

Book Three

THE CHILDREN'S TALE

BY SHAUNA SOLAMAN

Prelude

PROLOGUE

September 12, 2005 10:17 PM

"If you want to play with the fire, go ahead. You don't want to be reasoned, then I'll assume you're old enough to play with the fire," she said with but a smirk. The elegant figure sat quietly in her chair watching him over the rim of her glasses. She twirled her long black and blue hair with one finger, while staring at the blond figure across from her. He sat back in his chair, it would seem that he was too afraid to question her motives. Out of the corner of both of their eyes, they watched the young child move closer to the flames of the fire. I watched the child move closer, while the other two said nothing. That was my brother, the child, moving closer to the fire. The lady would never harm anyone, nor would she ever allow someone to harm themselves on behalf of her neglect. Yet, I couldn't understand her reasons. The male across from her, though afraid, didn't question her, for the same reasons as I. I watched my brother move closer, his eyes entranced by the flames that licked the bricks in the fireplace. His hands slowly reached out and the flame jumped to his hand. A piercing scream could only be heard. And then it came abruptly to a stop. The lady walked over to him and smiled courteously. She picked him up and he questioningly looked at her and his hands. He felt that he was burned, but there was no trace of it. Holding him in her arms, she brought him over to the purple sofa chair that she sat in previously. In her lap she played with his hands and then kissed his forehead. My father chuckled to himself and brought his newspaper up to reading level. "Let this be a lesson to you, my dearest. You are never to question whether a fire is a fire. You will always assume that it is fire, regardless of what you may think. In this house, any open places with fire is an illusion. I would never put you in harm's way. But you should never try that stunt again."

Mother was preparing us for something big. We didn't know it then, but it was moments like those where we learned a great lesson. The world that we knew was different from the world we'd eventually come to know.

Time unfold like pages in a book. It's always after a good length does anything ever make any sense. But all books come to an end. They choose a time frame to stick with. Life isn't like that. I am no authority on life though. At the time, I wouldn't question my parents, later I came to be reprimanded for such. They wanted us to question, to explore, to learn through our own experiences. That's how my parents got where they were. They didn't stay still for anyone; one would be extravagant enough to say that they didn't stand still for time itself. I know better than that.

"When We're Grown."

CHAPTER ONE

Wednesday, September 14, 2005 11:00:14 PM

There are many people who have crossed path with me. This is certain; as it is for you. Many of which, for me, have staked claims to knowing the truth. There is only one "truth" in my life and it concerns my family. It concerns the truth of how the events unfolded and led up to its climax and utter demise.

My parents were secretive. How very obvious, blunt, and straight to the point. They didn't speak much of the things that occurred in my life. I suppose they wanted me to figure them out for myself. Along with my younger brother, I did just that.

I'll spare you the meaningless introductions. Christopher Andre was born eight years after I was born.

However the circumstances of our birth slightly differ. There wasn't a big deal made of it throughout most of my life though. I supposed I felt special, since it created an undeniable bond to my uncle, who was very close to my mother. Risan, which is what I called him for short, was the inevitable product of my parents -- with my mom's wide eyes and dad's blond hair. I looked very much like my own parents, but very few would actually know that. Most people think I take after mom and that's fine with me.

The story of my life is no interesting in comparison to any other person. Then I've no reason more to write than you do. Except that my inclination towards artistry might weigh a bit more. Although, there's no pretty way to portray my beginnings. It would suffice to say that my mother, the natural born traveler, removed herself from her entrapment and along with her closest friends, did what she was naturally meant to do. Along the way, she found her evening star, and took him home with her. This is not to neglect the other details of such a story. Father wasn't a companion on the travels because work kept him behind. Although I do contend that he was not invited. It was a life long dream of the travelers, a pact made long before dad was prominent in the picture. Nonetheless, I did meet him before the papers were finalized. At that point of finalization, the world travels were complete and we, as a family, went to the States.

Time is a strange concept. As you move forward, your past collapses in on itself. A time traveler once told me that it's a different sort of thing when you're able to move in between. Everything collapses in on itself and you're left to wonder what happened when. If I were a time traveler, I'd have an awfully hard time moving in between time and I would suppose that many things wouldn't matter. If I were to view all of my reincarnations for a length of time, I suppose it wouldn't matter who was my parent when or what I learned specifically. The information would condense, leaving me to walk away with the important details. Somewhere, I don't know when, a name was carved on my soul. It's a special one; I'll guarantee that much. It always leads me to where I need to be, regardless of where I am. Which is why handing out the specifics of this current node in life would have to be important. Even though a black shadow of guide led me to India and gave me my new chance at humanity, the inscription led the traveler to me. It would have been her, with her red fiery soul, or it could have been that greenish one also. In either case, time falls in on itself. Who gave birth to me is of little relevance.

The man paused for a moment to go over his written words. Unsatisfied, he shifted in his chair, and then glanced at his dark walls. This was his apartment and he worked hard to get it. It didn't resemble the many homes of his parents, but it was his own. He pushed the chair from beneath him and walked over to his bed. Looking carefully at the bedpost he smirked at the gold pocket watch and flicked it with his hand. A legacy written in gold. He pulled off his shirt and sat bemused on his bed. He just really wanted to smoke, but he'd have to nurse his wounds first. Content with performing neither action, he laid down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. After a few minutes of thinking about nothing worth thinking about, he swung half of his body over the side of the bed. There on his hardwood floor was the phone, hidden slightly by the bed sheets that hung down the sides. He picked it up but kept his hand on the receiver. Smiling to himself, he waited quietly. At the second of the ring, he released the receiver. "You are irrevocably late," he said happily into the phone. "Were you expecting my call? Or, let me guess, your brother's?" came a despondent voice. "Risan and I have no reason to call one another. Why do you think we worked so hard on telepathic communication?" he said jokingly into the phone. "You are ridiculous. Can't come up with anything better eh? Telepathic communication, ha!" scoffed the soothing voice. "I tried to write memoirs, but I've nothing to write about," he said, laying back down facing the ceiling. "You...you have nothing -- AT ALL to write about? Christ, aren't you like the son of the great biochemist...er, neuro-something! And don't forget the son of the writer! With all the classes and nonsense you believe, you can't think of anything?" He shut his eyes to listen to her ramble on. He hated the comparison to his parents. It slightly bothered him that it would have annoyed

them also, had they been subjected to this. "That's them. I would appreciate the lack of comparison," he responded dryly. "Sorry to offend you," said the soft voice. He curled up with the phone and the two discussed their matters.

After many hours later, he hung up the phone. He didn't care much for the conversation, inasmuch as he cared for the person. Still, it was a necessary evil in pleasing her. He never understood women. Actually, he never understood humans. He picked himself up and headed to the bathroom. He looked around the small bathroom and then got into the shower. Contemplation came during these moments. Yeah, he was still partly dressed, but it didn't matter either way. He threw on the water and just let it hit his face. With his eyes closed, he scanned his memories for anything new. At some point, he decided he actually take a shower for cleansing rather than just thinking. After his shower, he headed back into the rest of the small apartment. The shower was the only place with actual privacy. It didn't matter much to him anyway. As he got dressed, he looked at the gold watch. He didn't need to open it in order to know what time it was; the time was visible, just beyond the letters inscribed F.M.R. It was too early and yet too late for anything. He could only think of one thing to do tonight. As he walked to the door, passed the two planes of planes pressed against one another. Water was trapped between them. He smiled at it while fingering his pocket watch. Happily he left.

"Risan... Now how did you get that name?" the lady inquired. Risan chuckled, "That's not exactly my real name. My real name is Christopher Andre." "An interesting assortment," the lady responded. "No, the name isn't interesting, it's rather plain. I prefer it that way. It's got a subtlety that can't be ignored." The lady looked quite uninterested and she looked away. "I suppose it has a history. Then how did you shorten it?" she replied dully. Risan wasn't in the mood to entertain her boredom, but felt like talking anyway. "My brother used to call me Ris. Then later added the first two letters of my second name." "You mean middle name," she pointed out. "Lady, I've got a couple names." She looked slightly interested in this. With the picked up interested, he raised his eyebrow and plainly stated, "I will not discuss all of my names." Sullenly she looked back down, searching for something to hold her attention. "Have you a name?" he finally muttered. "Ashley. Pleased to meet you." "How dreadfully he common," he laughed. Ashley shot him a smug look. "Sorry." Ashley sat up straight in her chair and looked around the desolate area. "Well, it's two in the morning with this flight delayed. What's your reason, business or pleasure?" she asked. He thought on this carefully, "Oh, well, I'm going back home to bury my father." She looked at him shocked and while she grasped for something to say, he could feel the joy in himself with that jaunty lie. He could hear a voice saying that he was a wretched scoundrel, but the same voice couldn't help but laugh.

Somewhere else, maybe some time else, the persons sat quietly across from the fire. They had all had a long day. Traveling. It's enough to make one incredibly weary. On the television, there was some antiquated show playing, a comedy, one that no one understood, partly because they were too tired to pay attention. For the next couple of the days, they would just remain here, till plans show up with something else.

Where the Elders Meet

CHAPTER TWO

Saturday, September 17, 2005 2:01:32 PM

Risan sat at the table looking at all of his elders. He didn't feel out of place, he just felt like something was missing. He knew what it was. He put his cup down and slowly began, "If everything I say is a lie --" Mariel raised her hand in objection. "You are above that logic nonsense. Your mother made you study that junk when you were a toddler. I would know. I had to listen to you prattle on while trying to

feed you, heathen." He just had to laugh, after all, Mariel would not let him escape without reminders. It was her right to do so, being his mother's right hand in all conspiracies. Risan loved when his parent's friends all gathered for a lunch or an event. Today was a lunch and whoever was in the area attended. There was never very many, but it was still worth it. They enjoyed reflecting on their lives. But unlike most elders he knew, they spent more time devising schemes for the future. And not just any scheme, mind you.

His flight arrived in Illinois early enough to catch a few hours of sleep. He knew that his elders had all arrived. It was not that he could hear their clamor in the many miles that kept them apart, but it was that they affected the area. Some of the children had also arrived. Though they weren't as obvious as their parents. Their parents were usually so unaffected by their surroundings, that it had to change to accept them. He shrugged and walked a to the nearest exit. Hopefully, he'd get a cab and get there as soon as possible. Upon reaching his destination, he walked up the stairs to see the group in the back laughing and drinking. Their food wasn't served yet. He walked up to them and grabbed a chair. After greeting them, he retreated back into himself, waiting for the next arrival.

Of course, he did speak up before a new arrival. Naina trailed quietly behind Uliaha. Uliaha stepped aside and presented Naina, "Look who I found!" Uliaha carefully observed the table and said, "You couldn't wait? Geez." Everyone looked at them, only a few seemed to take the fault. Vauhini spoke up, "Hey, you were supposed to be here on time." The two grabbed their chairs and joined in the conversation. They chose a most unfortunate time to join, since Mariel had proudly declared a change of the subject. The waiter came and seemed slightly annoyed to find new arrivals. The two ladies gave their orders and joined in with the rest. Conversations around here always had an odd flow. Might as well be a part of it.

Risan left the restaurant merrily. He was the only one of his family to attend. A normal person would have felt odd in such a situation, being that they were all his mother's friends and his mother wasn't even there. He zipped up his black coat and watched his breath. The cold air always did such wonders. Looking down to his left then right, he waved to the cab driver. He had called for a ride prior to leaving the restaurant. With small steps, he made his way to the car. As he climbed into the back, he recognized the driver. "Hey Ferdinand, how are you?" Ferdinand looked over his shoulder, "Mister Raisin, what a surprise. Family meeting?" Risan laughed, "If you call lifelong friends family, sure." "Then what do you call it?" Risan thought over this question carefully. He looked in the mirror and shot Ferdinand a mischievous look, "Home." The car pulled off heading in the direction of where the sun was setting. The reality of that was that home wasn't in that direction. Risan had a flare for being dramatic and preferred the setting. Ferdinand was accustomed to such eccentricities.

The group back at the restaurant were finalizing their plans. It had taken them a long time to conclude that they would return to the house. Most of the people present were travelers. Over the years, they had bought houses in various places, or if not themselves, then friends or friends of friends. These houses came to be known as stops -- infamous for their emptiness. Travelers of the friendship could use the house and such a house was located in this area. There's nothing too extravagant to a stop, depending on the person who owns it or maintains it. This particular house was well furnished. It had no second floor to anyone's knowledge, though clearly from the outside there was one. There was a living room when you enter through the front door, to the left. Three sofas all facing the fireplace that had a painting hung above it. Just to the left of the fireplace was a television set. Just beyond that was a small dining room set with the kitchen set behind it. A few steps beyond the front door, to the right, were three doors. A bathroom and a common female and male room. The spaces between the doors were aligned with picture frames. A simple duty of the house was to change one of the picture frames before

leaving. It depicted the different tenants and activities. Just beyond that, a bit into the kitchen were two doors -- a small pantry and the stairwell to the basement. The kitchen glass doors led outside to a small veranda, which led down to a pool (now very much empty). The basement was littered with a sofa, television set, full kitchen and bathroom. There was also two more bedrooms down there, also a common male and female. By common, it's merely meant that mostly persons of that gender stayed in that room. Most people leave behind belongings, which become a part of the house in itself. This is where the travelers stayed. It certainly didn't house them all, but there were enough sleeping bags and floor space for them.

The group walked into the house slowly, some dragging bags behind them. Tabitha looked around and said to the others, "There's something strange about the proportions of this place." Sharlene looked around then at her, "They never understood humor." Kevin laughed behind them all, "Or they wanted to create a labyrinth." Vauhini dragged her bags and put in on one of the sofas, taking note of its brownish colour. "Who owns this one?" The rest of her companions looked at her, pondering on that question. "Eh, I think my dad," Uliaha responded lightly. Everyone turned around while muttering to himself or herself. "So who is going out to get the food?"

Risan walked into the apartment. It was quite dark and constricting; he loved it. He walked over to the table and glanced over the sheets. He tugged his glasses off and lifted the sheets. He's writing his memoirs, he thought to himself. He smiled and the ink blots all over the sheet. Every dot was made when he hesitated. Nahit preferred fountain pens, so a moment's hesitation on the metal piece would cause the ink to splatter a bit. He placed the sheet back down. He was late; Nahit had left hours ago. This didn't account for him not making his way to Illinois for the gathering, but he knew there were other things to tend to. He contemplated leaving a message, but preferred their usual method. Heading over to Nahit's bed, he looked around for the phone. Nahit didn't like phones, but he'd have to deal with that. Risan reached for the phone but before he could dial, he heard a very stern voice.

A piece of paper crumpled on the floor. Would it matter that I knew just how much space it took up? Of course it did. Maybe not to you, but in the grand scheme of things -- well actually, no... It was a toy, like everything else.

"Alright, tell me about your mother." He thought carefully on this before laying out his sentence. "No, this isn't about her."

Mikhail's Story

CHAPTER THREE

Saturday, September 17, 2005 2:00:08 PM

Escape all the worlds you've come to know. You may know two or three, some gamble at five, others resent the implication of more than one. Is that the justification to living? I wouldn't know. My very existence came to be on behalf of the Red star and the Green star. I came to be the first of my line, the eldest, the caretaker -- not just to those after me, but before me. They, the elders, reject my help, but constantly need it. I have something most others don't have. There's no name for what I am exactly, but the closest would be a muse. I spoke the prophetic truths to humans. I aided the great one in his time of need. I revived the stars, gave hearts their sparks, drained and gave blood. Sometimes I feel as if I've been reduced in my existence. Why wouldn't I? Alone I walk in human form along these dark cold streets. I could have mated, create a being just for myself. Hell, I could have gone to my creators to ask for a companion. I prefer the solitude sometimes.

I wasn't much of anything to begin with. The Red cared for me the most -- not the Green didn't; I just preferred her. At the time there was no difference between them, they were just colours. They engulfed me for a while. I never knew how long before I realized that I was also just a colour. I was a moment; a thought. All of their knowledge passed through me and I understood it all. I wasn't a growing creature -- I was grown. I eventually came to realize that the Red had no form, not like the Green and I. We have no use for names because we recognize the very core of our beings. Nonetheless, we have them, and they change over years. When you live as an immortal, you accumulate many quite quickly and stick to the ones you adore.

