

The King of Spades

Book I: Dream Or Reality

“History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.”
-Napoleon Bonaparte

By **Salem Al-Tamimi**

The King of Spades: Dream Or Reality

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Based on the Multiplayer Online RPG:
<http://www.TheKingOfSpades.com>

Sources: Ancient and Contemporary Greek, Tarot, Kaballa, Runic, Hebrew, Buddhist, Eridian, Babylonian, Biblical, Islamic and other traditions.

For Shelley, for being patient,
For my family,
And for all the Prophets, Teachers,
Scholars, Poets and Artists who
channel the greatest superpowers a human can possess:
Wisdom and Creation.

Chapter 1: The First and Last Prophetess

Part 1: Shadow of Light.

She reached in the grocery bag and took out a green apple. The old car horns and bargaining merchants drowned her noisy chewing of the delicious apple as she walked across the old market in downtown Istanbul... Her home for years she had lost count of.

A gust of wind breaks free the pin keeping her silky veil secure. And as it takes flight for the air she mumbles in Turkish and starts to run for it, but as she tries to tackle the old Peugeots and Volkswagens on her way across the street, she looks up to realize that it's disappeared. Oh well. Not the first time it happened, and since she was already at the marketplace, she might as well shop around for a new one.

"Abandoning your shawl?" a man asked in a plain yet western English accent. The merchant frowned, "Me and customer busy, go away you American!" She turned around, her hand still feeling the new silk veil she was trying to buy. "Canadian, actually. Isn't this yours, madam?"

The man was in his mid twenties wearing a very expensive looking leather jacket, and a thick, plain white scarf around his neck. "Oh, uhm.. Thank you." She said as she tied the shawl around her head. She looked at the man. He was unsmiling, handsome, standing tall and broad; totally sure of himself. The merchant mumbled as he stepped back into his makeshift shop. She gave a half smile to herself, and turned around again to the courteous man.

He was gone.

She looked at her watch as she took the last bite from her fifth apple today. She was unconsciously obsessed with the ancient concept that Eve figured out the secret of Godhood by taking a bite from the apple.

She took off her glasses and placed them next to a big old book, written completely in Old Latin. The title was as dull as the book: "The Archer".

She closed the book and picked up her sketch of that sword. That sword she couldn't stop dreaming about. She stared at it again for the hundredth time, admiring its perfection. "I have the other eleven tokens accounted for... Except for you. Where can you be?"

She stared at it, as if waiting for a reply.

A book fell on the ground with a loud thump that almost made her jump. She turned around to the source of the noise and looked at the one or two remaining people in the library. One of the lights went off, signaling the closure of the university library, and the last remaining people stood up and packed their things. She didn't like this. She sensed she was being watched... And she was never wrong.

"Professor Nur, it is closing time!" The ailing librarian smiled. Not really saying that because she didn't know, but because he wanted to sneak a look at her gorgeous body; whenever he looked at her his heart would beat fast and strong from admiring her beauty, and he felt that it was what kept him alive for the past ten years.

She answered back: "Thank you Ahmed. I'll be right out." Ahmed walked back to the counter and closed the large Old Turkish Philosophy book he had been reading for the past 2 years. He frowned as he thought to himself: "Hmmm... I've known Dr. Meryam Nuruddin for the past 8 years that I've worked here. I could swear that she's looked the same as she did the first day I met her... Must be the chemicals in all those beauty products that the damn Americans send us." Ahmed concluded.

She walked in her usual long strides across the alley. It was eleven at night, people were still out in the cafes, smoking hookahs with flavored tobacco and playing cards. But that didn't make her less paranoid. Her eyes widened as she unmistakably heard the steady, cautious footsteps behind her.

She was being followed.

Her steps became faster, and so did the ones behind her.

She was approaching an old abandoned building which she used to escape to for drawing images of her past. She ran inside and took cover behind a large crate. She strained to see the shadow that followed her right into the building but all she could make out was spiky uncombed hair and a tall strong figure. She followed him with her sights, careful to keep every sense concentrated on the man.

"Go away." her voice echoed, "I've warned you."

The figure stopped.

She jumped back and screamed as a cat darted out of the crate (his sleeping spot) and walked away annoyed. She stopped to catch her breath, and then looked back up to see that the stranger had disappeared. She slowly stood up. Trying to feel anything in the air that might give away the direction he had gone.

"Looking for me?" A familiar voice behind her asked.

Her reflexes made her do a backwards flip, then she raised the palm of her hand towards the shadow, and calmly called out: "Five of Swords"

The space in front of her hand lit with a bright blue rectangle about as big as her, and it formed into the image of a Tarot card. The card appeared to turn into a 3D Hologram, and the five swords emblazoned in the image suddenly came to life, formed together in a group and darted towards the shadow.

The man raised one finger towards the rain of swords. Suddenly the sortie converged into a whirlpool in the air and collapsed into a single point on the man's finger.

Dr. Nuruddin was looking at this in SHEER bewilderment. "Impossible! NO ONE can do that!" she screamed.

"Seven of Wands!" she exclaimed. And the entire room shone with a blinding light emanating from seven rods floating around her. "Answer me! Who ARE You?" "You cannot blind what's seen the divine light." the man said, full of an aura of mystery.

The light dimmed and, instead, a light shone on the mysterious figure, which was none other than the man who found her shawl earlier today. She was confused.

"The divine light? Are you..."

Part 2: Revelation

"I" The man threw his coat to the ground, revealing great arches of wings; a characteristic of angels from the Devic Kingdom.

"Am Aryel... The Lion of God."

Later

She unlocked her apartment door and stepped into her place. "Welcome to my humble abode, lord." Krome - As Aryel calls himself in his earthly guise - looked at her puzzled. Nur: "Just joking. You guys should develop your sense of humor, it's been how long? A dozen millennia since humans developed theirs?" She stared at him, then rolled her eyes. "Never mind."

"You act as if you were never one of us, Tetra." Krome said, expressing neither concern nor sadness. It was as if this man didn't know what emotions were.

"Nur. DOCTOR, if you please. As long as you're on Earth, call me by my earthen name." "How appropriate. Arabic for 'light'. Pretty common with fallen angels, eh?" Krome said. Nur gave him a piercing look, as if trying to figure out what the hell he meant, then just brushed the thought away.

"So to what do I owe this social visit? Last time I saw one of you guys was when my twin brother and I were kicked out of the Devic Kingdom for teaching humans about magic." She said.

"You were told that humans weren't responsible enough..." Krome explained, as if she didn't know. Nur: "So I've learned the hard way... Magic was supposed to be a divine gift for Mankind to appreciate. Instead, they worshipped it. They couldn't grasp the concept that God's Will powered Magic." Nur said angrily. "So you were punished." Krome finished Nur's sentence.

She looked outside the window and watched an old woman walk by with a cane. "A punishment like no other. To live amongst humans. God's creatures whom my brother and I once loved so much that we risked God's anger for. Now I loathe them so." As she looked at the old woman trying to cross the street, a tear formed in her eye. The old woman looked both ways fearfully and hesitated to cross. A little boy came along, took hold of her hand and helped her to the other side. "...Just as much as I still love them." She concluded. Krome smiled, for the first time in a very long time. "But I miss home." Tetra continued... "Every time I turn off the lights when I go to bed, I try to remember how... Perfect, it felt when I got close to His Light, and cuddled in the emanating warmth." Krome sighed: "I wish I could've been the one to give you the glad tidings that you were coming home. But that's not what I came for."

Nur wiped her tears.

"So... How's your research? You've found something new, have you not?" Krome asked. "You're talking about the final fall of Babylon, aren't you." Tetra said as she walked away from the window. "None other." Krome said.

"Aryel - Uh, Krome, I have something to show you." Nur walked to her room and took out a large book, scribbled by her own hands. "Hmmm. Your prophecies." he said as he flipped through the pages. "Impressive, why don't you get the book published?" he said sarcastically. Tetra: "Shut up." Krome: "What was that about us not having a sense of humor?"

She pointed at a page. "The sign of the seven suns." She said. "The seven spirits of God." Krome read. "That's right. The death of the seven, as prophesized in the Book of Revelations. What's the seven, Krome?" "I don't know. I've even talked to His Eminence, the Lord of Messengers. He doesn't know either. What we do know is that with death comes birth. So it's seven births. And I have a clue on what a couple of them could be."

Nur looked at the humanized angel with wide eyes and smiled. "You weren't sent by God. Were you?"

Krome was silent.

"I've also seen these in my dreams..." Nur continued. She flipped the pages some more, to a page with the playing card symbols in a whirlpool. "What does that mean, Krome? The four symbols of tokens aren't stable? We're entering the Age of Tokens aren't we?"

He let out a deep sigh. "Nur. Tetra. The balance has been broken. In fact, the there has been unrest in the Devic Kingdom . Uriel and Israfel (the Gatekeeper of Hell) were in an argument, meanwhile, Neria (Israfel's sister) stole the keys of Hades under the cover of the shadows." "She's fallen?" Nur gasped. "Yes, some say she's followed the ranks of The Lightgiver... " "LUCIFER!" Tetra gasped again. "...But others believe she's got her own agenda." Krome finished.

"Lucifer - Lightgiver, Neria - Lamp of God. I see what you mean by us and our obsession with light related names!" Tetra said and Krome nodded in agreement. "So the balance was broken because Hades' keys have turned into the negative." Nur said.

Krome explained: "Which also means that the keys of Earth, Atlantis, even the Devic Kingdom are now at stake. And when they settle, they'll settle for good. Be it Positive or Negative."

Nur started to see how serious the predicament was. She smiled: "Now I know why you've been looking for me."

"Because you know where the tokens are." Krome said, with a slight tone of fear. Amazingly, this fallen angel had the upper hand and Aryel didn't like that at all. She sighed "Umm... Except one."

"What? Which one?" Krome frowned.

"The one and only, King of Swords." Nur revealed.

Krome sighed: "The Sar'Anbar - King of Spades..."

"I've tried to track it throughout the centuries, but the images I'm getting are vague. Mainly because I'm getting so old." Tetra said.

"You're joking right?" Krome and Nur stared at each other blankly. "all right, Go on." Krome sighed.

"The last human who had custody of the sword was an English Archer who found it in Petra during one of the crusades."

"Same place where the King of Hearts token was found." Krome rubbed his chin, deep in concentration.

"Yeah, The King of Cups. And if my research is right, that one's still in Petra ."

"So what happened to the King of Spades?" Krome asked. "Simple. Charles got wise and decided to dump the sword, which was, to him, more of a curse than anything."

"Got wise. And decided to DUMP it?" Krome was dumbfounded. Nur smiled and started narrating:

"The English army returned to their fort after their expedition of Petra . They found out the secret of Petra; that the Nabateans who were the ancient inhabitants of the secret valley were in fact the mystic Kabbalas themselves. There was a small fight between the French and the English over the treasures they found, but they made a truce and agreed to divide up the artifacts and books amongst themselves. The French took a lot of the Kabbalistic writings, that band of knights later became known as The Templars. As for the English soldiers, they didn't care much about the Mysticism, rather the jewelry and the artifacts.

Charles, a former English priest found a sword. And when he wielded it, it came to life again, after centuries of being dormant. He showed the sword to his companions. They shrugged it off as a beautiful piece of armory but essentially ineffective in the archery ranks. He refused vehemently to give it away and said that he'd keep it by his side always...

Weeks passed. One day, in a fierce battle against the Arabs, the enemy stormed the fort. Charles panicked as he reached for his quiver and was stabbed badly. He decided to drop his bow and instead, unsheathed the sword, and with one swipe he took out an entire line of the enemy. More shocking than that was that he took a look at his wound and it was healed! He stood up, looked against the edge of the fort and started swiping in the air! With each swipe, an eerie whistling sound could be heard and a line of the enemy fell lifeless. So are you picturing this? Him at the top of the fort, literally erasing people on the ground from miles away on the ground!!"

Krome seemed lost in thought. Tetra smiled and put a hand on his shoulder: "Brings back memories?"

Krome shook his head. "I just miss David. May God's Peace be with him. Go on with your story."

"Now Charles became ecstatic and "blade" happy, he started swiping away. Laughing hysterically and with each swipe he felt mightier and mightier. And with bloodshot eyes and his veins throbbing with wrath, he declared himself God."

Krome's heart skipped a beat. "Damn these tokens... Time and TIME again..."
"At that moment," Nur continued "As the shock kicked in that he murdered everyone in sight, including his friends and his own brother. He realized the secret of life." Krome nodded and said: "And so it deserves its name. The King of Heavenly Metals: Wisdom."

Tetra: "So he made a pact with God. That he'll forever hide the sword in an Altar dedicated to Him, in return for being forgiven for killing the people (including his human brethren whom the crusaders called infidels), and for committing the ultimate sin of declaring Godhood."

Krome shut his eyes. "That's why it's disappeared. Because God forgave him."
"Right." Nur nodded. "Now no angel, no magic, no prophecy will ever know where it is. And since Charles has been dead for more than a millennia, literally only God knows."

Krome: "Neria's after the tokens. I wish I knew in what order, but we know that the King of Clubs and the King of Diamonds are on top of her list, with which she can control Hell and Earth... We need to get them before she does."

"All the other crown tokens are pretty well hidden. But I cannot take part in any war or fight to bring them back. I've had my fill of war." Nur said.

Krome was visibly upset: "Cannot take part? Are you forgetting that you and your brother indirectly or directly caused some of these tokens to be created?"
Nur sighed deeply, as if about to give in: "Just tell me what your plan is, you know that neither angels nor fallen angels can wield the tokens."

Krome nodded: "I realize that. We need those tokens with humans we can trust. Humans who are strong and wise whom we can guide to Ascension so they will be able to wield the tokens and retain the elements for the good. I'll take care of the Heavenly Tokens, the King, Queen, Jack and Ace of Spades. After all, they are concerned with my own element and kingdom."

Nur rudely brushed the thought off with her hand: "Humans we can trust? Are you crazy? The age of Prophecy ended 1.4 millennia ago, Gabriel has basically retired."

Krome: "I was talking about those men and women, who (just like us), don't feel welcome when walking amongst mankind." Krome explained.

Nur: "You mean. The homo-superiors? The genetic anomalies? The freaks?"

Krome: "That sounds so much like you, Tetra."

"Shut up." Nur crossed her arms.

"Yes, I mean them. Since we can't wield any of the tokens, we'll have to entrust them to humans strong and wise enough to keep them, who would use them for the positive and to fight the negative."

Nur: "But what I don't understand is... Why don't we just get the keys back? It'll save us a lot of trouble."

Krome sighed. "Ok, it was a sort of security measure: When the keys were forged by the first Angels, they were placed within an inter-dimensional pentagram. One point in each realm with the fifth point being in the seventh heaven."

Tetra: "Ahh.. So when Neria stole one, it broke the link, and shattered the pentagram. A safety measure so that no one 'uninvited' can gain access to the seventh heaven. Clever. But of course, the compromise would be that the inter-dimensional gates are now unlocked. And anyone, even humans can now cross and challenge for the four thrones in each kingdom."

Krome raised a finger: "Remember, only ascended ones can challenge. Those who pass the twenty two levels. Which is in itself a monolithic task."

Nur leaned back on her chair: "So the only way to re-activate the keys is to make new ones and link them back, right? Using the same spell that was cast by those angels at the beginning of time, and create a new pentagram."

Krome shut his eyes and sighed, as if grasping for every inch of hope he had left inside him. "But see, if the tokens fall into the wrong hands and the four kingdoms of Earth, Atlantis, Deva and Hades are throned by evil..."

Tetra made a reversal motion with her hands. "They will cast the Pentagram reversed, and instead of the fifth point being the seventh heaven, it'll be the seventh circle of Hell. Throned by the Anti-God. Oh my God... Eternal darkness." The two were silent for a moment.

Tetra looked at Krome and shied away. "I know what you're going to ask me." "Will you help me aid humanity?" Krome asked. Nur sat down and shut her eyes. "This is going to turn into a lecture, isn't it?" Krome exclaimed. The lights dimmed. She raised her hand and a Tarot card formed in the air. It had the picture of a (fairly) young man on a precipice, with the sun in the air and a dog by his foot. He seemed happy, careless: and free.

"The Fool." Tetra said as Krome sat down.

"Man was put on this earth. He was blessed more than any creature ever created, even the angels, for they were created in God's own essence... They were God's most beloved creation." She said the last sentence spitefully.

She continued: "Yet as man's will separated from that of God's, he failed Him every time. God asked to be worshipped and accepted in return for man's bliss, instead they turned to rulers, angels, messengers, the demons and fake gods. The Age of Prophets came and went to no avail.

See Krome, I've already done my part for humanity: While my brother and I did the mistake of teaching the Pre Language, I tried to dilute it.

Like my brother who created Alphabets, I created the Tarot deck. It contains the twenty two letters in pictures, symbolized by the very same twenty two levels of Ascension."

Krome protested: "Ascent or Descent? Your deck is worthless, just as a good person can use it to Ascend into Light, so can an evil person use it to Descend into Darkness and premature Immortality."

Tetra shook her head: "Not my problem how they interpret the Secrets of Life." Krome stood up violently and his chair fell. "Your problem, ENTIRELY! You were punished, yet you continue to try to instill divine knowledge to the humans. Don't you see that the fact that humans are in ruin was because of YOU fallen angels?? The humans whom you, the great Tetra, made Zeros, you've named their card the card of the Fool! Yet you're the fool for missing a great opportunity to end what you started. For taking part in the history of the end of history. Your chance to reveal what's left of good in you. You see, if you don't help me in finding these people, there probably won't BE a judgment. And everyone, not just you and me, but the angels' lives as well, will be threatened by this Demonic onslaught of darkness."

Krome waited for an answer. Tetra looked at him with her sad eyes and he knew the answer was No.

Krome started walking towards the door. "I know you've made countless oaths before that you'll never help mankind again. I was a "fool" for thinking you still had it in you: One more sacrifice. But I guess not."

Tetra wept.

He opened the door. "Oh, and by the way. I lied. I did come here to tell you that you can go back home." He raised his hands towards her, a blue light surrounded her and ancient markings again found their place on her body. She fell to the ground in pain, as the wings grew back onto her. The door slammed. The tears continued flowing.

"The FOOL." she shouted. "Means the innocent..."

WARNING

the following literature contains profanity and violence. Do not read if any of the above offends you.

Chapter 2: The Venerated Evil

Part 1: Impulse

*Geneva, Switzerland.
The Day After.*

Claude rubbed his nose. It was itching. Hmmm. Maybe someone was thinking about him, you know, like the superstition.

He flicked his cigarette away. Nervousness was never a thing for him, yet he couldn't finish his cigarette because of his anxiety.

No, this was the last one in the shipment. If he could pull this off... Well, he'd be back to do another.

He motioned with his finger towards the others. Walking out of the shadows were two men, one scrawny, one medium-built, and a woman of far-eastern background. Meet Sieg, Nieder and Cristy.

The two men wore movers' clothes and carried a large piece of glass, probably for a window replacement.

Nieder: "Careful, idiot, move slowly or you'll break it."

Sieg: "Hey, I built it, so yeah; I know what I'm doing."

They walked for a distance, then stopped in front of a "hummer" parked outside the cafe. They lit a cigarette and started smoking, careful not to drop the glass.

A man, sipping his coffee, looked up towards the hummer and stood up for a minute. "They better not break that glass on my car, or I'll make them clean it with their teeth." A sexy brunette, wearing a silky white flowing dress and sitting across the small table looked up at him. "What did you say, Baby?"

"It's nothing Linda." John reassured her, and sat back down.

Sieg traced his finger up the glass piece and pressed a tiny button hidden at the top-right corner. A thin blue line started scanning from the top of the glass piece and steadily made its way down to the bottom.

Claude walked towards the hummer, he walked perpendicular to the glass where he could see Linda and John directly through the glass. He looked with the corner of his eye towards Cristy, now wearing a waitress' dress and serving customers in the cafe. Claude stood next to the hummer door and immediately inserted a card into the side of the door. He retracted the bottom half of the card and it clicked silently, flashing with a faint blue light.

Nieder took a drag off his cigarette and turned around to look through the glass. What he saw was the image of the front-left side of the hummer frozen at the time when Sieg pressed the scan button.

Claude was standing right there on the opposite side of the glass, yet he was invisible.

"Nice job." Nieder smiled.

"Danke." Sieg nodded.

A red light inside the hummer turned from red to green. Then immediately the lock flipped, and the card switched back to its normal position. Claude slipped the card back into his coat and opened the door to step inside just as Sieg and Nieder got done with their cigarettes.

Sieg pressed the button again and the image through the glass was real again. They carefully walked away with the glass.

John looked up and cursed Nieder and Sieg with a broken German accent. Then suddenly, he stopped and squinted his eyes as he looked into his car. Claude lit a cigarette and saw John looking towards him.

Claude: "Great..."

Just then, Cristy tapped John's shoulder. "Herr und Florein, would you like anything for..."

John stood up and pushed Cristy away.

"Out of my way! I have to stop them! They're stealing my... my..." John paused. He looked around. He stopped. "What? What am I?" He looked at his fiancé as she was calling out to him. "John? Are you ok? What were you saying?"

"Oh shit. I've been drugged. But how..." he thought to himself. Now his senses and abilities reduced to only sight and slow movement. He looked at Cristy. She looked worried. "Could it be this bitch drugged me? No she looks too stupid and simple."

Claude calmly pulled away and drove off with his new prize. "...I love Plan B's."

Part 2: Felidae

Claude laughed, remembering the look on John's face before the drugs kicked into his system. The drugs were born in Henrietta's lab. She, herself a former Chemical Engineer expelled from the University of Amsterdam because of her open ideas on chemical warfare. The drugs were administered into John's body by a tiny needle strapped to Henrietta's finger and carrying 0.5 milligrams of the formula: an offshoot of the PCP (Phenyl Cyclohexyl Piperidine) compound.

Then there is Sieg. They call him Skeleton Brains. Claude laughed at the thought. A super-genious computer hacker. He tried to go through the university's Computer Engineering program, but he found the subjects too easy for him to pay attention to, especially since his hyperactive brain creates ideas once every three milliseconds!

So, as surprising as it sounds, he flunked. He now works for Eisenvorhang (The Iron Curtain), along with the others. He got recruited after going famous in the underground world with his invention of the Noisy Port. A card that's attached into a slot in the computer and produces an intensive sonic pitch when an intruder tries to snoop into your computer. Since the invention damages the eardrum (or, if set to the highest frequency can shatter it!) he was placed in jail for attempted terrorism. In jail he decided, "The hell with trying to make it legitimate in this world. No one appreciates you. The underground is where I belong." Surely enough, his oath was fulfilled. As soon as he got out of jail, 4 years later, there was a job waiting for him at this infamous German mob.

Claude rolled back the window and flicked the cigarette out. He started rolling the window back up, but he paused for a moment... Just a moment.... Then he continued rolling the window till it was shut. He rubbed his chin, then slowly reached under his jacket and pulled out his Uzi.

He slammed on the breaks thrice in the traditional non-ABS emergency break.

"AUMPH!" the intruder fell in the back seat... It was a female's voice. He jumped to the other seat and aimed his gun at the woman.

"So it was a trap. Pretty smart. Who are you?" It was obvious he was pissed.

She climbed back onto her seat. She was a pure-bred French-girl, and he could tell from his first glance. She was a real blonde. Sparkly blue eyes and thick lips, no lipstick, just the way Claude liked it. She wore a plain, tight brown suit, apparently to match the color of the leather seats.

"How did you know?" She asked.

"You're stupid, you were standing right above me; don't you know hummers have very big side mirrors? And by the way, no one ever aims a gun at me. And those who do it jokingly die first then I laugh later. Now answer the question. Who the FUCK are you?"

"Officer Kathrine Lapierre. Interpol. Call me Kate." She answered and extended her hand to shake his.

"What the fuck? I'm pointing an Uzi in your face, you should be AFRAID. And I call YOU whatever I WANT, bitch."

"Go ahead, kill me. I'm underpaid anyway." She diligently replied. "Alright. I can shoot you in the head right now, or we can go for a nice quiet ride, maybe have some dinner, then go to my place for a little drink, then I shoot you in the head; if you prefer to go down with class. So which one would it be?" He calmly asked.

"Let's see... Umm... Can I phone a friend?" She asked, softly.

He smashed her head with the Uzi. "You make me laugh, bitch. Now shut the fuck up, I'll make the plans myself." He carelessly threw her to the front seat and courteously tied her seatbelt. He rolled the window down and threw her pistol out.

"It's called frisking; I'm good, aren't I?"

She nodded, not feeling like cracking another joke. The "crack" on her head gave her too much of a headache. She brushed her hair out of her face, wincing as she brushed the part of her forehead where she was bleeding. He lit another cigarette and continued driving off. The hummer picked up speed and the wind started blowing on Claude's face.

She shut her eyes and took a deep breath.

Claude turned to her. "What you gonna do? Try to distract me by taking off your shirt? Ain't gonna work, as much as I admire your -works- you know."

There was silence as they stared blankly at each other.

Kate smiled, and with one hand opened her door and with the other unlatched the seatbelt, making her take off into the street at 60 KPH. However, she twisted, raising a leg high up - balancing her body in the air, then landed on all fours on the road: The Cat-Tail Maneuver.

Claude watched this in bewilderment with his back against the steering wheel. "What the hell". Not noticing the hummer was going towards the other lane on the road! He turned around back to his steering wheel, jacked up the handbrake and spun a perfect 180. But you have to realize that only people with an extremely high agility and driving experience can pull that off in a hummer!

"Ok smart-ass, now what." Kate asked herself as the hummer roared towards her. "Don't PUSH me." She hissed, her nose fiercely wrinkled with her forehead. The hummer accelerated, Claude laughed lunatically. But before slamming into her, Kate jumped, taking total control of her Animal Assimilation and landed on the roof. "She's a freak!" Claude screamed. And spun the car in zigzags, trying to make her fall.

Kate's face turned to a wicked frown, and you could swear that you were seeing an angry cat's face. The palm of her hands were now pads, and through the tips of her fingers, claws started growing, breaking her nails in half. The rest of her hands were now full of thick white hair.

Claude was panicking, yet angry. "That bitch is a cat, should've killed the freak when I had the chance."

He screamed as claws ripped across his face, barely missing his left eye. The car screeched and veered, then crashed at a light post, throwing Kate across the sidewalk.

Claude shook his head, kicked open the door and loaded his Uzi. "Cat-Bitch. Today, you die."

She moaned. Then raised her face off the sidewalk and turned to look at Claude. "The name... Is Wily Kate. "

"What? How old are you? Twenty Five? You should've outgrown your cartoons." Claude mocked.

He squeezed the trigger.... Kate was, one moment lying completely on the floor, and the other hurtling upwards.

Claude looked up, his eyes so wide they were almost ripping out of their sockets, Kate's foot sprawled across the air and crashed through Claude's face.

She landed; didn't even need to gasp for breath.

Now completely back in human form, she unzipped one of the pockets of her leather suit; she took out a pair of handcuffs while turning Claude's half-conscious body around.

"And YOU, Monsieur Claude... You are under International arrest."

Part 3: Confinement

Nieder mumbled. He punched the bottom of the upper bunk-bed with his fist. Claude exclaimed: "You want to calm down, or do you want me to choke you to sleep?"

"HEY!" Nieder shouted, jumping out of the bed.

He stood in the middle of the jail cell. They were in Lyons, France, the base of the International Police (InterPol). This jail was the site of a 1795 massacre, in which 99 Jacobin prisoners were massacred by French rioters.

"YOU are the one who got us here in the first place. You open your mouth and spill your guts like... Like... Like a GIRL!". Claude shook his head: "Oh boy, he's going to turn into his "other" personality again.". Nieder grinded his teeth: "WHAT did you say to me?".

"Man, we have to find a way out of this thing." Sieg was frantically pacing the cell, examining the jail bars once and going around to the walls and feeling, as if he were playing an adventure game where if he looked for clues, he'd find a loose brick, which will open a trap door to an escape route. No such luck here.

Claude looked at him: "Sieg. Chill. Sit down."

Sieg: "No, no, man, we have to get out of here! PLEASE Claude help me find a way OUT!!! I'm not going through this SHIT again!!!"

Claude shook his head: "I knew it was a bad mistake to confess." In the interrogation room with Kathrine interrogating him where she could scratch his face all bloody? No, freaks "freaked" the hell out of him so he spilled and he narcked on his three partners in crime.

Even as Sieg paced the cell like crazy, nobody noticed that in one of the corners, a shadow stood there and observed them. She had a grin on her face. Fixated; in a way, the grin said "What did I get myself into." And in another the grin said. "They're just the ones that I need."

The shadow walked away from the corner. The light outside the jail cell slowly started illuminating her as she walked into the open.

It was a woman. Tall, slender and sexy. She was bald yet retained the full charisma and elegance of an intriguing and to-die-for personage.

"What the hell?" Sieg was the first to notice. Nieder who himself had had his share of PCP (only voluntarily!) slipped into a "trip". "Oh SHIT! IT'S THE DEVIL! And I KNEW it was a woman!"

The woman frowned. "The devil? Don't tell me I'm supposed to take that as a compliment. Please. The devil is so... Sixties."

"I am Mika Wolfgang. Some... Old... Friends of mine used to call me **Neria** ."

Claude got down from his bed. "I know exactly what this is. You're an agent from InterPol. What, the information I gave you wasn't enough? Motherfucking pigs." Neria rubbed her chin, deep in thought. She had a big smile on her face and she looked up and down Claude's body.

"I'm here to test... "Gifted" people for something that I have planned. As of yet I haven't found anybody good enough. But the three of you and Cristy... Especially You, Claude... I've been watching for the past couple of days. You're good. You're REALLY good."

