

# Cloak of the Light: Wars of the Realm, Book 1

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Drew is caught in a world of light - just inches away from the dark

What if...there was a world beyond our vision, a world just fingertips beyond our reach?  
What if...our world wasn't beyond their influence?

Tragedy and heartache seem to be waiting for Drew Carter at every turn, but college offers Drew a chance to start over-until an accident during a physics experiment leaves him blind and his genius friend, Benjamin Berg, missing.

As his sight miraculously returns, Drew discovers that the accident has heightened his neuron activity, giving him skills and sight beyond the normal man. When he begins to observe fierce invaders that no one else can see, he questions his own sanity, and so do others. But is he insane or do the invaders truly exist?

With help from Sydney Carlyle, a mysterious and elusive girl who offers encouragement through her faith, Drew searches for his missing friend, Ben, who seems to hold the key to unlocking this mystery. As the dark invaders close in, will he find the truth in time?

CHUCK BLACK, a former F-16 fighter pilot and tactical combat communications engineer, is the author of thirteen novels, including the popular Kingdom Series and The Knights of Arrethtrae series. Chuck and his wife, Andrea, have six children and live in North Dakota. His dad was gone.

Forever.

Drew might only be twelve, but he knew the sting of his father's death would last a very long time-a lifetime. The pain of loss was a fresh wound to his young, unscarred heart. There were no life calluses to impede the searing ache of death.

He sat there, staring at the casket, sorrow hanging heavy on his soul, threatening to pull him down to where he could not breathe. Though the sun darted between the clouds, trying to peek down from time to time, the day was a dark one. Long faces, black dresses, tears, tissues, and "Taps"-the four loneliest notes ever played on a trumpet.

Drew tensed up when the colonel knelt down in front of him. He struggled to look the man in the eye. He had quelled his tears, letting them spill only in the privacy of his bedroom. Here, in front of military statues made of flesh and blood, he wanted to be brave for his dad. He stared at the colonel's whitegloved hand covering the perfectly folded flag being offered to him. His mother had asked that the flag be given to Drew, not to her. He wasn't sure if the gesture was for her, for Drew, or for his dad. It didn't matter.

He just wanted it over.

The colonel's deep and sober voice resonated through Drew.

"This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful nation and the United States Army as a token of appreciation for your father's honorable and faithful service."

As Drew reached for the flag, he looked into the man's eyes—and saw there the same sorrow crushing his own heart. And though he knew the words had been spoken thousands and thousands of times, Drew believed the colonel meant them.

Tears brimmed his eyes as he took the flag. He pursed his lips to restrain his hurt, but it didn't help. He felt his mother's hand on his shoulder and knew that the pain they each bore was additive in a vicious cycle that provided no escape. He leaned in to her. He had heard that time was the salve for such a wound. If that were true, Drew wished a million years could pass in an instant to separate him and his mother from the pain of his father's death, but instead the seconds took an eternity to pass.

The day lasted forever. Drew didn't want to feel the pain, but he didn't want to forget his father either.

So he walked through it all, painfully aware that his life was forever, irrevocably changed.

And there was nothing he could do about it.

A few days later, Drew and his mother, Kathryn, received a visit from Jake Blanchard. He had attended the funeral but was silent through its entirety.

Kathryn invited him in and offered an iced tea. The raw emotions of the week were still evident as the odd trio sat in the living room in silence. Jake held his glass with both hands, either to keep it from falling or to give his hands something to do while he worked up the courage to speak.

How ironic that a Special Forces soldier of Jake's caliber, with years of combat training and experience, could be reduced to a hesitant, irresolute man struggling to say a few meaningful words.

Drew had seen his mother have this effect on other men, for she was a beautiful woman, the kind of pretty that could not be diminished with dirt, sweat, or sorrow. In fact, the worse the condition, the more resolute her beauty shone in defiance. Her dark-brown hair usually fell loose across the right side of her olive-toned face. Deep-blue eyes framed by high brows and accentuated cheekbones captured the gaze of both men and women. Drew remembered how he'd blush when his dad talked about how beautiful she was, but he was right.