I didn't start here nor will I end here. The Red and the Green kept me somewhere else while they stayed here. There was something they were protecting me from. Until that leveled off, I stayed away. I grew while learning and experiencing the things about myself. Being under their shield prior to leaving gave me a strong sense of self. I became known as the doctor far and wide. After many reincarnations, I decided to become a doctor in each life. It got easier with each new birth. I am a doctor in more than two ways and this values me higher. When I shifted dimensions and reunited with the Red and Green, I found that they were different. Not by much, but they kept their forms when they could. The Green had a true form, whereas the Red shifted around. I came to meet the beings I had always known about. We began using labels instead of just reading one another. This wasn't to divide or isolate one another, but rather the numbers of species had grown significantly. Not just here, but everywhere. Alliances were made -- and thus the symbols of such alliances were donned.

The Green actual form was consistent denoting that his creation was clearly intentional. The Red had no true form, which meant that she was an unintentional accident -- and a powerful one at that. With the information already present with the additional abilities of a healer, I was able to be of most service. Even to the most illustrious one, I healed and gave advice. He couldn't present me with anything. His powers would go to the most direct in line -- the Red, the Green, the Blue, and the Orange. I was happy with that. I watched his descent and soon after his everything -- the wife, companion, other half, so on.

He was engraved as "Azrael," a lost being that eventually found his way. The keeper of destiny found his destiny. The Red, Lilith, eventually gained a form with the fall of the first. After she gained a form though, she became most unstable, requiring the most help. It only got worse when spent without Jibril. She's still got a heart of a mother though. She threatens to create a partner for me or throws fits when I neglect myself, human qualities. I think she adores the fits. He's not as bad as she is. He actually created a few.

I live my life adhering to strict rules. I don't give myself too much time, nor do I donate it overly so. I did give myself to someone and they gave in to me. And we produced Aurora. After much ambiguity, we parted and I gave into myself. The whole situation pains me a great deal, so it's rarely mentioned. Even those who shower me with adoration refrain from that subject. I belong to myself and to my "daughter," Aurora, even though our relationship is nil. She has all the information she needs and I have no need to pretend to nurture her.

My tale has to begin somewhere, but I cannot seem to channel it right. This is the beginning of my memoirs, troubled and broken. If I cannot do it, then I suppose I had better leave off here.

He walks in the shadows and he is the keeper of keepers. Though he never meant for it to be that way, which was the inevitability that he faced. He walks on a path that is grandeur, compared to the rest of us. I admire him for that. Nahit always kept to himself, whether he asserting a humanistic role, Mikhail, or floating through time as an observer. My older brother, though I rarely affectionately say that to him.

As a younger being, I often clung to him till I was old enough to stand on my own. Sometimes I think that he resents his place in time, or that he resents being the first of our generation.

Over the years, he falsely comes to terms with who he is. He accepts a new truth, only to discard it shortly after. He belongs to no one and yet everyone. Mikhail is the light from the sky that shines hope on the darkest hour. This is not meant as in close to death or any of those sorts. He's a muse and a healer, that's what happens when you are made from pure energy and the focus of destiny.

Risan put down the pen and looked over at the door. He had arrested his idea of calling Nahit, since he had scolded him for even thinking of doing that. Instead, while his brother walked the lonely streets, he continued the memoirs. Nahit never liked to write about himself. He was always rather secretive, but enjoyed a challenge. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his pocket watch. Soon he'd have to head back to the house. He wasn't bound to such a task, but just being around those kinds of people made time worthwhile. He stopped to apologize to his uncle. He reached over and grabbed a clean sheet of paper and wrote, "Hope this helps till you find yourself."

Goblin's Grin

CHAPTER FOUR

Saturday, September 17, 2005 4:58:19 PM

Risan tucked some of hair behind his ear and pushed up his glasses. Nightly travels, he did enjoy them so. He watched the stars as they danced before his green glassy eyes. He walked around to the back, careful on the blue and greenish grass. The pool was still empty, meaning that they got in late and didn't feel like swimming, or wasting time. He looked over at the house, through the glass windows of the lower level. He could see the lights on and a figure rustling in the kitchen. It was Camryn; he could sense Tempest's presence within her. He mulled around the yard for a while. He remembered when Nahit was younger, how he would nurse stray animals back here. Not that they were always at this house. Their mother couldn't stay still for too long and their father couldn't either, though wasn't nearly as bad as she was. He reflected on what kind of child he was.

"She's late!" Mariel declared to her companions. Sitting in the purple sofa chair, she looked around and then fell back into her book. Kevin looked at her questioningly but could only laugh. Then out from the room Vauhini burst out. "Cookies. We need cookies," Vauhini claimed, making her way into the kitchen. Bjorn looked around at them, "We don't need anything. You need it, not 'we.'" Mariel put her book down again, "We should go to Thailand." Vauhini said quietly in the kitchen, "No, we should go to Ferrol." Bjorn sat there puzzled as the three laughed. Bjorn and Kevin returned to their attention to the television. After a while, Shauna came through the door. Her long black blue hair was tied up and she wearing a teal skirt with an off white blouse. Looking exhausted she walked over to the sofas and fell down on the brown day. "Long day," she whispered. "Woman, you are late and we are hungry," Mariel said in a stately tone. Vauhini, with cookies in her hands, made some sort of notion that she wanted food. "Where is every one?" "Eric is putting your demons to sleep, Bjorn and Kevin have been sucked into an alternate dimension where the only thing that matters is Naruto, Vauhini is trying to fatten herself -- unsuccessfully, Aya left us for food, Peter met with an unfortunate accident, and Liz has learned that she cannot cook," Mariel said without looking up from her book. She glanced up and grinned. "You really didn't have to update the likes of the persons that are within my vision field." "Yeah, but you're selectively blind." Shauna sat up and she could sense Risan stirring. Eric came out holding Risan, who was squirming in his arms. "I just put him to sleep and the second you waltz in, he's up." Eric handed the baby over to her. "Hi mom!" said Nahit, running out of the bedroom. Vauhini sighed heavily at the two of them. Food would have to wait.

Shauna held the baby who squirmed happily in her arms. "How was your homework?" she said to Nahit. He sat down on the floor, "It was okay, and I got everything done." "And your brother?" "He stuck to me like glue!" "And your frog?" Nahit looked up at her, "He's okay too, I built him a house outside so that he wouldn't have to go far." As Eric left for the basement, Nahit got up and walked over to the sofa and sat down. He stuck his tongue out at Bjorn and said to the persons present, "Hi Er-Bjorn, Utaer, Atemp, and Atrou." "Didn't you just say good night?" Bjorn shot back. Nahit looked around and seemed like he was lost. Holding Risan, Shauna bent down and looked at him sternly. Nahit looked down to the floor then went to the basement with his father. She then put Risan down on the sofa. "Go to sleep," she said softly. He squirmed happily not seeming to pay much attention. "Takes after you." "Everything takes after her, even the sofa and bugs," Bjorn said not taking his eyes of the characters. "Where are we heading?" Shauna asked the group, shielding the sides so that Risan wouldn't fall off with his tumbling.

Nahit went down quietly to find his father sitting alone reading the newspaper. "Hi," he said quietly. Eric knew that Shauna would send him down here. The kids were more attached to her and though this would give rise to jealousy, he didn't mind. He welcomed his son. "Come here, sit with me." A silence fell between them. "I understand why you cling to your mother." Nahit looked over at him, "No, I don't think you do." Eric smiled and hugged him. "Tell me a story," he asked. Nahit grinned and turned to face him. Nahit knew many stories, but he liked to make up his own. He crafted a story that seemed to have been pulled from the skies and stars. He spoke of angels -- beings that were nothing more than just a thought. Beautifully coloured, without a care in the world. He spoke of how they justified their ways by means of others. When the story was over, Nahit laid down, tired. "Dad, tell me about me," he whispered. Eric smiled and removed his glasses. Softly he began, "Once upon a time, there was my lady Violina of the raven towers, who felt trapped there. Everyone who knew her went to her to find solace, but they could never provide solace. Eventually they realized that she was unable to find peace as long as she was there. They had to set her free. They broke down the walls to get to her. It took so many to get her out, but in the end, they all stood together watching the temple topple over. She told them that through one window and only that window, there was a star to be found. She had to find it. They all agreed to go with her, for she didn't know what the world was like beyond those walls. Together they all traveled to that point, but it kept moving. Eventually they stopped following the point and started to follow their hearts. One by one, they all found what they were looking for. Except for my lady, who continued on. Finally she was brought to a place where the star reappeared and shone brightly. There she found you." Eric looked over at the sleeping child. "And when she found you, she called me and I came out there to meet you. And we adopted you. Interesting, isn't it?" He paused, for at this point he was just speaking to himself. "You take after your Uncle Shaun, both found by travelers and adopted at the age seven. Both so alike." Eric picked Nahit up and carried him upstairs and put him on the bed in the room. He returned to the living room.

Shauna glanced up at him, "He wants to sleep but he wants to play." "Eric! Put him to sleep," he heard from one of the ladies. He laughed and went over to Risan to pick him up. Risan looked at his mother and stared to squirm. "I will give you a cookie if you go to sleep," she said to him. Content with that, he allowed them to put him to sleep. "He's a good pixie, isn't he?" "Goblin, you mean."

Off somewhere else, Sphinx scryed the mirror for the on goings. Utterly unamused, she muttered to herself, "It starts again. Damn the cycle."

Risan was called all sorts of things when he was younger. He began to end his moment of reflection by whispering, "goblin." He walked calmly through the doors. "Hey Ris, what's up?" Camryn greeted him

as he walked into the kitchen. He walked over to the fridge and opened it. "Didn't go shopping for groceries yet, hmm?" He slammed the door and twisted his smile, looking at her. "Canned foods only, I'm afraid. Didn't you eat already though?" He laughed at a joke that only he knew. She put her hands on her hips and glared at him. "Of course I ate. I also drink. Live animals serve a higher purpose when you combine the two." Camryn looked unamused at him. "Stop joking around, everyone wondered where you ran off to." He looked at her and fixed his grin. He pondered on what to say, then as his eyes glanced upwards, "I went to go see Nahit. He has a writer's block." Camryn laughed and walked out of the kitchen, heading towards the stairs, "I know you like to lie, but you went to New York and then came back to Illinois in what, three or four hours?" He decided that maybe now was the time to go greet everyone, again

As he entered, he felt the memories settle. There was something comforting to see things the same after so long. Everyone sat in the sofas watching the television. They were going through the emails they had received over the last few days. "Went to New York to meet with my brother," he called out to everyone. They turned to look at him, some looked puzzled while others just nodded. Humans, such interesting creatures, he said to himself. He walked into the dark bedroom without throwing on the light. His eyes quickly adjusted the lack of light as he glanced over the pictures. They, his elders, would be starting a new set of travels soon. Some did it because they were looking for something, or satisfying their curiosity of the world, while some did it to explore the tangents of this dimension. It's all a matter of what you're able to handle.

He pulled out his pocket watch, a gift from his Uncle Shaun, which he preferred to call Uten. ("Ten" is a nickname for Shaun. It's common for him and well as a few others to take a persons nickname then add either an "A" for aunt, "U" for uncle, or "Er" for guardian before the nickname). Uten was a pocket watch fanatic and would give them out to mark a special occasion. This was his first watch, white gold with the initials "C.S.R." engraved on the front. Though the engraving changed once in a while, it was really your perception of it. This watch was given to him eons ago, which marked his bond. With a toothy grin, he dropped the watch on the chest of drawers. Each watch was made specifically for the person receiving it. It was always of significant purpose, especially since Uten only gave watches to people that he loved. It was also a mark that he loved them enough to not excuse them when they were late. Risan wasn't going to sleep in this room, but he liked to leave the watch in the special oak box lined with black velvet. It's where everyone who has ever received a watch from Uten put it to rest when it wasn't in use. In the lid, there was a raised turtle, a symbol of his uncle. Satisfied, he walked out of the room to the group. "I claim the green sleeping bag!" he smiled at all of them.

Unmatched Parallels

CHAPTER FIVE

Monday, September 19, 2005 10:16:29 AM

Do you learn from your mistakes? Take them into your being, let them alter you.

Shaun looked around his room. It was dark, always dark; he liked the darkness. His dark brown eyes seemed to glitter in the dark. Though that was his own perception, looking into the mirror. Teri was asleep and he was in no mood to wake her. Instead he scanned the floating thoughts of the people that he could read. His daughter, Uliaha, was over in the States, with friends. She was now twenty-four, and though he was willing to accept that, he was less willing to accept his own age. Well, his age for this body, anyway. Consequently, both he and his wife preferred a different place to live in. His age overall never bothered him, it was always the form that did. His normal lusty appearance would be lacking if he kept to a human form. In this life span, he was in his fifties, though it didn't show. He didn't stay

here often, so it was easy to forego deterioration. Time didn't stand still for anyone, except for him. The time for plotting the death of this shell was dawning though. He had retained it for far too long. This time though, he'd have to cater for Teri's preference.

Death is a journey throughout every dimension. You'd like to believe that death comes and perhaps there's an afterlife? Your body continually dies. It's a bag that carries from one end to the other. It's a matter of what you do -- what your soul accomplishes within that time. There are no guardians that look after your soul. Too many people die per day -- too many beings, per day. There's so many that the death givers needed others to rewire souls and even with the help of Black twins, it cannot all be handled. Some person's death gets all the glory though.

"Her death has remained clear in mind," I wrote as legibly as possible. I couldn't help but smile, but not in the sarcastic manner which Risan normally takes in. Nahit remembered staring at her in many different ways all at the same time. "I was downstairs, playing with the cat, when I felt my heart tremble. There was something wrong with her, but I couldn't figure out what." He paused at that moment. Explaining this to someone is rather hard, especially for someone who didn't understand the world of "wonders." He thought back to what his mysterious lustful object asked to hear about his mother. He had rejected her before, but now he realizes that it is a necessary evil. He would have to write about his mother in order to explain himself. Though he would reject this sort of justification, this time he'd give in. Reflecting on such moments was easier than writing them. He walked over to his bed and opted instead, to speak of them.

"Oh, so now you want to speak about her," said the voice on the other end of the telephone. "No, I'm only going to say a few things about her, in specific, her death. And that's it." "I didn't know she died," was the sullen response. "She didn't. This is a work of fiction." Puzzled, the voice reprimanded him, "Well, Nahit, if you're not going to tell me the truth, why bother!" Nahit flung the telephone across the room when he realized she hung up. He grabbed his watch and sunk into the bed. She couldn't handle it anyway, he assured himself. This wouldn't stop his reflection. In his memoirs, he wanted to write that the cat told him his mother's body was going to expire now. Or that a voice told him that he was reclaiming her. Both of them gave him comfort but still he flew inside to see her.

I ran into the lower floor, throwing open any door that tried to stop me. As I ran up the stairs, Risan either heard or felt me, or heard the voice and began screaming. Dad was standing in the kitchen perplexed at my actions but he threw a horrified glance at my mom. I couldn't tell what he saw; all I knew was what I saw. It's all a matter of what you choose to see and I saw three things. On one hand, mom was lying on the sofa, bleeding out. She was lying in a pool of blood while the blood seeped from her eyes, nose, ears, mouth, even her fingernails. It was almost gruesome, but I knew better than that. Her blood keeps the flesh bag moving and if the flesh is useless, so becomes the blood. However, I also saw her in another way. She was lying in dad's arms sleeping, slowly losing her breath, with Risan in her hands. He was whimpering in her arms, but kept quiet enough to not alarm anyone. In another way, she was sleeping by herself, losing sight of anything else in the world. Lastly, she was alone speaking to me calmly throughout the entire ordeal. I fathom that the second was false; after all, Risan was no child at the time she died, not to mention dad wasn't near her to begin with. I don't know what anyone else saw, but I know that I saw those four. Dad rushed to pack new blood into her body and on some level, she was telling him it was useless. She was reclaimed. It's not like I haven't seen her die before. For the first few years, I was foolish enough to try to save her. I then learned quickly not to. You let angels die so they can reach a new set of beings.