Claude thought. And for some reasons remembered his nose itching earlier yesterday before the hummer heist. "Yeah, that nose-itching thing. It's not a superstition. It's true." Mika said.

Claude gasped. "What the hell?" He thought: "She can read my mind?". Neria looked deep into his eyes, and he heard: "Yes I can." and this time, she didn't move her lips.

Claude took a step back: "Alright, you're starting to freak me out, bitch. Who the FUCK are you."

Neria frowned: "My sensitive ears aren't used to that kind of language. You fuck. Oh, that feels good."

Sieg was laughing: "Holy shit she's funny. Fucking strange she came out of nowhere but she's funny."

Mika: "Do you believe in God?" She was looking at Claude then turned around at the rest. "Anyone?"

They all shook their heads implying "No."

Niedrig shook his head: "I thought I saw God once when I was on an LSD trip." Claude slapped Nieder on the back of his head.

Mika sighed. "Me? Once I was a firm believer. For a long time actually. So long I lost count. I was close to him and he was close to me. Then... Suddenly... He just forgot about me. His attention turned to other... "Minor" creatures." She raised her eyes at the three men. They had no idea what she was talking about. "I got posted far. Far away. Where light was nowhere to be seen, or felt. Then. Years later. I stopped believing. "

Claude: "Good for you. How does it feel. Not going to church? Sitting in on Sundays and..."

Mika ignored his sentiment.

Claude: "You going to explain what the heck you're doing here or you're gonna get diced. Right here, right now." Claude exclaimed, apparently, his show of confidence was just a cover for his pure fear.

"Try me." Mika said. Her smile was from ear to ear.

Claude took two steps towards her and raised his hand high in the air and brought it down.

"Ok. Let's see." Mika thought. "I can take a step back and let him swing through the air, then I can punch his guts, throwing him back up into his bed... Or, I can take it orientally and use his slam against him, driving it to the floor. Or, I can make it really funny and play along, give him the illusion that he's smashed me into a hundred pieces, then reform like in the Terminator movie and laugh at him." "What the hell?" Claude said. His fist paused in the air, only he couldn't move. Just talk and think. Sieg and Nieder were in the same situation; they tried to move, but all they could do was breathe quickly. One more dose of weirdness and everyone would slip into shock.

"Wait, Claude. I'm thinking." Mika said.

She suddenly stepped back and looked at Claude. She bit one side of her lower lip, as if deep in planning. She walked towards Claude, still frozen, and moved his hand directly above his head. "What the f..." Claude was perplexed. The freeze spell was uncast. The fist came crashing down into Claude's head, full of a conflagration of kinetic and potential energy. The punch rendered him instantaneously unconscious.

Later

Claude came to.

He opened his eyes. He felt like he was having a major hangover. He had an immense headache. He had a hard-time remembering where he was. And... He had an IMMENSE headache. Claude: "What the..... Where am I?"

His eyes regained focus. And he saw Mika... Now she reverted to Neria, with wings spread.

Sieg and Nieder were ogling her appendages.

"What... Am I in Hell?" Claude asked.

Neria looked at Claude scornfully then laughed. "I'll take THAT as a compliment." and she winked. "So how's your head? You're right. I am a bitch. Feels good to me, does it feel good for you?"

"I... I'm sorry." Claude said.

"Whoa. Check this out boss." Nieder said "She's like a fallen angel. She's from Hell man."

"Are you ready to listen?" Neria asked.

15 minutes later.

"So... Hell... I mean Hades, is actually a whole world, like the Earth? Where people live, eat, fuck?" Nieder asked. He was sitting next to Sieg on the lower bed. Claude lay down on the upper one, listening intently. "None of that bullshit that the bible tells people?" Nieder asked. Neria nodded. "Well. Hades is not like Earth. Earth is material, it's reality. You have money, you have a job, you have death, you have science, you have day and night. In Hades, it's always night, you don't need food or sleep or money. It's like being in a dream state. If you're powerful enough, just think of something and it'll be. Heaven is the same, only Hades is in pure darkness. But trust me, it's better in Hades, coz you get to do BAD things." Neria had a wicked smile on.

Sieg and Nieder giggled, jabbing each other in the ribs. "Like, FREE PROSTITUTES MAN!" Sieg said.

Neria continued: "There's also no science. Only magic, which Lilith used to teach to the demons..."

"Whoa... Wait... Back up a second. You didn't mention anything about DEMONS." Claude said.

Nieder: "D... Demons? Like in all those horror movies?"
Mika sighed. "This is going to be so hard to explain."

A guard was standing outside the cell looking. The three guys didn't notice because they were too involved with the story-telling.

"Who the HELL are you idiots talking to?" He asked.

Mika turned around to the guard, and then looked back at the guys. They looked puzzled. "Don't worry, only you three can see and hear me. Tell him you're just hallucinating." Mika assured them.

"We're just hallucinating!" Nieder shouted.

The guard walked away. "Frickin Germans and their cocaine. They should be more harsh, those fucking wardens."

"Ok, look." Neria said. "There once was this evil king who ruled Jerusalem. He was rich and greedy and G... Umm.. He was given everything he ever wanted. Now this king, he was given a ring that would make him the undisputed ruler of Earth. This ring caused Beelzebub, the first fallen angel, to be dethroned from Hades. This king enslaved him for many, many years. All the demons hated this racist king, who cast a spell that disallowed any angels or demons from claiming the thrones of any of the

four kingdoms of Air, Fire, Water or Earth. That's why I've been looking for four people... To be the King, Queen, Prince and Knight of these worlds, one by one."

Claude nodded: "Me, Sieg, Nieder and Cristy." Neria looked at him with a mysterious smile on her face. "So we need the ring to be the rulers of Hades right?", Claude Asked.

Neria shook her head: "Not exactly. Whoever wields the ring controls demons and angels, that's why we'll need that before anything else. As for Hades, it's ruled by the King, Queen and Jack of Clubs. In time, you'll get to know what they are. Then we'll have to go and find them; we gain control of Hades, then we can wake the Arch-army of Hell with the Ace of Clubs."

Sieg: "Whoa Neria. Unlike you, we have limited minds, so slow down on us. But I want to ask you... Are we expecting any resistance?"

Neria shook her head: "Not in Hades, the demons from the inside are expecting me, and overthrowing the angel guards of hell would be a piece of cake with the King of Diamonds. But I have a hunch that a Herald has been sent from Heaven to stop me, so it might be harder to gain control of Earth. That's why we need to move quickly."

Claude smiled. "Sounds good to me; I wouldn't mind a few challenges and adventures."

Sieg: "Hey do you know that when I was 11 years old, I finished 15 adventure games on the PC and Mac?" Claude covered his face with his hand and tried to resist punching Sieg's face. "It's not the same thing, fuck head." Nierger snickered. Neria sighed and looked at Claude mysteriously. There was a long silence. Claude shrugged: "What?"

Neria: "To rule the universe, we'll have to unleash the elementals."

Everybody got up and with one voice said: "WHAT?"

Neria had an evil smile on: "Demons, they're just inhabitants of Hades. Just like Humans inhabit Earth. But you see, every realm has elemental beings that are lying deep within them. Waiting for freedom that will never come, unless, the Ace of the element awakens them."

WARNING

the following literature contains profanity, sexuality and violence. Do not read if any of the above offends you.

Part 4: The Shadows of Fire

Later

"Archdemons?" Clause asked, half sarcastically.

"How simple minded you are, Claude. Indeed, you wouldn't grasp the fact that even when these creatures first existed, they were thrown into the bottomless pit; where they are still falling. That's because they were totally uncontrollable. They wreaked havoc on the universe. Their fiery breaths were so hot, they blew planets apart."

Claude shook his head interruptingly: "Ok, lemme tell you something about simple minded. Now, to burn a planet until it blows up, that's scientifically impossible, Neria. I'm sorry, but welcome to the 21st century."

Neria frowned: "Are you calling me a liar?". There was a long silence.

"Umm.." Sieg raised his hand. "Sorry to interrupt, but there's something called thermonuclear reaction, Claude. That's when the temperature of an atom is so hot that the nuclei fuse together, releasing an explosive energy. Throw a dozen thermonuclear bombs on Mars and it's Kaput; Nuclear Fusion, physics. Give her a break, she came from fucking hell."

Claude nodded at Sieg: "Really? I suppose you have a scientific explanation for the "bottomless pit" as well, Mr. I am too good to be in school?"

Neria rolled her eyes and thought to herself. "If they only knew that all the collective knowledge of humanity wasn't close to one percent of the knowledge of the universe." She thought.

Sieg scratched his head. "Could be a blackhole. That's the only scientific thing I can think of that can hold these creatures, if they ever existed."

Claude thought, then nodded his head at Neria: "Ok, go on."

Neria looked at him with piercing eyes. Claude Gulped. There was deafening silence.

Claude gulped again. "Anyway. So what was I gonna ask you? Oh yeah, these Chaos things. If they've been falling for the past 50 million years, they'll probably beat the shit out of the first dude they see. So I ain't waking them up, ok?" Neria nodded: "Indeed, Claude. Indeed, their anger shall be great. But as the King of Clubs, your scepter will put them under your control. And the Ace will lead them in the War." she looked at Sieg. Sieg smiled: "Cool." then he looked at Nieder: "I'm gonna be better than you. I'm gonna be half human, half watchamacallem, coz I'm gonna be the fucking ACE of clubs man."

Niedrig frowned, obviously jealous: "What about me? What am I going to be? If Claude's the King, Cristy's the Queen and Skeleton-Brains -who would've done a

better job as the fricking Joker- is the Ace, what bout me?". Neria: "You'll be the prince - the Jack, Nieder. As the Prince, one of the Ace's principal jobs is to be your personal bodyguard.". Nieder looked at Sieg and smiled: "Hear that, Skeleton Brains? You're going to be my fucking body guard, and you have to shine my shoes too..."

"Go fuck yourself." Sieg said.

Claude roared. "You stupid little kids, let Neria finish, this is important." Neria nodded: "Thank you Claude. As I was saying, as the Jack, you oversee the Kingdom, advise the King and Queen, and make sure your citizens are not revolting. You're also responsible for the Kingdom if Claude or Cristy are not around, or in the unlikely case that the Kingdom has no King or Queen yet."

Nieder nodded: "Good enough."

"So how are we going to get to Hades?" Claude asked.

Neria took a step back and reached to the air in front of her. Suddenly, the dark room seemed to get darker.

A pitch-black object formed above Neria's palm. It formed into the shape of a clover leaf: The symbol of Clubs. It floated above Neria's hand and spun slowly.

"Cool. What's that?" Sieg asked.

"The symbol of Clubs. This is the key to Hades. It's actually a gemstone, created from the essence of the element of hades: Shadow of Fire. And crafted by one of the first angels, Ballaton." Neria answered back.

Niedrig stood up: "Kewl! Can I touch it?"

Claude: "If you've got the key, why don't we just go in there? Kick the shit out of the angels then call these Chaos things."

"No, the key's to unlock the gates between Hades and the other worlds, I have it, so all we need to do is walk into Hades, through its portal in Purgatory. But that's not the problem, the army is that the army of angels is too powerful for you and me put together, even with the King of Diamonds. I need "Super" villains by my side for that." Neria mocked.

Claude frowned: "What the hell do you mean? I thought you CHOSE us." "You're nowhere close to whom I chose. In order to wield any of the four tokens, you need to be ascended. That means passing twenty two levels of Ascension, reversed." Neria explained. The guys shook their heads. They were too confused. "I don't have all the time in the world to explain every detail, so you'll just have to find out yourselves." Neria said.

Claude: "But you ARE going to help us, aren't you?"

Neria nodded: "I'm going to be there every step of the way. And as for the other requirement... That can be fixed. By giving you guys a little... Boost." Neria smiled wickedly.

Suddenly, black serpents slithered out of the spinning blackness of nothing and crawled down Neria's body. There were many of them. At first three, then ten, then forty, then a hundred. But they were BLACK like the shadow so they blended easily with the decor. The three were panicking. "GET THOSE THINGS OFF OF US!" The guys screamed.

The snakes crawled up Nieder's body, they all gathered in the center of his body and formed a rope of blackness circling his front and rear body, from crotch up to his head and all the way to the back and buttocks.

The rope covered his face and he couldn't even scream anymore. But the pain he felt was excruciating. This was no dream. This was no "trip". This was real hell.

Sieg was in even more horror. The snakes took over his head, and swamped his entire spinal cord area. He felt an acidic sting in his back and felt the snakes trying to melt their way INTO his body.

Claude was in frenzy. Seeing a hulk like that thrash about around the cell in total agony is a sad sight indeed; the snakes covered his hand and it looked as if, for a moment, he had no right hand. He slammed it against the wall. He felt no release from the hundred or so snakes that swamped his hand. All he felt was heat that was so painful he could swear that his nerves were about to shut down.

Neria laughed. Her laugh echoed the entire cell. The three men were suffering and they could very well hear her laugh. But no, it was too late now. Whatever was happening to them. It was happening.

Suddenly Nieder's body broke in two, splitting him into two identical halves. The snakes filled the vacuum that was his internal organs and suppressed the impending blood-gush, absorbing it instead.

The snakes on Sieg's body disappeared into his spinal cord and the rest slithered under his skin through his cerebral cortex and into his brain. He fell to the floor in a violent epileptic episode.

As for Claude, he stared at his hand as the shadow formed into a metal, going through and into his hand. "WHAT" he screamed "is HAPPENING to me!"

"I introduce you to my three super villains." Neria said mysteriously.

"Niedrig..." She turned to him. Out of each half of his body, a shadow poured forth like black vomit, and filled the void, forming two people: Each one half man, half shadow. The Two "half" men stood up.

They looked at each other. "I'm... Two" he said, with two voices. His shadow halves moved themselves towards each other then merged. And out of the conflagration two opposite men emerged: One Man, one Shadow.

"... YOU, are **ShadowFlank.**" Neria Continued

"You can do two things at once, two simultaneous physical egos, if you will. Moreover, the shadow half can do superhuman activities. It can go through solids, climb buildings and move instantaneously to anywhere that the shadow can stretch to. The only catch is, the shadow half should only reveal itself when there's no light. Otherwise, your real shadow cast against light will be angered and will fight your shadow-half to the death."

Neria turned to Sieg. "Siegfried..."

Sieg was on the floor. One knee on the ground. He looked as if he was to begin a race. "I feel it..." he smiled. "I can FEEL IT IN ME!" he shouted.

Neria clasped her arms and smiled.

"Ready..." Sieg said.

"...Steady...." He switched to the "Steady" leaning position. As if about to run a 200-meter dash.

"Go!" He sprinted. In this small cell, you wouldn't think there's anywhere to run to. But he raced towards the wall and continued vertically upwards, as if gravity had no meaning to him anymore. Worse still, he could continue running across the ceiling, wall, floor, round and round again.

Nieder nodded with a smile. "Nice...." Who was now back into a one-man form.

Sieg paused halfway to the top of the wall then leaped across the cell to the top of the bunk bed and clasped his hands behind his back. "Don't feel tired at all!"

"...Hyperact.

The shadows inside your blood-stream and cerebrum take control of your hormonal and chemical balances in your body, boosting and balancing your testosterone, adrenaline, dopamine and serotonin levels accordingly. You are not only stronger, but you can also move faster, think faster, heal faster and sleep less without tiring. Your new friend, though, is the water bottle. You'll be easily susceptible to dehydration. So be careful when using your shadow powers.

She now turned to Claude.

"And you... My dear."

He was clasping his right hand with his left. Apparently still in pain. But he turned to her and raised his left hand at her. "Allow me." He walked towards the cell wall and

raised his right fist in the air. The pitch black metal seemed to shimmer for a moment.

He punched through the wall...

A scream was heard in the next cell as the punch hit the bunk bed "next door" and made it sprawl in the air then slam-slide across the floor, making its two occupants fly outwards, each hitting their heads against the walls. The huge bunk bed crashed into that cell's metal bars and the reinforced steel gladly gave into the makeshift battering-ram, opening the steel far and wide.

"I..." Shouted Claude, his skin throbbing with veins filled with a cocktail of blood and shadow: "...AM the Iron Fist... EISENFAUST!"

Neria disappeared. "I'll be back, with the next Queen of Clubs."

An alarm sounded throughout the jail and guards stormed the hallway. EisenFaust, HyperAct and ShadowFlank stood side by side.

Each of them smiled, and without a word they said:

"BRING IT ON."

History's about to prepare a new passage in its book:

"300 years later. A secluded jail in Lyons France. Was witness to a horrible incident. This day marks yet another massacre. But this time. No one was spared."

Chapter 3: The Nether

Part 1: Arrival

Krome handed his passport over to the customs official.

The official browsed through the passport and handed it back to him, the red jacket on the passport indicated that Mr. Comeau was a CD. A member of the Diplomatic Corps.

"How was your trip to Turkey, sir?"

Krome nodded. "Exciting." his face showing no emotion.

A black-suited man walked over to him and took his suitcase.

"Yeah, I know the weather down there is damn good compared to here, eh?" The official exclaimed.

"No. I prefer the cold." Krome said, turning the official's smile into a stare.

He walked past a couple of hallways. This is the Halifax Airport in Nova Scotia, Canada. True, Krome is actually an angel called "Aryel" from the Devic Kingdom who can instantaneously travel from one point to another, heaven or earth at the speed of thought, but you wouldn't know who's tracking your whereabouts. So to be in the High Commissioner's office in Vienna at one instant and in Iraq the other (as his travels took him in search for the fallen angel Tetra) would be suspicious. The last thing he wanted was for people to find out he was the Herald of the Devic Kingdom on Earth. His latest assignment from heaven is to make sure that the tokens of Earth, Fire, Air and Water don't fall into the hands of evil.

The suited man shut the trunk of the shiny silver MD Inc. "Baron" sports/luxury car hybrid (complete with a black top). He tipped the suited man about fifty Canadian dollars and took the driver seat of the car, which had red license plates with the initials "CD" in them and KROME for the label.

The car drove off, taking the car outside the city limits towards Krome's secluded Mansion. For a rich and handsome young man, Krome Comeau was a loner. And he preferred it that way. Maybe that was about to change... Who knows?

As he drove, he thought about the conversation he had had with Tetra. Saving the world is going to be hard, especially with no help. Worse than that, he knew very well that he couldn't interfere with humanity's business, that was the condition of his stay on Earth, whether he wanted to save it or not.

So even as a diplomat, he was incognito. He served no one but himself and represented no one. His guise as a non-specific "Diplomat" was the best way to give him freedom to travel and operate with minimal tracking.

He raised his eyebrows in surprise as he watched the road turn into a still image. His eyes darted towards his watch. Surely enough, the "seconds" hand wasn't moving.

Time was paused.

He opened the door and stepped out. The road was frozen at 110 kilometers per hour, so it looked like a big long smudge. A magnificent life-sized painting, if he ever saw one.

The sky turned purple, and wind blew. He watched as the entire visible sky burned irrevocably. The fire was fierce, yet calm. That was the sky's way of welcoming a supreme being...

For the great Archangel stood in the heavens:

Metatron, Chancellor of Heaven.

Krome humbly stood on his knee and bowed his head. "Lord."

Metatron smiled. "You look so small, Aryel. Not befitting for the Lion of God." Krome answered back. "Below the heavens, there is no class or size, Your Eminence."

Metatron raised Krome's chin. He was now changed into the form of a man. He wore a flowing white gown, and had a long white beard, his skin was dark, unmistakably a Semitic Hebrew. On his side he carried a book.

"You're wrong. As above, so below. Don't you know?.. You see my young Aryel - or Krome if I may. I, too, was a man. A long time ago. As Prophet Enoch. And my brother was Elijah."

Krome stood up and looked at Enoch. "The secrets that heaven holds."

Enoch smiled. "But the Angel that I envy most, is my own sister, Shekinah. For, even though unseen - only felt, she is the closest to humans. For she doesn't merely walk among them, she walks within them."

Krome looked concerned. "Lord, it is not common for you to contact me this way, does the Host need aid?"

Enoch rubbed his long beard. "I have good news and bad news. There was a rebellion in the realm of Hades, the Demons stormed the Gates of Fire and were going to escape. But the Host gathered an army and we were successful in pulling them back in. Now more angels have been staged into guarding the gates. About 7000 new ones, but as you know, since the keys have disappeared, Hades can be easily accessed by humans wielding the Nether Tokens." Enoch looked at Krome, his hand motioning him to complete his sentence.

"The Crown Tokens. Of Clubs. Tetra calls them the Crown of Wands. There are four."

Enoch nodded. "Yes, that's right. Blame it on these corruptible bodies for my being forgetful. And speaking of, how fares she, tetra?"

Krome shook his head. "I've just returned from Turkey, she's fine. I thank you on her behalf for your pardon, Your Peace."

Metatron smiled. "Why, you look like you don't know."

Krome frowned. "Know what?"

"It was fated to happen. Teaching man about magic."

Krome was angry. "She's suffered for 17 millenia, because it was all FATED?" Enoch shook his head. "Why, you also think it was chance that Adam and Eve were sent down from heaven? You think the human race is here because of something that wasn't supposed to happen?"

Krome looked confused. Enoch put his hand on Krome's shoulder as a father does.

"Ah. Still young I see. You'll understand one day. When you understand what fate means."

Krome: "Try me." He stepped back, making Enoch's hand fall.

Enoch sighed. "Fate is the book in which what to happen is written." Krome shook his head. "I don't understand."

"Us Angels. The Humans, the Demons and the Sprites. Our bodies move in one direction, towards the becoming. God on the other-hand, Was, Is and Will Be. Forget thee not, the Divine Name of God."

Krome shut his eyes as The Word danced on his tongue. A word of an ancient language, older than the original Babylonian language. The language that Angels taught men once, but became forgotten after The First Fall of Babylon. The feeling of Peace filled him.

"The created cannot understand the Creator. That alone is knowledge enough for me." Krome concluded.

Enoch smiled. "Congratulations, Krome. You've uncovered the secret of knowing the Hidden. Anyway, enough of that. I've told you the good news. Now for the bad news." Enoch said.

He didn't wait for Krome to ask. "One Demon managed to escape."

Krome raised his eyebrows. "A demon has crossed through the dimensional gates?" Enoch nodded, then his face turned sad. "On Earth our powers are limited. Even as angels."

Krome: "What? Four divine words is all that stands between a Demon and banishment into Hell."

Enoch smiled. "None was able to get close enough to him to cast the prayer of banishment..."

There was a flash. Krome and Enoch stood next to a river. It was late at night. The air smelled foul. "...Except one." Enoch finished his sentence.

They were standing on a murky River, once known as The River Ocean. The river that enters the Gates of Hell and converges with the River Styx. This is the River that leads to Hell, in a land called Purgatory, a land of eternal night that separates the Realm of Earth from the Realm of Fire.

Krome strained to see in the dark and saw a shadow walking towards him. It was a man. Black-skinned and towering. He wore a flowing black/purple cloak that rustled slowly with the wind.

Enoch: "This is Locan. In Hades he used to be known as The Lurking Shadow. He was a scientist of hell. Some say he was successful in creating something... Sinister. Evil. Mysterious.

Enoch looked at Krome. "Answer me this..."

"What is greater than God. More evil than Lucifer. The rich want it, and the poor have it."

Krome thought. He frowned, and looked back at Enoch.

Part 2: Shadow of Shadows

Krome: "That question doesn't have an answer"

Enoch shook his head. "Think, Krome. What is greater than God, more evil than Lucifer. The rich want it and the poor have it."

Krome thought then shook his head: "Nothing."

Enoch nodded. "Exactly."

Krome: "And what's this got to do with Locan... Wait a minute."

Enoch: "He wants to obliterate existence. Methodically, a big-bang reversal."

Krome: "He wants to change anything and everything into nothing. The ultimate Doom's Day Device."

Enoch: "That's right. And Earth - The Realm of Reality is the only place where that can be achieved."

Krome snickered: "Ironic. There was a Canadian scientist who researched Anti-Matter Technology. The United Nations, secretly of course, shut him down by lobbying the government, saying that the Technology may be stolen by terrorists to build Anti-Matter Bombs that could threaten the planet. Yet, here's a scientist-slash-terrorist from Hell, who's pulling it off."

Enoch nodded: "Not only did he successfully build an Anti-Matter Bomb that can threaten the planet, but he's also built a Chain-Reaction module into it that can threaten, in essence the entire Universe. Self-replicating Anti-Matter of sorts. Like an explosive virus." Krome sighed: "So the whole demonic rebellion was a cover for Locan to sneak out of Hades."

Enoch looked at Krome "I never thought of that. But yes, the correlation is plausible... So much for my good news." Enoch snickered.

The two were interrupted by fluttering in the air. An angel appeared; she wore an illuminating silver skirt and held a bow in her hand.

Krome looked up at her. "Artemis" he thought to himself. "Leader of Heaven's Archery Host. Men used to worship her as the Goddess of the Moon, way before the Age of Prophets. On Earth, she's known as Diana."

Diana strung a bow and shot it at Locan.

Locan grinned, his right eye shone with an evil glow.

He leapt in the air, and jumped from rock to rock, his amazing quickness left each rock he jumped off of intact and unturned.

With each jump, Diana shot an arrow, marking off about a hundred arrows every thirty seconds. Yet, each one missed its mark by at least three feet. Diana gasped for breath. Her earthly form was, after all, subject to fatigue.

Suddenly, she screamed as a gigantic hand grabbed her neck in the middle of the air and knocked her to the ground with a tremendous crash.

Krome winced. Locan held Diana tight and screamed into her face: "LISTEN TO ME!" Krome paused. "He wanted to say something?"

Diana spat into Locan's face. "I don't listen to demons. They are all liars and curators of confusion..." Locan covered her mouth with his hand. "I - WANT - ARYEL. In this realm, he's known as Krome."

Krome raised his eyebrows. He turned around to Enoch and waited for him to answer his lingering question.

Enoch shrugged. "We think he threatened a Shaman or Witch's life in this realm, and compelled them to track you down. Witches backed by demons, you know it's a boiling combination. He probably killed them after they provided the information that he needed."

"So you didn't come to me because you picked me, you came to me because this demon did."

"I detect a tone of anger in your voice, Krome. But I warn you, there are two sides in this conflict. I'm on yours, but he's not." Enoch pointed at Locan, who was now standing about 20 feet away from Diana.

It all took one instant. He turned around and out of his coat came a long Sai (a pointed one-handed dagger) that he flung across the air and passed clean through Diana.

"DIANA!" Krome screamed. He ran towards her to hold her, but his hands passed right through her. After all, this happened hours ago. Now, it was just reminiscence.

She moaned. Smiling defiantly as the pain kicked in. Krome looked at her, as if straining to see what she was thinking. He turned around to look at the Sai. It was enchanted by an unholy Spell of Blasphemy. The hypothetical silver bullet for angels. Diana was dying. Krome painfully looked at her. Suddenly, her eyes' focus shifted, and for a moment, it looked like she was looking directly AT Krome...

Her lips parted: "Aryel... My love."

Diana shut her eyes. And went to sleep, permanently.

"I didn't know angels bled." Locan said. His voice wasn't sarcastic. Instead, there was a faint hint of sadness. He walked away, dragging the shadows of the night with his cloak as he merged with obscurity.

Krome stood up and shook his fist in the air: "By the wrath of God. I will bring you to justice!" He screamed.

"And NOW..."

He continued, his anger sending ripples across the vision...

"It's **PERSONAL**."

Part 3: The Host and the Uninvited

He walked. The rain poured. The wind blew. The cloak rustled. The people gawked. He was a demon, walking late at night on Houston Street of Lower Manhattan, New York. It wasn't just the dark sunglasses that gave away that he was "out of place", but it was also his large stature, his flowing cloak and the fact that he had no aura. In short, he smelled fishy. Some assumed he was taking a break from an action-movie shoot. Some assumed he was some kind of mob lord. In either case, people crossed to the other side of the street as he walked towards them. Paranoia after all, is a thing that people in this city have been living with for a long time now. Locan noticed four things. One, yes, everyone was gawking at him. Two, there are these large billboards that have pictures of people wearing underwear and others which show things called: cigarettes, which you are asked to buy, but apparently killed you. Three, at four different points around him, there was a man or woman standing still, wearing all white and giving him nasty looks and four, that "jaguar" parked in the middle of the cross-walk, the red license plate read: "KROME".

He smiled. "And I was just getting used to the pollution."

"Locan." The firm voice was unmistakably of one man. One angel. His job is to look over human beings. His job title is Herald of the Devic Kingdom. His name is Aryel - The Lion of God.

Locan sighed, as he turned around towards the voice four consecutive hollow thuds slammed against his body. He found himself sprawling across the air, breaking steeply to a 90-degree angle. Now this was something his human form wasn't used to: Lack of atmospheric pressure. And it was decreasing, fast. He winced as his human-body eardrums suffered with the break-neck increasing altitude, and he felt like they were going to burst.

The flight stopped. He was now high up in the air. About 20,000 feet. Four air sprites grabbed a hold of each of his limbs. He looked around and snickered. "Whups, can we go down for a second? I think I lost my cloak."

He looked up and saw hordes of angels descending in the horizon, a hundred in every degree that he turned.

Aryel glided towards him. "You mean this?" He held the cloak with his hand. "Pretty impressive, demon; a cloak that reaches into the abyss of hell; specifically into your demonic workshop. Where you've built your arsenal of equipment and weaponry of evil."

"Hey I was bored. You wanted me to spend all my time playing checkers like all the other demons?" Locan replied defiantly.

"You're lucky I'm a no-nonsense angel, Locan so I'll ignore your insolence. Now you don't belong here. And I'm obliged to pass two judgments, one for illegal crossing your boundaries set by God and the other for... The murder, of a spirit of light." Aryel said; his anger was water suppressed under an oily-layer of calm bitterness.

"Of your two judgments I presage this: That the first you will overlook because of the preordination of an old mutual friend, and the second you will overturn because of the reasons of the reasoned." Locan said.

