

Chapter 4: Her First Fight

It was Saturday morning when Dad said goodbye and silently flew back home. His feeling of something wrong increased throughout the day on Sunday. Aliens made contact on Sunday morning with the president and the government wanted to know the identity of the mysterious man demanding the nation's cooperation.

On Monday, the flying man received a familiar face from his past. It was General Scott and he told Dad about the mysterious man. Dad looking for the trouble for the past few days searched beyond the Earth and discovered the aliens were in an orbit not far from Earth, just outside the government's detection. It was the aliens' presence that caused the uneasy feeling. As their intentions to do evil rose, so did the images in his mind of invaders wanting to take over the planet.

Tuesday morning, Dad contacted two old friends to help him, Rod and Nat who fought beside him in the past. Dannie assumed they had capabilities close to Dad's ability. Dannie offered her help, but the flying man insistently said no because she was not ready yet. Staying with Dad by reading his mind, she could hear Rod and Nat talking with him, yet she could not meet them. There was something like a firewall between her and anyone else entering Dad's mind. He insisted on protecting her and urged her to stay out of the fight.

Dad, Nat, and Rod were engaging the minds of the aliens making them think of images that were not true. Dad discovered the leader's unspoken admiration of his second in command, a fact the leader had kept it hidden because of the difference in rank. Dad brought this unfulfilled romantic fantasy from the deepest reaches of the man's mind and put it in the forefront of his thoughts as the second in command gave her report. He also added the hope that she had similar feelings, which encouraged the alien commander to make advances on the younger female subordinate.

Leaving Dad's brain, Dannie went to the second in command's brain to ensure her proper response to the impromptu courting. At first, the female alien was enjoying the suggestive comments coming from her superior. Then Dannie tried her luck at changing people's perspective and placed in her mind that these comments and physical affection were offensive, making the subordinate irritated and embarrassed by the advances of her boss. The upset junior officer left the commander's office in total frustration and went back to her station without finishing her report.

Dannie kept playing with her mind as the subordinate tried to do her work while Dad and friends took the battle to the other leaders of the aliens. While maintaining the feeling of violation from her boss, Dannie made her see things that were unreal on the screens in front of her. If a light turned red, Dannie made it appear green in

her mind. The screen showing the deployment of the alien battleships in attack formation, they kept moving from one spot to another by Dannie's manipulation in the young officer's mind. This caused the alien to repeat commands and countermand other directives.

Dannie moved the objectives from populated places on land to places over the oceans; the confused officer commanded the battleships to move to those empty locations. Seeing the second in command struggling, her assistant came over and replaced her at her duties. Then Dannie had the female alien start spouting nonsensical orders to everyone on the bridge of the space ship. The whole of the bridge was going crazy, which effected the entire ship.

Dannie maintained contact with the aliens longer than Dad, Nat, or Rod as the space ship left their solar system. When he realized what had happened, Dad was furious she did not stay out of the action. He told her that he could not protect her if she kept exposing herself to dangers.

Dannie refused to see the problem and became obstinate with Dad. Then Dad asked Dannie if she could put ideas in Todd's head. She answered that she could but that he began to figure out when she tried to get in his mind and now he would chase her away.

Dad simply replied, "Todd loves and cares for you."

Then it dawned on her that what she does not know, she does not know. Dannie apologized to Dad for not heeding his warning and thus putting everyone in jeopardy. She realized that if she had been caught, everyone else would have been in trouble. It could have resulted in a defeat for the men and the world. Dannie began to understand the urgency of the situation and the need to develop her abilities.

About once a week, Dad would visit to help her with her training. He wasn't sure what her talents were, but knew that she needed to be ready for when her power was called upon. After one of the training sessions, Dannie asked Dad how he had known Todd would react positively to her increased affection for him.

"Todd loves you. How else would he act?"

"You know, in a way, I did get him to change," Dannie pondered aloud.

"Do you always need to be right, Dannie?"

Dannie was quiet for a few minutes, and then looked up at Dad. "Do you think I work too much?"

"What is too much?" He responded in typical Dad fashion. Dannie shrugged in response. "Well, how many hours do you work?"

“Between sixty and seventy hours a week ... often more, though,” Dannie admitted.

“What does Todd think of the hours you work?” Dad asked, getting to the heart of the problem.

“He supports my work but sometimes I think he wishes to see more of me.”

“So, why do you work so many hours?”

To this, there was no answer.

After a moment of silence, Dad asked if she trusted her employees to do their work.

“Yes, I trust them.”