I knew that Uten and Asilen would be preparing for their rebirth soon enough. They were well into

their fifties, but because of their residence in Ferrol, they had been unaffected by age. Either that or Uten purposely set back the clock for his wife and himself. They chose their deaths, but they didn't always control just how the death comes about. They sometimes died gruesome deaths and some were peacefully. Sometimes they'd experience hundreds of deaths simultaneously, but it always got the job done. Once an angel dies, their soul passes through the controllers -- the paragons of life and death. After they are weighed, they then move on to a new body. Sahjinas are treated the same. Before you take offense, bear in mind that there aren't nearly as many of those two kinds as there are everything else. Everything else is marked and then sent to rebirth. It's a city of souls we live in. Only a few actually die and that's after we notice something about them.

For me, it's a rather tragic system. Though Risan takes lightly of it. He takes lightly of everything. He's an artist who only cares to play. He does care about his family, but that's just about it. If you aren't of his bloodlines then you aren't for his love, and you'll be subjected to any madness thereof. He's a selective tetchy demon, but that doesn't mean I love him less. He's eternally a child, only choosing to grow up when someone he loves needs him. Let's be careful about his bloodlines though, I do mean actual blood. If he falls in love with someone outside of that lineage, be sure that they'll be marked in his blood. I adore his theatrics, though sometimes its a bit too much. He's a natural born story teller, liar, lover, joker, and child. I seem to have lost most of those traits normally deemed innocent. Maybe its my age or because the very core of my being doesn't allow for that. It's why I can relate to Shaun Tannen the Talented, my uncle.

He's very accustomed to that particular name, I guess because it was rightfully his. Over time, it got shortened to just "Talen," a respected name amongst those to take to the underground. The name was a gift from human parents and the "talented" quip was added by other human parents. In a lifetime, one can't say how long ago, he was born in California to a wealthy English family. His parents died in a car crash and he was sent to into a foster home. I don't know why the rest of the family didn't look for him, nor does anyone else. Destiny needed him in the States, I warrant. Eventually a young married lady came to teach and fell in love with the young boy. With her husband, they adopted him and eventually moved out to New York, Long Island to be specific. Naturally, because Destiny plays a role in their life styles, his foster parents come to be the second guardians of my mother. None of this coincidence, nor does it work perfectly every time, but you get the point. Uten was remarkably reclusive, opening up only to those in his family. The Talen I knew growing up was warm, loving and caring. He nurtured me in aspects one can only guess because his outward appearance is cold, grim, sarcastic, and void. The only beings in the world who understood him (or so it would seem), were his wife (Teri, whom which I called Asilen), his "sister" (my mother), Mariel (a cohort of beneficial consequences), and Seen (if you haven't begun to figure out this puzzle, then I won't confuse you now. Clarity will come later). He's a dark man though; he covers himself, whether it's with black scarves, his usual top hat, and always appearing fully clothed. It's only in hidden moments you find out who he is. My own special moment was when Uten and mom would share the biggest bowl of macaroni and cheese (he threw in pineapples or apricots, which always slightly bothered her), while watching the television in their pajamas with rubber ducks. You'd never think you see the dark reclusive Talen like that, but you never would, I would though.

If you're wondering why I'd share that with you now, it's only because I am no writer. It's only through experience that I can relate the viscosity of who I am. Even that is questionable. Uten -- I should mention that only a few get to call him "Ten" -- would never describe himself like that. Actually, he's never tried to do it. Mostly people just write of him, but never has he made a rule of who he is. Ten...he was ten years older than mother. Nahit turned over and tried to sleep. They were all just thoughts that he had not written down. Elsewhere, a pen scribbled furiously without his consent.

Teri grabbed a book from the shelf and walked over to her husband who was resting in a chair. His cane had fallen down to the ground and all he did was stare at it. "Ten," she began. He raised her hand to signify silence. "We have to talk," he said quietly. "About death again? Let's just get over it over with." Very unsatisfied with her remarks, he stood up and held his hand over the cane, which flew up to meet him. "I'm going for a walk." "Oh really? With whom?" Ten smirked at her and walked out. She thrust the book onto the sofa and fell into it. Sometimes he was just too much to handle. She stared at the empty sofa across from her, thinking about the house. It would become Uliaha's when they assumed their new rebirth. Just then, she heard the phone ring. Teri picked herself up and walked into Talen's office. On his desk, she picked up the phone. "Running late," exclaimed the voice. She sighed on the phone, "Don't you people ever wait to be greeted?" "Sorry Silen. Hello, how are you? How's life? How's Uliaha? Where's your husband, tell him I'm running late," the voice said quickly. "Eric, really, you could break between the questions. Pretend to care." Eric's voice softened, "Silen, you know how he's fickle about time." Teri laughed, "He left without you. Off to the park, I suppose." She could hear Eric muttering under his breath. "So Craven, how's the new life going?" Eric paused, "Calling me Craven now? What have I done for you to reimpose my second name instead of my first?" Teri laughed again, "You are much too late to be worrying about that." Eric laughed and then after apologizing, he hung up the phone.

Eric pulled his car up to the lot, got out and hurried along. He could see his best friend dressed in black wobbling along the pathway. His health is failing, he thought to himself. Eric wasn't as swift but as soon as Talen sensed him, he stopped to grin. "In all my years, you have never been--" Talen started. Eric shot him a look, "Ten, don't start." The two walked together through the park discussing light matters.

Reflection on the Pond

CHAPTER SIX

Monday, September 19, 2005 7:27:48 PM

The night was calling to all of them. It dragged them out of the stop house and into a small area with a pond nearby. It was a magical night. The dark blue and green grass was an invitation for its visitors. Although most people present were there because they were always there. It was an event, not always yearly, but it happened every few years. Someone would get overzealous or feel the need to throw an extravagant party. But these weren't your ordinary run of the mill people, so you couldn't expect a normal party.

Deep in a small park, beyond the forest, strung high on the trees were little lights. Two grand black twisting trees acted as the gateway into the warm coloured area. Before you could go through, you'd have to visit the tree. Within the tree was a door; beyond those doors were clothes and accessories of all sorts. Whether you came prepared or not, you stopped in to pick out something new. It was a celebration of life and death, and the beings celebrated dressed up for it. It all depended on your mood, whether you wanted to dress Egyptian, dress up as a story book fairy (or prince for that matter), or represent your cultural aspects, it was all a beautiful choice. Everyone ran through the dark doors of the tree. If you stood right by the door you could peer up to the phthalocyanine green blue or viridian leaves and in between those, you could find the night sky that shimmered with stars. Tabitha, Mariel, and Vauhini ran through one door, seemingly in a flash, followed thereafter by Camryn, Naina, Uliaha, Glenda, Sharlene, with Veronica running behind them watching them carefully. Bjorn turned to Jelani, who shrugged while Kevin laughed at the abruptness of it all.

Through the doors the ladies were greeted by all sorts of things that they could adorn themselves with. Not to excuse our gentlemen in waiting, they ran through the other door in the tree. The Celtic knots of the black red wood seemed to shine. It was almost as if it were from another world. Deep within the roots of the tree, the voice could be heard. Singing sweetly into the night sky, for no one except for the moon. Beyond those trees and deeper into the warm bath of the lights, empty spots waited for their masters to fill them. Risan skipped, not bothering to stop in the tree. He was always where he needed to be, and that would be high in one of the trees, overlooking the pond.

Everyone emerged, glittering with delight. They all bounced past the doors and joined in with everyone else that was already there. Mostly biotis, because only they would throw a fairy's party in the middle of the night. Humans retained their forms while everyone else asserted their true forms. Mariel fidgeted with the intricate crown on her head. "I am queen," she proudly exclaimed to everyone. The fine lines of the greenish blue crown sat on top of her silver hair. The wings to match were in the shape of those resembling butterfly's wings. She swirled around so that the light could catch the blues, greens, and silvers of her dress. None of which clashed, rather it added to one another's beauty. She gave everyone a huge grin. "Finally made it," said a voice from behind her. Slightly startled, she swung around to find Ayami behind her. "Don't do that," she reprimanded him as everyone else stifled their laughter. "Did each of you find the earrings I left?" Of the ladies, Vani shook her head slightly so that the earrings could make a slight noise. "Her earrings are green! I should have the green ones!" Aya laughed and then led them back to the tree.

Risan sat in the small house on top of the tree. It was built for the persons who were responsible for the fire display. It was simple really, just a floor, ceiling and three walls. The fourth missing wall left an opening that overlooked the pond. The show would take place over the pond and that was his task for the night. He loved it; the display was of sheer ingenuity. On a small makeshift table, there was a black bowl filled with water and a few vials scattered around. Each of them had a powder in them. He held the red vial in his hand and flicked it open with his thumb. He tasted a bit of the powder and began to smile. He grabbed a few vials and went to the edge of the floor and sat down. Out of the corner of his eye he watched everyone. One by one he opened the vials and threw the powders in the air.

"You wouldn't dance with me before. Now you've got no other choice but to dance with me, if only for a little," said the girl who dragged the blue-greenish haired Kevin out to the floor. Slowly everyone else fell into their own place, whether it was dancing, painting, singing or just enjoying everything. Eventually, though, the pieces all fall back into place. Risan smirked as he watched the powder dance through the air and lace them all. When each particle was where it needed to be, he set the trail ablaze. The fire carried itself down to the lake by the path set by the powder, rising and shining like a phoenix and a dragon playing with one another. The girl stopped to stare at the creator of such a spectacle. Although carefully hidden, she could see his sharp green eyes through the dark with a grin matching a goblin's and he stared right back at her [orange-red hidden behind those] black eyes. Everyone continued on with their festivities, watching the brilliant display of lights.

"Do you remember when you were a child, how often you'd play in Ferrol?"
"No. I do remember the first time I was there. I think I was in Albridge though."
"We never did explore the whole thing."

"Turn your world upside down or for fun. How about inside out? Do you remember the first time you felt helplessly lost in a world that didn't care? Did you rage against God, asking why did he do this to you? Hi, my name is Risan and I do not care, but I'll help you," Risan thought to himself and grinned. He hopped down from the ladder coming down from the tree and began whistling to himself. He saw

everyone but singled Camryn out. She had his back turned towards her, so it would be easy to startle her. "Hey Cammy, twas brillig!" he exclaimed behind her. "Ris, there are so many people around here, why do you purposely come after me?" He laughed and wagged his finger, "Obvious targets." With that, he skipped off and she screamed behind him, "Do not call me Cammy!" His next target was Sharlene, who was equally easily annoyed with his antics. He carefully observed everything and was content with what he saw. Sharlene, who took great care in hiding herself in a costume wore a blue dress and wore a mask with a tiara attached. Certainly another gift from Er-Ayami -- the mask and tiara both had mostly red stones, which didn't match at all with what she was wearing. Er-Ayami was a jeweler, but not your conventional kind. When he created a piece for you, it was yours. Every stone accentuates your being, made mostly of your birth, planetary, and talismanic stone. On the occasion he'd actually put in a stone you liked, though it depended on the style. His pieces were found on everyone and Risan couldn't spot a single person who matched with their stone. Even if there was a chance that they could've matched with their stone, they either made the choice not to, or Er-Ayami did it on purpose. So there he was watching all these people who looked like they just stepped out of some warped fairytale purposely not matching. He loved it and because of that, he grew more mischievous. "Say goodbye and wave to the trees as they enclose their visitors."

Kevin walked over to the picture frames and carefully inspected each one. The oldest picture frame was always marked with something. The duty of the current house guests was to change the oldest picture. Replace it with something new and put the old one away in an album. Over the years, there had been many visitors, each adhering to the rule. The albums were kept in a safe near the fireplace. The oldest were yellowed from the years suffered, but quite thick. He found the red tag behind the oldest frame and moved it over to the next one. Then he replaced the picture. He didn't know who they were but he handed it to Tabitha who stuck it in the album. She couldn't have known who the three people were in the picture, but it was nice to see them smiling while fishing. The new picture had all of them in their costumes with the backdrop of a rising sun. Maybe the person who gets to change this picture will have the luxury of not knowing who was in that picture, or why their clothes didn't match their jewels, or why every colour seemed so off in the picture. Maybe the person would have their own knowing smirk when they do the same.

All the same, each collapsed into their bed or sleeping bag. All except Risan, who never seemed to sleep much at all. He was always on the move. Never stay still was his belief. It always has been that. Sometimes when you call people to return, they don't hear it the first time.

“And a very merry unbirthday to you, dear Risan.”

Rising Walls

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sunday, September 25, 2005 01:38:29

I like watching the droplets of water roll. One by one, they join one another to plot their big escape. I know exactly which picture Utaer chose to frame. It was a simple decision, everyone carefully hidden away in glamour and delight. The extravagance of someone's imagination; it looked like an old picture come anew. Though if you cared to look much more carefully, you'd noticed the yellow atmosphere that engulfed them and a red sky that hugged it all. A purple sea that washed over the blue land. A famously unknown place that was the center of the heart for some. Do you know or remember that place?

The midnight pond was a special one, think back. Nothing is ever what it seems to be. The giant mirror

that reflected the sky was a gateway to something else, something deeper. If you did it before, then you could do it again. Just will it and it will be yours. Slip into the water and immerse yourself in the delights of it. Then when you're ready, let go and feel gravity let you as you feel your ground open itself to allow you in. This was Ituha, within the same realm as Ferrol, Nagisa and Albridge. Ituha wasn't all like that though. Once you made your way to the magnificent castles, the skies turned blue, the grass green and the buildings became grayish brown. It was quite a sight to see if you weren't used to the way each land chose their own colours. The environment shifts as its inhabitants so; which is quite often. This is home.

Risan stared into the artificial sun, a creation on behalf Tempest. With no Phoenix to dance in the sky, there's no damn sun. He pulled out his pen and small notebook and began to talk to himself. This was how he always got out his best ideas. He would speak to himself and then if anything good turned up, he'd write it down. It was a behaviour he copied from his mother, nurtured by his father. Dad used to think it was quite ridiculous, but after mom was able to write a book due based solely on her conversationalist mind, he tried it and realized it was beneficial.

"You could sail these seas if you wanted to!" Risan bellowed at the sky. He grinned happily and continued on, "Hop on Oki's ship and cruise from Ferrol to wherever the hell else you wanted to go. But where's the fun in knowing and then disappearing. Just knowing is fun enough! Hell, hop on Taer's silver ship and sail the emerald seas. Go ahead! But if you're fleeing from nothing then what good is it? Hell, stay! Fight your goddamn demons and if it isn't worth it, then escape! Or not." He laughed at the "god" part and then scribbled it all down, emphasis on "then escape." At his artificial sun, he then added, "You can sacrifice yourself to me. I love a decent sacrifice. Emphasis on decent. I'm damn picky about whose life I take, so make it worth it, eh?" He grinned merrily and his tragic comedy and began scuffling along the blue land while the red waters washed the shores. He loved the Human Condition; he loved humans and all species alike but he enjoyed their comical tragedy much better.

He loved Ituha for its simplicity. The way the normalcy rose from the ground out of nowhere. The dark castles lay in the center of Ituha, drawing the attention of all. Visitors didn't explore this place yet, though children had their right of way. They didn't bother coming around here, only out of respect to the vacant castles. All you could see was the four tall towers rising. The tall towers were the highest point of each castle and as mentioned, there were four. All separate but drawn to a circle. No one (outside of the people who had the "right" to be there) knew what lay in the center. There were the stories though. In this particular dimension, they were vacant and allowed no one in. Or so you'd think. The castles were surrounded by acres of green bushes that formed an intricate labyrinth. The green foliage covered the walls that kept its traveler locked in. Risan knew what they were in a different dimension. In this dimension, which he firmly believed was the "one that came after the false one," the lands and water seemed to stretch endlessly. Ituha was open for all, but most got caught up in Ferrol or Albridge. Empty lot as it was. On another dimension, which he called "home to his home," Ituha flourished in its isolation. The four castles raged with colours and people within its walls. In the courtyard where the castles all faced, there were four blank statues that waited silently. It was the people within the castle that were all the fun. Running around doing all sorts of trivial things, he'd watch them and fall in love. In the "false one," people ran around doing trivial things but they seemed to hate it and be completely engulfed in it. As much as he loved them, he hated them. It was in his belief that only humans and biotis would create sadistic rules to compensate for themselves. There's nothing to compensate. Certainly there's a void in life, unavoidable, but that's the same with everyone. Rationalization doesn't set you apart, apparently it weakens. Adults never understood this concept though. They lose sight whereas children indulge too much into it. It was in his opinion that entire human and grimore race was doomed from the start. They just also happened to drag down the other

species along with them.