Aryel raised his eyebrows and nodded in surprise. "A servant of chaos seeking the discourses of order? You speak in a tongue famed only by the Judges of the Old Testament. That is very interesting. But I will play along in your game, but only because that we are under the laws of God, which govern fairness. Now speak. What is your case?"

Locan: "Reasons of the reasoned, because I killed her in self defense. She was about to say the four words of banishment and I had to... Stop her."

Aryel's wings drooped, and for a second he was going to lose his balance. Quickly his memory recalled the moment where he was concentrating on Enoch. He caught by the side of his eye Diana trying to get up after her crash and moments after Locan got up and started walking away. He had said something. Whispering. He had said... "Figures. You're not going to listen. That's ok then, I'll go find him myself. Heh. I guess if he doesn't listen I'm screwed." The demon was right. He never intended to kill Diana. Aryel looked up at Locan, his eyes were watery, all of his being demanded to know what the hell was going on.

"Go on." Aryel said. His voice half crackling.

"Preordination of an old mutual friend." Locan said, and he raised his head towards Aryel, and looked around him. Countless of thousands of angels were watching. Listening. A cloud of confusion filled the atmosphere.

He reached towards his sunglasses, and slowly lowered them. An instinct inside Aryel gave him the instant flash of the evil glow from Locan's right eye when Diana started shooting her arrows at him. Aryel screamed: "STOP!" and raised his hand towards Locan, but another instinct kicked in, this one more powerful, and made him pause. No, it made him freeze.

Locan opened his eyes.

Aryel's whole body trembled. "No... That's... IMPOSSIBLE!! It's..." Aryel choked. The thirty six thousand angels gasped. And they all bowed.

For out of Locan's right eye, a light sparkled, shone to every corner in the sky. And proclaimed to all the most ancient thing that was in fact, the opposite of all evil.

For inscribed deep into his eye was none other... Than the divine name of God. Which none may pronounce. And all has forgotten.

Aryel bowed.

Locan put the glasses back on. The angels straightened up. Aryel motioned for them to leave. The skies opened and the host ascended.

Locan and Aryel were now on the ground. It was an unprecedented notion; for it was the first time that an Angel and a Demon walked side by side. It was still raining. The four air spirits summoned by Aryel were now uncast.

"You've earned my attention. Now you'd better make it good. Start from the beginning." Aryel had said, he also handed him back his cloak as Locan claimed that it harbored his life support systems. But Aryel made Locan swear an oath of truthfulness. And so he trusted him.

"When the universe was first built, two races were created." Locan narrated. "The race of light and the race of darkness. There was nothing called Good and Evil back then. Just Angels and Demons. We all worshipped God, we all made the perfect balance of nature. We lived like that for years without number."

Krome nodded. "As a later-generation angel myself I wasn't around back then, but I know of all the stories. Demons and Angels shared creation together before the elements existed. And then..." "And then." Locan interrupted. "God had a plan. He decided to separate night from day. He wanted to see if the absence of his light would make us demons stop worshipping him. It was a test."

Locan: "The test proved its worthiness because as soon as we were separated from light, our connection with the divine left with it, and we forgot. So God called us Evil, and called light Good. And thus..."

"Time began. But you must also realize that at this pace, I'll be bored fast." Krome ended Locan's sentence.

Locan nodded. "Anyway, fast forward a few million years into the future. With the separation of light from darkness, our powers were limited to the realm of dreams, the unconsciousness, the Black. But because of our immense sizes and unlimited powers, we took control of the cosmos, throned by the kingdom of Hades with the arrival of the first fallen angel, Beelzebub. We were all living there happy, yet full of hatred towards that race of beings -next dimension over- that God created and made rulers of the Red, The Realm of Reality: the race of man. Because of all the gifts they were given which we didn't have. Their abilities, their power to will and most of all: Their SOULS. " Locan said that as he clutched his fist tightly.

Krome looked on.

Locan continued: "Several thousand years ago, the son of David -Solomon- took the throne of Israel and ruled. He built a temple dedicated to God. But the King noticed that his best worker, a young boy was growing thin by the day, so he asked him about it and the boy complained of an evil spirit, which visited him every night, stole his food and sucked on his soul. King Solomon consulted his ancient books and read about our world and us. He prayed to God and asked him to grant him power over demons."

Krome remembered. "Back then, I was in the charge of the Healing Host alongside Raphael. His Eminence, under the direct orders from God, was instructed to forge a ring that will subdue any demon. And thus it became: The token of the King of Diamonds worn by the King of the Earth. Solomon wore it, and with it, he was able

to subdue the demons that dared cross the dimensional boundaries, moreover, he'd send demonic messengers INTO Hades to bring demons up to him. For each demon that was recalled into Solomon's presence, it was asked what evils it afflicted man, what star or constellation it represented and what angel it despised. Each corresponding angel was thus summoned to be the steers of the demons under Solomon's service. In fact, Uriel, Raphael, even myself were amongst the many angels that were summoned. Solomon's wisdom intrigued me, and every time he saw me, asked me to send his personal gratitude to God. It is amazing how a powerful human like that remained modest for all those years that he was. "

Locan frowned as he remembered. "Yes, the ring. That's how our former master Beelzebub was caught by Ornias the traitor, son of Uriel. Beelzebub was reduced to be a slave for the humans. His majesty was shattered forever. Not only that, but Ornias also gave away all of our secrets. How we whispered into the ears of fortune tellers the happenings of the future and how we went to the ceilings of the skies and listened into what was written of the affairs of man. Listen that is, until we are struck down by angels or we tire from our travels, and we fall back into earth. We fall with streaks in the sky which humans used to think were falling stars then years later with the advancement of science, they were confused with meteorites. "

Krome looked at Locan: "Cut the story short, Locan. What's this got to do with you and me?"

Locan opened a gate and stepped into a cemetery. The rain stopped. Krome followed Locan with his eyes.

He was about to walk in when he realized that what Locan just did was that he made an amazing analogy. The cemetery's gate represented the hypothetical doorway between the Planes of Earth and Hades. It was a perfect analogy, after all, cemeteries separated the world of the living from the world of the dead.

Krome slowly walked in. "This remind you of home?"

Locan snickered. "Hell, the repository for souls empty of light? The aqueduct that receives vessels proven not worthy for heaven? The domain for souls which we can skewer, spit on with our sulfuric saliva and cook with our fiery breaths?"

Locan kneeled next to a wreath. "Once, I used to get drunk with pagans' blood offerings, used to cross oceans of galactic dust and drew the canvas of space with my breath. Until I, too, became enslaved in Solomon's court. The ring was talked about throughout Hades, and we feared it so. So when the ring was pointed at me. I had to surrender. I didn't dare look at it because I've heard of the suffering of those who did. I gave in, the "brave" demon Locan. And for years, I carried blocks and had to find gemstones from the four corners of the earth to adorn Solomon's temple."

Krome said: "Until...?"

"For years we longed for our freedom, our days of glory and bliss. But it never came. EVEN when a demonic prince, Asmodean from Edom took over the palace and banished Solomon... You know the story very well. Even though he had thrown the ring to the sea, he never set us free. Until one day, Solomon was fated to find the

ring in the belly of a fish and used it to return to the palace and overthrow the false king."

Krome: "But unfortunately for you demons, he didn't set you free then either, the temple wasn't ready yet."

Locan shook his head. "Yeah tell me about it. About a year had passed since his return, and one of the demons looked at me and said: For a million years Locan, you were known as The Brave. You reached stars that no one else dared to stretch to. Why don't you show us, Locan, show us the bravery that set you apart from a lot of us." "I pondered about that challenge for months. Then one day, I made my decision..."

I planned to steal the ring and throw it away into the farthest ocean on earth. We all knew that King Solomon took off his ring before he went to bed after his nightly prayer. He always placed it next to his bed-post. So with the help of a human boy whom I threatened to kill, my bonds made of iron were unlocked. I sneaked in through the king's bedroom, and there it was: on the bed-post.

I walked towards it, careful not to wake the king. I reached for it, and touched it with my human form. All of my senses told me not to look at it, but the curiosity overtook me and I. Looked.

The ring was so beautiful it captivated me; It was a stone with a pentagram inscribed in it. I strained to see with my human eyes at those inscriptions in the middle of the lines. And as soon as I realized what it was. It was too late.

The divine inscriptions shone with light that penetrated my human eyes and made a permanent imprint on my right eye (the slowest to close)..."

"And that's how you got the Divine Name of God imprinted into your right eye." Aryel nodded. The puzzle-pieces started falling into place.

"...As I screamed in sheer pain," Locan continued "the King awoke, grabbed the ring that fell from my hands and wore it.

The guards ran into the room and started beating me with their rods and spears. As I sat there, crying like a baby, the king motioned the guards to leave. Then he looked at me.

He walked up to me and raised my head.

"You wretched old thing." He had said." Locan turned to look at Krome.

Krome's eyes were not in focus, he was picturing the story in his head. He was blending with this ancient tale.

Locan knew he didn't have forever to tell his story so he continued. "He was about to bind me again when he paused and raised my chin. He looked into my eye, and saw the inscription, then sat down.

And for the first time, Lord, I felt a human trait that I never understood until then." "Compassion." Krome and Locan said together.

"...The king smiled at me with sad eyes." An evil spirit engraved with the most divine of names. Praise be to God. Which one be you, demon?"

I sobbed, overcome by the human form's emotional frenzy. "My... Name... My Lord... Is.. Lo... Locan."

The king touched my cheek. I have never felt a human's touch before. It felt. Warm. And that reminded me of something... From a long time ago. Suddenly, this being which we feared and loathed... Was a friend. He took me close to his side, and gave me the most valuable gift I could've ever dreamed."

Krome wondered. And looked at Locan. "A gift... What?"

Locan: "He taught me how to read."

Krome raised his eyebrows. "A demon... Read?" Krome wanted to laugh, but he stopped once he saw the look on Locan's face: For the first time in his long life, the angel Aryel sees a demon smiling. Sincerely. Affectionately. Thankfully.

Krome understood. The old mutual friend Locan was talking about. Was indeed Solomon.

"What's the preordination that you were talking about, Locan?" Krome asked. "In due time, lord, if thouest would grant me time."

Krome paused then nodded: "Ok, go on."

Locan continued. "It was his last months before his death. He was ailing. Every night, he'd call me into his chambers before he went to sleep and taught me of his wisdom, and showed me his immense library of books. And as he fell asleep, he'd let me finish reading the books myself. Though I had one eye blind, it was the eye that lit the pages which I turned. And so I read with my left. And that's how I pulled it off in hell too. The name of God was the only white light in all of Hades.

I read books of Babylon, books of the Greeks and books of the Egyptians. I grew attached to my human form. For it had the memory in which I stored all the things I learned. In fact, I didn't want to return to Hades because I knew that as soon as I reverted into the ethereal, all that I've studied will dissipate like salt in water."

"The days passed. I came to the King once to tell him about my predicament, but he didn't answer. He was sitting on his throne and lay with his chin on his staff. I didn't want to wake him so I stood there. Silently. The sun set and rose again, time and time again. And still he lay. I dared not wake him up, for we all fear his temper. So he lay there."

"Until one day a worm gnawed on his staff, and the king fell. And when he didn't wake up, we knew he had been dead all along. He tricked us to think he was still

alive so we'd keep on working. In any case, the ring disappeared through a crack in the ground and the demons dispersed onto the earth."

"One day, I discovered the secret of staying alive even if I shifted into the world of the dead. It was called Necromancy. Not only did that allow me to return to earth in this same body, brain and all, but it also allowed me to WALK into Hades. And in effect, study and build in there with material that I stole from earth. This proved a smart move especially when the Key of Clubs locked the gate that separated Earth from Hades - with the spell of the last prophet. So I stayed in my workshop in hell and worked. They called me the Lurking Shadow because the light I read with cast a shadow within the shadowness. I merged reality's technology with unreality's power of the shadow, with it I created my weaponry of darkness, and my most amazing invention."

Krome was now skeptic again. "I was about to get to that."

They were now standing on the ledge of a building, the wind whistled. This is the Tower of Spades. For Krome, this is a large business and communications hub for V.I.P.s that's high security around the clock.

For Aryel, this is the head of his base in the United States, with a direct satellite link to his Headquarters in Canada.

This is his window to detect demons daring enough to cross into Earth... With which he took no time in finding the whereabouts of Locan.

Locan motioned with his cloak like a magician. And beneath the cloak, a hulk of shadow metal and inanimate serpents was revealed. It looked just like an everyday earth bomb, only its metal was the color of the shadows and instead of "FROM USA WITH LOVE" written all over it, it was inscribed with latin words. It said: "Potius Mori Quam Foedari".

Krome thought aloud: "Rather Die than be Dishonored. Huh, life support systems he said. Yet, it wasn't a lie."

Locan was silent.

"I don't like being threatened." Krome said.

"I call it, proof of my sincerity. If I have come this far to be given a second chance. Might as well show how serious I am."

"Second chance for what? What is it you're looking for on Earth? Gold? Terrorizing humans?"

"I am beyond materialism, Lord. You sadden me. And humans I've come to learn to love. For if the greatest man of all can befriend a demon, so can that demon befriend men. I am over the jealousy. I humble myself beneath humans even when the greatest leader of the demons couldn't. And I ask to be given a second chance. God is ever merciful, is he not? But yes, today you're the judge. And it's your judgment to pass."

"What judgment can a judge pass if he has a gun pointed into his face?" Locan sighed. "Here goes."

He uttered ancient words, and suddenly the lifeless serpents awoke and slithered down the bomb, as soon as they touched the cement they shattered. For the unreal cannot survive in reality.

Locan then reached into his coat and took out a long sword -also forged in the shadows- he held it up high and slashed the device, instead of metal striking metal, the bomb sliced in two halves, as if he was slicing through a large black fruit. The slices weaned and withered then shattered into a billion pieces.

Locan turned to Aryel then knelt. Another Analogy; either kill, or knight me. "The last words that the noble King told me were: "I have one last story to tell you, Locan... A story of an angel, for he's an angel like no other. He rebelled against God once with many others. But as the others walked into the darkness, he realized, that it is not God that needed him, but it is he that needed God. As he stood there in the thin space between darkness and light, he thought.

And discovered the meaning of life...

Then he roared loud and strong. He spat into the darkness and proclaimed that his side will forever be the side of light and will stand in the face of all that choose the path of darkness.

From then on, that angel became known as Aryel - the **Lion of God** . " "

Krome was smiling. Again, one of the few times that he did. Yes, that day was indeed glorious for him. He chose his faith. And now... He understood why Solomon advised Locan to come to him, for Krome was once, for a moment in time, a demon himself. So if there was an angel that could understand, it would be him. And Solomon was right. His preordination has become true.

"Another chance you have earned. But I will always be next to you watching, if you fail me, I WILL banish you, and show no mercy." Krome decided. Locan nodded. "I would've accepted no better a judgment. Thank you, lord. No I will not fail you."

So they stood there on the ledge and looked at the streets of Brooklyn.

"Lord. Neria's convinced many demons of her plans. They ache to use their villainous and nether powers against humanity. But would Neria succeed? Would she prove too powerful for the angels guarding the gates?" Locan asked.

"We need to find Neria and stop her before she gathers humans to wield the nether tokens for her. Without the tokens, she has no chance in getting to Hades." Krome explained. He continued: "That's why we need to gather our own army. Ascended humans shall obtain tokens and guard the four kingdoms against the threat of darkness."

Krome explained to him about Righteousness and Responsibility and why it was

important that those who passed the twenty two levels of life from The Fool to The World would be the only ones allowed to wield the Tokens.

As the wind rustled. Locan asked. "Lord, you've heard of the saying Ubi Bene, Ibi Patria. Where you feel good, there is your home?"

Krome nodded. "Yes, Locan."

"Well, this is the first time I ever feel good. So this makes it my home."

Chapter 4: Lavender Waters

Part 1: Catopsilia.

She lay down on the golden colored beach. She was lost in that book that she found thrown from the depths of the ocean. As she turned a watered, salted and baked page, something tickled her long slender naturally tanned legs. she turned slowly to look and saw a crab staring back at her.

She giggled and tenderly pet the crab. It stood for a second then scuttled back to the water. She sighed and turned back to the book. She turned it around to look at the cover and read:

"Timaeus and Critias", written in contemporary Greek. She scratched her head in confusion.

There was a crackling sound in front of her. She turned her golden/hazel colored eyes towards the towering woman and smiled. "Hi mom. I was just reading." said the 18-year old girl.

Her mother was stunningly beautiful, and barely looked like she was in her mid twenties!! She had the exact same features, sexy tanned body, hazel eyes and long curly black and red hair.

She wore a single sheet of silky cloth that covered her bosom and flowed down her legs, but shorter in front than in the back. Her mom looked at the book, and surprisingly, from where she was standing, she could make up the words very clearly. "Greek? What are you studying, obsolete languages?"

Losepetta frowned. "Uhh.. No, this is a story book actually... I think."

Her mother nodded. "Right, anyway, there's been some kind of disturbance in the capital and the Council has called for the meeting of all the three cities. So pack your Rashes, we're leaving at sun down, darling."

Los smiled, "Anything you say mother." Her mother smiled, and her image blurred and disappeared.

"..DIARY" Los thought as she stood up. A screen formed in front of her and followed her as she walked.

"I'm having doubts again. About our traditions, about our history. This book that I found is... Is very strange. I can honestly say that it's not from here. But where did it come from? Is there something else out there? Dear Diary, I hope I can come to terms with my conflicts some day. I've heard of those who've thought too deeply into this and went mad. Science is right. Science is Peace. Science is reality. Science is what our world revolves around. But then again... Who? Who invented science? Who wrote those rules that our cosmically connected brainwaves decipher?"

As she thought these words, the screen in front of her jotted down what she was thinking, in a ciphered language that was unique only to Los.

"Los..." a strong male voice called behind her.

"Hey Remy..." Los said. She kept on walking. The man caught up with her and put his hands in his pockets. "There's no need to doubt, sis. We've got everything. Our law is love, our government is the monarchy ruled by the Voice Of the People and best of all, we've uncovered the secret of immortality. Look at you! You look like you're eighteen years old, but you've actually lived for forty five years!" Los shed a tear then she looked at her brother. "We don't have everything. I don't have you."

Remy looked at her puzzled. "What do you mean? I'm all yours!"

"No you're not. You know exactly what I mean. You're just a simulation. I wasn't allowed to have a real brother because our laws say our parents should only have one child. You're just an illusion. Everybody else who bought a BioMate customized them to be lovers, friends, and pets. As for me, I wanted a brother because I wanted to see what it would feel like. I shouldn't have because now I love you so. But... You don't understand love. Your body is a hologram and your brain is a Simulated Cognition Matrix."

Remy shrugged: "Well they taught me as much as my Matrix could handle, but love is a very sophisticated human emotion, and as I said before I promised to return that love, no matter what that means."

Los started crying. "Go away!"

The illusion was no more.

It was night time. The F-Class Lite-Pod glided across the skies. Los and her parents sat in the center, a large crystal dome in the middle represented the instrument panel. With it, you can change your destination, the speed, and the Holo-Vision channel.

Los' father looked at her and sighed. "What's the matter, darling? I feel an immense hollowness inside you."

Los nodded.

"Care to talk about it, darling?" he asked.

"Mom." Los asked "Can you tell me about that story again? Of the great Queen who founded our great capital?"

Her mother smiled and a little screen came to life in front of her. A counter on the screen incremented. "This is going to be the 74th time I tell the story."

Los shut her eyes. And she was transported 13 millennia into the past.

"A long time ago..." her mother's voice narrated, "We were ruled by a king named Atlas. Whose father, Poseidon, we worshipped as our God, the God of the Sea. The great mother was a native woman named Cleito of whom ten children were born." The story formed in Los' imagination, it was as clear as it would've been if she was physically there; a skill she mastered called "Claireverance".

She saw a majestic palace. Grand and exotic. It had a large court where people from the different parts of the world came to trade, show their exotic animals or just to admire the beauty of this great land.

Near the palace was Poseidon's temple, which was adorned and coated with Gold, Silver and Orichalcum. The last being a magical metal that Poseidon gifted to his children.

This is **Atlantis**. The Kingdom of Abundance.

That's how the island was known, for it was named after the First King. But it caused great confusion, for the great curators called The Old Ocean: the Atlantic. So many became misled and thought Atlantis was in the Atlantic, but that was not true, because the island was in the Pacific. And the Pacific is Poseidon's home which he calmed with his great Trident. Some say the Phoenician and Greek traders lied in order to keep the real location of the island away from other civilizations that will exploit its great products. Some say the fact that the island was so far away just made people forget, and when they were asked "Where is Atlantis?" they would reply, "Past the Pillars of Hercules!" which people would take literally.

Atlas the King had nine brothers who were the princes that ruled the different parts of Atlantis.

The Island was famous for its amazing palaces and temples, great canals and most of all, great knowledge. Which the ten kings and princes taught man and their generations passed it on. Moreover, the island was tall, so tall it reached the clouds insomuch that everyone who visited this great land went to tell people of the great Atlas who supported the heavens with his shoulders.

Poseidon blessed this great land and boasted of it to the other gods. For its people were the smartest and the richest in all of Earth.

Generations of kings passed. One generation, a descendant by the name of Nemuzed ruled The Citadel, the capital of Atlantis. He was loyal to the ancient laws inscribed by Poseidon himself in a tablet made purely of the divine Orichalcum.

There was a page in the royal court by the name of Aleskander who fell in love with an Atlantean peasant from the farms of Atlantis. The page was Nemuzed's favorite servant, and his task was to tend the animals who were brought in to the court from other lands.

One day, Catopsilia (the girl) mustered her courage and brought a butterfly to the page.

"What, sire is this beautiful bird called?" She asked. The page laughed. "Nay lady, 'tis not a bird, but an insect. It is a butterfly you see found only in Atlantis. We call it the Lepripacca."

She frowned. "Why call it not a more.... Presentable name than that?"

The page smiled. "And what would your name be?" She answered: "Catopsilia, sire." "From today on, this butterfly will be called Catopsilia. For it is beautiful as its namesake." He said.

She smiled and they walked together. "Sire, how learned you, all these wonderful things?"

"I owe it all to great Nemuzed. For he taught me of the alphabet of the Gods, in which each letter has magic in it. That language has the secrets of the entire universe."

She listened on, full of interest.

From that day on, the page would sneak out with the girl weekly, when her father brought in the reaps of his great farm. They'd run to the precipice south of the palace, sit with their arms around each other and stare at the ocean. Where the only shelter from the cold breeze was each others' warmth.

"Do you believe?" she had asked him once.

He took a rock and threw it in the air, watching it pick up speed as it fell far below. "Believe what?" he was puzzled.

"That Gods exist?" she looked at him with her deep brown eyes.

He laughed. "But of course! Why, Nemuzed the great is a descendant of Atlas, the son of Poseidon, the God of the Sea HIMSELF! How can I not believe?"

She looked at him and frowned. "What if it's not true? You don't know for certain, after all."

Aleskander shook his head. "I know it's true. Even though I've never seen Poseidon myself. Besides, Atlas taught us great things which only a God would've known! He showed us Orichalchum a magical metal which we can use to make metal become alive!!"

She sighed. "Darling... I have to tell you something. The first time I met you, I acted dumb. But I knew that the butterfly was an insect. I knew, because... I learned it, in books. Old books which a Greek scholar gave to my father a long time ago. That scholar taught us many great things. About science, and about the great things that would happen, when we enter the Age of Enlightenment."

"The... Age of Enlightenment?" Aleskander asked.

"There's so much to tell you, darling, I'm so excited I've finally opened up to you. The scholar's name was Elonas and he told my dad a great secret. That the Gods never existed. That it was all a myth, great stories that the Greeks and Phoenicians told their children which became more and more believable as it passed down from generation to generation..."

"NO... IMPOSSIBLE!" Aleskander trembled.

She smiled. "The Age of Enlightenment is the age when we will learn that the Gods don't exist, and we'll use science to power our world. Orichalchum is not a magical metal that Poseidon created like you were brought up to believe. Nevertheless, it's a metal that has a power in it which we are going to discover some day. That power is not magic, but it's science. You see, our knowledge which the "Gods" suppressed from us is in its baby stages, but one day we will discover how to use orichalchum to extract the power of lightning! You see, this metal has another name, Copper which the non-atlantians will only discover after 4000 years. Orichalchum is our key to becoming masters of the universe! But first, we'll need to learn the language of these... "Gods" because it has a secret in it, which even the scholars haven't discovered yet. But that secret, is called The Arcanum, and together with Science, we'll abandon these "Gods" and become Enlightened."

He shook his head. "Science? We don't need that. We need Gods to learn the secrets of the universe. You see, we have Nemuzed to teach us how to become Gods like all the kings before him. Didn't you see the power that they had?!"

She smiled. "But why do you want to be a God, darling? To command people? To look all mighty and powerful?"

He shook his head again. "No, we need to be Gods so that we don't die. I... I'm afraid... To Die. I'm afraid that... My whole life which I've spent learning and toiling, will all be gone to an abyss of nothingness."

She touched his cheek. "Then there is your proof. If those kings claimed to be Gods, why did they die of old age? But here's how we can become something even better than Gods: All we need to do is share unconditional love. We erase all hate from our hearts, and that'll make us spend all of our time learning instead of fighting. We'll all rule together, instead of one man giving all the orders. Then we can become perfect, and learn all the secrets of life... Even the secret of how to be young forever. But first we need to be smart and realize that these Gods, they're just a myth and figments of our imagination."

She held him tightly, but he trembled. "You filthy, blasphemous peasant!" He was angry. She gasped as he pushed her away. "What do you know?! Nothing!" He screamed. "But I do! I know that I worship my king and his great ancestor Poseidon, he's MY God. And you're wrong. Gods rule the world, and will do so for ever... You evil thing." She sobbed. "But... All I wanted to do was try to show you... That love is all that we need. Love conquers all...."

He pointed at her. "Answer me this: Does LOVE stop mighty armies from turning homes into ruin? Does LOVE stop diseases and plagues?"

She sobbed. "It can... If everybody worked together as one."

He laughed. "Your madness amuses me. But now, excuse me you shall, for I have wasted ENOUGH of my precious time with a creature that knows NOTHING." He stormed away. Catopsilia covered her face and wept.

Didn't her father tell her that once?

"Change." He had said.

"Men fear that more than Hell itself."

Part 2: The Proud and The Humble

Meanwhile, beyond the peak of Mt. Olympus, there was a meeting. "I've called you today, fellow Gods." Said Zeus. "To tell you of a predicament that's befalling us." Poseidon sat on one side and rubbed his long beard.

"Poseidon's pride and glory, the island known as Atlantis has proved to be reaping the fruits of its blessings. The people are slowly rising against us, the Atlanteans' arrogance have made them want to rise against the Gods themselves."

A handsome slim black youth standing next to Zeus nodded: "Yes o Lord of Lords, even the Kings have been plotting secretly for years. They deny our existence and look at the creed set by Poseidon spitefully." "Hermes, when a contagious disease starts in an area, you need to eliminate all in it, so that the disease doesn't spread to other parts. And so be here, if it has started in Atlantis, unless we put an end to it, it'll spread to the rest of the world. This is why I have called thy from the depths of the ocean, the depths of the mountains and the depths of the earth to find a permanent solution."

The court was silent. Zeus turned to Poseidon. "Brother, it is your island, I want to hear what you have to say."

Poseidon shook his head "Angry is what I am. I've blessed them for years I cannot count, yet they've raised an army that challenged even the greatest one, Athens. I punished them by sending 10 years of drought then they repented to me. But now, generations later, they have forgotten my blessings, my gifts, and are plotting against ME, I the God of the Sea who adorned my island with the best that none has seen before?!"

Zeus nodded: "So we have told you to limit their blessings. For humans cannot live in a perfect world, they are creatures made to err and made to greed for more and more. If they have everything." Zeus shrugged: "What more can they greed for?"

"The Heavens" Hera, Zeus' wife, said. Zeus nodded and turned back at Poseidon.

Poseidon slammed his fist on the great table of marble, cracking it mildly. "Enough is enough. I will send a terrible calamity unto them. I will cause a great earthquake such as the world has never seen before, in so much that those on the other half of the world, even in Greece shall feel that the Gods were wrathful, and from then on my name will be known as The Earth Shaker."

Hades smiled. "More souls for me to harbor, I'm for that decision." The others nodded. Zeus stood up, "So it shall be, the judgment has passed."

Aleskander rubbed his eyes. "Damn" he thought to himself. "Why can't I make myself stop thinking about her? I think I was too harsh to her. What if she was right? No, impossible. Plus I cannot question the Gods. I'm... Too young to die. " He yawned, as he looked up, he felt something in the air. He looked at the clouds and frowned. "Funny... Purple clouds?" he thought to himself. A heavy hand placed itself on his shoulder. Aleskander gasped and turned around. Then he bowed. "Oh great

King and God, Nemuzed the Second." Nemuzed smiled and brushed his hair with his hand, full of pride and self-worth. "Yes, yes. Uhh, Aleskander, it has been brought to my attention that you are not tending to your labors well. What matters you? Need you rest I can see, for you have gone for many an hour without the least of a rest."

"You've spoken truth in that I am greatly tired, oh greatest one, but there is, something, small, that bothers me. And I won't be rested until I hear of an answer that I may be satisfied with."

Nemuzed stood tall. "You have concerned me greatly. I tell you this, you are my favourite servant, so I'll grant you your answer, whatever it may be, fear not. Ask." Aleskander shook. And he shyly looked up at his king. "Lord, tell me, do you fear anyone?" Nemuzed shook his head: "Never have." "But... What about the Gods? What about Poseidon? What about Zeus?" the young man asked. Nemuzed looked deeply into the page's eyes and thought.

