

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

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We are a species, a member of a large variety of species, that are biologically committed to the greater articulation of the meaning and worth of life that comes of being bound to die. We are also psychologically committed to survive at (almost) any cost.

Death is the realest term of the worth of life and what lives amongst us as the project of being recognized that worth is the most articulating term of that worth.

But only real in this sense of loss and recognition is life what we know it to be. Therefore, of course there is no afterlife. And- therefore of course we are bound to speculate there is.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

M.J. Ennis

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There is supposed to be a big long paragraph in fancy legal text on how not to steal or resell this book both physically or digitally. Consider this passage just that. It takes an enormous amount of effort, time, and commitment to accomplish a book, I hope you can respect that. I also hope you try to write your own book some day, because the experience will change you in more ways than you can imagine.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

Afterlife

A MIND LEAK NOVEL

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Chapter 1

Blank Page

“Enniah,” a begging voice calls to me from over a grassy foothill. The girl calling has wavy red hair that’s blowing in the wind behind her while she approaches me. She’s got a plain white dress that all the other girls envy. Even I used to at times. I’d always wonder how it all worked. Why did everyone spare her and why did everyone cater to her so much?

There were seven of us all together. I’m the furthest in the back, isolated and distanced by a few rough patches in the greenery. I’d be further away, but they sort of follow me. I turn a deep red, the cause of anxiety, fear even. I know what is going to come.

There is a small yellow flower in the girl’s hand. It complements her whisking one piece, and clashes against her hair. It is a dandelion, I know this. The other girls were watching me, huddling around over their laughter, smiling around at each other in anticipation. These smiles didn’t bring me joy however, no, they were the terrifying kind. Tonya turns up from the patch of dirt she had been gathering from to ask me a question. “What is this Enniah?” she asks while holding out the flower.

Out here in the open I always fantasize an escape, jumping the rickety old fence that wraps the estate lands for the horses and the dogs. I couldn’t turn back towards the homestead. My stepmother believes I belong out here.

“Don’t say dandelion,” Tonya’s closest friend Saidey shouts over the wind. She had dark brown hair that matches her eyes and is always neatly combed behind her ears, she is slightly taller and fuller and she looks the oldest. “We know you know what that is, we just talked about

that and its name,” she smiles sadistically before asking her question, “What is the bottom part called?”

I hesitate, looking wearily to the group of onlookers and to the flower extended in Tonya’s hand. They all share classes together at the manor, classes I am not allowed to take. Saidey and Tonya have become natural leaders. They first became friends after an argument I had once with Tonya, who used to be my friend. Now I don’t have any friends, because I stood up for myself and my lack of general knowledge.

“I don’t want you to come up with excuses,” said Saidey curtsying with her white and blue checkered sundress, “just because you don’t go to school like the rest of us. You should still know what this is called,” she tore the flower off and placed it behind her ear. I imagined all the other girls would soon follow. She took five controlled steps towards me and hurled the green part at my face. I flinched and a couple girls beside Tonya and Saidey snickered.

The worst would be if I cried. I wouldn’t, I tried to repel the urge. I didn’t know what it was called and all the other girls were thinking of how stupid I was.

“Come on Blank Page. Don’t cry.”

That was the nickname I was given by Tonya after our fight. I had explained that I shouldn’t know the names of things because no one had ever told me, and if were to come up with a name for things myself, they wouldn’t be correct in reference to other people’s beliefs.

“God, she is *so* stupid,” said Tonya to her circle.

“I’m not stupid!” I yelled. I had been sitting in the grass trying to keep my tears discreet. I turned away from them and hugged my knees close to my chest. I should run, but our stepmother says we have to stick together. There are dangers beyond the fence.

I sense a girl walking beside me and then reaching over the arch of my back. I turn to watch her pick up the narrow underside of the dandelion that resembles a green stick. I witness the girl’s dark thick hair, the fun in her eyes, and the question in her hands. It is oozing out much in the way that humans bleed, except instead of red I see white. I hide again. A girl approaches me from the side. I wrongly raise my head hoping it to be Marry, a girl who occasionally sticks up for me. It isn’t however; it is a girl in a beautiful white dress and fierce red hair. Tonya grins

below the fire of hair; the rings of her eyes are almost transparent beside the blue sky. “It’s called a *Stem Blank Page*.”