Nahit watched the ant run across the window ledge. It wasn't running though; it was searching for the pheromone. He could hear the secrets scream by him without much regard for him. From the farthest reaches, he could hear the trivial ones to the devastating. Sephi, he thought, had a strict belief on this. Sephi had always believed that he was better than most others -- and not just species wise. What does it mean to be reclaimed, he asked himself.

"My dear old friend, how does the season greet you?" came Eric's raspy voice. Shaun peered over his black scarf over at him. Age had been a service to his friend's vicissitude, which was a delightful play on his wisdom, but it not made him any less the widower nor had it done justice to the beauty that Shaun fell for. Still beyond it all, he could find the warmth in his dear friend's eyes and feel unguarded around him. "My dear Craven, I am much older than you think," he smiled and then winked at Eric. "How are my boys doing," Eric asked thoughtfully. "Oh! I didn't know they were your boys. I thought they were just making use of the fact that you can help create a vessel for them." Eric shook his head, "I still helped to raised that the star and the goblin." Shaun smiled thoughtfully at him, "My Eric Craven of the raven tower, you know I jest. Sephi and Mikhail are well." "And what of --" Shaun held his hand up to him, "Fine. All alright. My concern, my dear, is you. Age has worn you down and this is to be remedied." Eric paused at his old friend and laughed, "You are what wore me down. Time. And you are what will remedy this, death." They walked along the path musing over such things. It was a vision to see, an old man torn by age with his young student, walking by his side, no older than his late thirties. Who would have seen the vision of a man about to embark on rebirth along with Time, himself.

The roses crept up along the stone blocks and got into the crevices. He walked slowly and carefully to inspect the roses. This man was different. His demeanor was altogether different. He grabbed a rose and smiled at it. "Yes, it's a time to return," he murmured to it. He could feel the marked soul pass. He didn't have to change anything, he just felt it drifting to where it needed to be. "Off with you Eric Craven Raganavok. Now it's time to start anew and fulfill a destiny." Never wait for your life to begin, take it by the reins and harness it for what it's worth. He put the rose back in it's place and allowed it grow once more.

The Explanation that Fell

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sunday, October 02, 2005 2:16:26 AM

"You can only reclaim something that you've once lost; or to be more precise, something you've owned. A human? Or maybe an angel? It's a common misconception placed among soul mates. People craft their own ideas regarding the matter. Let's be realistic. I once got myself into a conversation where the idea that you belong with your soul mate was written in your destiny. Or how about the idea that if your soul mate ceases the search for you or denies your existence, you cease to be. This ridiculous idea comes from the idea that you are denying your completeness. Some people are better matched for one another, whereas most aren't. It's a basic fact. There's no scheme to it all. Or maybe there is. Fuck hypocrisy; let's get down to business. Each being is unique in the sense that down to their very DNA strand, they are different. But that's because the system works. No one is going to spend time to create a new being every single time. Your body is unique. Your soul isn't, well unless you're new. Your soul is created to be unique and it then rerouted endlessly throughout lives. Every new conception presents a new possibility. Strip away your humanistic cause, even if you were a damn caveman, it would still be different. Do you have a soul mate? Maybe, the chance is you've got several. Depends on who created your soul. Your soul has a marker on it, which makes rerouting easier. In the

end though, it's all the same. Be reasonable. Our kind? We're unique, we don't surface often and we're killed less often. Simply because we're lesser in numbers. Not that we're infinite. You didn't think you'd get away without hearing about the two the helps this tragic story carry along did you? Come on now, they are my parents." Risan paused and took a deep breath. He pulled out his small notepad and began scribbling furiously. "How do you do? I am fine, though a bit tired. Would you like a hug? No, I'd like to dance." He began singing to himself merrily. He stopped to stare at his surroundings. He wanted to stay in Ithua, but he needed to return. Although Nahit was always in need of him, Asura was too and that little scoundrel had an affection for getting lost. Instead, he opted to head back to the house where the elders were staying. The green sleeping bag was always his.

Nahit couldn't sleep, so he threw his body forward. Staring at the night, he decided to go for a walk. He got up and slowly picked up his clothes to get dressed. If he stuck around any longer, she would call and then he'd have to answer to her. He'd prefer to flee into the night then have to relive that moment. As he fled, he could feel the spirits around him. Yes, they were always on their way to somewhere new. Colours floating in the dark night, he could feel them. "Jupiter," he murmured to himself.

"Jupiter and Neptune!" exclaimed the boy. "You can almost see them!" His mother looked at him doubtfully. "Okay, so you can barely see them, but can't you feel them?" She shook her head, no, she couldn't see nor feel either. "Stop being so grown-up! Look, we're all connected, there's no empty space, everything has something," he tried to explain to her. She gazed across at her son with his telescope. His brownish hair was a mess and his hazel eyes shone with delight. "You should be going to sleep." He tugged at his pajamas, "Don't want to. Come on, try it. Stand there and feel every bit of space." Frustrated, he stomped his feet, "Mom!" "Go to sleep, now." He looked like he was ready to put up a fight, but he was overcome by sleep. "I don't want to sleep." "Fine. You don't want to sleep. Then you don't need to. Play with your telescope to your hearts content," she paused to smirk, "but I will be telling your father" "He likes when I do this." Exasperated, she turned to leave, but he called her. "At least, say good bye to Gila." She turned with an odd look on her face. "Gila? I thought he left." "No, he's still around." She looked around the room, "Good night Emile and Gila." Satisfied, Emile went turned off the light and went to bed. As he closed his eyes, Gila emerged from the darkness, giggling. "She still thinks that I don't exist," Gila said to Emile. "I know, but that's her fault. She's not paying attention." Gila pouted and sat on Emile's bed. "You know, soon I won't be able to come back. Then I'll fade from your memory." Emile shot up, "You can't leave!" "It's kind of the way things work. It's okay though. I liked playing with you. But you should know that if you were to come looking for me, you wouldn't find me as Gila." Emile shot him a puzzled look. Gila showed him a small piece of gold; it was in the shape of wings. "When you part, you give this to someone whose supposed to find you. I found you with it and now you will find me with it." Gila handed the small pair of wings over to him. "If you're not going to be Gila, then who are you going to be?" Gila's puffy cheeks perked up due to his smile. "Well, when you start calling yourself Dragon, I'll call myself Asura." Emile yawned and stretched back to sleep, "It's a deal."

"Oh green sleeping bag, how I love thee," Risan sang as he set his sleeping bag on the floor. Mariel shot him a look of disbelief. He grinned right back at her, "You wish you thought of singing to your sleeping bag." "I have a bedroom, so ha!" Risan turned away from her mumbling to himself. Triumphant, Mariel walked into the bedroom. Still facing away, he called at her, "My dad is cooler." "Your dad is water, of course he's cooler," she shouted right back. Not willing to admit defeat, he hopped into his sleeping bag without changing his clothes and zipped it up around him. Mariel opened the door and found Tabitha sitting on the bed fidgeting with one of her books. "Stalemate, eh?" Mariel threw her a look and walked away.

Nahit walked the streets a bit cold. Although he saw his coat before fleeing, he preferred to leave it. It would have hampered his flight. Everywhere you are, everyone else is up to something. A trivial thought, but something that we seem to forget. Take love, for instance. One would easily forego their soul mate, for what? Someone who could just barely match? He smiled as he lit the cigarette. Yeah, that was just it. Love, soul mates, all those emotions still toyed with their twin, logic. He inhaled deeply flicking the cigarette away. There was no point in smoking; all it could do was damage the body but neither heal his soul. He started thinking about couples. He was alone and he alone knew the reason for that. He began choking on his own misery. Even thinking about how Lilith and Jibril would rather be with others than one another when they so clearly prefer one another hurt him. The decision was theirs and only they could understand it. Even more so, only his father, Eric, could understand why he appealed to Jibril's nature to gain what he so loved. Or even why Eric would accept the futility of loving someone who was so clearly destined to be with someone else. Or why he, Nahit was not with her. No, not the girl on the phone, who he resigned to discarding in a matter of days. "The inevitability of life or the human condition," he muttered to himself, "is the doom that we face when we are left alone to make our decisions. For what could there be worse in the world than denying everything you want because you are too afraid." He pulled out another cigarette and tried smoking again. "Still, you're going to find her and fall in love with her and try to be with her. And she will accept, and she alone understands why."

"Stay still you gremlin," Risan sneered at Asura. "You used to be nicer," Asura accused Risan. "I used to be a lot of things but I am sleepy. It would be nice if I didn't have to watch you," Risan said as he tucked himself into the sleeping bag. Asura growled at him. "How's Jibril of the Dragon Keepers?" Risan asked while yawning. Asura, looking much older sat down cross-legged playing with the carpet. "He's alright," he answered bemused. "And?" "She's much harder to follow, doesn't stay still, even for kid her age." "Then she knows," Risan said sleepily. "Indeed, I don't keep the facade of a child around her. She's doing fine, not adjusting to normalcy." Risan stared at the ceiling, "Sounds about right." Asura winked at him and said softly, "I'm off." Risan turned over and said to the carpet, "You're always off but you're never on. If you'd stay still long enough you'd stop altering the universe." Asura laughed softly, "Oh give me a break, the chaos theory? Or what was it, the butterfly effect? Weight and tides?" Risan said very sternly, "Good night young man. A certain sandman await impatiently." "There's no such thing as a sandman." Risan turned to face him with his goblin's grin, "Then don't make me create one." He winked at Asura, who then vanished.

After centuries of the same thing, your feet just kind of move without you realizing it. You get trapped in the mundane things because you forget. You forget how things are and how they should be and how everyone else perceives you. You would think that a lifetime of being with different sorts would make you aware of your differences. Instead you get so used to them. My feet walk slowly, softly, barely touching the ground at all as I keep my thoughts to myself. I talk to the air because the Air listens. Do other people listen? Well, that's questionable, isn't it?

If you had the chance to be great, would you take it? If you had the chance to be remembered, or even immortal? What would the cost be? Or better yet, which is the better deal? Humanity strives to divide and define itself. An old soul once named Eric gets reborn. His new name is Anton Russell Sergeevich, but still I like Eric better, as I believe my uncle does as well. It's the name that Uten befriended him with and mother married him under, so it's the name that we will keep with us. Born anew, ten years after my mother's death. He loved her till her own demise and I'm sure if he had the chance, he'd do it again. Eric is but a fool, but one that I love and one that guided me not knowing any better. I've been born to many parents, but he is the one who managed to exert fatherliness long after. Perhaps it's because he was weaved into our lives thanks to both persons he was directly involved with. And

through them, he gave Risan and myself, a chance, forever engraved with our marks on his soul.

Nahit leaned over the small fencing he had come across. The cigarette was almost done, so he flicked it aside. "This isn't the way I wanted this to go," he said unhappily to himself as he turned to make his way home. As soon as he reached the door, he made the resolution to write. He pulled out the loose objects in his pocket and threw them aside. Making his way to the table, he conducted the air with his hands. Ideas are best drawn anywhere until they reach the right spot. At simple pale green plastic and steel table, his papers and pens were still strewn about. Nahit picked up his pen casually. Slowly he sat down, the words were formulating and he knew what to write. He began as if conducting an orchestra. What was in his mind was different from what would be written, but it was worth the attempt. "The process of reclamation, regaining what is rightfully yours. What is anything without the act of love?" He paused and wrote in large letters, "What is a childhood?"

The Beginning of a Childhood

CHAPTER NINE

Thursday, October 06, 2005 10:10:22 AM

Every new birth is a different experience. You rarely end up where you need to be, but you always manage to find your way there. I was born in India, though I'm sure I must have mentioned this, the farthest away from where I needed to be. The rerouting of souls is merely to get you back into the world as soon as possible. You are more beneficial as a body than you are a spirit. That's the lie we tell ourselves. After all, we are never inhibited in our endless resources or powers. Ultimately it's a rare occurrence that you end up in the right place. It's either an honest mistake (though it is firm to our belief that there is no such thing) or that it was made in good jest. I ended up there whereas Risan came after me, born right where he needed to be. I guess the Black twins as well as our knightly paradigms thought that it would be better suited to have the gangly Risan back in a child's position. Though his own temperament is victim to it.

Sometimes you never make it there within the lifespan. It depends on what you do or how much you're aware of what is necessary. Though albeit, nothing is that necessary. You live, you die, you do something in between, because apparently the in between is what takes the longest. Your birth takes a second, your life stretches for an eternity, and your death is the final blow. What ever will you do? I've spent eons trying to figure out what it is I'm supposed to do with myself. Neither the greats nor the elders have an answer. They carry on in their ways because it's of a custom. Who is anyone to charge in on such a pleasure? Ultimately, even if you know your demise, or if you don't, it's still the same annoying thought. Does it matter to humans that their "God" is actually benevolent and malevolent, or that they are two beings? Two beings that can no longer stand on their own, so they reside in the spirit that is their creations? No. I prefer not to be crude, but to think that there's no master plan? That each newer being is more flawed than the last? To know that there's really nothing planned? We're all mistakes, down to the most well planned birth. It's a matter of survival now. And so, we who hold all the cards, play.

My initial birth was a planned mistake. Two beings of life that were brought together by Destiny and thus I came to existence. I guess I shouldn't have been created, but Destiny altered that. Upon my conception, I was sent to a different plane to explore. There were many microcosms and being that I had infinite knowledge, it was only right that I help chart such lands. Infinite knowledge doesn't always mean what the words say. You know it exists, but you don't know what else you could have done. Risan rose from life and death, so his nature inclination towards chaos couldn't keep him still.

I lived in a different place from here. We never named anything because naming wasn't a concept we understood. That created division and we only knew unity. You didn't have to know where things or places were, you'd figure it out. It was hard compared to being here, but we had nothing to compare it to. It was simple and easy. You pointed to where you were heading and you went. If you came back, you told of your adventures. Whether you traveled to another piece of land or to a new dimension was a relative experience. Your only version of the world may be spanned across many different dimensions whereas someone else's could be just the piece of land they lived on. It was a different way of thinking. I liked where I was, so I didn't travel. Although, as I got older, I began to realize that my world was too small for the kind of person that I was. I did not make trips to the dimension that Uten and Asiren resided in though. That didn't come till later. When I did get there, which was after an accumulation of many experiences, I was greeted by the most ridiculous sight.

The Chaos Sisters are known for their mindless destruction. Although if one paid any real attention at all, there'd be the realization that they were just playing. Silen usually cajoles the two together when their lands are in need of change. Though it starts friendly enough, soon you have them chasing one another for something that the one has done wrong. I didn't know this, so my entry made me believe that this was a realm of sheer chaos, hence Risan's appeal to it. It was a balanced system, there was harmony and there was chaos. Therefore it was most fitting for people to flee to. Though not everyone could.

Easily upon my arrival, I took to Pharaoh, Ra, and the great but lesser known Elder. I became an apprentice, given my background in the places I came and traveled to and from already. I was a magician, which you may understand to be, a doctor. Although, I prefer the magical names since they seem to be mystical, in which they are not. Medicine was a magic before it was thoroughly explored. Now its greatness is easily shattered. That's what I am though, the advisor, the magician, the alchemist, the planned mistake. I could know everything about everyone and I choose the role of a watcher. A mitigated watcher, somewhere between that and a guardian. I interact when it's necessary, but otherwise, I allow all else to flow. I don't play games because I have always seen things for what they are and I enjoy that subtle reality. One will find that Risan has the same capabilities as I do, but prefers to manipulate what is.

Risan was a brat from the beginning, spoiled by himself. Whichever way you'd like to look it. In this current resurrection, he was actually born to mother and father, a year pending my adoption. A wide eye blond hair brat, from the day he was born he was trouble. He listened only to disobey and squirm and fight when things couldn't possibly go his way. A smart little goblin, he was, for he'd calm down if he knew it was possible. It was the harder things he pushed for. Nonetheless, he clung to me while growing up, mostly because he finally had the chance to. He an anarchist wayward chaotic man who has no love for anyone except that within his bloodline. If affection should fall out of the bloodline, he would just as easily share his blood. That was the kind of human being he was.

As anything else, the term which I neglect to say since there is such high expectations of it ("angel"), he was quiet, reserved, maintain chaos, but was ever searching for something. Truly there was a split in the kind of being that he was. It was almost as if he expected to not have any expectations as a human, so rallied against it all. However as a higher being, he knew that he had a role and thus did it dutifully. The only true happiness gained was when he went off on tangents for the sake of chaos. Although at the time, no one would know that except the ones who expected this.