He placed his hand on his shoulder again and sighed. "Son... Let me show you something." He took him into the palace, and walked into a hallway that only royals are allowed into. He stood next to a wall at the end of the hallway then looked at the page. He motioned him to be silent. Nemuzed turned to the wall and with his finger seemed to be tracing something onto it. Suddenly, where he had inscribed with his fingers, the outline started to glow with a blue light. The glowing intensified and it looked clearer now. What he inscribed was a letter, of a language older than the "Gods" themselves. Suddenly, the wall split in half and roared open. The page gasped. Nemuzed motioned for him to follow and they went down the steps. Nemuzed said something in a strange language and the room lit.

"My boy, you are the first man who's not a king from the generations under Atlas to see this. Welcome to The Chamber of Secrets." The page looked in wonder as he saw piles of scriptures and tablets made from orichalcum in which were inscribed philosophies and ideologies written by generations of kings.

"Starting from the 5th generation under Atlas, we started questioning things. Why we are here on Earth, why we die, who are the Gods. How do we become Gods? We even questioned the very stories that made the threads of our lives. Namely, the legend of our ancestor, Poseidon." Nemuzed looked at the page's wide eyes. "We've come to the conclusion that the existence of these Gods has become questionable, for 'tis been centuries since they were accounted for. Some said they've weakened, some say they've seized to exist, some say, they never existed." The page gasped. "So it's true... We are entering the Age of Enlightenment. Oh, Catopsilia, I have wronged you so."

"Catopsilia? Who that be?" Nemuzed asked. "Yes, she's from the farms of the North East she said that her family has been visited by this Greek scholar named Elonas who's had the same theories as yours."

"Hmm.. A minor contradiction to our theories that we would be the only eartheners to question because of our immense library of knowledge. Nevertheless, Atlantis will still be the first nation on Earth to give its people the gift of immortality and make us Gods ourselves over the rest of the world. True we lost the battle of Athens where we would've become the undisputed rulers of Earth, but the next time, we'll be

stronger, mightier, and immortal." The page took a step back, seeing the glowing greed in the King's eyes.

Aleskander trembled. He was afraid. But suddenly he understood many things at once. He understood the meaning of the word Greed. And he understood now why Catopsilia asked him to question the meaning of the word: God. For when people want to become Gods, people want to rule, and want to kill and want more and more. And it will never end.

He also had another inspiration, as sudden as the first. He understood the importance of Atlantis. Unless he does something to stop the chaos, the world will be doomed. Nemuzed looked at Aleskander and frowned: "What is the matter, page?" Aleskander wanted to say something when suddenly, there was a tremendous roar that shook the room wildly and almost caused a cave in.

Nemuzed stood up straight. "An Earthquake? In Atlantis?" The room shook again this time more violently, the roof started collapsing.

The page turned around and ran towards the steps. Nemuzed watched the boy run and turned around, he calmly walked towards the gigantic bookshelf and took out a large book that looked oddly cubed.

He traced another letter onto the cover of the book, and it glowed just like the first time with a pulsating blue light. The cover of the book vanished and you could see that it was actually not a book but a box in disguise. Nemuzed took an orichalcum cube from within it. The cube had an inscription on each side, apparently six letters from that Arcane language.

He walked towards a table and picked up a cup. The cup was also made of Orichalcum. However, it was coated with golden engravings of a merman riding a sea-horse. Around the cup, four more Arcane letters had been embossed onto it. The King turned his royal staff sideways and attached the bottom of the cup onto the bejeweled tip of his staff. Moments later, the cup's golden rim seemed to melt and reform into four prongs that remained outstretched, as if waiting to hold something. He took the cube and placed it in the cup, the size fitting perfectly. The prongs came to life again and latched the cube securely. The orichalcum cube started glowing with its golden red fiery color and Nemuzed smiled. "The day has come to put you to use, oh Cup of Triton."

Three hundred Miles away, On the edge of Atlantis and the Pacific Ocean.

"Step Back." A masculine voice said.

Poseidon stopped. He raised his great trident to look under him and saw a man standing by his foot. The man wore casual everyday Greek clothing. He had long curly hair and had bright green eyes.

Poseidon took another step onto the shore and the earth shook.

"I said. Step back, Poseidon." The man said again.

Poseidon looked at the man and sighed. "Out of my way you feeble human, if you know who I am you will value your life and would step out of MY way before I crush you like I'm about to crush this island and the cities on it." He spoke in an eerily monotonous tone.

The man shook his head. "No, you're not going to do that. You're going to leave the Atlanteans alone."

Poseidon laughed. His laugh echoed far and wide in the skies. "Challenge a GOD? By what punishment do you want die? But make it quick I have a mess which I've started that I'm about to finish."

"You cannot kill what's eternal, oh proud one." The man said.

"Huh?" Poseidon was confused. He shook his head then pointed the trident at him. The man raised his hand towards the trident and thrust his hand upward. The trident flew high up into the purple clouds then fell moments later a mile away onto the tops of a nearby mountain.

"What the... Who are you?" Poseidon asked.

The man put his hand down. "Who I am is of no concern to you, but I'm going to make a deal with you. I've started an experiment with these people, and I'm going to see to it that I continue with my work. You walk away, don't show yourself to these people and I'll take this island away into a parallel dimension where I can observe them. You will then have your "world". The mysterious man snickered and continued: "Enjoy it while you still can..."

Poseidon walked towards the mountain and pulled the trident out. He stood between the mountain and the man. "If you are eternal, show your true self."

The man sighed. "Unfortunately, this IS my true self now. I... Lost, my original form a long time ago. And I blame it all on the likes of you. You've tainted the mind of man to want to become superior, to become Gods."

Poseidon clasped his arms childishly. "And what are you going to do about it?"

The man shook his head. "Nothing. What comes up must go back down. Except what's been up there all along."

Poseidon shook his head. "I don't understand your stupid riddles."

The man nodded. "That's because it's not. Now tell me, Poseidon, or whatever your real name is. Do we have a deal?"

Poseidon thought then laughed. He started walking towards the capital.

The man fumed and his eyes turned from green to red. Suddenly the ground trembled and rattled and a small sand storm formed around him. The man elevated high up to be parallel to Poseidon's line of sight.

Poseidon looked on in awe.

The man's lips moved. He whispered in an old language. An old language that caused great cities to fall, a language that caused demons to rise up to become gods worshipped by the naiveté of humanity.

The whispers danced in the air and echoed in the skies. Poseidon panicked as the whispers taunted him and flew about from ear to ear. The ethereal words gathered up in front of the gliding man and formed into three words glowing in the air.

Poseidon's eyes widened. "But... How did you learn those... letters?"

The man laughed. "LEARN IT? I CURATED IT! Under my directions, fifteen hundred angels forged the first Alphabet out of Fire, Water, Earth and Air. It represented the Divine Name which cannot be pronounced, the strength of which can create and destroy with the right combination. Your family stole it from the Devic Kingdom and used it to empower yourselves and create petty artifacts such as your trident to scare and overpower man. And because of that you claimed your Godhood over them. But now, these four words which I cast now in front of you will put you back into where you came from."

Poseidon gasped as a fourth word started to form in the air. He covered his eyes. "NO! Stop! Alright, I'll give you Atlantis if you let me go."

The man swiped the air and the letters disappeared at once.

Poseidon turned around and started to walk towards the Ocean.

"Go, demon. Go play your little game of God while you still have your powers. The higher you rise, the harder you will eventually fall." The gliding man taunted.

As Poseidon waded into the ocean, the man weaved a sigh of relief. He may be able to invoke the letters. But he was fallen, so he has no power to cast any devic spell. The bluff worked.

Suddenly he heard Poseidon laughing. "Take your Atlantis BARE of humans!" Poseidon raised his trident high in the air and a tsunami formed a hundred nautical miles away, and started to make its way towards the island.

"I have to find her!" Aleskander shouted as he ran across the damaged buildings. It was Friday so he knew that she had to be in the capital. He just hoped that she didn't decide to stay home, because she looked deeply devastated when he last left her. "No she's strong. And I hope she's survived."

Insofar, there have been seven quakes. Each one destroyed a big portion of the capital. The palaces of golden walls crumbled. The unliftable ruins buried people alive. The disaster was terrible. And the purple clouds ripped the sky with lightning and thunder and a torrent rain forced people to wade instead of running to safety.

"Father! No, father! Wake up!" That voice was all too familiar to Aleskander.

He turned around at the source and saw Catopsilia on the porch of a now-ruined Inn, her father seemed to have collapsed on the ground and the water was rising as high as his chest as he lay there. Catopsilia tried to raise him onto her chest but his weight subdued her.

He ran towards her and raised her father from the water.

She looked at Aleskander. Her face trickled with the rain water, and her soft hair was now wet and dripping. "He slipped and hit his head against the wall. I think he's fainted. I wish there was a way to fix him."

Aleskander pushed the old man's head onto his chest and pulled it back again. The man gasped and opened his eyes.

"FATHER!" Catopsilia cried in happiness.

The man coughed. "That hit was very hard. I don't think my old age could've handled such a blow... I think... I think the wheels are in motion to prepare for my death." "Daddy... Hang in there... We're going to be enlightened very soon. When we discover the secret of living forever, you won't have to worry about getting sick and being disease-ridden, you will be ok! Just wait..."

The man shook his head. "Darling... It is not my generation." He then turned around at Aleskander and pat his shoulder "But yours... I have laughed as I've seen you sneak away together, two young Atlanteans happy and full of life. I've had mine." He then looked at Catopsilia.

"I've had mine... My life became complete. When your mother, bless her soul, gave you into this world. She died a few years after you were born because she was sick with a disease that has no cure. I cursed death and disease and swore to fight them. But I know that... I've raised you right, darling. I've raised you to know that you need to fight two evil things: Death and those who claim to be more superior than others. Status and money means nothing when there's disease and death, after all, death's scythe differentiates between neither King nor Pauper."

"Daddy..." Catopsilia cried.

"I will make sure she achieves that, sir." Aleskander suddenly said.

The girl and the old man turned to him confused.

"...Because I know now what the truth is."

Suddenly they heard a laugh. It was coming from the center of the palace. Catopsilia stood and looked on as Nemuzed stood tall with a glowing scepter on his hand.

"Gather around fellow Atlanteans and witness a miracle. Of a man becoming a God. Witness as I subdue our disaster which was foretold by kings of old. It is sad that my

brothers are scattered far and wide in our great island and that they will not witness this great day."

The people stopped running and looked on towards the court. Awed with the glowing sceptre which they had never seen before.

The old man coughed. "Don't listen to him! He's a liar!" His eyes shut. Aleskander gasped. "Sir... Sir..."

The old man wasn't responding. With those words, he had uttered his last. Catopsilia held her father. "Maybe he's sleeping again? Daddy? Daddy?"

The moments passed like hours. He was dead. And it wasn't easy accepting that for neither of the two.

They turned as Nemuzed said something in an old language.

Nemuzed raised his staff high into the air and the pulsing grew more and more intensive. Its fiery redness illuminating the darkness of disaster.

Suddenly bolts flew out of the staff into the clouds, the rain stopped. The people gasped.

Part 3: Whirlpool

"Stop!" A man shouted. He was floating in the air.

A steady white glow surrounded him. The rain didn't seem to make him wet. "Is that a God?" Someone asked. "I think it is Hermes, the great messenger of the Gods! For he floats like so!" "No, it is actually Apollo, the God of the Sun! Look at his light!" Another said.

Catopsilia's eyes widened: "Elonas?"

Elonas shouted. "No I'm not a God. Neither is your King. Neither is Poseidon. They're all masquerading into becoming something that they're not. The Gods as you know them do not exist. They're myths."

The people gasped in shock.

The King laughed. "Prove it then, you intruder, whoever or whatever you are. Prove that I'm not a God."

The mysterious Elonas shrugged. "Why should I prove it? When a little girl can." He turned around and his eyes caught Catopsilia's.

Catopsilia stood there dumbfounded. Every single man and woman in the vicinity stared at her. "M... Me?" She asked. The King settled his staff. "Come, child. Come closer."

Catopsilia walked towards the center of the court.

"Y... Yes?" Catopsilia muttered.

"Ask me something. Ask me something that I can only answer if I was a God." He asked. Catopsilia turned at Elonas. The latter nodded.

"Umm..." she mumbled something, as if turning pages in her memory, trying to remember something.

"Gods create. What can you create?" She asked.

"ME? Create?" The King asked.

"Why..." He raised his staff, the cube and cup turned around to form a combination. "I can create birds in the sky... And let flowers grow from the ground." The sun shone, and with each thing that he said, it happened, much to the surprise of everyone.

Catopsilia turned to Elonas with her eyes wide open in surprise. He clasped his hands and avoided her eyes.

Catopsilia turned towards the king. "Gods destroy. What can you destroy?" She asked. He raised his staff, the cube reversed itself. "The same things I've created just moments ago, will now be no more." The birds disappeared from the sky and the flowers withered and died.

Catopsilia screamed: "My father's DEAD. Bring him back to life!"

The king's eyes widened. He stood there and froze. The people looked on, full of confusion and wonder. "I... I can try..." The king said.

"My father's dead. Bring him back to life, if you're a God." Catopsilia clarified. The king's teeth rattled as the warmth of his glory slowly dissipated.

He took slow steady steps down the court and towards the corner where the old man lay lifeless. He caught sight of Aleskander and whispered as he came closer: "Alesky! Help me out my boy and I'll make you my prince!" The King trembled.

Aleskander looked up with his eyes wide open. "I... I thought you said you feared nothing."

The king pushed Aleskander away. "Out of my way, servant! And watch me do wonders!" The king raised his hands and uttered something. The cup turned and the cube spun, they both seemed to go into a frenzy. Then they stopped on a combination.

The people looked and waited.

Suddenly. Amazingly. A man opened the door of the inn. It was Catopsilia's father! Looking healthier than he did years ago!

"F... Father???? But... I thought... You were..." Catopsilia mumbled. Tears trickled down her cheeks. Her brain could no longer tell whether she was still in the realm of reality. In fact, the whole concept of reality now seemed too surreal for comfort.

"I am alive and well, as you can see, my daughter." The old man said.

Elonas gasped. For the first time in a long time. He was shocked.

"See?" The king said.

Aleskander looked down towards the dead version of the father and looked up again at the standing man then stood up.

"Wait!" he shouted.

Everyone turned to look at him.

"What does that page boy want?" Some people mumbled in the on looking crowd. Aleskander leaned towards the old man's dead body and took out a piece of orichalcum inscribed with symbols.

He pushed it towards the man. "What does this say?" He asked.

The old man looked at the King. The King looked back at him then turned towards the boy: "What kind of stupid question is that, boy? We have no time for this, AWAY!" He pushed the boy and he fell on the ground.

"No!" A man shouted in the crowd. "Let him say what is written as the boy asks!" "Yea!" The crowd shouted.

The King trembled. The old man took the tablet to his eyes. "It says..."

Everyone waited.

Aleskander stood up.

The old man sighed and dropped the tablet on the ground "But I'm illiterate! For I'm but a poor farmer who's never had a chance to learn how to read!"

The people gasped. Someone stepped forward: "But... We know that merchant; he always used his tablets for counting."

"That's right!" Aleskander said. "These are numbers!" He took the tablet and showed it to everyone. "All humans, no matter what language they speak can make out these lines that help us in counting. Except him. Because he's not a man, he's an apparition."

Aleskander turned to the king "And HE taught me about them. He said that people who said the right words can invoke these spirits who can assume the form of any man... And use the power of empathy to delve into past thoughts and the feelings between people."

The people gasped. "He's not a God then. He didn't raise the old man from the dead, but he raised a spirit to trick us. He's a fraud. That stranger Elonas was right!"

The mob started walking towards the king.

He stood there and shook his head. Then raised the staff high in the air. "Better to have lived than to have not lived at all, believe thy not?"

The staff turned to yet another combination and froze.

Suddenly, for a whole second, there was absolute silence. In fact, every single person thought they had gone deaf. There was a bright flash and a bolt ripped fiercely across the sky into the ground where the king stood.

He proved himself a true coward, for he had chosen the fastest possible way to die.

The people rubbed their eyes and sighed. Elonas picked up the staff that was all that was left from the king's demise and handed it over to Catopsilia.

"Huh?" She froze. "We don't have much time... WIELD IT." Elonas commanded.

Suddenly there was a mighty roar. Everyone turned towards the west across the mountains. There was an immense splash and they saw a humongous tsunami towering high above them.

Everyone screamed. The people started running in sheer frenzy.

Catopsilia turned to Elonas and thrust the scepter at him: "You are the wise one, you do it! I don't know how to!"

Elonas shouted above the noise of the roaring tidal wave: "I CAN'T USE IT! You're the ONLY ONE WHO CAN!! You need to think of a combination to make it work. Think of a whirlpool then point it towards the sky. Do it! Now!"

She gripped the scepter and grinded her teeth. She shut her eyes and cleared her mind. She imagined that she was in a peaceful quiet place, just her and Aleskander. Then she thought of a calm, blue whirlpool.

As her brainwaves scattered her thoughts into the air, the scepter picked them up. Immediately, the cup turned and the cube clicked thrice.

Catopsilia raised the scepter high and a whirlpool symbol illuminated the sky. Suddenly, the clouds started to churn and spin, Catopsilia looked around her with her eyes wide open as the image around her smudged and slowed and spun. The people who ran were now running in slow motion. People who spoke, spoke really slowly and in a coarse voice.

She also noticed that she was in the center of it all. She looked up and she saw the sky open. A sense of euphoria filled her. A sense of power. A sense of glory and might. Her entire body throbbed with an intense feeling of supremacy and perfection. So much it felt like she was going to explode, yet the feeling was so irresistible.

Suddenly she caught a glimpse of Aleskander. He stood there and watched her. Even as the world around him was in total turmoil and optimum disaster, he just stood there and stared at her. His eyes had pride: He was proud of her.

She shed a tear as she chose her heart over her euphoria, a split second before she would've understood what it meant to be God-like.

"Love conquers all. And I've proved it." She said. The whirlpool stopped.

There was complete silence.

Part 4: The Shadow on the Waters

People mumbled. People wept. People stood up and walked, they had nowhere to go. But they just walked.

Confusion was the theme now. But unmistakably, they all knew one thing for sure: They were somewhere else. For what was left of their city, was in the middle of a great island stretching as far as the eye can see. The mountains that surrounded the Atlantean Capital were now no more, and the ocean near the citadel welcomed them into this eery new plane, for the odd-colored waters shimmered as ten strange dolphin-like creatures leaped out of the water into the air, chirped and fell back in.

These are the Water Sprites, for a million years they've lived alone in this realm. Now they had company. And they celebrated.

Aleskander walked towards Catopsilia. "I heard what you said." He smiled. She raised one eyebrow at him, as if saying: "I told you so."

Aleskander: "I'm sorry for what I said to you, I shouldn't have treated you that way. Yet my pride took the best of me. But now I'm happy that I've decided to take this path with you... After all, better to have loved than not to have loved at all, believe thy not?" She laughed.

"So how did it feel like? To wield all that power?" Elonas asked as he approached the two youth.

"I felt like a...." Catopsilia spoke.

Everyone turned to look at her.

"...Woman in total control." She smiled.

"And so you shall need a man to stand by you and share that control." Elonas said and smiled at Aleskander.

"You've passed the test, my young one." Elonas smiled at her then walked past the crowd.

There was a fierce wind in the air. And as if called from a long long sleep a shimmering red object flew across the air, darted towards Elonas then came to a full abrupt stop above his outstretched palm.

The object was a shimmering red symbol, the bottom half was pointy and the upper half had two humps. The people looked on at this strange object. "This is the Key of the realm of Water. For years uncountable it waited for a master to serve. That is now you. This symbol will now forever represent the bond of people, unity and love. The hearts of people uniting into One." Elonas preached.

Elonas took out a blue gemstone from his belt sack and clasped his other hand with it. The Symbol of Hearts disappeared into the gemstone. He also took out a small

tiara and latched the gemstone into its center. He gave it to Catopsilia and she wore it.

Elonas elevated into the air. "Now hear me all! From today forth, you shall be ruled by a Queen and a King." Elonas explained.

The people muttered. "No, you shall not be lead to ruin. As you all know, an army of Sheep led by a Lion is stronger than an army of Lions led by a Sheep."

The people agreed: "Yea! You want a woman and a page to rule us?" "Baseless argument. For men and women are not young or old by age, but by wisdom. And this woman and page are wiser than all of you combined."

Everyone was quiet.

Elonas continued: "You see, just as the generation of Queen and King is passed by the laws of Monarchy. So are they themselves ruled by the Voice of every man and woman in Atlantis. The voices are casts of Vote for any decision the Royals make. This is the Perfect system of Law and Order where none shall be wronged, and everyone's concern shall be heard."

The people mumbled. They nodded and seemed to agree.

"Now each and every one of you shall swear an oath of allegiance to your leaders, the Queen and King who shall never claim Godhood or Superiority over any one of you."

The crowd started walking towards the soon to be King and Queen. They needed leaders, and they've found them.

It was night time before every single adult man and woman had sworn allegiance. Catopsilia walked into what's left of the throne room. Elonas sat on it. He raised his eyes at her and realized that she seemed to have a hard time letting go of the scepter.

"You can put it down you know. None may wield it except you. You see, I've been testing you as you grew up. You may be young, but you've passed the twenty two levels of ascension that even the greatest of kings have had a hard time doing. Now that Token is locked with you. And may only be challenged by another who has ascended. But with the Key of Hearts safely locking the Gates between the other three Realms, you will be safe." Elonas seemed to be choosing his words carefully.

Catopsilia sat next to him. "Elonas. You've never told me. What are you? I never knew you had powers, all those years I've known you. Where'd you come from?"

Elonas stood. "That is not for you to know. Maybe someday you will, my little one. But not soon. "

She frowned but nodded. "I understand, master." Elonas laughed. "No titles, that's when superiority starts."

Catopsilia clasped her mouth with her hand. "Oops."

He stared walking away. "I've already taken liberty in assigning court occupations for people. You now have teachers to teach, librarians to scour the knowledge that the kings have had stored in their Chamber of Secrets, engineers and architects to build your new city and law makers to propose laws for you to pass.

Catopsilia smiled. "Thank you, Elonas. How can I ever repay you for all that you've done to our world?"

Elonas paused. He looked down to the ground. Then turned towards Catopsilia.

He seemed to have lost himself. "I... I've never had anyone appreciate my... work... That. Is enough payment."

He walked away. "Goodbye, Queen of Hearts."

She stood up "Wait! Elonas! Will you ever return??"

Elonas looked up at the large crack in the ceiling that peered into the sky. "When the water-bearer makes a full circle around the cosmos and returns to that point in the sky. So I shall return... But that will be the end of the Age of Enlightenment." He said sadly and walked away.

Catopsilia stared.

An alternate reality later

Elonas stood on the mountain and stared at that open space, now a perfect circle on the plains where the capital of Atlantis once stood.

"A conscience. That's what you're missing." A female voice said behind him.

Elonas was quiet.

"Not having much of my powers, I had to take a ship across the Atlantic and halfway across the world to come here. I asked for directions and they took me where it was supposed to be, but guess what. It's no more. Everyone on earth apparently felt the earthquakes and thunder and the purple sky and all. Seemed really interesting. Everybody was talking about the tidal wave that hit the city and sank it into the ocean... Which happened right after I saw a whirlpool symbol in the sky. That's funny. Last I heard, that's the combination of letters in our Devic language that opens Gates across realms. You took your fellow Atlanteans for a cross-dimensional trip? So much for not interfering with man's business?"

Elonas stood up and turned towards the woman. She stood tall and beautiful, she had puffy black hair and pitch black eyes. It would've been hard to convince people they were brother and sister.

He sighed. "My dear, your trip was a waste."

"Hey. Last I know. I was DRAGGED into this trip called EARTH because of a nagging brother who had this BRILLIANT idea of pleasing God by teaching humans the arts of MAGIC. Remember? Four thousand years ago? No. THAT trip was a waste!" She shouted.

When he didn't answer, she continued. "What was that great plan of yours? You said man will worship God MORE if they were taught how to invoke spirits and divine letters?"

Elonas was still silent. He had nothing to say.

"But WHAT happened. The exact OPPOSITE. And "I" had to be punished WITH you because I followed YOU, STUPIDLY. I followed you..." Tetra paused.

"Because I loved you, the only person who would listen to me." She finished then sighed.

Elonas smiled and put his hand on her shoulder. "All of the questions you've just asked, you've answered them all yourself."

"So you haven't had enough? How many cultures must you ruin before you realize no man can understand. Every man greeds. It's in men's hearts, it's in men's genetics. You can't change that." She lamented.

"That's where you're wrong. With this final test. I may prove it. And if I succeed, God will redeem us both. I know it." He insisted.

Tetra raised her hand towards her brother's forehead and shut her eyes. He shut his eyes obediently and waited as Tetra played back the last 2 days in Elonas' mind.

She shook her head and smiled. "You'll never learn. Now you decided that they shouldn't believe in God to..."

"No, " he interrupted her. "I never told them not to believe in God. I told them not to believe in The Gods."

She listened on then nodded sarcastically. "And their Atheism will create a perfect society? How is God going to redeem you then?!"

He sighed. "You won't understand, Tetriel. You won't understand."

She shook her head... Yet, she sighed. "Ok, whatever. At least you went alone this time because I wouldn't have helped you."

Elonas nodded. "I wouldn't have let you."

Tetra: "In any case, that's not the real reason why I was looking for you. I've seen something in the future."

He shrugged "So?"

"Just Listen. I've had a vision of a canvas of four skies. Each sky had three bright stars on top like a crown, ten less bright stars arranged like a line under the three and one last star, bright like the first three, sitting at the bottom. One sky was in the whiteness of the cloudy daytime, a second was in the blackness of the night, a third was in the blueness of the clear daytime and a fourth was in the red of the sunset. The twelve crown stars then changed into the signs of the zodiac. Which as you know, are derived from the twenty two letters that make up the Name of God."

Elonas looked at her with one eyebrow raised: "Are you forgetting who I am? Of course I know what the letters are."

She rolled her eyes. "Work with me, what does it mean??"

Elonas thought. "That doesn't make sense. The four colors do not represent the four planes of proximate existence. Red and Black do, however, represent the Reality and Dream states. White - Black - Blue - Red.. Hmm.. Air, Earth, Water, Fire, perhaps." She nodded. "There must be a reason why it was arranged this way. But I have interpreted it so: The three stars in each sky represent three royals in each kingdom. King, Queen and Jack."

He thought.

She continued. "Now. Twelve can also mean twelve artifacts. Twelve tokens. Each of these tokens has some kind of connection with the Divine, represented by the endlessness of space and the Zodiac. "

"I see what you're getting at. We need to account for all of the divine tokens. If your prophecy is true, there will be twelve. Most probably sixteen, with the other four being the Ace - or Knight - of each Kingdom; a member of the royal court, but not really a part of it. He or she will be on the other side of the kingdom, at the head of the Army."

She shut her eyes: "Ten."

"Ten...?" He asked.

Tetra shut her eyes as she became arcanelly inspired: "Ten elemental army chiefs. The Archchiefs. Ten from each kingdom that will lead the army against the other kingdoms... The ultimate war."

Elonas thought again then nodded as he realized the graveness of their dialogue. "As for the tokens. The Queen of Hearts Token is safe with Catopsilia. The King and Queen of Spades... Well, we know all about that. The Jack of Spades token is in Asgard, which is next on my list of duties. Others I don't know of but we'll need to keep track of them with time and as new ones become introduced into the world and make sure they fall in safe hands, or no hands at all. "

A shiver ran down Tetra's spine: "Why do I feel that... These Tokens..."
Elonas turned around: "These tokens WHAT?"

Tetra looked up at Elonas with fear in her eyes: "...Will end the world?" Elonas turned back and sighed: "The divine is powerful. I can see the humans racing to collect them in order to rule the world, even the Universe."

He started to walk away.

"So you part from me again?" She asked.

"I've dragged you into one mess. I promised never to drag you to another ever again. But I have some work to do... I'm done with cultures, but now I have to clean up what I started in the land of the Norse."

"Why even bother? Let it go. Forget helping the damn humans and let them help themselves as they're supposed to."

"I have decided my course in life, so should you." He pointed a finger at her.

"Why do the Midgardians call you Rune?" She suddenly asked.

He put his hand down and turned his eyes away. "Odin the King of the Norse called me The Whisperer, in their language, it's Rune."

He looked at her then started walking away.

"What happened?" Tetra asked. He was afraid she'll ask.

He didn't reply. She tried to walk up to him to force the story out of his head, but he stopped her with one firm hand raised towards her. "Let's just say that I've done something that I need to fix, and quickly. I didn't know how much power and greed could drive people mad."

"Good job; oh fearless anarchist gambler poet brother." Tetra thought aloud. For a moment SHE seemed to be the older sibling.

She continued: "Well the next time you want to inspire a culture, maybe instead of making letters, you should make pictures. Each letter after all, tells a story." She said, matter-of-factly.

He continued walking. "Maybe next time we meet you would show me how that can be. I'm not an artist after all, just a curator."

"Goodbye Raziel." She said. He blinked; having heard a name that he had almost forgotten. Then left.

She stood there all alone and turned at the spot that he was staring at.

"Next time? Something tells me, that'll be a long time waiting..."