I nod. *Please just go. Go away.*

“You can add that to your picture book Enniah.” Tonya tosses it again; this time it lands in my knotty brown hair. I quickly brush it out with my buzzing hands. “God knows Enniah won’t ever learn to write.” She drops her face before me and picks up the stem. She adjusts it to fit securely behind my ear. I’m shaking now, trembling while tears sulk down my face. “Remember, it’s green... with a pencil like bottom or neck.”

I look away and wipe my eyes in my arms. I want it to stop. I can tell today is going to be a bad day. Marry wasn’t here to help. I looked around for her; she is in the back, tired of sticking up for me. She has the fairest of all our skin and she paints her nails using berries. I can’t see them today, because they are in the pockets of her shorts. She is the youngest not quite by a full year, she isn’t quite the shortest, and she is the most creative of us all.

Tonya in her sparkling white dress spins in a complete dramatic circle and captivates onlookers in an attempt to imitate of me. She throws her hand over her face and wails. “Wah, wah, wah. No Marry to save me.” After a moment of silence, she looks longingly into my eyes, she almost looks concerned or intrigued. She takes a step towards me. “What is that Enniah, in your eye?”

“It’s a tear!” I remark instantly trying to disclose that I do know some things. I’m not stupid the thoughts arise. I cry a little harder now. I knew what crying was, I knew it well.

“Not that Blank Page. I’m talking about that mutt of an eye you have.”

I stand up feeling insecure. Occasionally Tonya and Saidey would hit me, this felt like one of those times. I fear her closeness, and her vibrant red hair. I back away, but on my knees there isn’t much of a place to go.

“Leave her alone.” Marry moves in closer behind two newly flowered ears and finally behind Saidey and Tonya.

Marry hates it when they do this. They sometimes make fun of my eyes because they aren’t just one solid color. They reflect the outside world and the colors of nature. Perhaps they

don't like the band that is unique to me, the one that wraps around the black of my eyes in a zigzagging yellow line. Marry says looks like lightning.

Tonya has crisp blue eyes like the deep of still water. Saidey has the dark brown eyes like the base of a tree. It just so happens that all of the girls have perfectly solid eyes, just not Marry and I. Children I suppose could be cruel. They would observe the slightest difference from one to another and use it as means to neglect what wasn't in their favor, others like Marry saw something greater in difference. Marry's eyes aren't quite as torn as mine. They mimic the clouds with fluctuations of grey and blue. She watches me uneasily behind them while the other girls perform their act.

Saidey seats herself on the backside of Tonya, pulling her red mane and thrusting her pelvis into her lifted skirt while shouting derogatory remarks and barking like a dog.

"Oh please don't be too loud," Saidey sighs to her underling. "We mustn't allow anyone to know of our love!"

Tonya barks three times with intermittent snarls.

I can't bear it. I don't quite understand where their hatred spawns from.

Tonya growls louder, "Errr-oughhh!"

I cradle a pile of dirt and grass pulled from the earth beside me.

"You don't know what either of you are talking about!" Marry exclaims. She watches them, their faces turn to her, a little more surprised than normal.

I watch them laugh for a couple seconds, tears burning into my cheeks, turning to anger. I know I should run now.

"What are we to name our un-brained child?" asks Saidey.

"Errr-rinnnn Eyee Ahh!" Tonya growls.

The clumped dirt is tight in my fist, and I whip my arm as fast as I can. Almost immediately the dirt bomb explodes against Tonya's cheek. I never strike anyone, this surprises me. I smile for a fracture of time where they have stopped, the look on their faces while they are still mocking the likes of animals, Tonya's pale flesh marked by dirt. There is no longer a smile,

Saidey is slowly dismounting from the girl who's holding her scarlet hair pulling it back now to one side. It isn't long before my mistakes would be realized and disclosed, and I punished.

Saidey and Tonya surround me quickly, I push away but Tonya grabs both of my hands. I can't break free. She gestures an angry approval to the ones behind me.

They pull down my pants and fill them with grass and dirt. I lose my balance around the ankles and stumble to the ground. My chin is pressed hard into the grass while Tonya spits before me. "Do you know what this is Blank Page?" Tonya brushes some of the minor dust from her tidy white dress disgusted with my act. She is holding the earth in her hand, distorted clay and sediment. Saidey sits on my back and kicks Marry away who is still trying to rescue me. A taller blonde girl named Jacklyn grabs her and makes her watch.

Sophie leads two other girls who hadn't taken part to ease in around me.