All of our lives we've been told to prepare for something big. We have yet to find out what that big

thing is. Raised in the foundations of order, trust, honour, respect, chaos, dignity, evil, dishonesty, etc., we couldn't possibly know what is in or what was in store for us. In neither sense of being.

Rüstesihan

CHAPTER TEN

Thursday, October 06, 2005 10/6/2005 7:02:54 PM

"Little boy, all grown up, come and write for me," said the raspy voice. Nahit turned around to see the cloaked figure. Nahit was but a child of fifteen, but still he liked the idea of being grown up. "Roo-stai-sin-ah," after carefully pronouncing each syllable, he looked over to Rüstesihan for approval which he wasn't receiving, he continued, "shouldn't you be resting?" He couldn't see Rüstesihan's face, but he could hear him chuckle. "Young man, I don't know how many times I have to teach you how to say my name, but it's alright." "Then how do you say it?" Nahit demanded. All he could hear was the figure's chuckles under the blackish gray hood. "Continue your studies." Nahit mumbled and continued studying. "Didn't you want me to write for you?" Rüstesihan had taken a seat and was reading a rather large leather bound book. "I want you to do many things, so did you mother, the question begged is which of those many things are you going to do?" Nahit sighed and continued on with his studies. "You were never much of a writer, more so the muse," Rüstesihan commented without looking up from his own book. "Your brother, young Risan is much better suited." Nahit smiled at the antiquated tactic. Reverse psychology always worked on Risan, but not him. "Rüstesihan, you old fool, you should know better." Rüstesihan looked up and with a grin no one could really see, "Ah yes, but the older and more confident fool I am."

Rüstesihan the Elder. He was the first elder that Nahit studied under the guidance of. Rüstesihan rarely unveiled himself, the only part trully visible was his hands. Slender thin wispy hands that looked remarkably old. At times you could see the hairs growing off the back of his hand and his nails uncut. He rarely revealed how well he hid himself. Everything else was shrouded in a many layers of grayish black or blackish gray cloth. The ends were frayed and worn away, but still he looked almost like a picturesque version of death. Nahit would often envision him with a sickle. On the absolute rare occasion, Rüstesihan would take his hood off, only to reveal a thin layer of some kind of cloth or screen covering his face. Nahit had never or would never see the face of the man who taught him. Or he liked to believe that it would be a great secret unveiled at Rüstesihan's death. Much unlike Risan who firmly believed that the idea of Rüstesihan was actually many teachers who tried to teach him in vain.

The teaching styles of Rüstesihan had to vary given who was in training. It was a bit different being that Nahit openly wanted to learn and Risan wanted to actively challenge while learning. Rüstesihan had an easy time with Nahit, but getting Risan to affirm that two plus two might equal four was the hardest lesson of all. Rüstesihan and Risan learned that Risan wanted to leave the room open for anything that may or may not be true. Nothing was stable or absolutely known, so two plus two could actually mean six or five or any number you could think of. This presented a challenge for Rüstesihan, who found ways of navigating around it.

The eminent question was, "Who is Rüstesihan?" Although he was highly regarded by all that knew of him, not very many could say that they knew who he was precisely or what he was. In a lifetime ago, he was a highly regarded advisor who dropped out of the social net when the beings he advised condensed. He was denied his rightful knowledge for many years till found by those who wanted to be taught. Apparently you could know almost everything, except that which was held from you. Rüstesihan was one of those rare creatures that were given the opportunity to know what secrets remained swollen in the heart.

My first lessons of this lifespan with him occurred when I was eight. I didn't recognize him for who he was even though he remained the same and I was the one whom was different. I remember the damp clammy walls and how the light failed to do its job. There was a slight golden glow all the way down, past the huge wooden doors. I thought that for sure, mother was giving me up. No one would want me, not even my birth parents. It would only be matter of time before she grew tired, especially since Risan was just born and already trouble. I watched her lead the way humming a song that I heard father sing and play for her. The piano, she adored the piano and violins. It wasn't a classical song, but just a simple song that lyrics meant a lot to the both of them. Not that I would ever hear it again, I thought. She sort of skipped her way along, very merrily, but still with a manner of seriousness. She is one of those rare people who could be ridiculous and serious all at the same time. We never got into much trouble. I'll point out that I didn't realize that then.

I hate the dark, damp, and cold atmosphere. I hated her and father for bringing me here to leave me. Still she bounced along the way. Past those large wooden doors were three dark tunnels. She paused for a moment to figure out the way, then she called me while bouncing down the tunnel on the right. It had an odd dark green glow. Down the tunnel in almost absolute darkness, finally the light broke in. I shielded my eyes and when they finally adjusted, it was a rather large room that just seemed cozy. There were a few towers of books, rugs, furniture strewn about, but mostly books. "Mind your manners!" said something. I felt brushed aside but I had no idea by what. "Oh come now, you could be decent Troubles!" mother called out. Trouble came in many names, but Troubles came in the form of my Aunt Vani. "Mom, was that Atrou?" "Of course! Wretched girl!" Perhaps she hadn't meant to leave me all alone. Then the dark cloak emerged with his raspy voice, "Little Firefly's all grown up. She's gone and brought a new little firefly." Mom went to greet the person warmly, though he didn't remove any of his coverings. She helped him over to a chair. "Nahit will be taking lessons with you. Unfortunately, not starting today because I believe he's a bit scared." The two of the them whispered back and forth for a while. I stood frozen till they stopped and mother said that I can take home whatever book I wanted to. I left them to explore.

I ran my hands over the bookbindings and played with some of the books. I did enjoy books, but most of them were written in various languages. I still liked to pick up the odd and old ones to see what magics were within. As I wandered around, there were little emblems, etchings, various items carelessly left about. What did catch my eye was the one thing I understood amongst the array of items. A small emblem that hung on a piece of string across a bunch of books. It was a staff of Asclepius, which was something I learned from Atemp (Aunt Mariel). Which at the age was probably the only thing I remembered, attributed largely to the snake. I reached up and grabbed the pendant and ran back to mother and the mysterious cloaked person. I showed them the pendant and asked for it instead of a book. Mother looked at me in an amusing way and the cloaked person motioned for me to come closer. "You must always come close, when I ask, for I am too old to move," said the mysterious person. Mother nudged him playfully. I could hear him chuckling, "Alright, I joke. You're too young to understand what about and she understands all too well. I expected you to choose that instead of a book." Mother added, "It does come with a book. But the book is harder to find than the pendant is." I still didn't understand. "You'll understand within time," said the cloaked figure, "come with me, I'll get you the book that that pendant belongs to." I clutched the pendant in my hand and mother looked disapprovingly, but I couldn't figure whom this look was for. "Rüstesihan, you haven't told him that the pendant is his." The figure's name was Rüstesihan and the pendant was meant for me. Rüstesihan paused, "You killed the mystery! You just had to. You know being a shadowy cloak of darkness is fun until someone gives away your name." At that moment, I thought that I would be afraid of this thing, Rüstesihan for the rest of my life. Mother shattered that image when she with a smirk, as if confiding a

great secret, she said very clearly, "He's affectionate for Rumpelstilzchen, that's Rumpelstiltskin dear, and he forgets he's too old to pretend to be a manikin that helps turns straw to gold. He's an alchemist and a teacher." Rüstesihan laughed, "Hush with your fairy tales, you're just like Tempest and the last thing I need is another literature bookworm. I have myself an apprentice... of science! Come along Nahit, we have to find that infernal book!" Rüstesihan clutched a staff that was on the chair that he was passing and called to the abyss of books, "Onward!" I followed him happily in a place to call my own.

They were right about the book being hard to find. Rüstesihan allowed me to climb up the towers of books, which was apparently bolted down to the floor and up at the ceiling. I never got that high up but I could see the reinforcements. If I ever got too high for his liking, he'd call me down. It seems like it took hours but when we found the book, it was beautiful. It was large for someone of my size, but it seemed normal sized when Rüstesihan held it. It was translucent -- glowing with greens and blues floating in a sea of white. We found it alone on a shelf high up. Rüstesihan knocked it down with his staff because he refused to let me climb. When the book received the floor, I thought that it would shatter as it came down. I picked it up and handed it over to him. From the moments of looking over the book, I didn't see how the pendant I had in my pocket had anything to do with the book. Rüstesihan opened it and showed me the inside cover. There were the letters "F.M.R." and a spot for the pendant. Triumphantly I walked back to my mother who was reading a book with Rüstesihan trailing behind me.

We all stood there for a few moments before mother started to gather items so that we could leave. "Lesson number one hundred five hundred and sixty-three, what's yours is yours and will always return to where it needs to be," Rüstesihan said clearly. "How did we even get to that lesson?" I asked as loudly as possible. "I've been teaching you for far too long, but you always slack up little Mikhail. And though you have no idea what I'm talking about, remember that there's tutoring hours." I could almost feel him smiling as he turned to walk away. "Okay wait, but if you're going to be my teacher, then how do I say your name." I could hear him and my mother laugh (which startled me at the time) before they even thought to respond. "Well, Shauna, isn't that the age old question? How do we pronounce my name?" Mother looked up over the rim of her glasses then she looked at me, "He chose the name at birth and it's his secret alone along with his true face." "But that doesn't answer the boy's question!" Rüstesihan thundered in a jolly voice. On that note, he charged over to his books, wobbling the entire way there. After a few feet, Rüstesihan turned around, "Lessons are an hour after your school ends. Be prepared and know your elements!" I had no idea what he was talking about but I wasn't worried.

"What are the most important elements?" Rüstesihan asked during the first lesson. It was a small classroom with students of all ages and thus all sorts of answers. Apparently the right answer is based on the kind of person you are. The answers flew: "carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, (some even added iron or silicon)," "the mind," "knowledge," "yellow bile, black bile, blood, phlegm," "fire, water, earth, air, (wood or aether)," "heart," "logic," or "time," "solid, liquid, gas, or plasma." Rüstesihan smiled at all the answers not disregarding a single one. "It all matters on your state of mind and now that I know that, this will be your last class as a class. All of you will be getting one on one lessons." After that day, I didn't see most of them, unless they were also in the large room, which came to be known as a commons room or studying room. Rüstesihan, I believe, taught each of us and in his absence, one of his previous students would come and teach us, inviting us in on their new knowledge. It seemed though, that everyone you came across knew who you were based on the very first answer you gave. It did matter, because that would be the first decision you made without worry. Even if your most important element was money or the heart, it was still your decision. It was the grounds for which you stood for and the same grounds that could crumble from beneath you. My answer was "love." What always struck me when someone new came to tutor for a while was how they would just know what you said.

They wouldn't ask. Instead, the infamous question that they would ask, was: "How do you pronounce Rüstesihan's name?" An icebreaker, every single time.

"There are more important things in life, its up to you to find out what they are. If you miss your chance, it's still waiting to be discovered. Just don't ever get caught up in something silly. Like chemical reactions or the right mixture for revivification. Look deep within yourself and set it free. Let your spirit come alive, light the flames and go where you need to be. You may not always know, but there's a driving force that does. It may not be destiny, but its gotta be worth exploring rather than nothing at all. Or denying your chance to live in stagnation. So. How do YOU pronounce Rüstesihan?" Just grin.

House of Books

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Tuesday, October 11, 2005 06:20:32 PM

Risan started his lessons a bit earlier than I did. I was fourteen when Risan began at the age of six. Much more uncouth than my initial entrance, Risan flew everywhere, this time with father present. Mother had had other things to attend to and she was very upset that she couldn't be there for his meeting with Rüstesihan. Father was on great terms with Rüstesihan at that point and ecstatic that his older son was following a path of medicine. Sometimes dad even came to tutor students, but that was only when his own schedule allowed him to. He was a doctor first and then a lecturer. He could have added "tutor" to his repertoire, but he preferred to keep silent of it. It was a silent unheard of joy, especially of the ever-resounding question, which you could hear bouncing off of students, teachers, and tutors alike. How do you pronounce his name was as big as how does he look. Although the question of appearance is often a secret question that every one ask but certainly not in jest or fun.

When Risan came to this place of study, I had come to realize that it wasn't an underground layer with tunnels and hidden rooms. It was an ordinary building, just the basement and the floor just above. I suppose Risan saw the same thing as he tagged after dad (or before, I am not sure). Upon his arrival, Rüstesihan called on me to be present. Rüstesihan liked to joke, but his jokes weren't always interpreted right, that's why my mother had to be present when I first came. Father would have been just fine, but Rüstesihan and father plotted to reinforce that brotherly devotion and togetherness quality. As I approached the room, I felt myself come alive. Risan saw me and came running to pounce on me. After being pinned to the floor, I looked up to see father and Rüstesihan speaking about something. "Come on Ris, behave." I picked him and set him right, grabbing his hand and leading them to him.

"A lively one, my Eric Craven," Rüstesihan said to my father. Risan beamed up at him and I just looked away. "Nahit, by all means, go ravage the books," Rüstesihan said to me. Off I went, leaving Risan with the two. Risan didn't wait for anyone though, after he saw me run off, he beamed smiles up to the two and ran off without hearing or saying a word. What Rüstesihan said can perfectly sum up Risan. He began climbing up the towers with no regards for the books or anyone. He was perfectly content waging his war against gravity. I caught him sitting on one of the shelves playing with a bunch of dragon figurines and left him in his merry little world.

Our lessons varied given the different circumstances that fell to us. It was after mother's death that I had things figured out. I saw her for what she was and I in turn understood everything else. Life was a beautiful tragedy; you're either going to work your play like it's yours or your going to concede to others. I didn't mourn her death, because as soon as dad held her corpse I felt her presence somewhere else. It's all a matter of thinking and knowing and luckily for myself, I have that luxury of knowing.

Eric was distraught over losing her. Or maybe he was upset that he had lost another loved one. Humans are strange in that sense. They are always sad about something. I continued with my lessons with Rüstesihan because it meshed well with the medical career that I was pursuing otherwise. Risan lessons were lesser in duration and frequency as compared to my own. He took up other lessons with other people. When I joined with the Sphinx for lessons, he joined with Taer and Troubles. There became more of an urgency to learn about mother's circle after her death. Not so much for retaining a memory, which I'm sure some of them thought, but to gain an insight into whom she was when they knew her.

I am like my Uncle Talen, whom I so adore. It was his [foster] mother that told him that the medical field would suit him. She died shortly after the adoption was finalized at the age of ten or eleven. By the time he reached high school, he knew what he wanted to be, so he started his medical lessons early. He also took side lessons with Rüstesihan. I didn't walk into my high school knowing the same thing he did, it wasn't till mother's death when I figured it out. I was sixteen and the circle engulfed me. They are forever written into my soul all because of what occurred in this life span.

Uten and dad were often tutors in Rüstesihan's chambers of learning. As I got older, I would start to get them in rotation. Uten was always shrouded in a mystery. I'd normally be crouched over some books when the tutor would walk in. When it was dad, he bounced in happily and started the lessons while throwing in fun. Over the years, he had lost his sense of seriousness. He was well aware that you had to play and have fun. A lesson he had to learn by means of mother and Risan. There was warmth in the room and he would glow at the thought that he could teach me things other than the normal anatomy, neurostructures and interactions or biochemistry. Then there would be Uten or the infamous Talen as every one else called him, who would walk in quietly and take to the shadows. Eventually you'd realize that there was something lurking in the shadows. It was a new way of thinking, just in case you're not familiar. Most people think that something scary lurks in the shadows, but instead it's your teacher. When you realized he was there, then you could see him smile through the black scarf he kept up high or past the hat he was wearing. He always concealed his face. Uten was a proper sort of person, so he always looked he just stepped out of the Victorian age. He remove the outer layers and gracefully sit down and being instructing. Everyone had something to teach. It's yet another thing to be learned but no one out rightly says. You can learn from almost anything. Rüstesihan put me on the tutor rotation, so I began teaching and learning -- just like my father and his best friend, my uncle.

Eventually there's a point where you have to decide which path are you going to follow. Delay that decision as long as possible. It's never really that necessary and don't trick yourself into believing so. If you're going to dedicate yourself to something entirely, you better know it before you do.