Chapter 5: History of Legends

Part 1: Soulcatcher

The wind blew the sand on the man's rough and tattered face. He stood nine feet tall. His armor was made of bronze. His face was red with anger. His shield-bearer slowly walked up to him and offered the shield. "OUT OF MY WAY, FOOL!" The warrior shouted as he pushed the man who fell on the ground with the loud clacking of the disarrayed armor. The boy at the head of the other army looked on, he had long brown hair, wide brown eyes and his skin was slightly dark. The warrior started running. The boy frowned. His brother called out to him: "David. Stay back here we'll protect you." The boy ignored his brother's plea and started running towards the charging Goliath. The wind blew fiercely and the boy seemed to be flying rather than running. Goliath put a hand on his sheath and said something in a strange tongue. David grabbed his sling-shot and loaded it with a small stone, barely half the size of his palm and shot it towards Goliath. The stone flew like a bullet and hit Goliath in the middle of his forehead, so hard that it killed him instantly. Goliath fell square on his face.

Both armies looked on in sheer bewilderment. David walked up to Goliath and stood on top of his carcass. He wrapped his hand around the handle on Goliath's sword and said: "In the name of God." As he pulled the sword out of its resting place, it shimmered and shone. David raised it high in the air and prepared to chop Goliath's head off.

There was a flash. David was taken to another time. A time lost in the annals stuck in the void between history and legend.

Bactra
A few thousand years earlier.

The thick boots looked like they've gone through hell. His eyes were weary; it looked like he hadn't slept for months. Vigilance was his new friend.

Next to him, a large leopard prowled faithfully, the fierce creature was hungry for some action, and in a way, there seemed to be a communications channel between the two, and the man silently told its pet to wait patiently. "You will feed, very soon..."

The man stopped and looked up towards the palace walls that towered the gates to the city. The man was black-skinned, so black his skin glimmered with the sun's glare. He had short fuzzy black hair and his muscles were toned yet fearsome.

"I have come to claim you as my own!!" The man shouted with a deep - penetrating voice.

His sentence echoed the walls of the city and the palace.

The king of the city turned around to look outside the window; he motioned for his advisor to come close. "Who is that man?" The advisor shook his head: "I have never seen a man such as that sire... Of an unsightly skin color and very strange clothing as well."

The king was annoyed: "Who are you? And what do you want from us?"

The mysterious man sighed. As if he was going to repeat a sentence he had said dozens of times before.

"I am known throughout the world by many names. Some call me The Hunter of Souls. Some call me The Leopard Tamer, some call me The Tyrant of the Earth; for I, am **Nimrod**, the King of Shinar."

The king's eyes widened: "The King of Shinar? Nimrod? Is this man mad?". The advisor snickered: "Obviously, sire, this man is either drunk or mad. For the King of Shinar is a great and terrible King who is mighty, handsome and white for the eyes to behold. He rules cities upon cities on our great Earth and is adorned by Gold and Silver and jewels that we've never even heard of. As we speak, the King and his barbarian armies are storming our other cities, but we are prepared for his terrible onslaught. But as for this absurd and filthy... ANIMAL, he is merely a charlatan."

The king looked at his advisor: "Should we kill him or should we just let him be?"

The advisor rubbed his long beard; the dark eyes were deep in thought.

"How about we play along with his game and put a bit of a show for our people, it will help, because when the people see what we'll do to this man, they will fear us more."

The king nodded. "A wise decision."

He stood up. "Alright, Nimrod, the kingdom is yours. However, where is your army? We've heard of your armies of barbarians who scoured the Earth like locusts. But we do not see them."

The man who called himself Nimrod started walking towards the palace gates: "They couldn't keep up."

Nimrod stood in the middle of the empty and plain palace court. The wind blew and the green grass rustled with the cold air. The court was quiet. Too quiet. Nimrod looked at his pet and it growled.

He pet it. "Sit back my faithful friend, sit back. I will take care of this one." he said telepathically.

Nimrod looked up towards the balconies and saw people gawking at him. The citizens were obviously here to be entertained. Nimrod frowned. "Want entertainment? You'll get entertainment."

Four gates around the court opened up and out of each gate a great elephant came out with a guard on top wielding a spear.

The king, standing on one of the balconies, starting laughing. "While our cities in our beloved Kingdom of Bactra are reportedly being pillaged by the great and terrible Nimrod. This man comes here single-handedly, a wanderer and a lost one... And claims to be Nimrod! WELL if he is Nimrod, let us see the great legendary strengths famed by ages of old which only he possesses!" The elephants roared and the people cheered in excitement.

Nimrod grabbed the handle dangling on his belt and the unsheathing sound silenced everyone and everything. He crouched, ready for battle. One edge of the long blade glowed furiously, as if waiting to show off its splendors.

The king frowned and turned to his advisor: "What is that??" he pointed at the blade.

The advisor looked at the mysterious object. "Not a knife, and not a spear, but definitely a spade of some sort, sire. The likeness of which I've never seen or heard of before. "

"Should we worry?" The king asked.

"Sire, the greatest of Bactra's spears cannot fell the Elephant Guard." The advisor snickered: "This man's weapon is a mere waste of precious iron."

The King stood up and shouted: "Kill him then spear his head on the gates of Bactra, that much honor we will give him, for he has earned it because of his courage and his madness."

The elephants roared again as their steers ordered them forth.

The crowd gasped as Nimrod started running towards one of them. He leapt into the air, spiraled and spun, and with his blade cut off the head of the steer. The headless body fell to the ground and the leopard growled as it started to rip the flesh with its teeth; turning the carcass into a conflagration of blood, gore and crushed bones. The crowd made a commotion; marred with panic, fear and awe.

Nimrod had landed on the ground swiftly, with one hand to the ground and the other brandishing the sword. His eyes had optimum confidence in them; this man did not know what fear meant.

The King stood up and shouted: "I said KILL HIM! CONVERGE AND ATTACK!"

The other three elephants stood shoulder to shoulder and in one charge started to stomp towards Nimrod.

He raised the sword in the sky and it glowed, he shut his eye for one second then flung the sword towards the elephants, as it flew, there was a blood-curdling wail that penetrated the hearts of every single person that was present. But the sword missed the steer and instead struck the wall.

The king, who was following the action with every sense in his body, started smiling for a change. "Ha! He missed! Now without his weapon he'll be crushed!"

The elephants stomped, slowed then stopped. The elephants were at loss; usually the steer would be yanking the thick girdle to make them charge forwards. But the steers weren't doing anything. It's as if, they had fallen asleep...

The people mumbled.

They looked at the three steers on top of their elephants. The three faces were expressionless and their eyes looked out towards oblivion. Their jaws were open wide. Nobody knew, that the arcane sword had claimed the souls of the steers.

Nimrod raised his hand and called out: "Sar'anbar!"

The sword shot through the air in time for Nimrod to expertly grab its handle. The three inanimate steers lost balance and fell to the floor lifeless as they were. Everyone gasped, including the King.

The ground started shaking. Lightly at first then the intensity increased more and more. Nobody doubted it: It was an earthquake. Nimrod smiled as he put his sword back to its sheath: "Like I said... I have come to claim you as my own."

The people scrambled to the Western walls and stared in bewilderment at the approaching army. The cavalry had arrived. As if Nimrod even needed one.

Oannes opened a flask of water and quietly sipped it, he motioned for a platoon to storm the city gates, and obediently, the sortie of two hundred barbarians charged.

A warrior next to him approached. A scarf protected his face from the cold wind. A small dove sat affectionately on his shoulder.

Oannes offered his flask to the warrior and the latter gladly accepted. Suddenly, the dove on his shoulder flew away and went towards a cleft on a nearby mountain. The cleft overlooked the city walls and its palace... But faintly, you could see a single tower overlooking it. "Must be a watchman's tower." The warrior thought. The dove was flying straight for it. It encircled the tower a few times then hurriedly flew back and perched on the warrior's shoulder. Oannes looked at the warrior and smiled: "I never got to thank you for choosing your side next to..."

The warrior suddenly stood up straight and looked at the citadel, squinting his eyes as if straining to see something. Oannes frowned: "What's the matter?" Oannes looked at the citadel then looked back at his mate. "Do you think...?" The warrior nodded. Oannes called out towards a platoon of mountain soldiers.

The commander of the soldiers knelt next to Oannes: "Yes, oh great Vizier?" Oannes: "Lord Nimrod may have overlooked something. I want your most experienced men to scale that cleft and storm that watch tower." Oannes pointed at the hard-to-see tower and the commander looked. The commander nodded.

Oannes patted the scarved warrior's shoulder: "You are now under the direct command of the person that I trust with my own life." The commander looked at the scarved warrior doubtfully and looked back at Oannes. "I've given you my order, what are you waiting for?"

Inside the palace, the battle raged. People were slaughtered whether they were men, women, old people or little children. Barbarians didn't know the difference.

Nimrod broke open the royal chambers with a kick and stepped inside.

Not expecting it at all, Nimrod's eyes widened as the king leapt in the air and crashed into him. The sword flew to a corner.

A big scuffle ensued. Nimrod punched the King with only half his might, nevertheless, the latter fell helplessly in sheer pain. "I'm saving my willpower for the feast." He said sarcastically.

Nimrod walked towards his sword, picked it up then pinned the King down and held him tightly. The King laughed: "Go on! Kill me! Ha!" Nimrod raised the sword high in the air.

There was a flash.

David could see through Nimrod's eyes.

David didn't know what was going on but as he held the sword high up in the air on top of Goliath, he frowned and looked down. "This is not the King..." He said. Yet it wasn't him that spoke. It was Nimrod. A long time ago.

Nimrod thought: "He can't be the king. A king doesn't give up his life that easy; kings live for life because they have no riches beyond the grave."

Nimrod: "Where's the king?" The man snickered: "But I am the King." Nimrod relentlessly cut off the man's hand and he immediately screamed in agony. "Where's the King?" Tears ran down the man's eyes. "I was sworn to protect his secret. Kill me, Nimrod, my duties on this Earth have passed! I gladly accept your terrible spade's judgment."

Nimrod frowned. "So be it." And he swung the sword in the air and it came down silently.

Goliath's head rolled.

David stood up straight and looked on. In front of him was the army of the Israelites, behind him was the army of the Philistines. There was only one odd thing though. Every single person, and by that it meant every one the 75,000 soldiers from both sides, was frozen.

A slight panic filled him as he turned around and noticed that, the trees were frozen as well; even the wind with the debris that it carried was frozen too!

David didn't know what to think.

"The man you've just seen was a man foretold by the heavens since the beginning of Time. He was Nimrod." A man's voice echoed.

David turned hesitantly towards the voice and saw an angel sitting on a rock. He held a stone and gently threw it upwards. The stone stopped in the middle of the air as it called towards gravity to manifest itself onto it but found no answer.

The angel started walking towards David. "He was the first ascended one to wield that token. In fact, it was the first token."

David shook his head. "Huh?"

The angel continued: "That tyrant king was Nimrod. He ruled for about 600 years in the land of Shinar. But how he came about to have this power and immortality, is through that." He pointed at the sword.

David looked at it and wondered if he was even supposed to touch it, he felt an immense flow of evil within it.

"What you are wielding now is The King of Spades token. The first sword in the Esoteric History." He explained.

The angel continued: "Cain, the son of Adam forged it with the help of the demon Vulcan and sealed it with an ancient spell engraved with the letters of the angels."

David shut his eyes and the ancient tale contined.

Part 2: A little birdie told me

Nimrod almost ripped the large tent apart as he angrily swept the goat-skin tent door and stepped inside.

"We were tricked!" He shouted. Suddenly Nimrod stopped and he raised his eyebrows in surprise as he saw, sitting on a chair and hands bound: the real King of Bactra.

"What the hell?" He said. He looked around the room and saw Oannes his Vizier, Semiramis, Oannes's wife and the chief of the mountain soldiers. "Where was he?" He asked. Salmu, Nimrod's black leopard peered curiously into the tent. Oannes smiled. "Hiding, like the true coward he is, in the watch tower on the cleft."

Nimrod nodded. "Brilliant. Shaban, you shall be rewarded handsomely." He said as he turned to the Mountain Chief. Shaban grinned, revealing half-rotting teeth. Oannes looked at Nimrod: "And what about the genius who cleverly deduced where the king was hiding and guided the mountain soldiers into the fort and captured the king?" Nimrod smiled as he walked towards Oannes and pat his shoulders: "You greedy old man, you have all you'll ever need with me, in my palaces. What more can you want?" Oannes shrugged: "Nothing sire, except, it isn't me that deserves your pleasure." Nimrod walked towards a table and grabbed a handful of goat meat, munched on it and threw some for Salmu outside the tent. It roared happily as it jumped at the chunk and munched away. "Whoever it is, make sure he is rewarded handsomely as well. With Bactra, the last of the kingdoms of earth taken into our empire, I can now go back to Babel where we can rest a few months, recruit more men then continue the conquest to the lands westwards."

Oannes' wife spoke: "Thank you lord for your generosity, but your kind words and your pleasure are enough reward for me." Nimrod stopped munching. A piece of meat dangled down his mouth. "Reward for what?" He asked as he finished his bite then looked at Oannes: "She planned out the attack on the fort? All by herself?" Oannes: "Not just that sire, but she also scaled the cliffs with my men and subdued the king!"

Nimrod looked at Semiramis waiting for a giggle or something to end the joke. "My father" Semiramis explained "...Was an avid of the ancient Eastern arts of the eight trigrams; a secret form taught by the old Oracle of Changes. He taught me the art of using the eight forces of existence to your advantage and thus being protected from any harm."

Nimrod walked towards Semiramis and started walking around her. She's been with the army for a week. Oannes met her during the pillaging of one of the Bactran cities and fell in love with her when he saw how she resisted capture and subdued three of Nimrod's men. When she accepted to join him, he begged Nimrod to keep her. So Nimrod agreed but wasn't too optimistic over how long she could survive wars. Women weren't fit for battle, so Nimrod thought. "Tell me, Semiramis." Nimrod said. "What do you think we should do with your king?"

The king looked up. He muffled something with his gagged mouth. Nimrod motioned for Oannes to remove the gag from his mouth "Let's hear what he has to say."

Oannes obeyed... "Semiramis! I beg of thee. I was your king, have I not been fair to all my people? Please, I am pleading for my life. If the great and terrible King Nimrod will not listen to my pleas, maybe he will listen to yours?" Oannes covered the king's mouth again and Nimrod turned towards Semiramis: "Well?"

She spoke: "The king was famous to all for his cowardice. And thus, no one shall want to pay for his ransom, if we should declare one. He is useless. I say the faster we rid of them, the better." Nimrod turned around at his two men and relaxed when he saw the shock in both their faces. "A female barbarian? A wonderfully beautiful one at that too." Nimrod thought: "My dreams have become true!"

They heard the King's attempt at a muffled scream and they laughed. Nimrod smiled at Semiramis: "Do the honors, Semiramis. Any way you like." Oannes opened his mouth to say something, but Semiramis picked up a spear standing on the wall, walked towards the King and pierced his heart with it. Nimrod's eyes widened. "Only a true warrior can pierce with a spear like that, without throwing it." He thought aloud.

Semiramis walked towards him: "That is why you forged your great blade? A weapon that has the piercing power of a spear, yet the swiftness of a dagger... The Sar'anbar..." She reached for the hilt on Nimrod's belt. Nimrod grabbed her hand and pushed her away. "No one touches the Sar'anbar. Unless they want to feel the blade take their souls away." Semiramis rubbed her bruised hand: "I apologize, Nimrod. It wasn't my place to..."

There she was, from peasant to warrior strategist. And yet, Nimrod never noticed how beautiful she was. It was almost as if she knew how captivating she was, and she used that to her advantage, to rise. Was this her way of making herself known to him? Was she flirting with Nimrod?

It was nighttime now. You could hear the crickets. The largeness of the moon illuminated the sky. The only other thing in the vicinity that was as bright was the Sar'anbar. Nimrod clutched it tightly and the strange markings on the blade glowed like embers teased to fieriness by an imaginary breeze.

Nimrod looked down the breathtaking panorama that the cliff gave on the world below. He was expressionless. In his head, he heard screams, voices, and people calling out to him as they drowned helplessly. So helpless, but the paradox was: so was he.

He looked up towards heaven with an evil frown and there was a slight red glow, deep in his eyes. "Why?" He asked.

He looked at his sword and heard more voices. But these were the ones that he enslaved. In his hunger for revenge, the same fate that was inflicted on the ones he loved was the fate that he inflicted on the ones he conquered. Thus if the sword didn't channel the energy of the mind, he would've flung himself off the edge of the tallest mountain in the world, without looking back; the madness was too much to bear.

He heard a soft scuffling sound behind him; his hyper-senses shot up but calmed down as it told him that it was a friend. "Hello Salmu."

Semiramis giggled: "I am honored that you've mistaken me for your most faithful companion, lord." She said as she walked towards him. Her white gown and her white face shone with the moon's rays. Her eyes were deep brown, more beautiful than any race of woman he had seen in all his travels throughout the world. He turned away. "What do you want, Semiramis?" She shrugged. "Nothing I was out for a drink when I saw someone standing here. I thought it was Oannes at first." He grinned to himself as he thought what a good liar she was. He looked down again and returned to his thoughts.

"How does it feel like, to rule the world, lord?" She asked. He wiped his nose with his arm and sniffled as the cold he caught started to bother him. He can't wait to leave these cold parts and go back to warm Babel; the center of his Kingdom. "I will wait till I rule Heaven, then I will think about how it feels like to rule the world."

She nodded. She looked down then she started walking away. "Wait." he shouted. Nimrod had just realized something. In all his pillages and all the women he raped to satisfy his animal desires, he never stopped to think about companionship. True, he had Salmu. But Salmu didn't know conversation, and even though the two of them could communicate, nevertheless, they were two different classes of creation and opposite mind-sets. He needed a woman to be his companion, perhaps even bear him a son. "You don't fear me, Semiramis. You talk to me as if I was your brother, not your King. Tell me why."

Semiramis looked down. "Lord, it's not that I don't fear you. But it's that I know that people, no matter how strong or powerful they are; still have a heart, like all of us."

She walked away.

Nimrod froze.

His cruel soul has found its complete opposite and perfect compliment.

Part 3: To Have and To Withhold

The army cheered as they stormed into Heliar. The villagers screamed as the barbarians ran in, burned the houses, raped the women and killed the people relentlessly. Nimrod stood there and sighed. Salmu turned to Nimrod worriedly. "Go feed, my clever one, go feed." The leopard leapt in the air happily and ran towards the screams. Oannes walked towards him. "Sire? It is not normal for us not to see the great spirits of the king so low, that great king who walks miles ahead of the army and pillages the cities whole before we even reach it. You have been extremely saddened for many days, sire? What matters you?" Nimrod looked at Oannes and grabbed his head. "Oannes. I need to tell you something, but please don't take it the wrong way."

Oannes frowned: "What is it lord?" Nimrod sighed: "I think I may have fallen in love with your own wife, Oannes." Oannes' eyes widened and he stepped back. "But...." He nodded at him: "It is true. Oannes, I promise you the hand of any of my fair daughters in marriage in fair exchange for Semiramis." Oannes shook his head: "No. I can never part with my beloved." Nimrod sighed: "Think about it, Oannes, think about it very carefully. I am in love with her and unless I am united with her I shall remain miserable." Nimrod started to walk towards the village. Oannes stood there frozen.

Three days later he hung himself.

"I am so sorry, my dear." Nimrod said as Semiramis wept on his chest. She sobbed: "He was so happy for so many days. Until a few days ago, he stopped eating and sleeping, he wouldn't even talk to me and tell me what was wrong." Nimrod gently caressed her head. "Don't you worry, Semiramis. It has passed. I will tend to thy with all my might and all my care."

A month had passed before Nimrod returned to Babel. Now married to Semiramis, they sat on the throne that ruled the kingdom of Shinar in the city that was called The Gate of God: Babylon. Shinar was divided into twelve provinces. Each province lead by the tribe of that part of the world. And the chief of each tribe was stationed in the twelve-member council of Babel (the capital). In other words, Nimrod had the entire earth in hand's reach. He had the world bowing at his feet. But still, he thought he had achieved nothing.

Semiramis was a great queen; she tended to the peoples' needs and helped the poor and the orphan. Her people loved her so. And Nimrod was proud to claim her as his own.

He dedicated a shrine sacred to especially three Gods. And the largest of them held a smith's hammer.

Everyone under Nimrod was forced to worship the Gods that he worshipped, and all those who worshipped any other Gods were executed.

"Blessed are thy, my lord Cain." He said as he prayed. Semiramis took off her shoes, stepped into the shrine and kissed Nimrod on the forehead. She looked at the statue

of Cain and looked back at Nimrod. "Nimrod?" She asked. "Yes, my love?" he replied. "You've never told me about Cain. Why you venerate him so, and why you loathe the God of our great grandfather Noah?" He shook his head: "You cannot understand, Semiramis, as I've told you countless times before, why do you keep persisting?" She frowned: "Because I care for thee. Our hearts are one with each other but I need to know what you know so that our minds can be one as well." She clasped his hands softly and her warmth filled him with ecstasy. "I want to be to thy, what thy are to me: My 'an: My heaven."

He sighed and looked at Cain's statue. He then stood up and walked towards his sheath and took out the sword. He walked towards Semiramis and she looked at him quizzically. He sat down and held the blade by his hands. "Touch it." He said. She shook her head. "You've killed every person that has ever laid a finger on the sword. I do not want my fate to be as theirs." He shut his eyes. "I promise thee not to slay. Now touch it." She blinked, and then reached her hand towards the blade. As her hand closed, the swirling symbols on one edge of the swords started to glow with a faint blue light. The light grew and grew as her finger came closer.

There was a spark.

Part 4: The Cipher of the Heavens

Nimrod stood there with tears in his eyes. He looked up and saw a torn man looking down at him with a smile. The man had a strange mark on the left side of his face, covering his eyes and down to his cheek; a scar of some sort. "Lord Cain... I am afraid." young Nimrod said. "Don't be afraid of what you truly are my little one." He said. "You see, even when my father, Adam himself found out what he was, he was scared too. He covered under the fig tree next to the first mother and they shivered. But when you know your worth. You need to grasp that." Cain raised the sword up high. "As I have." Cain sighed. "As I have. But my time is running out, my young one. It is your turn to do what I have been destined not to do. Avenge for the death of my children."

"The d... death of your children?" Nimrod stuttered.

Cain nodded: "So ill-fated. So ill-fated they were. The forbidden race. My children who were despised, not only by the sons of my younger brother Seth, but also by every creature that walked the earth. Because they were descendants of the firstborn: The Murderer of God's beloved." He sighed sadly as he started explaining. "I am the firstborn Son. I loved the firstborn Daughter so, but Adam gave her to Able instead. So I hated him. But God saw through my hate, and refused to accept my sacrifice and instead took Abel's. So I killed him in the plains under the great Mountain, thus God marked me and I had to live with my mark for the rest of my life. Father and mother couldn't bare to look at my face anymore. The mark that God smote on me reminded them all of the murder that I committed. So I left. But before I left, I went to the cave of treasures and stumbled upon an Ark made of Gold, in it I found a piece of garment which was the only thing that was salvaged from Eden by my parents. So I stole it as I escaped down to the plains of Exile -- the Land of Nod. And I discovered the secret. The piece of garment told me how to look into heaven to discover the letters. So I looked, for a year. And every month, saw one letter affixed in the sky. When I learned all twelve, I drew them in the right combination. And thus, the other 10 letters were revealed to me. Only my children I taught. They became mighty and strong with the power of the letters." Cain stabbed his palm with the sword and blood spurted out of it. Nimrod shuddered. Cain gasped: "Nimrod! Look at my blood! When I invoke them, the twenty two letters of the name of God superimpose the twenty two letters of Man. I am no more a man, I am a supreme!"

The wound sealed. "I can live as long as I want! I am stronger than a giant, faster than a gazelle, more perceptive than an eagle, and I can communicate with people and animals through the power of the mind. But that is just the beginning."

Nimrod now started to see the world in Cain's eyes: "But if you are so powerful, how come you did not yet rule the world?"

Cain shrugged: "I planned to. But God sent angels down from heaven and there was a war. My children, with all their might, were powerless against the forces of Heaven. So they scattered across the earth. Thus, heaven decided to send forth the diluge. So it rained, and rained, and rained. The animals and children of Seth were saved on an ark built by Noah, but the rest of humanity perished."

Cain traced the glowing edge of the sword with his finger: "That's why I forged this." He looked at his sword.

Nimrod pointed at the blade scaredly: "Wh... Why?"

"Why..." Cain smiled: "To rule Heaven of course. Nothing can rule Heaven, except the King of Heavenly Metals... Sar'anbar. That's its name." Cain sighed, looked at his sword again then thrust the handle towards Nimrod. "Call it, and it will come to you. Never leave its side. Take the leaf too, but beware... For if others discover what the sword or the letters are worth, they shall be lead to ruin. I never knew the strengths of this Token. In fact, I don't know of all the things that it can do. The letters I engraved onto the metal proved too powerful for even myself. Wield it, and find out what you can do with it, and what it can do to you. My young one. Wield the King of Spades Token, until you claim your rightful throne as the King of Heaven."

Semiramis gasped for breath as she fell back. She got up on her knees with widened and watery eyes. "Oh my god."

Nimrod smiled: "So you wanted to know." She took a deep breath and wiped her eyes. "Cain was alive? How did he survive the flood?" Nimrod shrugged: "He never told me. But he told me that the sword grew so accustomed to his superior nature, that if he parted with it, he'd lose all of his powers and become mortal again. Thus, the sword kept him alive with its powers of immortality. Until he entrusted it to me."

She looked at him with a frown: "Without the sword, how could he have survived?" He looked back at her expressionlessly. Her heart skipped a beat: "Cain sacrificed his own life for you?" A tear formed in his eye. "He had faith in me. And the day he gave me the sword, I made a solemn oath never to fail him. And I never have." Semiramis smiled: "So that's the secret... Of why you are the greatest King in History." He nodded then added: "But being the greatest King in History is nowhere near what I rightfully should be."

There was a loud voice, it almost sounded as if someone was calling out for help. Semiramis fell to the floor with a fright fit. "What was that?" She shouted. Nimrod inserted the sword back into its resting place. "One of the souls enslaved in the letters." He said. She looked deep into his eyes: "What? They're enslaved in the sword forever?" He looked at her: "Yes, forever. They can never be freed. Because the letters make the sword unbreakable." She looked at him suddenly in a way that made him shiver. "Do you know the secret of the name? Do you know how the letters are arranged?" She asked. He looked at her: "That secret, Cain made me swear not to give out to anyone. If others knew how to invoke the letters, they would become too powerful for anyone to control. They can even claim to be Gods."

She looked at him and her eyes widened: "So YOU are the undisputed God right now." He frowned at her disgustingly then stood up angrily and walked towards the door. "I knew you'd never understand. You understood it exactly the way that it wasn't supposed to be." He slammed the shrine door and a loud echo followed.

She shrugged, but stood still for a moment.

She looked around the room. She walked towards the ceremonial table and looked around. She looked at the scrolls on the only table in the temple chamber and paged through them. They were just records of old stories and a record of the ancestors of Nimrod, from Noah's ancestors to Cush; Nimrod's father. She slammed the table

with her fist. "WHERE can it be?" She looked around the room and sighed. "I know he has the secret hidden in here somewhere because it's holy, and this is the holy house. But where? There's no furniture. There's nothing in here." She paced around the room several times and thought.

Then she stopped. She looked at the statues and stared at them. She walked towards Cain's statue and looked at him carefully. She noticed that Cain's scar was embossed in silver. She slowly touched it, the head moved. She raised her hands towards his head as her body throbbed with an un-understandable feeling. She raised his head and saw a green leaf folded carefully and placed in a small crevice inside the statue. She smiled to herself as she put the head down and slowly unwrapped the leaf. She blinked as she looked at the strange symbols lined up on it, there was a large Y under two intertwined triangles. It seemed as if they were etched by a twig in a very hasty and strange manner. She looked at the letters and felt as if they were calling to her. She reached her hand towards it and touched the leaf.

"Adam!" She screamed. "Oh my god. He's already woken up." She said as she looked at his dead body. An angel glowed towards them "My Lady! What ails my Lord Adam? Why is he on the ground like so?" She shook her head as she shivered. "Raziel. Raziel. Please. I want you to do something for me." She said. Raziel bowed to her: "My lady. Let only the powers of creation be my limits, but as far as God has bestowed unto me from the treasures of knowledge, I will obey to the ones of whom God created from his own Essence." "Raziel." She said. "You are one of the few angels to know the secret of God's holy name". Raziel looked at her suspiciously: "My Lady, those who know have sworn an oath of secrecy never to reveal the name unto anyone." "I know it, Raziel. It's what God said when he let the Universe know him; it's I Am the One Who Was, Who Is and Who Will Be For Ever and Ever." She said. "I want you to write that name, Raziel. Write it so that we can see it, when we awake." Raziel frowned: "But why, my lady?" Eve was crying uncontrollably. "Raziel. We've made a mistake. Because of what he did. Satan. The damned. He tricked us..." Raziel looked around: "Lucifer was here? I must call on the Host." "No!" She screamed. "Don't. I don't have much time. I'm going to die, just as Adam has."

Raziel looked at Adam's corpse and shrugged: "But how can you die if your soul is God's and God is Eternal?" she shook her head: "It's not dying as in cease to exist, rather die and be reborn in a reversed consciousness. A consciousness in which we will forget what we truly are and where we came from. Banishment as you angels understand it. See, I want you to write it up, write the name of God, so that we can remember when we look up into the heavens." Raziel shrugged: "What do you mean write? What is, to write? I do not understand what it is you wish me to do." Eve grabbed one of the leaves that she used as a garment and grabbed a twig. She etched something onto it and another and another then showed it to Raziel: "As you make sound when you speak the name, so can each sound have symbols to represent them in writing. That is what it means to..." Suddenly Eve choked as she realized she had stopped breathing: "I want you to divide..." She said with great difficulty: "...the name of God into symbols and arrange them like the shape of the tree of life in heaven." Raziel nodded at her: "Understood my lady, I will gather a curation host so that we can get to work at once." He said and stared at her as she choked in pain and fell down dead.