"What do mutts get?" Tonya asked fixing the dandelion tucked behind her ear. They have circled me now.

Sophie shyly answered. "*Cleaned.*"

The white dress kneels in the dirt before me, and when I look up at her, she speaks. "It's a *rock* stupid." Tonya thrusts the odd shaped stone into my mouth. I choke and try to force it out with my tongue. The other girls brush my teeth with dirt, little rocks scrapping the inside of my mouth. I'm stripped down to my under layers so they can attempt to clean me. There was a point where I just let go, I endured the pain and the sadistic mystery of my peers. I'd rather run, I'd rather die. It wasn't until Marry came back again holding her torn lip and defeated self that I would try to fight. I lifted myself from the earth and torn land. I spit the jagged rocks and a single red tooth into the dirt at my side and rolled. Tonya fell over my chest. I pulled her hair and scavenged my tooth. I knew the thought of blood on Tonya's dress would frighten her and it did. I backed away, until Saidey grabbed one of my arms.

"Let Enniah go!" said Marry.

Everyone turned from me to face the brave Marry. "I'll teach her..." Marry's eyes filled with fear when everyone had challenged her heroic confidence. Jacklyn released her, Marry then looked up at her. "I'll teach her!" The others all did what Tonya and Saidey had always done, but

still Marry found a way to be as brave as any could be. “I’ll teach her what her little brain will allow.”

“You can’t teach her anything you halfwit!” Snarled Tonya.

It was quiet for a moment, the grass moved in the gentle breeze, and just when I and all the others believed Marry was retreating from her wishes, she swung. She swung hard and high, strongly and with passion, until her buried fingers collided against Tonya’s jaw. The white princess fell slowly to the ground, and we all stared in momentary silence.

I turned in that moment both shocked and inspired. I’m sure it was the shock that left her in the grass unable to get up. Tonya, was definitely still conscious, just confused and fascinated. I mimicked the actions Marry had shown me. I had learned something after all. I stepped backwards and then quickly forward while her attention was in the new perimeter around Tonya’s collapsed body and with my clasped hand tightly bound to one destination. I knocked my bare hand across Saidey’s face extending my force as far as my reach would allow, following my friend’s commitment.

I backed away, and Saidey quickly stood up sulking, “I’m reporting this!”

“Don’t” Marry pleaded. “You shouldn’t, it would be unwise. That would just get us all in trouble. Just take in today and appreciate that you learned something.”

-“And what is that?” asked a shy girl, who usually never spoke.

Marry smiled to this as if she wanted someone to ask. “That Enniah is brave, powerful, and someday stronger than us all.”

It's been years since that happened. I'm a teenager now, and yet those events still haunt me, and it was one of many. There is so much more to that story, but my pen is fading. It is strange in that the memory I have of those things are very vivid, but what connects them is clouded and uncertain. It is as if there are short blocks of vivid picture stacked along a line, and then the parts between them are sort of lost in the passing of my life. I hadn't had anything of importance between those blocks, and so it was sort of fuzzy. That's the reasoning I gave myself.

Now I am under the watch of the very teacher who had raised the other girls and their intellect. However, I am not sure why they were all so mean, it seemed so unnatural. I grabbed for a new pen, as my final words were starting to become much too difficult to mark on the parchment.

I can write now Saidey.

I pushed the final words into my diary upon hearing a woman's voice carrying from afar. Away into the cupboard drawer those words went, and many others. Aihdah's voice calling out to me. I didn't keep many things secret, but writing about what used to happen before Aihdah took me in fully, could potentially break a promise I once made.

"Enniah, come here please! We need to discuss something of importance." My mother's words tally from nearest stairwell. She is in fact quite far away; however, she has a gift for screaming through the emptiness of our household. It's just her and I for two months, and the occasional house worker.

I did as she wanted. Moments later I was again at her heel.

I stand just beneath her crown of hair, her remarkably sturdy and thick auburn hair. I am shy by just an inch or two. She stares into my eyes intently.

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“Thank you for taking this seriously,” she said calmly, “remember I told you, I warned you rather, that there might be a time I need you?”

I nod. “I do.”

Of course I remember. How could I forget? You tell me – every – single – day.

Aihdah’s emerald eyes were unforgiving. “Tonight Enniah, you are to remain in your chambers and do not leave them.”

“-But why?” I answered abruptly. “You just said you needed me?”