Today I live in a tiny apartment that isn't furnished. That's the reality. I don't have a practice, the world, as you know it doesn't know who I am. Somewhere else though, the world as you don't know it, knows me very well. Here, I am lowly "Nahit Raganavok, brother to Christopher Andre, son to the late Shauna and Eric Craven Raganavok." There, I am the esteemed, "Mikhail, creation of Lilith and Azrael, magician, teacher, and advisor to all." It means nothing to you, but it justifies my choice to work with Rüstesihan's house. It allows me the chance to travel and be where I need to be. Every life span is game, you've got to figure out what you want to pretend to be while you're doing what you need to be doing.

The Sphinx was an interesting one to take lessons with. Sometimes she'd enter the room I was studying in quietly or happily bounce in. It depended on her mood. Other times, a small note card would be brought to be with the golden letters "Sphinx" written neatly across. On the days that she was present,

she'd claw at the books at teach me all sorts of things. As she'd jump from book to book, she'd sometimes get so involved and enthused, the flurry of madness would be ore beneficial then she'd realize. After she'd calm down, she never realized just how much she taught during those moments and try to explain herself thereafter. Other times she'd just watch and learn from me. She'd ask about the equations on my sheet, or the sprawled notations of chemical symbols, the random array of anatomical images, recipes and so forth. It was interesting to see her as a bubbly child in that sort of atmosphere. She was engulfed in learning and teaching that she didn't realize sometimes just how well she fit in with everything else.

The first time I got a note card, I was analyzing gene expression when I took notice that my tutor had not shown. I had laid out my books concerning chaos theories, human genomes, and various other equations. I was home. Usually there is no set time; one usually wanders in after ten or fifteen minutes of your arrival. A person knocked, waited for permission, and then entered. The long straight hair girl nodded at me before coming over. First pushing up her glasses, she handed me the card. The golden letters sprawled, I looked up at her unsure of what to do. In a small voice, she chuckled before replying, "That's a note from lady Sphinx meaning that instead of her coming to you, you'll have to go to her. You will meet her at her salon, only be sure to never call it that." I was very annoyed at this because this had never happened before. I gathered my books and I went to the see her.

The mirrors serve as portals – although anything that can reflects you works. The experienced variants walk around with a pocket mirror or a small amount of water to create small puddles. The tiny vials they keep in pockets and sleeves, thrown anywhere creates an escape. Gaze into the way you see yourself so that you may see how wrapped up in the trivial you are. At the school, we had many portals, although you had to direct yourself there. I stood in front of the mirror hugging my books. I saw my dark brown eyes and hair and even the brownish skin colour. That was the body, but who was I? The reflection began to change. He grew and his eye colour changed to a greenish and reddish mixture. The colours play with themselves, never crossing. They settled on red and my hair became jet-black. My reflection beckoned me through whispering that Sphinx had much to teach me if I was willing. I closed my eyes and stepped through, opening my eyes to find myself in dark area. There were barely any lights, but I could see lights behind a door. I stepped through that once again.

Slowly the place lit up by fire on the walls. The room was decorated in white and gold. There were plants all along the walls, but most peculiar was the center. There was a small pond with a proportionate bridge over it. At the far end of the room was a small hut, or something. The lights when right through it since there were but white sheets that laid across the wood. If you thought that perhaps the bridge was to walk over to this little house, instead it was perpendicular to the entrance. I followed the lights to where I needed to be. I could have walked around the bridge and pond, for they weren't large and I could pass, but the lights led me up the bridge. As I stepped on, the whole room lit up and it seemed that the room was dropping down. I watched as the walls sped up wondering why everything had to be so extravagant. When the ride finally stopped both ends of the bridge led up to a door. Mind you, by standing on the middle, you could easily see what both doors said. The door to the right was white and in gold letters it had "Sphinx" written across. The other door on the left was black with the silver letters, "Stonehenge." I knew this game, but which door would you have gone through?

"Regardless of what tablet you are reading from, you start from the bottom and make your way up. Whether you read Newton's version or Bacon's version, the last thing is realizing what you've done and how you got there. Your mission is complete. You just have to know what your mission is. They did get one thing right, you must move beyond matter to get into the realm of imagination and knowledge. We are not here to find the Philosopher's Stone. You work through the white, black, and

red, but what for? That's your choice."

As I walked through the door, I was hit with the colours of red. It was a big room with lofty sitting chairs. This wasn't just any enlightenment salon; this was the one that the Sphinx hosted. She didn't dare call it a salon. It was a neutral ground where the greatest minds could come to speak and everyone else to learn. Whether you learned to spoke, hate, love, or grow, there was respect here. It was as infamous as the enigmatic Sphinx was. Upon this new first meeting, she was new. She wasn't the tutor, teacher, or student that would sit in my study doing one of those three. She was elegantly poised, gravitating towards particular conversations. When she caught sight of me she motioned for me to join her. These lessons worked to see how well I developed myself – how I explained and knew the depths of my areas of study. It also aided in teaching and learning across new means. Not everyone was a student of Rüstesiha and it was amazing what others had learned over their many years.

Once in a while, the other tutors would bring their students to the salon so that they may learn a few new things. "This is my house and you will abide by my rules," way the warning when they headed in. This meant that as Risan got on in his later years, I'd run into him and learn what he's learned and teach what I have taught. His experience varies from the beginning, but why start there?

Live Lessons Abroad

CHAPTER TWELVE

Wednesday, October 12, 2005 6:27:51 PM

"Okay, I was a brat growing up, but I tell the story better than he does," Risan snickered to himself. Far away from Nahit, he decided to conjure up his own story. Scribbling furiously into the paper, he gathered the attention of everyone around him. "What on this dimension of Earth are you doing now?" asked Vani. "What would your mother say?" Sharlene asked very sleepily. Risan turned to grin and everyone producing his sheet of paper. "Did he just cause all that raucous just for what, a flower?" "I think it's the ocean." Risan tucked his smile away to be very serious as he announced, "No one understands an artist. Be gone with you all!" And with his very pompous self, he ran off to start his day, at six o'clock in the morning. "Come on Utaer!"

Risan stood still and silent as the wind blew throughout his hair. For a while he stared at the orange and purple skies. After a few minutes, he grew restless and pulled out his watching. Watching the hands wait patiently to move, he began tapping his foot against the hard wood. Just then, a green haired figure appeared from behind him. "I am not late!" Risan exclaimed. He turned around to face the figure. "Utaer, what had happened was, that, you see, well, hello," Risan said quickly to him. Taer looked at him his a laughingly manner, "Is that how you explain yourself?" "Yes. It's my inadequate story and I'm sticking with it. You cannot compare to my infallible logic!" Taer raised a brow at him, "Now, where on Earth, could I have heard that before?" Risan grinned and then looked around the ship. "This isn't much of a pirate ship. You should have a full crew and black flags with skulls. And beer!" Taer laughed at him, "I think you're underage." "Hey, this body is underage but I am way older. I'm even older than the wines... that you don't drink." Taer shook his head and turned around heading back to the small room aboard. "Infallible logic!" Risan insisted. "Have you learned to steer this ship yet?" Taer asked without turning. Risan ran up from behind him, "Yes, can't you see that I'm doing a good job?" Taer laughed, "Risan, I didn't stop steering it." "Oh come on! How do you expect me to lie if you won't let me?" "Get to it."

Risan breathed in deeply and began concentrating. He found it all rather boring very quickly. "Oh come on Utaer! I can't do this. Well, I mean I can, but what are you trying to teach me?" Taer looked at him

sternly. "You and I do things very differently." "Duh." "Yes, it's only right that we do things different, but you have the capability of trully understanding this from all angles. If you aren't going to try... Then go home." Risan smiled and began concentrating. Taer knew that Risan's pitfall wasn't that he could do it, nor that he was aware that he could, but more so he didn't know of the several alternatives. Steer a ship with it's navigation system, concentrate on its movements, control the water, part the air, so many ways of doing just one thing since they were all related. It's easy to feel one with the universe and feel empowered, but another to feel it but be actively aware of all feelings and truths that bring you to that point. Taer proceeded to the room.

The bluish-green room was turning to a darker green with small lights moving along the wall. At the table sat Mekhi working on a map. Taer smiled and walked over to the young man who worked with fountain pen in his hand. Mekhi stopped and small blots of silver ink spilled onto the sheet. He looked up at Taer, "How does this look?" Taer looked at the map and then looked up at the small moving lights. Some of them where expanding. "Let's see how the universe responds." Taer handed him the sheet and Mekhi stood up. They both watched as the lights moved into their places. "Maps are EVIL!" they heard Risan call from the outside. "Back to Earth, goblin!" Mekhi replied. "What's the point of having a map of the universe in these ships?" he asked Taer. "Why not, where else do you put one?"

Risan stood quietly and felt everything around him. True, I wasn't the best student in the world, he thought to himself -- he knew what he was and he prided himself on that. He wasn't by any means ignorant or foolish, he just preferred the unconventional ways of learning. One of his first tutors was a young Gwen, who was still learning. Very much human, she tried to explain her views of the world, not realizing that he already knew. Many of his teachers or tutors were like that. They would come in and underestimate his ability to understand. The only one to know of my true capabilities was Rüstesihan, he said to himself. He'd frown when I played around too much, but still knew I was aware of what needed to be learned. Most people thought I was too cocky because of who I could have been.

I'll make my trip down memory brief. Dad took me to Rüstesihan's school of magic teaching (wizards, if you will be that nerdy) where I blended like a... Demon. Okay there's no better word for my first day of meeting. I climbed up the towers of books, found toys and played. Nahit was just jealous that he himself was too scared to do that. I would never assume that Nahit would ever be jealous of me, but he hated when I thought that. Being around Nahit after so many years was the greatest gift. He knows that I jest and joke, but I love him. After Nahit went back to classes, I came down from my castle and returned to dad and Rüstesihan. Rüstesihan was very kind to me, I think because he wasn't sure of what kind of lessons to give me. I didn't care to interact much with him, mostly because he knew. Once a person knows you, the fun of being spontaneous goes away. They know to not take gambles and they see straight into your heart.

During the filtering process, the question was, "What are the most important elements?" I didn't answer. There were no important elements. There was just elements, none better than the other. Who would be the fool to state otherwise? After that, we were dismissed for the day. During the next session, a little lady grabbed my hand and led me to the room of portals. I closed my eyes as tight as possible because I hated my reflection. My reflection wasn't a child's; it was an older man with long jet-black hair and greenish eyes. His toothy grin revealed a few sharp teeth and his demeanor looked like trouble. That was I, but I also liked seeing the child I was pretending to be. When I opened my eyes, we were a very large white room. It almost seemed like a place that a circus would be if not for the lack of colour. There were acrobats that seemed to be ballet dancing in the sky and large pastel balloons that floated up and down. Perhaps you recall that Nahit was called on the Sphinx. Well, this was what was behind the other door, though I wasn't sure of the name on the door, this was a place was known as Stonehenge

and owned by Yevunye.

The first person I was ever taught by was Kolos, a young man, maybe his mid-twenties, who had no idea who I was. He grew quickly impatient with me. Now you may be wondering why I'm bother to bring this up, but he was the first to try to walk me through something. He dragged me out to the beach at the middle of the night and insistently pointed at the sky. "They are so far away, but they are there and they are a part of us," he said. I looked at him and I saw into the sky. He couldn't see beyond the sky, past all of the space and see the other bodies in motion. I could see things that were so plainly obvious, but he couldn't, that was the difference in our species. We don't have the luxury of turning it off whereas humans do. "You don't see Pluto because you choose to," is what I wanted to tell him. You feel it, but you don't really want to see it. Still he continued, "Okay, okay, okay, listen, I'm going to help you through one of my experiences. You'll just have to bear with me as we do this. Got it?" "Yeah," I replied, even though I still felt like this was a waste of time. He spoke to me but the words didn't matter. He knew that I didn't care and grew frustrated, so instead I tried something. "Lay down on the sand, close your eyes, and try to get comfortable." He didn't want to, but eventually did so. Content with his position, I continued, "Just silence your mind for a bit, slow it down. Breathe in the air. Did you know that when you move, even the slightest, you are manipulating the world around you? All the molecules have to shift into a new spot and you glide your hands across them. Every space must be filled. But don't think of that right now. That's for your knowledge. Now, just relax. Ease everything. Feel the vibrations of the Earth beneath you. Yeah, the Earth is always moving. Under you is the crust and beneath that is the mantle. Somewhere in there snakes magma. Rocks are being moved. Eventually you'll hit the core, but that still unknown therefore undetermined. But yes, everything beneath you is moving. And even though your body seems restless, internally it moves. Kind of like clockwork, in rhythm with the Earth. All of it's moving. As you lay there you should feel the vibrations of the Earth coursing through your body. It is a part of your world just as the air and the sky is. And if you were to project yourself upward, you'd find that all of it is just a part of you. How many light-years away are the other planets?" I watched as his face tensed as he tried to do this on his own. "Far. Light years, depending one which planet you're referring to," he replied simply. "Only according to science. But if you can feel the Earth beneath you, then why can't you feel Neptune? It's all a matter of space really. Everything is inhabitable by something. All it is is a matter of moving those particles aside and finding yourself there. They are all connected on a very scientific level. But yet we as humans fail to recognize that. We seem to know it's there, but not feel it. That's what we've been attempting to do all of our lives. To feel and experience less. Well, anyway feel less alone?" I could see the tears escape his eyes. "I feel more --" I smiled, though his eyes were still closed. Yes, he understood, but perhaps it would serve him better if he didn't have to remember this lesson. "Insignificant," I said simply. After that, Kolos and I grew to become good friends. He never understood why he treasured me and I allowed it.

Rüstesihan was very displeased to know that I had released such information to such a fragile mind but was glad that I took away that knowledge from him. I thought that Rüstesihan might discharge me or be more selective in who was to teach me. Instead I found myself with a whole new group -- of students. My playfulness got in the way, but that was fine. I dragged my classes to the "salon" of the Sphinx or let them run rampant in Stonehenge (no relation to the stones). There were many travels, as they had to learn all sorts of things with me. Like Nahit, I studied sciences and magics, but I was also heavily into theatrics. I love the arts and that was an area overlooked simply because I possessed knowledge of all fields. My students were always puzzled as to what they were going to learn or where that learning was taking place. I hated to be confined and they had to suffer. I didn't gain this freedom of moving my classes around till I got a bit older though. It didn't matter, my age, because anyone who is younger is a hard person to take lessons from. Especially someone as especially young as myself.

It wasn't till the new alma mater arrived that I went back to being just a student. All of which were the cohorts of none other than my mother and father. Seeing the onslaught of my "uncles" and "aunts" was the most freeing moments ever. Especially when they came to give me my lessons. These family friends had easily assumed the roles of family members in my life, so sometimes I'll admit, I made it harder on them. They'd remove me from the school and take me to settings that I would enjoy. Never the same place twice, they fed my urge to keep moving. Still, outside of this context, I remained quiet in front of them, unless I was rousing up fun.

More often I'd be paired up with the Chaos Sisters, meaning both at the same time, or Taer. Given our experience with one another, sometimes lessons got in the way. Simple little jokes snagged us, like when I'd joke with Utaer about his name. It was known that Djibril (Jibril) called himself Tear once in awhile. Although the name he assumed now is Emile, a name from the human mother who gave birth to his current body (or state of being, whatever you wish to call it). The Chaos Sisters were always at their ends when they tried to give me my lessons. Tempest was serious enough whereas Troubles wasn't serious enough. They balanced one another out. The problem was that sometimes it's hard to teach someone you know when you can laugh with them instead.

During the first meeting with Rüstesihan, I heard how father pronounced it. I tried carefully to imitate him, but it came out all wrong. That night I heard how mom pronounced it and it sounded just like how father did. Nahit pronounced it differently. I assumed then that they were the only two beings that knew how to pronounce it right. I later learned that all elders eventually learned the right way. It was a joke that most couldn't say it right anyway. I guess if you say it enough times, the right way strikes you. Nonetheless, he's always "Ro-setsu-han" to me.

Risan quieted his mind and used all the elements at hand to work the ship. All were equal, none better than the other. Taer shook his head and smiled in the room. "I wonder what he's looking for," Mekhi commented. Taer looked at him, "I don't think he's looking for anything. I think that he can't find peace till Nahit does." Mekhi looked at the dark green walls, "It must be hard to dedicate yourself to others happiness." "Let's be glad he's selective when he does that."