Semiramis woke up gasping for breath. She coughed. Then realized she was just

day-dreaming. She looked at the leaf then sighed. "So I wanted to know." She repeated Nimrod's words. She put the leaf back into the statue, wearily, then stopped. She smiled to herself then whispered into the air:

"You are mine now."

Part 5: The Dawn of Aries

The wind rustled. The chief astrologist pulled his cloak onto himself tightly: "All the symbols are in place, sire." He said as he pointed to the top of the tower. Nimrod nodded: "Excellent."

He looked at the twelve letters lined on a belt around the peak of the tower or "Ziggurat" as the Babylonians called it. As a safety precaution, Nimrod didn't trust anyone to see the true form of the primary letters, so he had to subordinate them. And the new symbols didn't glow.

"If my mathematicians are correct, the sky should align with the Ram directly on top of the tower in exactly four years time." He said. Nimrod smiled as he looked at his chief science officer. Geniuses are hard to reward, Nimrod thought to himself. But it's ironic how they feel that the knowledge they gain, is as valuable as gold.

"Sire, I've never doubted you. And truly, you've taught me the power that these strange letters can do to foretell the future, with that knowledge that I'll forever cherish and I'm ever indebted to you. But I pray tell me, what your purpose be, in lining up the letters in like thus fashion on top of the highest tower in Babel?"

"Patience" Nimrod nodded. "You will witness wonders that will be recalled in history for ever. And will indeed, cast a new light into the world. But in due time, my friend. In due time."

The veiled woman opened the door to the blacksmith shop. The hammer slammed on the blade and the smith looked up. He smiled, revealing dull yellow teeth and slammed the blade again. "I want you to make something for me." She said under her silky mouth cover.

The smith smiled: "I accept payment of copper, silver, gold, and a good time in bed." He laughed.

"Hold your tongue you filthy rat." She said as she revealed her face.

The smith's eyes widened so much that they hurt. He fell on his knees: "My Queen! Forgive me! For I am a man married to my work and..." Semiramis interrupted him: "Silence! I am in need of your services. And I hear you're the best blacksmith in Babel ." He nodded: "But of course, my liege lady! Anything you want, I make: Horseshoes, mechanical parts, anything that is of metal."

"I need a spade." She said. The man frowned: "A sword? It is our specialty, my apprentices go far and wide across this beautiful earth to teach the arts of sword-making!" She shook her head. "No. I need a spear with a broad head. As a speared sword."

He thought then frowned again: "My lady. You have to understand. A sword is a sword, and a spear is a spear. Swords are made for close-combat and spears are made to throw."

She clasped her hands: "Haven't you heard it when the great Nimrod himself marveled at me for my unmatched skills with the spear? Have you not heard it, when I slay a deer last hunting season, by walking unto it face to face and piercing its heart?"

He nodded: "That I heard."

He thought deeply. He brought out a piece of papyrus and a small piece of coal then drew a spear with a pointy edge in the bottom and a broad two-edged blade on top. "How's this? The bottom is pointy for being thrown, and the top is broad. Thus with this spade, you can pierce lions as a spear and cut bears as a broad sword. Hunting, is what you need to use it for, I am assuming."

She had a wide grin on her lips. "Hunting. Indeed, my dirty friend."

She threw him a bag of gold: "Four days and four nights." She said.

He opened the bag and dropped the gold coins on his table: "I give it to you in four days and three nights!" He laughed hysterically. "Finally, I can retire." He thought to himself.

She started walking out then suddenly flung a dagger at the table. The smith gasped. "You tell no one. NO ONE, that the spear is for me nor that I was even in your shop. Do you understand?"

"Yes, my lady." He bowed.

It was night time, in a far away land.

Semiramis walked slowly across the hallway. She wore a long and flowing grey gown, the sleeves extended beyond her hands and floated freely as she walked.

She looked at the columns and frowned as she saw the unfamiliar and strange markings and inscriptions. Yes it was Sumerian, but she could not understand it. That is strange because, even though it is not her native language, she was a quick learner, and it only took her a few years to learn the language of the people she came to rule... But these letters, it's as if they represented the precursor language to Sumerian!

As she walked, she could see statues, sinister statues of hideous creatures, their faces were wrinkled and ugly. And their eyes, they glowed with a steady red light.

Semiramis shivered; it was cold as well.

She heard a crash. She stopped and looked behind her. It was misty, she couldn't see anything. She continued walking and came to a door. Semiramis is a hard person to scare; she has a warm, but strong heart, so she didn't hesitate to open the door.

She looked inside and saw darkness. There was a staircase that lead downwards. She took careful steps down, her heart beating with excitement, oh how delicious the feeling of curiosity was, she thought.

"Semiramis" she heard a female voice calling from the bottom of the seemingly endless staircase. "Who are you?" She asked, wondering if she spoke loud enough to be heard. Immediately she thought it could be her mother. Semiramis never knew who her mother was... When she was born, she had a necklace with the image of a dove engraved into it but she never knew what it meant. When she asked her father, he shrugged. In fact, she doubted that her "father" was her real fraternal parent. But she didn't care about that, her father was a philosopher and a martial arts expert, and she learnt a lot from him, especially two important things: Poetry and Survival. She reached the bottom.

It was a gate, tall, large and made of copper. She looked around her and saw eyes staring. But they were just eyes, with no bodies.

"Come" another female voice called. Semiramis looked behind the gate and saw a beautiful woman. Her skin was dark as if it were scorched by the sun. "Thank you."

Semiramis found herself saying. And as she stepped through the gate that the gatekeeper opened, she closed in to kiss her forehead in gratitude, but instead found herself drawn to her dark luscious lips, and she kissed them instead.

The gatekeeper nodded as she softly touched Semiramis' cheek and whispered: "She awaits you."

For a strange and peculiar reason, Semiramis found herself at home in this strange place. One thing was for sure, she didn't know where she was, or who she was going to, but she knew that she was close to discovering who she really was.

She shut her eyes as she walked across the path, she heard a million voices, and they were all around her, talking, conversing. She couldn't make out any words; moreover, there was no emotion in whatever it is they spoke. Her nose caught a scent. It smelt like burnt apples.

She looked around. She could now make out people. They were women, thousands and thousands, seated in pairs and in couches; she perceived it to be some kind of council. But a council of what? She looked down and realized that the path had now turned to a red carpet. With each step she took she shut her eyes in ecstasy as an amazing feeling of euphoria filled her. She looked up ahead and saw an oak throne, tall and majestic. The top had the face of an owl, to its right was the engraving of a bright sun and to its left was the engraving of a crescent moon. She gasped as she started floating in the air, steadily towards the throne. She didn't know whether she was physically floating or whether she felt like she was floating because of the intense feeling of euphoria that literally made her feel as light as a feather.

The woman sitting on the throne turned towards Semiramis and smiled. She stood up. Her skin was bronze, her eyes... Her eyes were a strange color, and she never thought such a color existed. It was a splash of violet, green and hazel, or maybe just those three colors blended in together, and the colors swirled! They were heavenly. She couldn't help but rever this woman's origins, whatever or wherever that was. She had long black hair and she noticed that her breasts were not covered. As the woman walked closer to her, Semiramis realized that the voices around her began to sing. It was a beautiful and alleviating song. In fact, it made her blood course and her heart beat faster. But now she felt something else, she felt special. That's because, of all the people sitting in the council, she was honored enough to be standing in front of this woman, this queen, this ruler.

"Oh how beautiful you are. Just like your mother." The woman said.

Semiramis had tears in her eyes: "My mother? You knew my mother? Who are you?" The woman looked at her in surprise, as if expecting Semiramis to have known all along.

Suddenly, Semiramis realized that she DID know who that woman was. "Inanna..." Semiramis whispered.

Inanna smiled:

"That's right, Semiramis... I am you."

Semiramis woke up from her dream soaking with sweat.

"Oh God." She exclaimed as she wiped the mixture of tears and sweat off her face. She looked next to her to see if she woke Nimrod up but he wasn't in bed. She

looked outside the window and calculated the time with the position of the stars. It was close to sunrise, where was Nimrod?
She stood up and walked towards the large barrel of cinnamon water and drank a ladle-full.

She stepped outside to the balcony and walked down the artificial garden. She strained to see the dark man standing near the ledge and made out the shimmering of the Sar'anbar, which he held with his right hand. He was in his hopeless contemplative moments again.

"Ki-an?" She called out to her beloved in their adopted Babylonian language.
"Semiramis. What are you doing up? Go back to bed." Nimrod called back.
Semiramis walked closer. "I had a bad dream. I dreamed I was... Uhh.. Never mind. Why aren't YOU in bed?"
Nimrod sighed.

She stepped in front of him then leaned her back against his chest. He sighed and wrapped his left arm around her waist, pulling her body closer to his. They looked northeastwards towards the Ziggurat.

"I am sorry if I upset you yesterday for asking about Cain." She said.
"That is the least of my worries." He replied.
"So something does worry you. What is it, my love? Is it the children of Cain again? The voices?" She asked.
"Ki-an.... Ki-an, my life's an empty vessel. Yes I am proud to have this world under my feet, and you to wake up to in the mornings to. But I am not happy..." He explained.

Semiramis interrupted him: "But darling, we've tried to have a child, but I guess I am not meant to bear children." She lamented. "If it's another wife you seek, and if that will make you happy..."
"NO!" He shouted. "I'm not worried about who'll take over my kingdom after I die. I know I have a long life ahead of me before I start worrying about that. After all, though I lost count, I'm almost six hundred years old. And I feel as healthy as ever."
"Darling. What about me? I am not immortal like you. Can I be...?"
"You can't!" He shouted. But instead of looking sad, for some mysterious reason, Semiramis smiled to herself, without Nimrod noticing.

"That's ok, Nimrod. I'll just wait until I age and die, then you can continue without me, and find another wife that can bear you children whenever you want."
Nimrod nodded. "Yes, that's how life is, my darling."
Semiramis walked away and in her native Bactran tongue mumbled: "Not if I can help it."

"What was that?" Nimrod asked.
"I said, good night, my darling." She replied.
As she walked away he grabbed her hand. "You didn't wait for me to answer your question." She blinked, and then sighed. "What will make you happy?"
"Facing Him and getting an answer for why he murdered the children of Cain."

Semiramis' heart skipped a beat.
"Then, dethroning Him, and taking His place, as the King of Heaven."
Semiramis hesitated for a moment then said: "God's not the King of Heaven."
Nimrod frowned. "What?"

"God is the God of Heaven ('An-u), not the King of Heaven (Sar-'an). If you want to dethrone God, his throne is beyond Heaven. You see, the Sumerian language is an odd system of answers to questions that people don't know how to ask."

Nimrod was shocked at Semiramis.

Semiramis pointed at the Ziggurat. "That tower may open the gates of Heaven in four years time, but you need to look higher if you want to reach God."

Nimrod smashed her head against the hilt of the sword, and she fell to the grassy ground in sheer pain.

"I don't know if I should take that as a blasphemy against ME or a blasphemy against God himself, but don't EVER question my plans." He screamed. The veins of his neck throbbed with his vented anger.

Semiramis looked at him from the ground with fuming bitterness.

Nimrod sheathed his sword. "I have studied and planned this for hundreds of years then a puny woman comes along and tells me that I don't know what I'm talking about? What an insult to Nimrod the great Soul-catcher."

He walked towards the bedroom.

"You may be immortal, but you are STILL human!" She shouted at him.

"What's your point?" Nimrod asked.

Semiramis was quiet.

"Exactly. Nothing. That's what you are without me. Don't ever forget that, woman."

Nimrod said and slammed the bedroom door behind him.

Semiramis breathed fast as her anger circulated inside her.

"You will pay for disrespecting me, Nimrod. You will pay, someday. THAT, I shall never forget."

Part 6: The Shadow Of Heaven

Four Years Later

"Tonight, my ministers..." Nimrod said as he held up a chalice of wine high up in the air. The twelve tribal chiefs sat around the table and looked on. They sat in the holy temple and the feeling of sanctity filled the room. "Is going to be a day recorded in history for generations."

He shouted: "Semiramis! Bring in the ram."

Semiramis walked into the room with a strange spear/sword in her hand and slammed it on the marble floor. Nimrod stood up: "What is this insult, Semiramis. What are you doing? And where is the sacrificial ram?"

"Chiefs. Leave!" Semiramis ordered.

"What? They're not going to listen to you. They're loyal to their king." Nimrod said. Surprisingly enough, the twelve chiefs stood up and walked out of the room.

One of the chiefs stood back and kissed Semiramis. "Everything is going to plan, my dear."

"What the hell?!" Nimrod shouted.

"That's right. Hell, not Heaven, is where you're going to tonight. And I will conveniently replace you as the ruler of Shinar."

"Not as long as I wield the King of Spades, traitress!" Nimrod unsheathed his sword and ran towards Semiramis with a classic barbarian war cry. She raised her spade at him and parried the lunge with an admirable swoop, something you cannot do with a spear. She spun around and kicked Nimrod hard on the side of his torso, breaking his ribs.

He swung his sword at her with rage and she instantly ducked the slash. She panned the sword with her spade and kicked Nimrod in the face. Expecting a reaction before his next attack, she was shocked to see him immediately stab her, as if he didn't feel the kick in the face.

He laughed. "Yes, I know. Clever aren't I?"

The blood spurted onto her hands. She gasped, and then smiled.

The wound sealed.

She smiled as she waved the top of the spear and he saw the inscriptions of Devic symbols. His eyes widened in horror. "You... Created a Token."

She laughed. "Yes, I know. Clever aren't I?"

"But... Why? Do you realize what you have DONE?!" He asked.

"Oh. Nimrod, you selfish bastard. Don't you know that we ALL want to be immortal?" She screamed and flung her weapon at him but he dodged it with a back-flip. She ran towards him screaming with relentless lunacy. She called out the name "Nin-Mar" and the Queen of Spades flew back into her hands.

He swung his sword at her for what seemed like a dozen times and in each time she expertly blocked his attack.

The two metals clanged as the two fighters paused. They panted and gasped as they struggled to gain as much breath as they could before someone made the next move.

They looked at each other with hatred and uncontrollable power.

But... Something was wrong.

She looked at her spear and tried to pull it, but it was stuck. No, she was stuck. She couldn't move. Semiramis looked on in confusion. Suddenly Semiramis' mouth opened in horror as the image in front of her tore.

There was an implosion.

They looked around. It was somewhere else. It smelt foul.

They were in a place that looked similar to the room they were in, but instead of a table there was a large stone slab on top of a stream. Nearby there was a throne, but not Nimrod's. It was the same one that Semiramis saw in her dream. Semiramis looked around then realized that it wasn't Nimrod that cast this spell, but it was her.

She let go of the object she was carrying (which was now a long shadowy object with shiny symbols on top of it) and looked at Nimrod. His skin color was now a little lighter. There was a strange mark on one part of his face, he had a larger chest and was much taller. The sword on his hand was now a shadow with little shiny symbols and ethereal elements encircling those symbols; those were the souls entrapped in the devic letters.

"Hello Cain." She said.

Cain looked at her with a frown: "What is this. What kind of spell have you cast on me, Semiramis?... Wait, you're not Semiramis."

Instead of Semiramis he saw another woman, tall with strange, swirly eyes, long black hair and bronze skin.

The woman covered her face and laughed hysterically.

"I am Inanna. Welcome to the underworld. My recluse, my kingdom. Or part of it. And this is not a spell, but rather, an unspell. To open our eyes, and see what's real. In your case, you are really Cain. You killed young Nimrod, didn't you, and then took over his body, and pretended you were Nimrod all along. So you really live up to your name, accursed one."

"I see what's going on here." Cain said with a nod. "And you have been reborn in Semiramis in order to walk the Earth again... Inanna, ancestress of the Eridians and the Babylonians. But you didn't just randomly pick her. You nurtured her. You knew her mother, didn't you? A priestess of yours perhaps. But what was your plan? To take over my kingdom?"

"Oh, my dear Cain. You cannot fathom it. Countless years ago, before you were even born, there was a prophecy, sacred to me. I am merely fulfilling it."

She nodded then gasped as she remembered something then pointed at him. "Wait... You! It was your father and mother that took over my home and banished my family."

Cain frowned: "What are you talking about?"

Inanna: "I'll spare you the words, and I'll let you SEE my story."

Tears trickled down her magical eyes as she said: "The story of my people."

She raised her hand at him and he fell asleep.

Part 7: The Queen of Heaven

A long time ago. In a land closeby, yet far, far away.

Inanna opened her eyes and looked around. She sat up and looked around her again. She must've wandered too far from home. She was sitting next to a murky river. She looked up to the sky and noticed that the moon wasn't up yet, so it must've not been so late.

She shivered and looked across the river and saw eyes staring back at her. Eyes without bodies. She shivered again.

She looked up ahead and saw the dark forest. It didn't look that scary a few hours ago when the sun was still out. She had to walk back home or her family would get worried, but the way home was through that forest.

As she walked she shut her eyes and covered her ears with her hands. She didn't even want to imagine what type of creatures dwelled in this place.

She stumbled on a stump and fell to the ground. She looked around her in fear expecting a giant monster to attack her, but there was nothing. She looked around her at the strange monstrous trees. They were thick and fat. There were holes burrowed into them, homes to what, she didn't want to know. The leaves were brown and withered. But fruits clung onto them, they were wrinkly and brown.

She gasped as one of the rotten fruits fell in front of her and split.

As she raised herself to her feet with her tiny child hands she saw the black seeds inside what was left of the fruit. She touched them with her finger to see if they were some sort of insects, but they weren't. She snatched one of them, clutching it tightly, although it was tiny.

Later...

"Don't run off again darling. We don't know what dwells outside of our Kingdom. And we do not want to shatter the balance; it is sensitive enough as it is." Her father nodded then looked up at the dark sky. "Well, I must tend to my duties now. Goodbye."

Inanna looked up at the sky and smiled as the moon slowly shone into the heavens. "Mother, why does the moon always come at the time when my father leaves at night?"

Her mother hugged her daughter. "I don't know, darling. Maybe your father secretly turns into the moon at night. And your brother, who goes away at dawn turns into the SUN!" They laughed. "And I turn into..." her mother tickled Inanna playfully but she shouted: "No! Wait!" The little girl opened her hand and showed her little seed. "Now throw that away, dear, if you found it in the land of dark, it must not be good." The girl frowned sadly and threw the seed away.

In the morning she went outside to play in her garden. It was huge for a little child's garden. It had flowers of every type, and all the animals of the world came here to play, where lions and deer admired its beauty equally, and all grudges forgotten. Everyday she played with the animals and laughed and ran for miles and miles and miles.

Suddenly she stopped as she saw the little black seed on the ground. She lay down next to it and looked at it. "Hello."

She paused.

She pointed at the sun: "That is the sun; it gives us light and brings happiness... Do you feel happy?" she smiled at her imaginary friend, the seed.

She rolled around the grass playfully, and then crawled towards the seed again. She stared at it for a long time then asked: "Are you hungry? What do you eat?" She waited for an answer but there was none.

"Would you like some water?" She ran towards the spring, cupped her hands and filled it with fresh water then walked back towards the seed, careful not to spill all the water away. She poured the water on the seed then waited. "Grow." She raised her hands in the air. And as if obeying her command, the seed grew roots to attach itself to the ground then a stem formed and expanded and grew and grew.

The animals stared in wonder at the enormous vegetation. The tree was beautiful, it had green leaves and the fruits it gave were fresh-looking and red. She hugged the tree and said: "I knew it. All that you needed was some love and attention. Look at how beautiful you really are."

Suddenly there was a soft fluttering in the air and a dove landed on one of the branches of the tree. It looked around then started cooing with its soothing peaceful voice. Inanna was filled with happiness: "OH! A bird! And it has chosen my tree for a home!" Inanna stretched her hand towards the dove. "Come little bird! Come!" The dove looked at Inanna and it flew away.

Inanna drooped her head and tears formed in her eyes.

A tall man walked towards her. She felt his footsteps and trembled with fear. Then she sat on the ground and bowed her head. The man laughed. "Stand up, my beautiful." She smiled: "Thank you, grandfather. I mean, lord Enki."

"Do you know what you shall be when you grow up, child?" He asked. "Older." She said matter-of-factly. He laughed. She looked at him quizzically then saw her own father and mother standing behind Enki, holding each other and smiling proudly.

"Look at this tree. Wonderful as it is, has its roots in the underworld, its stem firm on the earth and its branches and leaves stretch across the heavens." She looked back at the tree and noticed all the animals gathering around her in admiration.

"You shall go through many trials as you grow up. But in the end, I know you shall prevail. You will return here where you tree shall be waiting. And you shall become, the Queen of Heaven." Enki promised.

Her eyes widened with happiness. "The Queen of Heaven!" The little girl smiled gleefully. "So ALL the birds in the world will LOVE me as WELL as the animals?"

Her parents laughed, her mother shed a happy tear and wiped it, she was happy yet sad because her daughter was too young to know what it meant to be bestowed such an honor.

Night fell

She heard a scuttle in the bushes. The little girl opened her eyes and looked around. It was late, by this time all the animals should have left. She was wondering who or what it was. Suddenly there was fluttering in the bushes and a creature whooshed across the air and disappeared behind the tree.

The little girl's eyes were wide with wonder. She walked closer to the tree then went around it. A large hole was burrowed into it, a creature sat there... It was a woman. A woman with wings? The wings were not like those of birds however, they were like those of bats. Her long red hair and wings covered her body yet she shivered. The little girl's fear turned into pity as she saw the tears in the maiden's eyes. The latter sobbed as the girl walked closer to her. "Dark maiden... What are you running away from?"

"They hate me." She sobbed. "They want to banish me. Because I am hideous and was made of mud, just like him. But not like HER."

"Oh..." the little girl didn't know what to say.

Suddenly there was thunder in the sky.

The little girl's eyes widened in absolute fright.

"Oh God... Spare me." The dark maiden prayed.

Suddenly the sky opened and creatures descended from the sky, they had long arches on their back, from a distance they looked like wings, but were not wings, rather they were arched waves, oscillating in different frequencies as they changed speed and altitude. The creatures shone with an annoyingly bright light, one thing's for certain, they were not from the land of the dark, but neither were they from Eden.

Two of them walked towards them and pushed the little girl away and dragged the dark maiden out of the tree. "There you are Lillith." He said. Lillith screamed and struggled, her wings fluttered desperately. The little girl stared and looked at the men in fear. The other one looked at her. He held a long object which pulsed light from it. He pointed it at her and shouted: "Are you Angel or Demon?"

She fell back again but felt compelled to answer, but she didn't even know what he was asking her, although the language was, not surprisingly, the same. Her brother ran towards the man with a large axe in hand. "Don't touch my sister!" The angel pointed his weapon at her brother and a bolt of fire shot from it, he fell on the ground in pain.

The little girl turned around and saw her family being dragged out of their homes. She held back her tears.

"What are they?" One of the angels asked. The other -whose "wings" were larger than that of the others- shook his head. "I don't know. But they've all been tainted by the demoness..."

"Understood. They must all be banished to Hades as well." The second in command exclaimed. "No." The chief angel commanded: "Don't send them to Hades. Send them to the Unreal."

The other angels turned around in surprise.

"Yes. Banish them to the barren Earth. We don't know if they have powers. And whatever powers they may have, they will be dormant in that realm. They will be in a dream state after all. And as for this tree, mark it off the dimensional grid, it has also been tainted."

One of them grabbed the child but was stopped by another. "No, Raziel. She is just a child, let her go." Raziel looked at her with suspicion. "She looks very sinister. I can feel it. She is exhuming a strange type of vibration. Evil, without a doubt."

"What's your name, child?" He asked.
"Inanna." She said with a tremble.

He looked into her deep oddly colored eyes and didn't feel threatened, so he let her go. He looked at her with a sigh as she ran off towards the woods. If her home was taken, the dark was the only thing left.

As she looked back, she saw Lillith looking back at her with a smile. An angel grabbed her wings and ripped them off. Lillith screamed and fell on the ground with explosive pain.

"What about the garden? Shall we burn it?" One of them asked.

Raziel stopped. "No. Wait!" his wings increased in amplitude and he rose to the sky, the sky opened and he disappeared.

The sky opened again and Raziel returned, behind him were two people. A man and a woman without wings, neither did they glow. The woman was short, she held onto her man as if he was the one to protect her from any harm.

"My home. My family. My garden. They've taken all of it!" Inanna told herself sadly as the tears poured down her face. She walked away. She couldn't bear to see any more.

Part 8: The Tower

Nimrod awoke with six of his chiefs holding onto him. He raised his head as he saw Semiramis standing on top of him with his own sword.

"How do you open the gates of heaven?" She asked.

"Heaven? You are not worthy of the Earth and you want to rule Heaven??!" Nimrod mocked her.

"Tell me the secret or I will slaughter you." She insisted.

"No!" He shouted. "There are guardians in the gates of heaven, they will repel you. You need more than your spear or my sword to gain access to it." She wondered if he was bluffing then suddenly felt a tiny buzz in her head, as if her brain received a new set of information. "You are lying. The Sword is the KEY into Heaven. The Angels fear the tokens... Because... Wisdom. Of course, the one thing that angels have always longed for, yet are banned from... A free will."

Then she looked at the sword, and realized that the sword was feeding her these revelations.

"So this date of sacrificing the ram coincides with a rare simultaneous alignment with the constellation of the "ram" as you've called it. And that constellation can be redrawn to represent the divine letter of Aleph, the First Devic Letter. The key to opening the gateway. Oh I love wisdom." She said as she held the sword up high above her head.

"I don't need you anymore Nimrod so yes, you are the sacrificial goat now. Say a prayer, Nimrod. Say a prayer to any God that you want. It is the last thing will be able to do."

Nimrod shut his eyes. "Avenge me, God. For I am the one you had forsaken so many times. Avenge me, the one whose thousand and one children's souls you've claimed. Avenge me, for I am the First Born. Avenge me, for I repent. Avenge me, for I have always longed for you." The chiefs looked at each other trembling more than ever.

They knew that the "First Born" was Cain. Their own alleged God!! And there he was, being executed right before their eyes!

Semiramis sighed: "I could've almost shed a tear for that." She raised her hand in the air again and the sword came down seamlessly.

Far away, among the stars, a wheel in the sky churned and spun, clicked three times then stopped on a stellar combination.

"The Vernal Equinox. And it's right on schedule." Raziel said. His sister stood next to him as they watched the unfolding events from their Devic vintage point. An interstellar particle shot across the stars and landed in the earth's sun. An explosion ripped across the surface of the sun, dwarfing its natural eruptions.

Semiramis winced in pain as the sun's rays shone into the temple. The chiefs blocked their eyes.

They went outside. The city was blanketed with the pure brightness of the sun, and to turn and look at the sun, it would've been excruciatingly painful.

The head chief looked at Semiramis. "What is going on?"

Semiramis shook her head: "I don't know..."

Semiramis raised the Queen of Spades in the air and uttered something in a strange language, and what she said, although was incomprehensible, felt serene, and in fact, sent a warm feeling to everyone that heard it.

Suddenly, everyone gasped as a dark object started moving across the surface of the sun. A few minutes later, it was completely covered.

An eclipse.

"Quick! To the top of the tower!" She shouted at the chiefs.

They ran towards the staircase and climbed to the top of the Ziggurat, where Nimrod had instructed his chief astrologist to build a belt of the twelve primary "zodiac" letters around it.

She walked towards the symbol of Aries inscribed on the stone and looked to the sky towards the constellation. She then took the sword and retraced the symbol of the first Devic letter on the wall. She stepped back with a gasp as the margins around the inscription cracked and light shone from within the letter.

The head of the chiefs looked at her with burning anxiety: "My queen. Is it working?" "Silence!" She shouted.

She reached her hand for the symbol and suddenly there was a ripple in the air, as if she was underwater. She looked around in a sudden panic then relaxed as she realized that the vortex that connects the realms of reality and dream was opening.

Suddenly there was a thunder clap.

A gigantic bolt of lightning struck the tower and it exploded with a roar. Several chiefs fell to their deaths. Semiramis, who was flung violently to the outside wall shook her head in pain and felt the crack on her head. She called for the Queen of Spades and it sealed her wound.

She stood up and saw a female looking at him with a smile. She thrust her hand toward Semiramis and several bricks flew towards her. Semiramis parried the heavy bricks with her spade, its design and arcane powers giving it unsurpassed swiftness for the parrying ability. The female thrust several more bricks towards her and smiled as Semiramis started to pant and gasp for breath as she meticulously parried the volley of bricks.

"A guardian... You're an angel?" Semiramis asked.

The female revealed her feather and bone "reality version" of her wings and nodded: "Yes I am. Known by many names, Tarot the Angel of Time, or Tetra the Angel of Glory. Which I came to strip you of."

Semiramis looked at Tetra with wonder, in that split second that she was off-guard, a brick flew to her face and fractured her jaw, she fell down to the ground screaming in pain and slid towards an incline of the collapsing tower.

Semiramis looked around for her sword and saw Tetra stepping on it. For some reason, Tetra looked scared to touch the weapon.

Semiramis smiled: "You don't even know who I am. So I suggest you leave." Another angel descended behind her. "Oh really? Why, who are you?" She turned around and smiled... "Well, well. Hello Raziel." She said with a smile.

Both Tetra and Raziel quirked their eyebrows in confusion.

"Why... Don't you remember me? You spared my soul from banishment, a long time ago, in a land called Eden... Before you stole it from me and gave it to Man." She said.

"Umm... Brother... Wanna fill me in?" Tetra asked.

Raziel sighed. "Inanna."

She nodded. "Step away Raziel. I'm only going back to what is rightfully mine, and bring my family home."

Raziel raised his hands towards her and an ethereal glass enclosed her. "I'm sorry about your garden, but I'm afraid it's not going to be that easy."