“*That* is what I need you to do.”

Beyond the Fence

Marry and I ran that day, until our legs couldn't carry us any further.

“They will pick on me now,” said Marry. We had reached the furthest fence from the estate. The building was small in the distance, so small that a majority of what was visible over the horizon could sit in the flat of my hand. It was still a sight from here, beside the wooden posts and beside Marry. Its three story stone walls and guardian tree looming in the center of the courtyard. I felt safer here, far from every other person. Still we hadn't crossed the fence. I placed my hands upon the dried wood, and turned to hope Marry would follow.

“Why don't you come with me?” I asked.

“I can't, my mother would miss me.”

This seemed to take my attention and placed it towards my parents. I stalled here, because I couldn't remember any. I wasn't taught Marter ways because I wasn't born a Marter, I was something else.

“Don't be sad Enniah,” Marry pleaded. “I want to come with you, you understand, don't you?”

I nodded and began clearing the excess of nature's markings from my clothes and lips. “Thanks Marry. You have been the best friend. I don't see how things could have gone any other way.”

“I do,” said Marry. This wasn't supposed to happen. The highest planned it this way, it couldn't have been by chance.”

At the time this confused me. I even questioned if Marry had spoken correctly, but I was quiet about this. I didn't believe in much of anything the other girls spoke about. She had just stood up for my existence. Maybe there *was* something wrong with me inherently, like my physical self. Maybe I couldn't do the things they could. The things the other girls said about me, I must have done something absolutely awful by their standards. The thing was, I didn't remember much of my life before this place. It was a blur. Where I came from was discussed by the others. *A giant whale delivered her on shore where she was starved of the necessary nutrients to survive, or I think that she was hatched from my pet rock.* The most common however that usually was expressed in an uninspiring manner was that, *I was a black pullet.* I didn't know what this meant or what it was, and the furthest explanation for this was presumably because Aihdah said I was delivered by a giant stork, which none of the girls believed was possible, so they all made fun of me for it. I am simply just a lost girl, who didn't know what she wanted.

“Aihdah will be coming shortly. Recess will be over and you can guarantee that there will be some exaggerations on your behavior.”

I stared at Marry and her cloudy eyes. The wound in her lower lip had dried and her cheeks had become mildly dirty. I wanted to ask her what exaggerations meant, but suddenly it had occurred to me. They obviously would have to tell a great horror of me and for it to be convincing it would have to be lies or stretches from the truth, like Marry and I had started the fight. For whatever reason Aihdah did not take sides, she would punish us all the same.

Marry hugged me at that point. “Everything will be okay,” she said still tightly wrapped around my neck. “It wasn't good for you here.”

Nothing came to me. I hadn't ever thought of a plan. I always saw myself running away only to escape, I'd never thought about my loneliness or of crossing the fence.

“Do you think it's true?” I asked envisioning my fears. Aihdah had always spoken of monsters, fanged creatures my stepmother would say, that lived beyond the fence.

Mary looked to me very decisively, first challenging the thought like it was a dark fairytale and then nodding to herself, “It seems improbable.” She said looking out beyond the fence. “I don't know if such evil things exist. Not just beyond the fence, but anywhere.”

I nodded trying to imagine the things Marry and the other girls were taught in school. How one could wonder the possibility that things couldn't stretch beyond themselves and what they experienced. I was different; I knew so little, so little in fact, that anything was possible. Perhaps I was creating my fears by allowing them to exist.

Marry broke me away from these thoughts. "I don't know," she said plainly.

I looked to her wanting to hear more.

"It's just that Aihdah has never lied."

Marry's words hypnotized me.

"Here I'll help you." Marry placed her support beneath my right leg using her arm. I struggled with aching pains in my side, so when I tried to climb, halfway through I just caved to the aching muscle, so Mary lifted me upwards until I was able to part myself from her using the little strength I had. Then I was perched between the estate and the deep unknown woods atop the fence that separated the two worlds. Dense woodlands consumed the other side of the fence like a heavy fog. Nothing could be seen between the trunks and branches ranging in every size. It seemed quiet but occasionally insects and birds would chirp.

"I don't know where I'll go, now that I am here." I had never left the fenced land before, the thoughts and plans of what I would do when I got to the other side had never occurred to me.

Two of the other girls could be seen in the distance on Marry's side of the fence, accompanied by an adult.

"What are you waiting for Enniah, go!" she yelled.