Every New Beginning

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Saturday, October 15, 2005 4:49:46 PM

“Even in the house of Rüstesihan, I had issues with writing. Rüstesihan and my teachers didn't mind, they all believed that when the time was ready, I'd do what was necessary.” Nahit dropped his pen and leaned back in his chair. He wasn't sure just how much time has elapsed. He got up and walked over to his window. It was still cold, but he opened the window and leaned out. The sun had risen already but he still felt unaffected. He had to check on Asura. Nahit took to checking up on persons from afar, but preferred to keep out of their way, sight, or mind. That's what he did for all elders, make sure they were safe. That's the part about being a doctor to them. Risan was with Mekhi and Utaer taking lessons to help him concentrate. Everyone feels he's much to all over the place, so they figured this exercise would keep him still while moving.

The song changed and I could feel her dancing. I hated her and yet loved her immensely. It always brought tears to my eyes. Once in a while, I would speak about this person I love so much. I've never mentioned her name. She isn't the same person that I speak to on the phone. The person I love is long gone from my life, leaving a child behind and nothing more save memories. Often people have tried to pry her name out of my memories, but I guard that well. Sometimes I check on her, always from afar,

just to see how she is. I don't know if she remembers me or not. Others of my kind could have found her and washed her own memories away. Or even I could have done it without knowing. I don't want to know most of the time. Music was vital to us. I don't know what to do with myself.

Nahit walked into the bathroom and tried to push everything out of his mind. He moved slowly towards the sink basin. When he first got the place, there was a mirror right above it. He had removed it and put a new one to his right on the wall. Instead the small cabinet remained but with a picture in front of it. As he slowly walked over he tried to avoid his reflection. As he inched up to the basin, he turned and growled at his reflection. "And why should anyone know my pain?" he charged at his reflection. "What can they do about it? It's my own, it doesn't help to speak about it. All it does is give rise to my own pain, my own failure. If I am everything then why am I not enough?" His reflection looked at him thoughtfully, "That's what love does to you. It steals who you are and replace it with vulnerability. You open your world to someone and look at what can they do." Nahit grabbed at his hair and sunk to the floor. "That's why I've got to hold her -- a secret." He stared at his green tiles, he hated that colour suddenly. "Let it all be white. I will not pity myself." He stood up and walked out of the bathroom as the tiles turned white. He had an idea of where he should be.

Beginnings are relative. My beginning started when I was born in Udaipur. Then a new beginning when Mariel and mother arrived. Atemp and mother were travelling throughout Asia, as once planned. They circled throughout Asia and ended up spending time in Cambodia. I saw them once as they breezed through India and the "writer" (that's who mother was then) and the poet noticed me but kept on going. They had an ultimate goal and after that was completed in Cambodia, they came back. The writer came to be known as Shauna, who set out to adopt me. While this was set into motion, I had the pleasure to get to know the poet who became Mariel and her newly born son, Jady. Soon after, Eric came in and this made the transition easier. At that point however, both ladies were married and travelling. They came to Asia and they both were parents. The question is that if that was a beginning for me, where was theirs? I know the secrets I withhold, but what about these people whom I've never asked?

"Aren't you supposed to be writing your memoirs? What does your memoirs have anything to do with the parents of this lifetime" Talen asked. He was so composed in the crushed black velvet recliner. "Uten, what was she like, you know, with him" I asked. I could feel his eyebrows raised behind the black cloth that engulfed him. I grew impatient with this ability to hide himself to the world. "Uten, come now, I know what you're like, you have no reason to hide yourself. Adam." He sighed heavily and removed the black cloth that draped his body. Youthful as always, I was barely older than him. "Do you hide here to defy your age?" Talen laughed, "My dear dear Mikhail, I don't hide. I am time. I prefer it here. Just as others prefer other places." I nodded. He sighed and said quietly, "I don't speak for my sister and you know that. As long as she has a mouth of her own, let her speak. I can voice my memories though." "Then tell your side of the story." "There is no story child, there are memories on top of memories. You never stop, you just keep going. Eventually they become fables that drop out of sight and become new experiences again."

Talen smiled as he searched through his memories. The colours danced in his eyes as the memories were evoked. "I met Eric when in attendance of my first class at the university in England. We had big dreams to start our own practice as doctors. Later we met Jouni and Handel who became part of that. A dream that came true. Sometimes I wish I would have invited him to my wedding." Talen looked up after speaking with a small smile. "Wait, tell me about your wedding," I pleaded. He smiled for it was not known that Talen had had two weddings. "I wonder about your intents," he said. "Eric and I became best friends rather quickly. After a year, I met Silen and I also brought Eric to the States to meet my family, let's note that Shauna was nine at the time. After another year, Eric, Renee, Silen and I went to

Australia to continue our studies." I stopped him for I had heard very little about Renee. He knew why I stopped him, "Renee and Eric dated for a long time, however she wasn't in classes with us. She didn't do very much with us a group given her erratic behaviour." I wanted to know more about this Renee, but I knew Talen would only give as much as that which was already provided. "As you know, Silen and I got married on our fifth year anniversary. We planned a very large upscale wedding." He paused to look at me. "Yes, I know about that," I answered quickly. "A few hours prior to that wedding, we asked my father, Silen's parents, and Shauna to dress in black and be ready for us to pick them up. Silen and I had planned to have a small intimate wedding with just these people in attendance as well as Amphi, for photography and music and a clergyman." "Fine, I understand that, so my father and mother?" Talen held his hand over the small table beside him. A small cup of coffee appeared and he took a few sips. After the sip he smiled, "Your mother and father."

"Eric was your best friend and Shauna was your sister with an eleven year difference, how did that happen?" "Your mother and I care very little for age. If you haven't noticed, it's a game for us. She goes through life cycles as fast as she can whereas I like to stretch them out. She's older than Time and I am Time and it is time that ages." I laughed as he smirked. "He taught her and cared for her. And they knew they didn't belong together." My face fell. "Oh come on now, surely you knew that they both knew they didn't belong together?" Talen asked quizzically. "No...I mean... I thought she had no idea or that she was trying to make him happy." Talen laughed, "Dear little one, Eric was smart enough to know that she should have been with Chris. He asked Chris. Just because you have a soul mate doesn't mean you're absolutely supposed to be with them. Your soul has an extensively long time to figure things out. Sometimes you just rather be away from that reality." I still didn't understand. A part of me could, but to just reject what is true? Talen was reading my mind and letting my thoughts run rampant. When I looked up at him he shrugged. "You..." "Silen isn't my soul mate. I know who my soul mate is and I don't reject it. She does, but I don't have the bliss of ignoring it -- but that's what she does and I acknowledge it." I became enraged, "How can you be so nonchalant." All he could do was smile, I felt that it was a mockery but I knew better. "We are the creators young one. If we even so much as think something at the same time as another of our kind does, it comes to be. What does it matter? Love is nothing, death is nothing, belief, all of these trivial things. You must remember to not get yourself wrapped in them or you will become bitter and fall like the two great ones." "Love made them fall!" He shook his head, stood up and then walked over to me. "Come now Nahit. Love makes you do crazy things. If you take that away, what do you have left?" I searched for an answer and the only thing that came to me, I muttered below my breath, "Everything else." "You can conquer the world, destroy it and turn it anew, but you'll still weep for what you've lost." I knew that story. Talen reached over to hug me and he whispered, "Now that is no story. It's been proven already." He let go and smiled, "You are a hopeless romantic and within another million years or so, you'll realize the futility, we all do." "What else plagues that mind of yours?"

"Give me your memories," I asked helplessly. "For all the years you've been alive, you still don't know much yet, do you child?" he asked. As he walked back over to his chair, he looked around the room thoughtfully. "The room of Tempest," he said into the air. I looked around and realized there were tears in my eyes. "Why did you choose here?" "You've so many questions, why didn't you ever ask them before?" I thought about this question, why did I hold them all back for so long.

"My memories have no place in your own. I'll give you the ones relevant, but don't go searching for others to supplement your own."

Risan shook his head. He's off track again, he thought to himself. He could never figure out what would keep Nahit on track. Everyone always thought that he was the one who needed to concentrate,

given the exercise he was doing now. Yet they never realized that there Nahit went without my notice. Nahit was all over the place emotionally but no one noticed except those who were close. "Hey Utaer! I'm off. I need to see Atemp!" Taer looked out at Risan and nodded.

Sometimes "here" wasn't the right place to be. You'll always eventually find where you need to be. It's a matter of giving it time.

Recantation of Father Time

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Monday, October 17, 2005 4:42:24 PM

I watched as Nahit sat on edge, waiting for me to say something meaningful. That's who I was to him, the kind, wise uncle that he looked up to or created parallels with. Never mind that he was older than I. The fact remained that I was closer to his mother and that was all that mattered. I shared a bond with his mother that he couldn't attain. She let him grow up and experience the world and I was the one she nurtured. Admittedly our lines of relationship became blurred quite often. Rather than she be the sister and I the brother, sometimes I would act as a guardian, sometimes she. Sometimes I would watch her from afar and wonder where the lines of her being my sister, my guardian, and one to be guarded was defined. It was only natural that Nahit would seek this information. He saw me as close and that I was. Both to he and his mother, but the question remaining was what link was he searching for. When anything involved her, the search would end at my feet. He didn't realize this, so here he was, dragging me out of comfort to speak to me. He couldn't understand. He was confused and acting childish, but that's how you learn. So I indulged him. Risan believed that we didn't know that Nahit was no more controlled than he. Although I'll venture to say that beyond the false appearances Risan puts forth laid a very cool, calm, and largely rational person. I adored my coffee, sipping on it while I watched him fidget. All searches end with me.

Should I tell him everything? Certainly not. Should I give him an inkling of his mother's past existence? Why should I? It would only confuse his life and no other. What good is information if it confuses. Little Nahit-Mikhail, who didn't know where he was going or what he was doing. The facade was that he knew who he was or what he was doing. We are all like that before the realization hits. Or judges. My sister took many billions of years to figure out just what she was needed for. Which to her demise was actually nothing. So now she rules over turmoil and does it well. She had no purpose then, but she fits into the grand scheme of it all. Azrael...Azzie, oh dear, it took him much longer. And he had to confuse and betray both Djibril and Lilith to figure that one out. I was kept under lock and key before I figured out what I was to do. That's what separates us. Not our age, our knowledge. That is what makes and separates an Elder from all else. Not species or any other thing that divides. We are all about division, but yet in the grand scheme, there's an overall that seeks to destroy it -- that is also us.

Nahit believes that I do not know about his secrets. I know them but I keep them. He would be foolish to think that he stands before me well guarded. Even Shauna knew them. She ignores them till he is ready and so will I. If it is yours, then it is yours and yours alone. That doesn't mean it isn't known. The person that he loves but keeps away from, the child he watches over with adoration but keeps the distance for fear of... Who am to tell? He keeps his secrets yet here he is asking us to divulge ours. I can't divulge Shauna's though. At this point, she has none to keep. I have none of my own. We're open books, it's a matter of how you want to see it. He wants to know about my dear Eric, my wedding to Silen, his parents' wedding, his parents' friends, and so on. What it must be like to live trully as child and parent. That is why I sent my child away. We all send them away because it makes it easier. Do you want to know your parent as a parent or who they really are? Those lines get blurred and sometimes

you never see either at all.

My Eric. My best friend and consort through almost everything. The only choice I wish I had made was to invite him to both weddings and not just one. He has known of that regret. Before he used to think that my not claiming him as a godparent was a regret. He just didn't know what was in store for his life.

I met him at the university studying at the same level I was. Well, he was a bit more advanced than I was. My accelerated studies and his put us in the same program just at different levels. I became entranced with him and the way he was so involved. He was one of those few whom had a true passion for his studies. I think I loved him from the beginning. Although I was aware of the kind of person I was, so rather than gravitate to him, I waited for him. We became the best of friends quickly. He and I wanted to open a practice together but not there in England. His home was in Australia, he had chosen England for the travel... and that he was originally born there. I had a need to travel so while setting up the chance to study abroad, I met Silen. Yes, in that office I met the woman that would be my wife. We began dating.

Silen was extraordinary. She seemed to balance out everything that was ever needed in my life. A ballet dancer with long hair and small eyes. A beautiful face that she was so dedicated to hiding. When I met her, she hid behind her hair while I hid behind my glasses. We were both incredibly shy. Eric brought out the bold and Silen asserted the shyness within me. I ran into her in the office and when I saw her I nearly crumbled. I know I was supposed to meet her and I knew when, I just didn't realize the impact she'd have. We bumped into one another while getting information for Australia. I remember that Eric had classes whereas I had the time off so I figured I'd start procuring information. We literally bumped into one another as neither of us was paying attention. We apologized and then I knew. Nice going, Destiny. I could hear his laughter continents away. I had a choice, either I ask her out now or we wait till we bump into one another again, then we will grow as friends. Numerous possibilities and I knew them all. I asked her out on a date and she accepted. With her right hand she brushed her hair aside. I'll keep the details of our first date except for the key points. For our date, she tied her long grayish black hair up which I noticed would never be that colour again and I learned that she was just like me.

A few months after our dating, Eric and I took a trip to the States for a visit to my family. We began putting our plans into motion after consulting with my dad. That's when Eric met Shauna.

This is all information Nahit wanted, but instead I gave very brief details. Why bore the young lad? He'll find things out. I peered into his eyes. He didn't notice, for I am usually well hidden or discrete. He wanted to see what this life span held for me before I die. We're all like phoenixes; we don't die -- merely reborn. I have no reason to indulge him. How he begs and pleads but lacks the understanding. His clothes, a simple white shirt and a pair of jeans. Nahit hasn't been taking care of himself. He has noticed my wandering. "Uten, just tell me," he asks once more. Like a child, like my own child.

I was born out in California, my parents hailing from England. They married and moved out there and though my mother's accent was light with a mix of something Arabic, dad had a heavy one. Mom spoke in many tongues though at my age, I didn't recognize them. Possibly French, Arabic, English, and Portuguese. They died in a car accident and I was given to the state. A payment for injury -- that's what I was. I didn't wish to be adopted by the happy cheerful folks who walked in and out. They'd come to me and ask me about myself. Every time, without fail, I told them what my dad taught me to say. I gave them my name and my age. They'd ask if I liked my name or talk about how they'd change it and I refused. They probably tried to sort that out from the beginning. It's better to have a foolish child that will concede than one who knows who they are already. I was waiting for someone in specific.

Specifically, the young schoolteacher, Coline. We got along well. Then one day she showed up with her husband. I remember as I saw the man in the suit walk in with her. He came to speak to me and asked me a few questions. After a certain question he shot me a puzzled look and stormed out. I watched as he went to his wife and started scolding her. I immediately got mad but that soon fell when I saw her. Her eyes filled with tears and then she started laughing. "You're right honey! I'm so sorry; perhaps we should do that now. I'm sorry," she said to him. He smiled and embraced her and then followed her back to me. He came forward then bent down on one knee as she grinned behind him. "My wife, Col, well, you know her," he paused to shoot a grin at me, "she forgot to make a few things clear. We would like to adopt you. I was under the impression that she told you this already. Usually we don't run around making demands. Would you like us to adopt you?" I was confused but many people ask this question. I said yes. "Your name is a strong name and you should hold onto it. It would only hurt us if we ask you to take our name. Instead, we'll ask if we can have yours." That is how the sole Tannen got his family. Years later the same husband and wife became the godparents (or the backup parents) to Shauna.

Coline was repetitious in only but a few things. She was convinced that both Shauna and I were going to be great. I was going to be a doctor. The future was uncertain for Shauna as since it seemed that no one could predict what she would do. However we both had great potential. She died shortly after the addition of Shauna. After her death, dad's world was sent spiraling. He was approached several times to relinquish his rights to me by family members. He refused and he raised me on his own. He never fully recovered from her death, his own death being the true marker of value to that.

Coline was right about us both. I became a doctor and Shauna dropped out of life before having to make any real decisions. I will say that choosing your death is the most important decision but some refuse to believe that. Death is the one thing you own. You may not control it, but its yours and there is no denying that.