As Drew looked across the room at Jake, he realized that his mother's beauty was not what was causing the man's unsettled beginning. Jake finally set the sweating glass of tea on the coffee table before him.

"Ma'am, I'm not very good with words, but I do have a few I need to speak." Jake dropped his gaze to the untouched tea and the ice still circling to find a resting place. His left hand massaged his right as he continued. He glanced at Drew and then back at Kathryn.

"Ryan and I were on a lot of missions together. We became good friends. In fact, he was the best friend I've ever had." He stopped and swallowed hard.

Kathryn teared up. "He wrote of you, Jake." She spoke with a sweet compassion. "I know Ryan considered you the same."

"What I'm sure he didn't tell you was that he saved my life in Iraq. I owe him everything."

Kathryn dabbed her eyes with a Kleenex. Jake reached into his shirt pocket and removed a folded piece of paper.

"I'm sure he would have wanted you to have this. It was a letter he was writing as we got called on our last duty together. He gave it to me just before—"

Drew's mother gasped, and tears streamed down her face. Jake leaned across to her, and she took the letter as though it were as precious as gold. She looked at Jake and mouthed the words thank you.

Jake turned to Drew. "And this is for you." He held out his father's Army Special Forces pin and green beret. "I know he would have wanted you to have these. He was very proud of you."

Drew held the pin in one hand and the beret in the other. Despite all the pain that came flooding back, these things helped. They were one more connection to his dad.

Drew sniffed. "Thank you, sir."

Jake smiled through wet eyes and nodded. He took a deep breath, as if to prep for a mission. "I don't mean to make this difficult, ma'am, but I need you to know one more thing before I leave. I was with Ryan at the end, and he asked me to make sure that you and Drew were taken care of."

"You've done that for us today. We will be all right."

Jake shook his head. "I promised him, ma'am, and I intend on keeping that promise." He leaned forward and handed Kathryn another paper. "This is my address and phone number. I will be stationed here in Fort Bragg for the next six months. No matter where you are, if you need anything, call me and I will be there for you and your son."

Kathryn took the paper. "Thank you. That means a lot, Jake."

He nodded, then stood up. Drew walked with his mother to the door to see Jake out.

On the porch, Jake turned. "It was an honor to serve with your husband, ma'am. He was one of those rare men of true honor and integrity." Jake put a hand on Drew's shoulder. "You can be very proud of your father."

He looked as if he wanted to say something else, but instead turned and left.

When the door closed, Drew and his mother retreated to their rooms to spend time with their new treasures. Later, Drew's mother read the letter to him. One part stated that Drew's dad had some exciting news to share but that it was too important to share in a letter. He wanted to tell them in person. Whatever it was, it was news that was lost forever. Worse than that was how the letter ended...

"Please tell Drew that I miss him and that..."

That was it.

News untold and a message undelivered. The letter hurt more than it helped, but it was worth it because it was a final memory of his dad. The ache in Drew's heart was the painful tutor teaching Drew a new law that was as unbreakable as all the laws of the universe: life isn't fair.

#### Other Books

Kazantzakis, Volume 2. Putting Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis's vast output into the context of his lifelong spiritual quest and the turbulent politics of twentieth-century Greece, Peter Bien argues that Kazantzakis was a deeply flawed genius--not always artistically successful, but a remarkable figure by any standard. This is the second and final volume of Bien's definitive and monumental biography of Kazantzakis (1883-1957). It covers his life after 1938, the period in which he wrote *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, the novels that brought him his greatest fame. A demonically productive novelist, poet, playwright, travel writer, autobiographer, and translator, Kazantzakis was one of the most important Greek writers of the twentieth century and the only one to achieve international recognition as a novelist. But Kazantzakis's writings were just one aspect of an obsessive struggle with religious, political, and intellectual problems. In the 1940s and 1950s, a period that included the Greek civil war and its aftermath, Kazantzakis continued this engagement with undiminished energy, despite every obstacle, producing in his final years novels that have become world classics.

⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ . It was sent to Leah Levin-Dunkelblum on 23 March 1951, when the novel was about half completed: [N]ow I am writing a book on a Jewish subject; it takes place in Palestine. . . . . In Greece everything is going badly; one must be or ..."