“Do you trust the person who trained your employees?”

“I trained them,” Dannie replied with a little defiance.

“Then why do you work so many hours?” was his death nail question. This made her mad. Partly because he was right, but mostly because she had not seen the obvious solution earlier.

The next day she met with Jan and Chuck, the two restaurant managers, and explained her wish to work less hours.

“Are you able to pick up the slack that comes with me working less?”

They looked at each other and both said, “We got it.”

“You make sure everyone else has time off for living, and even make sure they take vacation, except you don’t take any time off yourself,” said Jan. “Of course, we will help.”

“I have the kitchen maintained,” Chuck interrupted, “and if something comes up, I’ll call you. But for now, take a break.”

And so, she did. It took about two weeks for Dannie to pare her hours down to forty-five per week. She was pleasantly surprised to see how everyone rallied to support this change in her work life.

The shift that took place gave Dannie more free time to be creative in the kitchen and in advertising schemes. Every day, the restaurant would receive rolls from the local bakery. The driver had a dozen extra French baguettes and sold them for half price because he did not want to return with them. Chuck found some Italian sausage links in the freezer and Dannie came up with a plan for the evening’s menu.

They roasted garlic and made a compound butter including basil and ground pine nuts. They sliced the bread to match the size of the sausage link and spread the spiced butter on it. After browning it on the flat-top griddle, it was topped with a slice of provolone cheese. They grilled the sausage on the flat top and put that on next.

Chuck covered it with grilled peppers and onions and smothered it in rich tomato sauce. A final handful of grated mozzarella and sprinkled Parmesan cheese topped the dish, which was then placed in an oven to melt the cheese.

Their working title for this creation was Poor Man's Lasagna, and it would be served with a side of Italian greens in a vinaigrette. Dannie intended to change the name into something more sophisticated, but the bustle of the day soon caused her to forget. As the dinner hour began, she noticed the spontaneous name on the black sign in neon red lettering. It was too late in the evening to change it, so they ran with it, hoping people found it to their liking. It turned out to be a hit and Dannie decided to make it a regular Saturday night special.

Todd served as an English professor at Boston University. When the opportunity had come up for Dannie to move back home, Todd was all for it, as there was a small liberal arts college about thirty miles north. When she took on the job at the restaurant, he started a tenure-track professorate at the local college.

Todd came home one night and told Dannie about a problem at the school. The dean of the English department went to an emergency meeting so he had to cover her class. Todd had originally thought it might be a financial matter, but when the dean returned, she indicated something else.

Dannie was sitting on the couch when Todd came home midafternoon. A worried look was on his face.

"Todd, what's wrong?"

"Remember, I told you that the dean was evasive in her answer when I asked what the emergency was yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Well, now there is this rumor going around among the students and some staff. A supernatural being threatening the school. According to the rumors, this being is willing to burn down the old library if they do not pay him to leave."

"The college library?" Dannie asked.

"Not that library," Todd explained. "There is another library, in the house of the man who started the college back in 1890. His original house still sits on the hill overlooking the campus."

“Oh, yeah, I remember now,” Dannie said. “You pointed it out to me. That old house is huge.”

“Yes, it has 12 bedrooms, an office, a conservatory, and an old library. Although the house used for administrative offices, the library houses old and rare books from the college’s history. You can’t even visit the library unless you have special permission or an invitation.”

Dannie thought for a minute. “It doesn’t seem like a supernatural being would resort to arson to get his way. What would a spirit want with money, anyway?”

“Yeah, precisely. That’s when I thought of you, and your dad. Do you think it could be one of your powered flyer friends?”

“He is not a friend of mine if he is willing to harm others,” Dannie retorted.

“Dannie, I didn’t mean it like that. I just wanted to know if you could help.”

“Of course.”

At eight that evening, Dannie flew up to the college. She entered the old house and started for the library since that is where this being was rumored to be located. As she approached the door to the library, she caught the mind of a flyer. To her surprise, it was Gary, the cook who had been let go from her restaurant when she had turned eighteen.

When she recognized Gary, in her mind she shouted his name. Gary heard Dannie and immediately recognized her from the restaurant.

“You are the b**** who took my job!” he shouted with anger and malice in his tone. Gary came blasting through the library door after her. The hate for Dannie was so strong that she ran for the front door. She saw a ray of red light pass by her as she raced out the front door. She took off in flight only to have Gary fly after her in hot pursuit.