I haven't answered any of his questions. His parents wedding. He's confused and he doesn't even realize it. My wedding to Silen is of no real correlation to his parents. "I'm searching for something," he desperately says. "Yes," I reply unevenly, "we're all searching for something." "But you're not!" he charged. "You're right dear, I am not. "Is Eric forever in our lives?" Of course. "Why must you be so silent!" I suppose now would be the time to answer. "Mikhail, calm down. You're right; I am not looking for anything right now. Eric is a part of us as long as we should love him. I choose to be silent because I have that choice." "Why would you be with someone you know you shouldn't be with?" I had to smile although I tried to conceal it from him. It would only stir anger and resentment. "Why wouldn't you be with someone you should be with? As a matter of fact, who judges whether you should or should not be with someone?" I feel the electricity of the neurons snapping and I sense his tears being held back still I continued. "There is no cupid, no magic potion. Just you and your kind who makes such calls. In case you haven't forgotten, which I think you have." He across at me trying to find my eyes. I had removed all my coverings but still he couldn't find my eyes. I knew there were more questions but the most important one he couldn't find. His eternal search -- what was it all for?

My dear Nahit-Mikhail, you're looking for validation for your existence. Your trail will run cold and you will realize there is none. You'll run back into the arms of someone who cares, who returns your affect. It doesn't matter who is your soul mate when you realize that the world means nothing to you and you mean nothing to it. All that matters dear, is the relations you keep, that which sustain you for the lifetimes to come. What purpose do you serve dear? What is a product of chaos and destiny? The triumph over all, hope and the need to keep playing in between. That which is neither. Eventually, we

all find our way. Even if it usurps time.

Hollowed Time
OR
Recantation of Father Time (cont.)

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Wednesday, October 19, 2005 10:48:50 AM

I wanted to urge him on but I knew better than to push. "Do you deserve to be with your mysterious love?" He looked at me sternly. Thinking, trying to find excuses. I took a few more sips of my coffee. Certainly more hazelnut and vanilla was needed -- or perhaps even raspberry. What a delightful cup. Still trying to find an excuse. "Your love is an angel," I said to my cup. He looked at me wildly and before he could begin his accusations or defense, I stopped him. "Calm down. It's nothing I couldn't deduce. With this mysterious person, you created a child that you adored -- Aurora. Aurora took well to Risan and that alone shows that she is an angel." "That foolish boy," he muttered. I smiled, not sarcastically but genuinely, as always. Although rarely did people understand that as rarely as they actually saw me smile. I knew what would pick his mood up a bit, "Evening star." He looked at me with a gracious smile. "You're always absent yet there. Your answers aren't here," I sang in a low voice. "Mom used to set up puzzles so we could solve them." I laughed for I knew better. "Are you sure? Your mother was as straightforward as possible. That's why she was so hard to decipher. The answers are always present it's a matter..." He looked startled. I suppose it never occurred to him that the smoke and mirrors were devices planted by someone else.

The weddings and the excursions. Dad died about a year after my wedding to Silen. On the day of his death, Shauna and I each received a package from him. We knew when death came for its claim. The package contained photos, letters, and tapes. His memoirs, the things he spent his last years engraving into his memory. The final message of it all was "good bye." Still up to now, we find tapes he left behind. There are several of them that showed that he taped them as they came. No real order or structure to how he recorded or taped them or how he distributed them. Slowly they came back to us for deciphering and they all turned out to be lessons that only we could understand. I assumed dad's role over Shauna.

Over time I asserted the darker sides to myself. She quickly worked against me. Along with Jace (a close friend of the "family") she would launch into Disney ballads. Once the two ganged up on me till I finally succumbed to the evils of "It's A Small World After All." I ate macaroni and cheese as a well balanced diet and she tried to steal it. I eventually started adding fruits in hopes that she would stay away from my bowl, but that didn't stop her. Needless to say Silen had a hell of a time breaking me out of the habit. When I was younger and Shauna used to visit, she'd run into all the small corners and crevices. As a joke, I created the idea of the magic horde I kept. As quickly as she found the box of macaroni and cheese, I grew to like the idea. Even in the house now with my wife (long after she's "broken me out of the habit"), I still keep a hidden horde of macaroni and cheese. I've grown to like the pineapples in there. Or even the apricots and peaches. Our bond was not only in the magic horde and random ballads, but in our very clothes. We were the rubber duck clan, so we had pajamas with rubber ducks. I had these black and orange rubber duck pajamas. The pants have the ducks all over whereas the white shirt as one big duck on the front. It's ridiculous but fun. Shauna has a gray and blue duck outfit and Jace had a red and black. There are more rubber ducks out there and we'll have them all. We now find the material and have them made.

My own wedding... Quite an event. Our anniversary every year is a spectacle. On our fifth year

anniversary, we were wedded. Halloween, which is our favourite time of the year, serves as our anniversary. We gathered a small group to help us with our white wedding. Then privately we discussed our black wedding. While the group handled the white wedding, we handled what we needed to and the black wedding. Although the black wedding was easier -- a small intimate occasion for our families alone. That was the real wedding. The white wedding took place as planned except that everyone else outside of the black wedding didn't know we were already married. When we recited our vows, we chose a different tongue to say something else. No one was the wiser. The three levels of beautiful decadence entranced them all. Every year for Halloween we then celebrate Halloween and our anniversary. Although there's often a disagreement as to what year we are celebrating. Most believe that they should count from when we first began dating whereas others from the time we were wedded. Add five years to the wedded date and that's how long we've been together. She and I don't count. Why hold Time against time? That was her idea.

Add another five years to the wedded date and that would bring you to the birth of our daughter. The second hybrid -- the second sahjina. Not just a soul that found a new body but a completely new soul: Uliaha Yashmira. In the hierarchy of being, there was no cross of an angel with any other species. Ahnaleaha broke this hierarchy and Uliaha confirmed it. Angels largely don't have bodies unless they were created with one. Given that a large portion of them are mistakes, they lack that specific planning. In our world it differs greatly. We have the power to create. We don't give birth, if we will it, it is. If I'm thinking of a large bowl of macaroni and cheese the same time any other angel is, we thus create a bowl of macaroni and cheese. Creation is lovely and annoying. We're restricted in our thoughts in that way. Amongst the many problems in our own system, aside from what was just mentioned, after you create something (recognizing it is easy since a part of it comes from you and thus had a piece of you written onto it), who gets to claim it? Sahjinas are a new breed and so little is known. Uliaha and Ahnaleaha were given birth at the very conception of their soul. The rest of us can recreate that moment by plugging ourselves into humans or being reborn into the process, but it's never our soul that undergoes that process -- just the vessel. The macaroni and cheese bowl is always mine. There are no exceptions to this rule.

"The difference, my love, is that I loved you since I was a little girl and you were already a man. You fell in love with me after I was all grown up. You've seen it both and all I know is you," is what Shauna said to Eric. That was everything in a nutshell. Eric had loved her for the child she was and loved for the lady she became. I employ lady here because that's his preference. Eric had two main issues when dealing with his feelings. He did not want to hurt neither she nor I. He believed that he could be easily replaced in our lives, so he approached the change with great caution. He knew what we were because after our time together, I had to let him in. He was in my world and in Shauna's world and when you become important to two elders, you must understand why. He was in over his head, but always remained calm.

Their wedding took place on their second anniversary of dating. It was of no surprise when Eric asked me for permission to do so. I laughed while admiring his calmness and yet chaotic interior -- much like an ocean. Peacefully resting while the world of chaos within ensued. It was hard to get them to date and then when together, they couldn't be pulled apart. But that's for this lifetime, I'll remind you. You'll find that we all have our temporary loves that shades the soul mate. Never look at your life as a small moment, look at your soul. Eric's soul was out and about and none took notice till he ran into me. He's locked in, especially since he harnessed the respect and care of Nahit and Risan. Others drop away, not having the fortune of ever remembering. The choice of wrangling in Risan and Nahit was their own. Fortuitous to find their real creator and spend time with her. The others they'll find another time. The wedding was a lovely small event with just the members of the "inner sanctum," as Shauna called it.

They've also earned the title of "Elders" for many other reasons. The intimate occasion called for everyone to wear black, which most of them abhorred and chose other bright colours. Tempest (Mariel) staged this rebellion, knowing that it would make sense. For us, black is all the colours brought together, it's the most colourful. Disagree if you will, this is our belief. Instead of having something void of colour, make it wondrous. Having the colourful guest linger in a dark place made for a very happy mood.

Eric initially declined Shauna's advances for Halloween and instead asked her out the day after. Why? Lest anything should happen, why ruin it all? He didn't know any better and that's fine. Twice the mourner, Eric dedicated himself to the children that he had supplied vessels for. Then he taught them and allowed them to go. This is the beauty of hope, keep it alive and keep it burning. Keep hope moving and let it stand against the tides. It won't wither away if you truly believe in it. The question is whether Optimism himself believes that.

Keep searching and keep moving. Even if the steps are microscopic. That's the inevitability of all things.

I suppose I had better take my own advice and accept my death. I hate being reborn and then having to grow up. It takes the fun out of living. I suppose I ought to do it soon though. Wouldn't want this flesh to run dry or colleagues to get suspicious. This is how the original issue of the philosopher's stone. That's another story that I'll not divulge. Perhaps I ought to attend to the young man that I've been neglecting.

"Nahit, the answers you need are within yourself," I said rather despondently to my surprise. "That's the common excuse," he said mournfully. "Yes, it seems habits are acquired quickly. Be off with you, I must rest." And with great animosity, he disappeared into the night. He was always too dramatic, but so very much worth it.

What are you going to do when we're all gone? One day, we'll leave and then you'll have no one to face but your reflection. Then you will have to see the truth which you hold. We all do eventually. I could hear Silen rustling. Time to return the story to Nahit, who doesn't seem to want it at all. So much for his memoirs -- and so many tales he could tell! Years of knowledge and experience locked into a single being and held there because he doesn't know himself. Well, in the end, aren't we all like that? Hiding from who we really are? No, not all. Some escape with their truths.

Lifetime Escaped

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Saturday, November 05, 2005 11:12:39 PM

The doors swung open and I could hear their voices. Sometimes your feelings mix in and hamper your ability to do something. "You're running from yourself," and "Don't allow others to solve this for you." But they don't know what it is I'm searching for. Believe me, you can't know if I don't know. Am I to deny myself? Or should I allow myself to roam free? Knowledge empowers you and thrusts you forward, for what? A visit with --

It seemed like twenty odd lifetimes ago. Maybe more or less, time was never constant for me. It passes too slowly but covers a great amount. I was a young child, playing in the street. During these times, an incurable disease took most children my age. It's a surprise that the human race flourished at times. We donned bodies and strut about, but I had fallen into the care of Akraziel, who found himself an uncle to

me. I played with a ball in the street and as I dropped it, I remembered thinking that this was the moment. The plague would reach me, wrap me around and drag me to the dead. Akrasiel stepped out of the shadows, apparently lurking, or perhaps on his way to buy something useful and got in the way. He watched my then brown eyes turn to blue and then laughed. "Little boy, you aren't so little," he said. I hated him and I hated everyone. I wished that the whole world would be taken by their death. He shook his head and kept on his way. I blinked and then I returned. I was a trapped in a body I was never meant for. A real decision had to be made. What would I do with myself? Risan and I had not run into one another, nor had I found Lilith or Azrael. Here I was, an old man dressed up like a young boy. The Black twins as well as the charges of Death got to choose death for other species. When would they choose mine? Or was I able to choose my own? I died only to realize that even though I chose to not live in that body, they chose everything else. I was hateful even more so. I wanted to rage against everything but I didn't know who. So I stole away to the underground.

For years, I had been in the limelight of everything. I was the trusted, the respected, and the exalted. But I was no one and I felt like I had no one. It's a different game when you don't need to be nurtured. You crave it because you don't need it. You don't need love but you want it. That was my concern. The right hand of everything and the left hand to all. Others hung off my arms and held me close. I was the one who passed the orders and knew of everything. I was essentially a watcher, but I was a doctor also. I had the luxury of going anywhere; instead I created my own plane and stayed there. Dimensions are usually these vast things, but mine was a small thing that housed myself. I stayed there for some time, doing nothing, just simply being. I preferred to remain ignorant -- I knew they knew where I was but I pretended that I was alone.

I had to carefully orchestrate my rebirth. For that to happen, I would either have to use my own malleable body, which is easily detected, or choose rebirth through humanity. If I chose to go by humanistic means, then I would surely been found. Time (Adam) himself and Jibril oversaw the reaping of souls and the Black twins (ordained by Adam and Jibril) worked in conjunction, also reaping and sowing souls. The Black twins took care of all that occurred below the biotis whereas the other two oversaw all. There was also a third who I knew little about. I'd have to rely on my own body to make my way back into that world.

That was done in success. I resurfaced amongst the humans escaping the four watchful eyes of death and rebirth. Within rebirth however, you may face the two that negotiate the terms of living. The final two, Lilith and Azrael -- my creators. I passed through without any interruption. I felt myself cleansed by this choice I had made. IF they noticed (which they did), they made no mention of it. Nor have they since. The confrontation of life is something I could do without and they know it. That new life I created for myself was ridden of angels and anything else that followed suit. I didn't have to practice healing, medicine, or magic. It was a breath of life and they knew to keep clear, just this once. I lived a human life, up to ninety-six, when I heard a rap at my door. I knew who it was and I knew why they were there. I had not felt their presence since the beginning of this escape. My caretaker came first, "There's a gentleman at the door and he asks permission to see you." I nodded, since that was all the strength the body had. My caretaker, John, led the person to the doorway of the small living room. The person stopped at the doorway and waited. I nodded for him to proceed. I was in a rocking chair with my blanket over me. The person kneeled before me. I motioned for John to leave and as he did, he closed the door behind him. "You know why I've come." I didn't say anything. "May I?" he asked. I nodded. With the gesture he sat in the chair beside me. "Blue and bronze wallpaper? With flowers? My how lavish we've become." I knew it was over.

I turned to face him. "Savin Black, it's been a while," I said to him. He always had such a toothy grin.

He was in his mid-thirties, dark brown hair and light skin with eyes of gray. He wore a full suit and seemed perfectly fine in it. "You've grown old," he said staring out the window. "Yes, it's been an interesting existence." "What did you do?" I smiled at him, "I grew up, and I tried my hand at business and made out alright. I married and that's that. You took her a while ago." Savin shook his head and said quietly, "I'm sorry, but that wasn't I nor my brother. We've been working around you. Her death was taken care of by Jibril." Of course, the furthest one from me. No one else wanted to deal with me. "So they take care of her, but ignore me?" "You're fragile. Always have been and no one knows how to deal with you. Would you believe, they wanted me to ask you if you wanted the body to die?" I couldn't help but smile. "They knew all along?" I asked. Savin shook his head, "I have no idea, sir. You know that in a life, the only flags raised are birth and death. They might have known and they might not have." I rocked slightly, "No, they always know. They know everything except for one another." Savin put his hand on my arm, "They know everything. It's whether they choose to acknowledge it, like you." "I don't have much of a choice here," I said as rocked. I didn't, because I would just be reborn. Or I could choose another path, another existence. "Sometimes choices don't always seem like choices, but they are. You can choose to die -- kill your soul. You are bound only because you want your soul to live. The body means nothing." I turned at this, slightly outraged. "You shall not assume that they are separate." He nodded, "I shall assume. You work on healing the body and I work in recycling souls. What matters?" Another choice is made.

Savin got up and tried to embrace me as I sat in the chair. "What was her name?" he asked. "That is for me alone to know." He smiled at me, "Your own decisions, huh? You were meant for much more. Don't dawdle on these accessories." He held me once more and bid me good-bye. I sighed and looked at the window. The body was failing, but now I could feel it urging to die. Still I sat there quietly, reflecting on this short period of time. I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply. Fine, I'll let go now. I could feel everything whip up around me, engulfing me. It dragged my soul out of the body. I watched the shell die as I stood across from it. I had no home and no solace. However, I had memories of what had happened.

I lived and everything else lived. I never had to face the doors of life and so we lived. It's a game that you choose to play. You know everything and you haven't the luxury of pretending that you don't. You can lie to others, but not yourself. Not even that true moment of mine did I understand the implications. Nor did I experience what would change me forever. The moment of change awaited me, for I had not even come near it, not yet. Savin escorted the body away and Soren presented a new one for me. Eventually I'd come face to face with her, but not yet. They were waiting and they knew when the time would be best justified.

SHAUNA SOLAMAN