Semiramis walked forwards and hit herself with the invisible glass, she screamed as her body changed to that of Inanna's, then she shouted out for the Queen of Spades. The weapon flew across the air, shattering the glass spell as it relentlessly made its way towards Inanna's hand. "Out of my way, Angel. Or you shall taste what it is to be banished." Raziel stepped back but was nevertheless stabbed by the spade. "Raziel!" Tetra shouted and she flew towards her brother. Tetra touched his wound and it healed. "Raziel! Are you alright?" She asked. He shook his head: "Yes, she didn't intend to kill me. Inanna. STOP HER!"

Inanna raised her hands in the air and called out into ancient names: "ANU! ENKI! NANNA! UTU! Awake from your dwellings and come join me in our ascent back to our home."

There was an earthquake. "The invocations!" Raziel shouted suddenly. He stood up, raised his wings and flew to the ground where a crowd of people stood watching. Tetra flew next to him and looked at her brother. "What are you doing?" Raziel: "I

know we were only bluffing when we confronted Nimrod. But it's time to do it. We need to teach people how to invoke the words, it is the only way to stop the Annunaki from returning." Tetra shivered: "But God told us not to give the secret to anyone." Raziel shook his head: "This is an exception. The only way to save Mankind, and to regain their worship of the One true God." She nodded: "Ok."

They raised their hands in the air and the Name of God shone in twelve different languages, then the names slowly started to revert themselves to the primeval letters, slowly, they became more and more purified into the original Devic Letters.

The people from the different parts of Shinar read and gasped as they each remembered what was instilled into their souls by the ancient powers of existence. "What shall we do with this knowledge?" One man asked.

"It shall grant you the power of Magick. Invoking a combination of words will cast a Devic spell. You can invoke the powers of the Earth in order to confront the onslaught of the Annunaki."

"For example, forming this combination, will move the moon back in its course." Tetra said as she formed two letters in the air and the moon moved away from the sun, breaking the eclipse.

Inanna looked down and saw the letters being taught to the people of Shinar. "NO!!!!" She screamed.

She leaned against the edge of the tower and screamed with anguish: "STOP!" Raziel and Tetra appeared next to her and crossed their hands. "So you shall desist?" Inanna cried then her form turned back to Semiramis'. "I shall. Leave my people alone, they don't need to have so much power." He nodded: "Spoken like a true and just Queen... Agreed. But on one condition, I shall erase the secret of the name from your mind and destroy Eve's leaf, and then we shall take these tokens away. We can't destroy them, but we can hide them."

Semiramis wept.

Raziel raised his hand towards her head and sighed as he deleted the secrets from her head. Then walked towards the wall and wiped off the mystic form of the first Devic letter. Tetra flew down to the people and snapped her fingers in the air. The letters disappeared.

"What... Why?" The people asked in pure confusion.

"Not yet." She smiled, and flew back to the tower.

Raziel stood next to Semiramis and placed his hand on her. "Semir... Inanna." Semiramis looked up at him with her tears. "I truly am sorry. It was destined. Trust me, when this is all over, you will get what you truly deserve. Think of it, as a really really long story, with everyone in the universe acting it out. And with you as one of the actresses." and for a moment, Raziel shed a tear, overcome with emotion. "I guess that stab did more than what I thought it would... But thank you for sparing my life." He stood up and sighed.

Tetra carried the sword and the spear, ready to throw them into the ends of the earth. Raziel looked at her: "You know, I'm glad you can't wield those things otherwise you could've been wise and ended up killing me." Tetra looked at him with a frown: "What?"

"Never mind." He shook his head.

The sky opened and they ascended.

Semiramis wept once again.

This time, for her family, whom she shall never see again.

Chapter 6: Hexagram

Part 1: Tip of the Arrow.

She stood on the horizon. A handsome and dignified man stood behind her. One hand was on her shoulder and the other was on her bow. Her hand twitched as she paused and concentrated on the silver arrow's line of sight. In this dark night, the stars were jealous because the two beings' radiance was undisputed in the night sky. "Steady." He said to her and stood back. She twitched again. It was the fourth day straight that she was in that same position and her hand hurt like hell. She remembered his words: Steadiness was the key in Archery and if she was going to be the best, so be it.

A beautiful white bird appeared in the heavens. It glowed just the same as the other two. It swam in the night sky and it sang. The girl didn't know what he was singing, but it sounded so beautiful, so serene. "Now!" her brother shouted. She hesitated: "Uh. But. It's so beautiful. I can't!" the man squeezed her shoulder tightly, she screamed in agony. "You must, right now. It's evil you see, that light that it shines, it's fake. We are the true ones, they're not. Now shoot it! Her eyes shed a tear. "No." she relaxed her hand but her fingers slipped, the arrow shot silently through the air and landed on a small patch on the ground and started a fire. The man stepped back. "Huh. Figures. You are so weak; you've been weak since the day you were born. You need to choose your side, or else, you will be alone forever." He flickered, and his image disappeared. She stood there in the heavens and sighed. The bird fluttered and landed on her silver bow. She smiled at it as her tears continued to flow. The bird itched its feathers with its beak. She gently reached her hand towards it to pet it. But it fluttered away, leaving a single white feather floating gently onto her hand.

"You will be alone forever." Her brother's voice echoed in her head.

She woke with a start. She wiped her eyes and noticed that they were soaked with tears. Her confusion was marred with more confusion as she looked around; this wasn't home. She tried to raise her head but winced as a sharp pain on her solar plexus kicked in. She touched that part of her body between her breasts and stomach and winced again. She looked under her rose nightgown and saw a bandage fettered around her torso. Then she realized she had one more question: "Who was she?"

A door opened and a butler came into the room with a shiny golden tray. Breakfast was grapefruit and bacon.

"Where am I, mister?" she asked. The butler ignored her, put the tray on the nightstand and started walking away. "I ASKED YOU A QUESTION." She reprimanded. He turned around: "The master will be here shortly." The butler said with a "pommy" accent. She shook her head as he slammed the door and looked around her. It was a velvet room. The bed was large and was sheltered by silky drapes. The room had a large dressing table with a golden-framed mirror and a velvet dressing-chair. She realized that this room was meant for a woman. She looked at one of the paintings on the wall and saw a black-haired woman standing tall and carrying a red shield on one hand, the shield had a strange symbol of two

triangles intertwined with each other, a type of six-pointed star. She looked at the other wall and saw another painting. She raised an eyebrow. She saw a painting of a woman shooting a silver arrow and a man nearby sitting behind a chariot with horses blazing with fierce flames. The man and woman looked very much like the two she saw in her dreams. There were markings under the poster. She looked at it then she realized that she didn't know how to read.

The door opened again. The man blew a cloud of smoke in front of his face, blocking it from view, and walked into the bedroom."

"Who are you?" she asked, trying to calm her nerves. The man pulled a chair and sat on it. "I. Am your new master."

She laughed. "Oh, really?" He nodded: "Really." "Ok, we'll see about that." She said as she stood up and started walking towards the door. She winced and crouched to the ground. She didn't like feeling helpless, she didn't like it one bit. "You're just going to walk out on the man who brought you back from the dead?" She put a hand on the bed and with great difficulty pulled her self back onto it. He didn't bother lifting a finger to help her. He smiled: "You don't even remember who you bloody are, do you?" She sighed as her body slowly regained some much-needed strength. "No I don't." He grabbed an ashtray and flicked his cigar. "I'll tell you what, love." He said as he took out a deck of playing cards from his pocket and shuffled them. His British accent almost got to her nerves. "How about this. Since we have all the time in the world to learn all sorts of things from each other. I'll do this. As soon as you're done with your breakfast, I'll tell you about your history. Then mine. After that you get some rest so that you can start practicing." She frowned: "Practicing for what?" He looked at her with deep green eyes: "Didn't you know? The war for the four kingdoms is about to begin." And with that, he stretched his palm forward and an Ace of Clubs, Hearts, Diamonds and Spades floated from the deck onto his palm and slowly spun around each other.

And as if it was a spell to trigger her memory, she suddenly got flashes. She saw people. But, where they people? They were strong and mighty. They were her family. And there was another side. People who lived in another plane, another universe. They, disliked them for some reason, even though her people meant good. She saw a legion walking up the sky with heads drooping. The man who was on the end of the line looked behind him onto the earth and a tear formed in his eye. "Goodbye mankind. I've had my heaven with you."

She shook her head and looked at the British man. He had this sinister look in his face and she felt like she wanted to punch his lights out. It was as if he was trying to pry into her thoughts. "Start talking old man." She said.

The cards slowly flew out of the deck one by one. She shut her eyes as his voice formed images.

Part 2: Return to the Cosmos.

"A long time ago, there used to be great beings that walked the Earth. In Hebrew, they were called Nephilim. In Greek, Titans. There were many. Most wreaked nothing but destruction and were evil. These evil ones claimed to be Gods, under the leadership of Kronos. Humans were forced to worship them or face death. It was only a matter of time before humanity forgot about the "One God.". Some of the Titans that intermixed with humans gave birth to a new generation of creatures: Great mighty warriors and beautiful maidens who had the strengths of the angels, the beauty of the humans and the temper of the titans. They were called the Olympians because they took up that mountain in the middle of the Earth as their home.

And they waged a war against the Titans who saw that they were quickly getting the fairer side of public opinion for their courage and dignity. Humans loved them, and started to worship them instead of the Titans. So there was a great war which the Olympians won. The Titans got many punishments. Some were pardoned and lived on the other half of the Earth; some were thrown into Tartarus in the underworld. And some, like Kronus (whose son was the leader of the Olympians) were locked up in other stars and planets. Countless of years later, there was an unprecedented deluge, which the Olympians didn't expect. The deluge drowned all that remained of the titans and Nephilim on Earth and saved only a handful of humans and animals. After the great flood the Gods met to know who ordered the great flood. That's when an angel appeared and asked the Olympians to surrender to the One God who Was, Is and Will Be. The Olympians were dumbfounded that there was a being who called himself "The One God." Zeus, then the King of the Gods called a meeting to discuss this. All the Gods unanimously disapproved any surrender. Thus it became and so the Age of Prophets began..."

The girl shook her head. "Look. I don't know how long your damn story is going to take as long as you let me know where I fit in it." The man turned around and looked at the painting on the wall. She looked at him: "That's me isn't it. Don't tell me I used to be an angel." The man shook his head: "You didn't used to be. You chose to become one. But before that, you were the proverbial "Daemon", a creature that falls under the "Miscellaneous" category of beings. That is, neither an elemental sprite nor angelic nor human. You were one of the illegitimate yet direct heirs to the throne of Zeus. You see. Zeus, was your father." The girl's eyes widened, but she smiled. "You're bloody kidding me." She said. The man shook his head with a smile. She started laughing hysterically. "Zeus, the King of Gods, was my father. Like I could walk up to Zeus and say: Daddy, daddy, can I go out and play with the humans?"

The man was amused but didn't like her sheer sarcasm. "Whether you like it or not, you were the daughter of Zeus. You were Artemis. Like your grandmother, you were the Goddess of the moon. You also ruled the Hunt. The crescent represented your bow." He said that as he pointed to the silver bow that the painted Artemis held in her hand. She pointed at the man. "And that'll be who, The Sun God?" he nodded. "Yep. That's Apollo. Your twin brother. "

"You are SO bullshitting me." She said as she shook her head in disbelief. The man stood up and walked to the wardrobe. He opened it and took out a crossbow and an arrow. He walked towards the window behind her bed and opened it. The window

overlooked a magnificent garden. The garden had a hedge maze and in the middle of it, there was a court yard with three large squares. The left square had a grand fountain festooned with cherubs. The right square had a large sundial. And the middle square had a six-pointed star symbol engraved onto the marble (the same star as the one on the shield in the other painting).

The garden and the house sat in the middle of a great forest. The girl could see trees as far as she could. The man handed over the crossbow and the arrow to the girl. "What do you want me to...?" "There." The man said. "See that deer?" She got up on her knees to get closer to the window and looked outside. A baby deer sheepishly stepped out of the forest into the garden and sniffed around. "You want me to shoot that deer?" she asked. "Do you see it?" he asked again. She hesitated but remembered the dream and the taunting of her so-called brother. She nodded. "Good." He said, and then pulled a string next to the window and a velvet curtain fell over it.

"I want you to shoot it through the curtain."

She grinned: "You must have a lot of confidence in me." He nodded: "More than you'll ever know." She sighed, looked at the crossbow and examined it. Even if she was Artemis, she wouldn't know how to use a Crossbow; too high-tech. She examined the string and immediately understood the structure of the crossbow. She attached the arrow and pulled the string. The mechanism locked the arrow in place. The man smiled in admiration. She stared at the point of the arrow and gently caressed it with her fingers. Her hand then traveled to the string and felt its softness. It was all too familiar to her. Maybe she was the Goddess of the Hunt. He is telling the truth isn't he? She had a million questions. But her rare patience was now taking over. She didn't know what this man wanted from her but she'd better be careful or she'll get herself into a mess.

She straightened her back. She tightly held on to the Crossbow's handle -other hand supporting the crossbow shaft- and readied her line of sight. She could barely see through the curtain but could make out the outline of the deer. How was she going to do this? She wanted to take a shot anyway but thought about what he said in having confidence in her. "Do it. Not for him, but for yourself. If you really are Artemis." She said to herself. She strained her eyes as she carefully aimed. She looked at those tiny needle holes that filled the curtain. She had an idea. She strained to see through the holes and as much as it was amazing, it didn't surprise her when her vision magnified and started seeing THROUGH the several microns wide holes!! She could now clearly see the deer; she adjusted her aim with pinpoint accuracy and pulled her finger on the crossbow trigger. All that the man heard was a faint "foosh" sound, but the next moment he heard a thud. He moved the curtain and smiled. "Perfect shot." He opened the curtains completely to show the dead deer. "Ok, now I know who I am. Now who the hell are you?" She asked. He waved a finger at her signaling "No." and said: "As we agreed. First, breakfast. Then you'll let me finish your history, and then I can start with mine."

She sat back down on the bed and munched on the grapefruit. "Is this going to take all day?" she asked. He sat next to her and put a hand on her leg. "You see." She interrupted him as she grabbed his hand, nearly crushing it and threw it by his side: "I prefer it if you tell the story without any "bloody" formalities." He ground his teeth in anger as he rubbed his crushed hand. "Very... Well." He said bitterly.

He continued his story. "The Olympians ruled for a total of twelve thousand years. Until the message of the prophets spread far and wide. Every human tribe received a prophet. From the Native Americans to the Arabs. And the might of the Olympians shook solemnly. Everyone doubted their existence now, and the lack of self-confidence made them weaker. The angel appeared again. He called out for their surrender. And Zeus once again called the Gods from the corners of the Earth. And when all the Gods were quiet and couldn't speak, Hermes, Zeus' closest messenger came up with the ultimate diplomatic solution. He negotiated a guarantee of the pardon and safety of the Olympians in exchange for quiet departure from the Earth and an oath never to return. The "One God" agreed and pardoned them. So one by one, the legion of the Olympians ascended from Mt. Olympus onto the Cosmos. Some of the Olympians took up their homes close to Earth, so they could look up to it and remember their days of glory. Zeus, who loved the humans the most, was as such. And he took up his home next to his father's. The others took up homes in the stars that they revered. All of the Olympians ascended the cosmos..."

Artemis sighed with a heavy, sad heart. Sad, because she actually remembered that day. The walk across the cosmos. She looked up at the man. He smiled. "They all ascended the "cosmos". Except one, who did a totally different kind of ascension." She looked up at him and wiped a tear that helplessly formed in her eye. "Who?"

"You." He finished. She flinched. "You should remember that day very well. For it was the turning point of your life." He said. She paged back through her memories and tried to recall. She shut her eyes.

Part 3: A Glimpse of Heaven.

"Wait!" She heard a man say.

She opened her eyes and turned around. Standing tall and beautiful was an angel. He had golden blonde hair that shone as bright as his wings. "Hello Diana." She clutched her bow as her heartbeat raced: "Aryel?"

"I need a yes or no answer. Heaven would like to offer you a job. To train angels in Archery for whenever they descend to Earth. Would you like to accept that offer?"

Her mouth was wide open. She didn't expect that at all. She looked at him then drooped her head. "Would... Would I be close to you?"

Aryel blinked and looked at her expressionlessly. "Diana. Yes or no."

She sighed as she heard her brother's words from a long time ago; the day she met Aryel.

"Yes." She answered.

Aryel elevated and reached out his hand for her. "Give me your hand." She slowly reached out to him. He grabbed her and took off to the air. She grabbed him tightly and he raised his left hand. The strange object that he wore on his arm glowed and the heavens opened.

The image blurred outwards and sped. Every cell of her body vibrated. The vibrations pulsated energies of light and when the vibrations settled on a frequency, she was somewhere else. In a higher plane of perspective.

She opened her eyes and realized she could see in every possible angle simultaneously. "Wh... Where am I?" A tower of light in front of her pulsated, she saw wires behind him where his wings should've been, they waved up and down slowly and softly, it look liked the Northern Lights which she would see on Earth when she traveled far Northwards for the hunt.

"Welcome to the Devic Kingdom. If earthern scientists could name such a thing, it would be known as the Upper Fourth Dimension. I know your body is adapting to the extremely high frequency, so you may not be able to see my true form or feel anything until you're more acclimated. But every being in here has a unique signature which you can sense. Memorize mine and follow." There was a beam and "Aryel" disappeared. "Artemis" turned around and she could feel her perspective moving, it was like floating on water, only the surface was four dimensional.

She realized that as an Olympian and living on Earth all her life, she thought being a "Goddess" was the highest thing that there was for a woman, but she was oblivious to this other world that existed. And she felt so pathetically tiny. How big was heaven??! Was it endless? Never mind that... How many other dimensions DID exist?? She marveled where she was. Then she also realized how lucky she was.

She looked towards the different signatures of light and saw Aryel's of what she perceived to be about 20,000 leagues away and counting. "Ok. Go. Artemis. Go. Follow the blinking dot." She sighed as she realized she didn't know how to travel in this realm. Another being bumped into her, it stretched its "hands" and instructed: "Compress the space between yourself and wherever you want to go, and you'll go. Remember, the Law of Order and Balance. That's what the Universe is built on, even in the dream world." The "angel" as Artemis assumed it to be disappeared and Artemis felt like cursing Aryel for leaving her without an instructions tablet. She did as she was told, deformed the space in front of her and she boosted forward. She saw a smile and knew it had to be Aryel's. "You learn fast." Aryel said as they glided at immeasurable speeds.

She didn't have a heart per-say but she could feel something within her beating. A feeling that was so good. She hummed. Her humming sounded like the sustained after-effects of a pin-drop. Then she remembered hearing that singing somewhere before, a long time ago. Aryel. She turned around at him and he was singing. His voice spread colorful energy across heaven. And she asked him what were the words that he was singing. "Our own version of the psalms. It was the first thing that came out of the mouths of angels... We sang them in the dawn of the fourth day of the universe. When we first sang them, the whole universe heard. And the birds of Earth tried to imitate us, so they try singing them at the dawn of every morning." Aryel said and smiled softly. She had never seen him smile, and she liked the feeling she absorbed from it; Aryel appreciated what he was, in fact, he wouldn't have appreciated to be anything else. If only she knew that it wasn't easy being what he was and seeing what he had seen.

She tried to think whether time even existed here. "No." Aryel said suddenly. Artemis didn't know whether he answered her thoughts or whether he was on some kind of heavenly communicator talking to someone else. So she just stayed quiet and presumed time didn't exist.

Aryel pointed at something in the distance. "See that?" Artemis tried to make sense of what she saw. It looked like thrones. Where they thrones? She realized that was just her ethereal mind's way of translating what was hard to understand. The thrones were inside some sort of temple on a background that looked onto 3,000 galaxies. "Let me guess. The throne of God, and his two right hand mens'?" Aryel looked at her strangely. "No, throne of God, that'll be the Universe. But that's the court of the King, Queen and Jack of Spades. Originally throned by three angels, but now after some rectification only ascended humans or human hybrids with a Spades Token can take up the spots. For example, if you had the token of the Queen of Spades, you'd be sitting there and will rule Deva, i.e. the 7th heaven; the realm of air." Aryel sighed. "Ever since the tokens existed they threatened the security of each realm for what they potentially could do. So just imagine if they came to the wrong hands."

"Where are they now?" She asked.

Aryel shrugged: "Don't know. But we're not worried because we have the keys safely locking Deva from the other three realms so even if someone had the tokens, they can't claim the thrones because the doorways are locked."

She attempted to do some kind of chinless nod then realized she had actually HAD a chin now. She was too scared to look at herself; she didn't know what kind of abomination she would see. Maybe a large sphere for a head with a million eyes all around it and some kind of hideous half-serpent, half-lion half-monkey medley. Aryel heard her thoughts. "Don't worry, Artemis. You look like whatever you used to look like in the realm of reality. Look at me for example." Aryel stretched his hands and she could see the angel image that she was used to. Artemis looked at her hands and saw human hands. She looked around herself and saw people and angels smiling as they glided past her. Some had wings and some didn't, she assumed the latter were ascended humans, or perhaps just visitors. She relaxed a little.

"How can I tell Angels from Archangels?" She asked. Aryel shook his head. "They're a higher frequency, this plane can't support them. You have to go higher to see them, but you can't do that because any higher a frequency and your living cells will dissipate. You weren't made for that." She nodded in wonder.

They came into a gigantic field, about 400,000 angels stood inanimate. Aryel shifted into a slower gear and floated to the "ground".

Artemis didn't know what the landing procedures were or whether there was some kind of runway but she knew that she was going too fast for comfort. She shot through the air above the legion. Aryel sighed. She turned around in a wide arch and crashed into Aryel. Luckily, an ethereal cushion stood between every being and another so Aryel merely slid a dozen paces and grabbed Artemis.

"Thank you." She said as she floated gently to the ground.

"Without any further ado..." Aryel said as he frowned at Artemis. "I introduce you, fellow Archery Host to a being, who has traveled the Earth, knows every forest in it and is a master of the hunt. She will train you swiftly and prepare you..."

Artemis looked at Aryel. "Half a million angels, Aryel... Is heaven preparing for some kind of war?" Aryel sighed. He shut his eyes and opened his mouth to give the answer.

Diana opened her eyes and saw the British man's eyes wide open in bewilderment. "What the hell? Where you listening to my thoughts?" She was furious.

"Oh my God. I never imagined heaven was... Like that. And half a million angels you say? Interesting. Go on. Finish. What did Aryel tell you?" He asked more curious than any proverbial cat.

"None of your business." She said and pulled the blanket over herself.

The man nodded then sighed. "Thank you for the entertainment. I should also say that you've basically said your jolly history on my behalf."

"Ok." She said as she pointed at him. "I'm done with MY history. Now I want to know yours. And make it quick, buster."

Part 4: Downpour.

"Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement.
Properly understood and applied,
it is the most potent instrument of action. "
-Mahatma Gandhi *

Rudheseim, Germany
1547 AD

1:25 AM

Her lips mumbled as she recited the verses from the Torah. Her head humbly rocked back and forth. A grey scarf covering her head symbolized her modesty. If you looked closely at her lips, you'd notice that they were shivering. She gasped with a start as the door to the house slammed open. The man standing at the door wiped his nose. "Fucking rain." he said. He had a dark bottle on his hand. He staggered into the room and slammed the bottle on the table. Her shivering became worse as he started to walk towards her. The book shivered with her. The man grabbed the book from her hands. "You reading this again? Huh." He threw the book back at her. "When you find God in there, tell him to give us some money. We're poor." She stuttered: "M... Maybe if you didn't spend all our food money on your drinking, maybe we'll have money."

He laughed then pointed a finger at her: "Woman. If I didn't get drunk to forget your ugly face, I would've left you a long time ago. So be thankful that I drink." A tear trickled down her face. But it wasn't because she was hurt over what he said, but it was because she couldn't understand how a human being could be born without any feelings.

As she stood up she heard a child's laugh outside. She gasped as she turned around. Her battered black eyes looked outside towards the darkness of the night (one of her eyes was permanently purple from so much beating). "I... Isaac?" she reached her hands towards the wooden window to open it. "What did you say?" The man said angrily. "Nothing! I didn't say anything!" She insisted. He stood up and started walking towards her: "Haven't I TOLD you to NEVER EVER say that name in this house again?" He walked towards her then swung his hand in the air. The fact that he was drunk impaired his aim so he merely hit her head lightly as she crouched in fear. She whimpered. "I'm sorry, please don't beat me again."

He grabbed her face then looked deep into her eyes: "You know, the only reason I married you is because your father was rich. If I knew that old bastard (God rest his soul) was going to go bankrupt I wouldn't have even THOUGHT of marrying you. You ugly whore." he let go of her and walked away, leaving her alone to cry in the corner.

How a person like her could take so much suffering in those five long years was in itself a miracle. She cried and started remembering her wedding. Remembered how Moshe said he loved her and how he wanted to make them have many children and become the best Jewish family in Germany. She remembered how the merchant ship burned en route to Greece from Italy, and how the thousands of Deutschemarks

were lost and the family business went under. And it didn't help that Moshe worked for her father either. That was the same year that Isaac was born, and Moshe became an alcoholic. Four years later, while in a drunken fight with her over giving their son up for adoption, he beat her unconscious. When she came to, that's when her son had disappeared. She asked him where their son was, he said that he ran away when he saw her unconscious and thought she was dead. He said that he tried to run after him but couldn't catch up. But he told her not to worry. "He'll be back." So she believed, and still does. And every time she hears a child's voice. She thinks it's Isaac's. And every time she called out his name, for some reason Moshe would get furious and he'll go into a fit. But that doesn't stop her from hoping. If only she knew that her absolution would never be.

3:01 AM

"Ammah!" The woman heard as she woke up. She didn't realize she had cried herself to sleep. She looked up and slowly got to her feet. She may be stripped off all of her humanity, but at least she still had her mother's instincts. And it told her that whoever had called out to her was her son. "Ammah!" She heard again. A tear trickled down her face as she unconsciously said Isaac's name again. She turned around in fear, expecting a fist to punch her face. But Moshe's snoring relaxed her.

She opened the wooden window and looked out. The rain was pouring hard. It made it really hard to see, as if the darkness wasn't bad enough. She looked on and saw a child smiling at her. The child waved his hand and he giggled. Her tear ducts gave in and the tears started flowing at will. "Isaac" she said, each letter came out shaken; this time it was different, they were shaken with happiness. She smiled. The boy motioned for her to come out. She tiptoed to the door. She didn't want to wake Moshe up, as hard as it was for her to believe, she knew he wouldn't. She was going to go bring him home; maybe then Moshe will feel better. She thought to herself quietly as she secured her veil. She put her shoes on, grabbed an umbrella and opened the door. "Wait, I'm coming baby." she whispered, hoping little Isaac would hear.

She slowly closed the door then ran outside, not minding the downpour. She went to the spot where he was standing. "Isaac? Where did you go?" She smiled, thinking he was playing hide and seek; his favorite game. "Isaac, don't hide from Amma." She stood there and waited. "Isaac?" her smile turned to a frown. Did she lose him again? "Isaac. Please come to me. Please." she didn't know what to do or where to go. She just waited. Maybe he'll come back.

Minutes passed like hours. No, it was an hour, that's how long she just stood there; her mind was too numb to think of anything. In a way she felt stupid. What if it was true what Moshe always told her, that she was born stupid? She looked back at her house and hesitated to walk back; Moshe was the least of her worries at the moment. Her son meant the world to her. And she wanted him back so bad. No matter what it takes.

She gasped as she heard an angry German voice: "It's MINE! I FOUND IT!" There was a push and a scuffle. She strained to look and saw two German thieves fighting. One of them held a large brown disc. The other man punched the first and the disc flew out of his hand. It rolled towards her. The two men stopped and looked at her. The disc rolled and came to a stop at her feet. The rain stopped.

She looked at the disc. It was a large dirty-copper dish with two intertwining triangles engraved on it; she recognized it as a hexagram symbol. One of the Germans hit the other. "Hey look, a Jew." They started to walk towards her. "What, you're going to steal our... Round thing?" She shook her head: "No. I am out here to look for..." The door to her house slammed open: "RAHAB! WHERE DID YOU GO?!" She relaxed as she heard his voice; the wife beater was now her savior. He started walking towards her "What the hell?" he shouted as he noticed the two men with her.

She stepped back as one of them jumped towards the disc and pulled it. "Damn! It's stuck." he struggled with it as his fingers tried to grip the edges but it wouldn't budge because the shield was thin in the circumference, so thin and sharp that it cut the thief's finger-tips when he squeezed hard. "What are you doing?" Moshe shouted as he started running towards the two men. "Just leave it, man, just LEAVE IT!" the thieves took off. She smiled at him. "What are you doing out here woman? Explain yourself." She stuttered as the words came out too fast: "I saw him... I saw him! He called out to me! I know his voice!"

"Who?" her husband asked. "Isaac!!" She said; a big smile removed the plastered ugliness that was imposed on her face. He grinded his teeth and clenched his fists. "That name again. You'll never learn will you?" He punched her. She didn't feel the fall and didn't know what side of her body she fell on. All she knew was that one moment she had hopes high up, the next they were on the ground with her. A line of blood trickled from her lip and swam in the shallow pool of rain water. The man's eyebrows twitched.

"I killed him." he said suddenly as Rahab tried to sit up.

Rahab's eyes widened in horror. She stopped breathing, or at least she couldn't feel herself breathing. "When I beat you until you fainted, he ran towards you crying and the four year old child told me that I was going to go to hell. That's when I lost it. I beat him. But his little body couldn't take it. I killed him, Rahab. Your drunken fool of a husband... Killed our son." Rahab couldn't believe this. She's been waiting for a dead child to come back for one whole year. "When I realized what I had done..." Moshe was wheezing, he was having an asthmatic attack but he didn't bother to do anything about it, let alone relax. "I took the boy, placed him in a garbage bag then walked to the Rhine and dumped him into the river. I didn't know what else to do... I was... Too scared." He said.