Gary was fast. As she tried to evade him, he kept closing the gap. Dannie circled around the house, then between some trees, but Gary kept getting closer. She could feel Gary right behind her and made a sharp turn to the left and he went zooming by. She turned and headed back to town, hoping to evade him, but he stayed right behind her.

They raced down Main Street just above the streetlights and he began closing in on her again. She made another sharp turn around a bank and headed out of town with Gary still chasing her.

They came upon a group of trees and Dannie turned completely invisible trying to lose Gary and lost control of her direction. While she missed several large trees, she ended up passing directly through the trunk of one large tree. Gary had to fly up to avoid them. After Dannie passed through the trunk expectantly, she reappeared by not concentrating on her invisibility. This gave her some more space, but with Gary hot on her tail again, she became frightened.

At that moment, she heard a voice deep inside her head say, "Go invisible and stop." She quickly obeyed. Gary flew right past her and no longer followed her as she floated in the air. She let down her guard for a second, as she was growing tired. She must have appeared as visible for a moment, for Gary shot his red pulse at her again. Dannie went completely invisible again, and the ray went through her.

Turning to see where the light had gone, a steel ball struck Dannie in the head. She fell to the ground, still trying to maintain her invisibility. She lay on the ground for a minute to regain her bearings, feeling blood dripping from her head where the ball had struck her. Dannie could see Gary in the sky looking for her as she lay exhausted on the ground. She tried to put the thought in his head that she had flown away but he did not believe it. He obviously thought she was somewhere around him as hundreds of steel ball bearings from a local manufacturing plant flying aimlessly around him as he orchestrated them with what seemed to be powers of telekinesis.

Dannie thought about slinking away to fight another day when a sturdy hand touched her on the shoulder. A commanding voice rang out in her mind to become visible and take his power.

She rose to face Gary in battle. The moment she became visible to Gary, he spotted her and shot a red bolt of lightning at her. It struck Dannie square in the chest which sent her flying backward.

Dannie thought that was the end. Instead of the red bolt killing Dannie, however, it strengthened her. Her head stopped hurting and she felt ten times stronger than before.

The voice returned and said, "Take his power."

Dannie stood up again and hollered to Gary, "Is that all you got?" Gary looked shocked to see she was still alive. He extended both arms and two thick, flaming bolts shot toward her. This time, she absorbed his power without falling back. He tried to stop the attack, but she was in control and continued draining his power.

Within seconds, she drained the last of his power, leaving him depleted. He slowly fell to the ground. In a blink of an eye, she caught up to him and took his ability to fly simply by touching him.

Dannie watched him fall to the ground where he stumbled and fell. He lay there for a moment as if he were dead, and then got up, staggering away.

She heard Dad calling to her and asking if she was all right. She saw him approach her from the sky.

“YES, EVERYTHING IS GOOD,” she screamed, full of excitement from the battle. She had been victorious.

“There is something menacing about you,” her Dad indicated. “Come with me.” They flew to their training park. There, in the entrance, was a field with a single oak tree growing majestically in the center of the field. Dad pointed to the tree and told her to release the energy there.

Dannie pointed at the tree and in a matter of seconds, all the red evil came out of her into the tree. By the time the last of the wickedness left her body, the tree exploded.

In her excitement, she forgot to thank Dad for helping with advice when it had been sorely needed. As they flew home, Dannie could keep up with Dad without his assistance. She connected with Todd mentally and asked him to drive the vehicle home and meet them there so they could talk.

When taking the final power of flying from Gary, thoughts of his life had flooded into Dannie. As she flew home with her father, she tried to process them all. She hadn’t realized there had been so much anger against her. He had blamed her for losing his job at the restaurant. He saw her as a brown nose for showing up to work on time every single day. He thought Dannie was a showoff for doing kitchen procedures correctly every time.

Gary had discovered his ability to fly around that time and started using it to steal from people. He met up with Darby, who taught him additional powers. Gary wanted to be in charge and Darby, who Dad and Rod killed, would not let him. They had a disagreement where Gary threatened Darby with death if he ever came looking for him.

Using her mind powers, Dannie shared the information with her father. As they approached her home, she saw him slowly shaking his head. “These powers are a gift and should be used as such – to help others and not to hurt them.” He seemed more concerned than upset.

“Will Gary ever get his powers back after tonight?” Dannie asked.

“You took all his power and he will never get it back,” he answered. “For now, you are safe.”

Todd stepped outside to meet them and threw his arms around his wife. “I’m so glad you are okay.”

After bidding her father goodbye, Todd and Dannie went inside together, safe against the rain that had just begun to fall.