She wept. "No....." Her eyes shut so tightly she thought she was going to go blind. "NNOOO!!!" Her shout rattled a sign that hung on top of the inn next to where she lay. Moshe stepped back. She took one deep teary breath and clutched her shirt. "Beni!!!" she screamed as she called out to a person that ceased to exist a long time ago. "And my prayers?" she thought. "All those prayers to God asking him to bring my son back to me."

She said aloud as she grinded her teeth: "For what? To find out I was praying for nothing? God, right now, there's nothing I hate more than you." Moshe shuddered: "Calm yourself... Rahab? Rahab?" She turned around and gazed at Moshe. To him, her piercing eyes felt like a spear that struck straight through his heart. He gulped. "And You... You killed the only thing I've ever loved in my whole life." She looked at him with a witch's frown.

The only thing that registered in her mind now was: "KILL! KILL!" Suddenly she looked at the disc and quickly crawled towards it. As she grabbed it, Moshe stepped back: "Wh... What are you doing?" She stood up with the disc, intending to beat him with it, but instead, it slipped out of her hands and slashed through Moshe's neck. His eyes widened. She stood there perplexed. It happened too fast for her to comprehend. She looked at her hands with her teary eyes and mouth wide open. He drooped his hands as his eyes slowly shut. He fell on his knees and the head detached from the body. Rahab screamed.

Part 5: Street Shadow.

There was a thunder clap. Rahab shuddered in a sheer mixture of every emotion known to man or woman. There was another thunder clap and she screamed as a towering creature stood on top of the shield. The thing was as so black and oblique, it blended in perfectly with the shadows. It towered as tall as the building. Its two eyes were sown shut, as if it were a ragged doll. The creature had its hands crossed. Its lips parted, and with a soft, hollow but clear voice said: "Who has awakened me?" Rahab was in a state of shock. Your nervous system can only handle so much until it breaks down. She shuddered and she bit her fingers. She looked around, as if trying to find something to make her grip to reality again.

The creature was silent. It breathed softly as if it were half asleep. The breathing slightly calmed her down, or put her to grips with reality, if that made sense. "Wh... Who are you?" She heard herself asking.

"Mammon was the name given to me by many. I was worshipped as God of Wealth by the Syriacs for four hundred years. I am frustrated so for I have been made blind and enslaved twice by the power of the Alpha." Rahab shuddered again: "You... You are satan?" The creature nodded: "One of." he rectified. "Are you going to hurt me?" She asked. The creature frowned and didn't reply. "Who has awakened me?" He asked again.

"My name is Rahab." she said finally, slowly trying to whimper away. The creature suddenly shuddered and stood up straight. "Will you wreak an oath to the creator that you tell me no lie?" she stopped and frowned: "As God be our witness, let there be no lies between us; my name is Rahab." She said, half-pleading.

The creature bowed. "Lord." Rahab's eyes widened. "Huh... What?" that was the last thing she expected to happen.

"Lord." The creature said again and bowed. She giggled to herself and wondered what the hell kind of joke was being played on her. But by whom??

"Pardon my absence from the earth, good lord, for an evil witch had enslaved me in this Hexalpha for hundreds of years I slept in. Now once again I be, oh great one over the seas." She shook her head as she understood nothing from what he had just said. But she pointed at him: "How were you worshipped if you were a worshipper?" The creature stood up straight. "Many a man bowed down to me and sold me their souls in return for the bliss that I gave them. And their wishes I made true of richness and glory." Somehow this story sounded all too familiar to her; from Jewish or Arabic folk tales perhaps. She was still wondering whether this demon was pulling her leg to enjoy a good laugh before he could eat her whole.

"And I am your lord?" She asked. He nodded: "Yes oh Rahab the great. And I, among many am witness to the great wonders that you've boasted onto the Earth and the Sea. And the souls that you've shook to death from your terrible screams as you arose from the deep." She frowned as she tried to think who the demon was confusing her with, in all her studying of the Torah she never heard of any Rahab "Lords". Maybe she didn't read enough. "Free me, master, from my prison." the creature pleaded with a whimpering voice that sounded like a dog's. Rahab shook

her head. She didn't know how to free him, but she didn't want to either. If this creature could make her dreams come true... Then she just got a new pet. "In time, my faithful one, in time." She said in an inflated voice trying to sound the best she can like a demon, or even, a man. She then started crawling away but screamed as she came across Moshe's head.

The creature moved its head around, trying to make sense of what's going on. As it moved forward there was a thunderous slam as an invisible force-field denied the creature from moving away from the circumference of the disc. "Lord. Will you not set me free?" the creature pleaded again. Rahab turned around. She was starting to get scared. She didn't want to get decapitated if the demon found out she was not who he thought she was. "Mammon." She said as she got an idea. "Yes, Master?" the creature asked. She looked at the disc. "Explain to me how the disc enslaved you?" The creature sighed: "When Solomon enslaved us with the Pentalpha, we contemplated on how to protect ourselves from the impermeable captivity of the five pointed star. One day, I discovered that one of the greater demons, Locan, had committed treason against the Demonia and befriended a human, namely the Evil King Solomon himself. Locan begged me not to tell on him in return for the secret of not falling into the Pentalpha. Locan made me understand what the pentagram symbol looked like and showed me the shape of a circle. First, I had to check with my foresight whenever I'm summoned to make sure that there was no circle around the star, for if there was then this is a demon trap. So I took this knowledge and revered it dearly. After Solomon died and the demons were dispersed onto the Earth, I went to Syria and found many loyal worshippers. Thus I greatly frustrated God by claiming their souls to myself. Until a witch attempted to summon me into a Pentalpha, I remembered Locan's advice and looked into the chambers with my hindsight and accounted for the pentagram and indeed, a circle hence I knew it was a trap. So I refused to respond. The witch summoned me again, and once again I checked, and once again saw a five pointed star and a circle. This went on many a day. Then one day after a long absence of summons, she summoned me again onto a symbol I didn't recognize as the Pentalpha so I obeyed."

Rahab looked at the disc and smiled: "She used six points instead of five. She tricked you." The demon nodded: "This is how the disc enslaved me." She stood up, having more courage now. "I command you by the name of God to go back into the disc!" The demon shuddered: "You are not Rahab! What are you? A man?" He was furious. Rahab shrugged: "My name is Rahab. I'm not who or what you thought I was and I'm not a man, but I'm a woman." The creature laughed. "In that case. I can... K..." he stuttered. "What? You can't say that you can kill me? You can't say that because you'll only say that to scare me. And you can't lie because I swore that truth be told between us."

He humphed: "But you cannot make me go back into the disc, feeble human. You don't know it." She took a deep breath then shouted: "I am commanding you to go back into the disc!!" The creature screamed and a whirlpool formed that sucked it into the space in the middle of the hexagram symbol. She stood there and wondered. Worked that time? She walked up towards the disc and picked it up. She turned it around and noticed that the disc was actually a shield; there was a small band attached to it to strap your arm with. She inserted her hand through the band and was surprised to notice that it fit her perfectly... As if it was made just for her! As the shield was secured to her arm, thoughts started streaming through her head: ""You don't know it." The demon had said. What was he talking about?" She was

looking up, so she didn't notice the invisible liquid oozing across the surface of the shield, leaving behind it the sparkly and fiery red metal of the shield and the shiny silver outline of the six pointed star. "But I said, I command you in the name of God? I thought demons were scared of the name of God."

She thought. "You don't know it." He had said. He was talking about the name of God she realized. Then she remembered him screaming after she commanded him the second time. She gasped. "I... I said the name of God. That's why it worked. I said... I command you to go into the disc." Another voice inside her head spoke: "I am..." It corrected. "I am commanding you to go into the disc." "I am." She repeated then a million voices echoed in her head. "Was, Is, Will be." and with her eyes shut, found herself saying: "The one who Was, Is and Will Be." The redness in her weary eyes immediately disappeared and her eyes shone from a light emanating from within. A light that has been awakened. Her breathing became heavy. "Unh..." She closed her eyes as she felt so light she thought she could float. The permanent purple in her beaten eye disappeared. Her body clock rewinded a few years back. Rahab open her "eyes"... The veil in front of her eyes was gone. She could now see: for the first time. "I am He Who Was, He Who Is and He Who Will Be. That is the name of God."

"That's right. And don't you forget it." A woman suddenly said from behind her. She turned around and saw a hooded woman. The stranger approached. Rahab stepped back, but it wasn't out of fear, this new Rahab didn't know fear. But she stepped back to prepare for a fight. She's been the down-trodden, now she was out to revenge for her suffering. The woman lowered her scarf and revealed a beautiful black-eyed, black-haired woman. First thing that came to Rahab's mind is that she was most likely Arab so she sighed with relief. "But fortunately, unlike others who've made that mistake, you did not ascribe the name to yourself, rather acknowledged who the name truly belonged to. The soul that you have may have come from God, but does not make you God. That's why you've passed the test of life. And you are now an Ascended neutral left. You've broken free of the circle of life just as many have before you."

The woman motioned in the air with her hand and a Tarot card formed in the air. In the bottom of the card, in Hebrew words. It said: "The World." and the card had the symbols 21 and the greek letter Omega. It was the image of a woman standing on a field in front of a circular "window". Behind the window, there were animals and angels. This was the window to the world. She realized that the card represented a story that happened a long time ago. It was the day when Adam opened his. He saw the nakedness of Eve for the first time because he had his eyes open for the first time. He saw the world and understood where he stood in it. It was the day that he declared: "I am". He didn't have his divine eyes closed anymore like the angels and animals. It was the day that man became conscious.

The Tarot image disappeared.

"What do you mean token?" Rahab quizzed.

Tetra pointed at the shield. "You found the shield that's been moving from thief to thief for the past century. It was stolen from the old Kabbala sanctuary in Petra. It's the Red Shield. It is the symbol of the Queen of Discs; the Queen of Coins; the Queen of Earth. You." Rahab shook her unshielded arm in the air. "Ok I have no idea

what you are talking about. May I ask, who are you? Don't tell me you're an angel. I've had enough supernatural experiences for one night."

She sighed to herself: "I used to be an angel. Once upon a time... My name is Tetra. With my brother, we were the first to teach the name of God to man. We didn't know that they were actually going to have the opposite effects that we intended them to have. For when men took whatever words they salvaged from the teachings, they formed combinations, and learned the art of magick, and were successful in invoking spirits from the nether. In other words, demons.

The demons deceived the humans into blaspheming against God inspite of our strict warnings to the humans. But that's only because we gave the secret away freely without testing the people first."

Rahab shook her head: "I'm sorry to hear that."

Tetra: "Well, what's happened has happened. But I'm out there to fix what I can. Only for myself; I've had enough of helping humans. So here I am. Accounting for the tokens." She said as she pointed at the shield. "Step back, you're not taking it away from me, it makes me feel... Worth something." Rahab warned. Tetra shook her head: "I'm not here to take it away from you; I'm just here to make sure you know what you're up against. And no, you're worth much more than you think, whether you're ascended or not. And whether you're wielding a token or cleaning your house or praying to God for your son to return." Rahab stopped walking backwards and tried to fight the tears. "You could hear my prayers?"

Tetra nodded: "All 800 of them. That must be the luckiest son in the world. You see... God hears your prayers, and echoes them to the whole universe. Even us fallen angels can sometimes hear them if they're loud enough." Rahab smiled and felt guilty for cursing out God in her anger fit. She turned around at Tetra. "Tetra. What's the fate of my son?" Tetra sighed: "I'm sorry Rahab, I don't deal with heaven anymore nor am I in contact with any of the angels. I'm fallen like I said; I'm stuck here as the self appointed herald of what used to be Babylon. Me and my brother, herald of Atlantis. Wherever he may be."

Rahab nodded. She took off the shield for a moment but all the warmth, wisdom and strength she got left with it. She now felt like old miserable Rahab again, so she quickly wore the shield again. "Oh what a sweet addiction." She thought. "Who was that witch anyway, who made this shield, Tetra?" Rahab asked as she opened her eyes. But she saw a guilty look on Tetra's eyes. "It was you?" Rahab gasped.

Tetra nodded and started narrating: "It was seven hundred years B.C., Mammon struggled hard when he realized that he was trapped. His screams and flames nearly razed the Sanctuary of Diamonds to rubble. That's where I stored the Tokens that I found throughout the centuries, including the Ring of Solomon and the King and Queen of Spades. So I entrusted the shield and whatever tokens I had to Rakim Moses, a Levite Scholar married to an Arab Jew. I made him pledge an oath never to wield any of the tokens and he promised to store them safely in his sanctified house in return for the secret of the Holy Name. So I taught him the art of the Tarot and showed him how they could be arranged to represent the three modes of consciousness and the 22 levels of ascension, and how that can be arranged to represent the tree of life, the tree of knowledge and the name of God. He cherished

the secret and was careful in passing down the knowledge only to his son, Azzab. Azzab went on to teach it to his apprentice and so on. This secret society grew through the years and became known as The Kabbala. Which meant, "Receivers of divine knowledge." The knowledge they gained granted them amazing powers. But Azzab became fearful that the other Levite or Israelite Jews would steal the knowledge to themselves, or worse, that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar would seek them out and take the secret to himself and wage tyranny against the Earth, as his predecessor, King Nimrod did during and before the era of Abraham. So, Azzab and his followers set out to the desert and invoked their loyal demons to cleave a rock in the desert and carve them houses and shrines out of stone including a large Sanctuary in which they kept the books and artifacts. And thus they cleverly hid themselves from the evil Babylonians and the power-hungry Israelites. In a city called Petra; made of stone hidden in the middle of the desert. These self-exiled jews and arabs, became known as the Nabateans."

Rahab listened on intently, amazed that she was part of such a rich and esoteric history.

"One day, many generations later, a wicked King slyly became a member of the order. He learned the secrets and gave them away freely to everyone in Petra, most of whom blasphemed against God openly. There was a battle between newly invoked evil demons and the old demons, and the evil ones won and were set as Gods by the now evil Nabatean Kings. The Kabbals were furious but they were reluctant to hit back. God didn't take this insult lightly and he punished the Nabateans by invoking one of his very own letters. An angel carried the First Thunder to Petra and when it was thrown into the valley, it shattered every living soul. No soul and no bone was found in the valley, whether king, child or scholar; good or bad. A year later in 106 AD, when the romans discovered the whereabouts of the city and came to conquer it, it was too late. They were perplexed to find it barren but they claimed to have conquered the Nabateans anyway and said that they made them extinct to strike fear into the region which they wanted to control completely."

Tetra continued with a snicker: "Luckily the Romans didn't stick around long and didn't bother venturing deep into the sanctuary to find the well-hidden ancient books and the artifacts in there. The Byzantine Christians came in the 6th century and replaced tombs with churches. But they didn't stick around in this now-barren valley too long either. The place was haunted and it scared them. That is, until the crusaders landed 500 years later in Jerusalem. The crusaders were ruthless and they massacred Jews and Muslims alike; anyone who wasn't christian. They set up the Holy Church of Jerusalem. It was from here that a band of six crusader knights from the order known as the Knights of Solomon's Temple set off to the desert and came across Petra. At first, when they stepped into the valley, they thought there was Gold, but there wasn't any."

"Miraculously, they were fated to find the secret chambers of the Kabbala. Some were more indulged in the knowledge than the actual tokens. Some of the tokens that were found were the King of Spades and the Queen of Diamonds tokens." Tetra pointed at the shield and Rahab gasped.

Tetra: "...Some of them indulged their knowledge freely with the rest of their brotherhood, others stayed in their make-shift temples in Petra for years. These knights became known as the Templar Knights, they converged Judaism with

Christianity with the Mysticism of the Kabbala and thus revived an ancient faith... Gnosticism: The Faith of Knowledge. They pledged to continue keeping the secret of the holy name sacred and secret (the name was ciphered by ancient Jewish mystics into the letters: "Je-Ho-Va-H" to protect its sanctity). Of course, the Christian Church called the Templars heretics and expelled them from the Holy Church of Jerusalem, and the European Church followed suit when they moved back to Europe. Their rival knightly order, the French Knights Hospitaller even planted lies and conspiracies to them. This the church gladly accepted as a means to rebuke this new religion that would probably threaten the Absolute control of the Pope. The brotherhood moved back to Europe with their knowledge and with the tokens. Some of the Templars were tried cruelly and were found guilty of heresy by the church. Some renamed themselves to other names to hide their true identity. Some fled to hide in the ghettos of Germany, Rhode Island, Malta, Venice, France and as far away as Scotland. Finally, a hundred years ago, the shield of Mammon was stolen from the Templars' cell here in Germany. And that's why I'm here in Europe. With the task of tracking down the Templars and accounting for all the tokens, once again." Tetra finished her narration and took a deep breath.

"But... What "powers" does it have?" Rahab wondered aloud as she marveled at the shield. It was more attractive now that she knew its "Romantic" history. Tetra shrugged: "The powers that you are feeling right now: Immortality, increased confidence, increased strength. And Mammon." Rahab thought: "Wealth? I can be rich?" "I'm glad you were smart enough not to have sold your soul to the devil. But unfortunately, there's more to it than that. You now carry an old curse of wealth: The curse that Mammon declared when I enslaved him." Rahab frowned: "How can being rich be a curse?" Tetra recalled that day. The screaming demon made Tetra's Sanctuary walls cave in. "I curse the human who wields this Token that six-fold their lifespan, their children will start gaining infinite wealth from usury. Their wealth will make them the richest people on earth. But they will be hunted for what they have, out of hate and jealousy. Like the dog hunts the fox. And thus their eternal wealth will be their eternal misery." Tetra ended her narration. Rahab shook her head: "That curse doesn't scare me. On the contrary, I welcome it. If my children shall be hunted fox, they'll know how to protect themselves, for foxes are the smartest animals. We'll be able to handle ourselves; we won't hurt anybody as long as they don't hurt us." Tetra smiled: "You sound like the perfect karmic, Rahab. I'm sure you'll make an excellent Queen of Earth. And my heart's rested now." Tetra covered her head. Her smile disappeared with the shadow that the hood cast on her face. She started walking away.

"Wait. Tetra. Before you go. I have one last question." Tetra turned around: "Yes?" "Who's Rahab that Mammon worships?" She asked. Tetra nodded "Rahab was a gigantic and fearsome worm-like demon that traveled the world and lived in the sea and mountains. It terrorized humans and villages, the other demons marveled him. They didn't worship him, rather they respected him because of his ability to strike fear into man. The legend of the Demon Rahab lives in almost every culture. The Hebrews knew him as The Leviathan. The Egyptians knew him as Behemoth, the Teutons knew him as The Drake, the Japanese knew him as The Great Dragon and the Arabs knew him as the great Efreeth of the Sea." Rahab nodded and laughed: "Oh. He thought I was that? Wow."

Tetra nodded as she started walking away. "Goodbye Queen of Diamonds."

Part 6: Magen David.

She noticed that it was first light; the birds were singing. She gasped as she recounted the night's strange events. She leaned against the inn's wall and shut her eyes. Had she taken off her shield she would've collapsed from fatigue.

She heard people screaming. "She killed him! Look!" They said. Rahab rolled her eyes. "Oh God. Whoever thought my troubles were over." "Let's go get her! That damn Jew!" people started running towards her and she took off for the street. She stopped. Another mob stood in front of her. She was cornered. "Oh. Now what?" She shut her eyes and a voice inside her said: "Depend on yourself." She shrugged. She winced as a pitchfork flew across the air towards her. There was a loud thud. A hollow thud. The pitchfork clinkered on the stone street. Rahab examined herself for any wounds but couldn't find any, she hadn't felt anything either. The people stood there, angry but confused. One man shouted and the mob started running towards her. There was a hollow thud for every man or woman that came anywhere close to the invisible three-foot circumference around her: The red shield she carried projected her instinct of self-preservation into a force field of pure energy.

Rahab looked at herself then pointed her shield at the mob, an energy wave hit the crowd and they fell on top of each other. She leapt into the air and started running. She didn't know where to run to but that was all she could do. She couldn't hide at home; what would she do in there? Wait till she has starved to death?

She could make out the galloping of a horse behind her. She turned around and saw a man riding a brown horse racing towards her. "Oh great, can this shield make me outrun the horse?" she asked herself. "Hiaa!" the man shouted as he commanded the horse with its girdle to run faster. She could now feel the ground shaking. She couldn't stop or she'd surely be trampled on! "Take my hand!" the man shouted. Rahab didn't stop. "Rahab, it's me, Rabbi Elchanan Bareket!" he shouted. She slowed down as she heard the name. "Rabbi Bareket?" She turned around and she screamed as the man grabbed her and threw her behind him. She grabbed onto his waist with her free hand. "What are you doing with that shield on? Throw it away!" She refused: "No! It's the only protection that I have. I can't explain now. Maybe later." He shrugged.

Half an hour later.

They stood by the Rhine. The horse grazed on the grass.

Rahab took a deep breath: "This is where he dumped my baby." She said. The wind rustled her hair and she wasn't surprised when she felt no veil covering her head anymore. Must've flown off while she was riding the horse. "I'm not a mother nor a father." The Rabbi said. "But I can understand the anger that you've had; I probably would've done the same." She had a tear in her eye: "You don't understand. It was an accident. It just slipped out of my hand and..." She made a cutting motion with her hand. "Cut his head off." The way she said it was more funny than scary. The rabbi held back his mirth and gently wiped her tears with his thumb. "Or maybe you just... Willed it to do what your hand couldn't." He said.

"Yes... My, other mode of consciousness." Rahab said as she remembered Tetra's words.

"A consciousness? What's that?" He asked.

She looked at him strangely. "I wouldn't know how to start explaining it." Then shrugged.

The Rabbi looked at her and curled his lip, as if trying to figure out which one of them was crazy. "So let's get back to the part where you said that this shield is possessed. So you say there's a demon in there asleep. Ok, show me. Wake him up. It's not that I don't believe you. I do, but I also think you've lost all common sense, with all your stressful happenings and the passing of your son and husband, in one night, if I may say."

She sighed and looked at the shield, now lying on the grass. "I am commanding you to wake up!" she shouted. They waited. "Nothing happened?" she asked. The Rabbi frowned: "Actually I think it's doing the opposite. It's making me fall asleep." she pushed him laughing. "Quiet you. I'm serious. There's a demon in there its name is Mammon. He was the God of Wealth." The Rabbi laughed. "Worshipped by the Syrians. Isn't it written somewhere in the Pentateuch?" she asked, obviously frustrated.

He was thinking. "How did Aladdin wake the genie up in the Thousand and One Nights? You know, that old Persian Folktale." She shrugged: "I don't know." He thought. "Hmm... He rubbed it. Friction. Friction produces heat." He looked at her with his eyes squinted, as if trying to read the answer on her face. "Tell me again what happened before he woke up?" She shrugged again, "It was just there on the ground, I screamed and there was thunder and there it was." He shook his head: "No, before that." She had her fingers on her lips, deep in thought. "It cut off his head?" The rabbi rubbed his beard: "Hmmm, it couldn't have been enough friction to produce heat. Heat. Heat. Wait a minute. Blood temperature is apparently extremely hot, according to doctors." She looked at him with her eyes wide open and looked at the shield, then looked at the Rabbi again. He shook his head: "You're not coming anywhere near me, you hear?"

She laughed and collapsed on the grass. She yawned. The rabbi shook his head and placed the shield down.

She lay there and thought. She wondered if all that happened the past few hours was just a dream. Maybe it was. Maybe she dreamt all that up because of all the stress that befell her.

"I love you Rahab." he said. She turned to look at him. Her heart beat loud. This was the first time she ever knew what it meant for someone to care about her. All she knew was what it meant to care for someone. And that someone was her son, and was now no more. Her world was changing, wasn't it? Fate is ironic in its own way. A dead son is substituted for a lover.

"Oh, David..." She said. She didn't know what else to say.

He sighed. "Rahab, I have a confession to make. I hated your husband so. Not just because he used to beat you everyday and we'd see those bruises which you'd make up all these excuses for every on Sabbath. But because he beat me to you." She looked up at him quizzically. "The day that I was going to propose to you, that's when I heard that Moshe beat me to it." He laughed: "I went on a fit. You know what I did? I said to God that I wasn't going to talk to him for two whole days." Rahab laughed. This man made her laugh. If it meant something, it meant to show how people can easily make mistakes that would affect their entire lives, without knowing it. "But after the second day." The Rabbi continued, this time in a more serious tone. "I asked God why he didn't want me to love you. Then..." Rahab looked at the Rabbi's face and saw it changing tones; she saw a face that reached into oblivion to find answers. Answers which he already held; but was just a matter of listening to the right voice. "And then I heard this voice." Elchanan said and Rahab rolled her eyes. "It said to me: "What do you know about destiny? Let it do its work, and you do yours." It made total sense to me." she sighed as she asked herself who had more wisdom right now. The Rabbi or herself.

The Rabbi extended his hand towards her and they stood up. They looked out towards the river and the Rabbi clasped his hands. "I call out to you Lord in all the humbleness of Rahab and myself. May you forever let this child rest in peace." "Amen" they both called out. Rahab put her head on his shoulder and sighed. The Rabbi suddenly looked at her and sighed sadly. She looked at him: "What??" He looked at her with solemn eyes: "You're not wearing your veil, now our prayer cannot be answered." She looked at him with a sad frown. He drooped his head close to hers: "Rahab. I'm joking."

She rolled her eyes and they started walking back towards the horse. There was a slight déjà vu of the days back in her family's mansion in Berlin, they too had horses. In those days, the only way you could be respected as a Jew is if you were rich, now most of the rich Jewish families were driven out by misfortune or politics. She didn't know why people were so anti-Semitic. Perhaps because they were God's chosen people and everyone else was jealous?

As the last of the darkness made way to the light of day, 800 stars gathered in one of the cosmic clusters and spelt out Rahab's name in Hebrew letters with a little footnote: "Isaac."

"Let's go to Frankfurt." He said, suddenly. "What?" She asked just to make sure she heard him right. "You can't go back to town, they'll kill you. If the mob doesn't, the police will. Let's go to Frankfurt, my uncle owns the synagogue at the Judengasse in the city. It's a neighborhood just for Jews. You know how they all hate us wherever we are. Well in there, we get to live our own lives without anyone bothering us. And I'll have a job at the synagogue." He shut his eyes and prayed for a smile, and when he opened them he had his prayer answered. "Will you marry me, Rahab?" He said and held up the disc to her. "With this demon as my witness to my undying love?" she laughed. "Yes I do, David Elchanan Bareket."

One Year Later

Rahab smiled as the Jewish nurse gently passed her newborn son onto her. "Shalom Alechum, Isaac. You are so beautiful." Rahab said as she touched her baby's soft cheek. As the baby giggled she looked up and saw Elchanan walking towards her. His

face was grim. "David? What's the matter? Aren't you happy? Look at Isaac!" He covered his face with his hand and dried his tears. "Rahab. You're not well." He said. She shrugged. "So? As long as the baby's fine I'm ok, don't worry about me."

He slammed his fist on the bedpost and Rahab and the baby looked at Elchanan startled. "You are dying, Rahab. You are bleeding internally and the nurses don't know how to take care of you. There's no other doctor around Judengasse. And today's Sunday, we are locked out from the other districts of the city because it's the Christian holiday today. So we can't do anything about it." Elchanan was obviously distraught, but she didn't worry. She always kept in mind the power of immortality that the shield bore. All she had to do was wear it and every wound would seal and her apparent age would be restored to around 25 years old.

The day she had cut herself to show the shield's powers to Elchanan, he had fainted, so she was reluctant to use it again after that. Instead she stowed it away in case she ever needed it. This was almost never.

"David. Get me my shield from the house." She said. Elchanan frowned angrily: "This is not time for your accursed so-called possessed shield now. You are DYING don't you understand?? I'll be ALONE again to take care of the child myself." She sighed: "David, just get me the shield." He stormed out.

Isaac snored softly. Rahab looked at him and smiled, then her eyes shut and she fell asleep.

"Six-fold their lifespan, their children will start gaining infinite wealth from usury. Their wealth will make them the richest people on earth." Tarot's voice echoed in her mind as she recalled Mammon's curse. Rahab woke with a start. That meant a hundred and eighty five years from now. And every year that she lived longer, it was an additional six years when her ancestors would become rich. Just as soon as she came to this conclusion, David opened the door and placed the disc next to her.

"Give me your pen, David." She said. He frowned as he handed her the pen dangling on his shirt pocket. She turned the disc around and wrote on the shield-band the following brief testament: "Hurt only those who hurt you. My children, the curse that befell me you shall turn into a gift. Keep me on your door and I shall make it the lighthouse of the world. Love, Queen of Diamonds." She gave it to him. "Tell Isaac to always keep it safe, and it will protect his home, and so will his children and his children's children. Do you hear?" David sighed and nodded: "So you leave the shield for Isaac? What about me? What are you going to leave for me?" She sighed then looked at the shield again and saw the hexagram. "The shield is yours too, David. And, I leave you the six-pointed star which I name after you. The Magen David." He was unsmiling even though her light humor calmed his desperation: "And? What, is it going to replace the Menorah as the Jewish symbol?"

She shrugged "Maybe... But that's how our brothers and sisters from the holy land will recognize us when we return from Europe." He looked deep into her eyes: "Is that a prophecy that a homeland will be created for the Jews? That our dreams will be reality?" She looked at him as if she had just returned from a séance where she saw the entire future of the Jewish race. And her eyes were now ghostly. He looked at her and he shivered.

"Yes" She replied. "And my descendants will lay the cornerstone for Israel, and will trigger the beginning of Armageddon."