I lifted my other leg over the fence and I said my goodbyes.

"I'll miss this Marry." I said.

She nodded. "I'll miss it too."

I ran from the coming voices, further than I had ever ran before. I looked back periodically, reassuring myself that Marry had left. There was no one. The fence dwindled away with each passing glance, and eventually it too was swallowed by the crowding of trees. I stopped, panting and grasping all of the spots that ached and favored pain, and I hoped for

Marry's safety, and then my own. I studied my surroundings, staying alert for whatever may have lived on this side of the fence. I saw nothing for a time, just old dried up leaves and swaying limbs. I hadn't even seen rodents of some degree, no not even a chipmunk or squirrel. Even in the large empty rooms of the estate, the ones I was alone admitted to, I had never felt this alone.

I saw a single harmless flower several feet before me. Yellow and gold, with a white core and a strong green *stem*. There was a rock beside it in the clearing. I sat myself on the stone emerging from the earth, shaded from the surrounding trees but spaciouly empty overhead. I felt hungry, faint even. I hadn't thought about food, or shelter. I had been so tormented that I hadn't pictured anything but running. "Why?" I suddenly whimpered, I through my hands over my face and I cried, again.

An hour or so had passed, I knew not of the time. I'd finally seen movement! I saw a squirrel chasing a rabbit. It was a bizarre thing to see. Squirrels don't eat rabbits, at least it didn't seem logical or expected. They ran off in the bushes beside me and I started wondering about the things I thought I might see, and how I hadn't seen them. Maybe I was seeing things and I was truly alone, maybe I was supposed to hunt the rabbit, to eat it. I hadn't seen anything novel to me, especially dangerous, despite the rumors of monsters and perilous things. Maybe it was all made up, but who would make something like that up and why? The sun began lowering through the trees...

I stood opening my eyes fully. This wasn't a place to sleep. My hunger had grown to a constant hymn, a musical nuisance from my stomach. It kept me awake, and yet tired me equally so.

"Why? Why do I exist?" I asked aloud. "Is it just to entertain you?" No one answered. Aihdah always spoke of the unity of everything still being under constant watch. She teaches the concept of a god that created everything, from the stem of the flower to its rose and the small creatures that consume it. She also contradicts herself, and tells me that it doesn't have to be that way and that a god doesn't have to exist. That for some it's about mathematical equations and the probability of everything, she says that it doesn't matter though, when someone's damaged enough they all start to prey to something. She wouldn't ever teach me more than this because I

am not her student, but still, the other girls get jealous that she talks to me at *all*. Defensive even. Is that why they despised me so much?

I looked around the small clearing the rock had been centered in. I didn't realize the significant placement or how the trees had bowed away from the clearing, as if something forceful had permeated from the center. I examined the rock that had made a preferable bench, realizing that perhaps its form and location was too perfect to be coincidence. There were faded markings that extended from the top of the stone lodged into the earth, unfortunately I couldn't read. There were other markings that were strange as well, ones I didn't recognize at all, not even to be letters, and then there were two I believed I had seen many times. Above in a circular indentation was definitely the sun. –A circle that was surrounded by speckles and small triangles pointing away. Below, was something I saw often enough, the moon in one of its phases. –An elliptical wedge placed in a small crevice. This puzzled me to a point where I began feeling the structure for something different.

I grew frustrated when I found nothing resourceful. I hated even further that I could not read what the others were capable of reading, and so I sat wondering of the adolescent diversity between myself and the others, was it because of one condition, if that's what I could call it. I wasn't allowed to learn, just because I wasn't born a Marter.

“You are not recognized by the Marter council and don't have a history. You don't exist in the books, and no one knows your true last name. You can't be taught our ways, because you lack the parents of Marter blood.” Aihdah would say.

I was so frustrated. I didn't remember my life before this place, so how could I check them to Marter records? I just felt I belonged inside, I believed that I should finally be able to teach Saidey and Tonya a lesson.

Who was I kidding, I knew I didn't remember what happened prior to being found out here somewhere lost entirely before I was brought to Aihdah. It was obvious that no one wanted me. I mean even here, I made a single friend. *Again, the reason would never be taught to me.* Maybe they did think I was dangerous, because I was adopted into the Estate. Maybe that was viewed as undesirable and worthless, more so then I had previously decided, but the Mother Aihdah took me in to shelter me, that should count for something even if it hadn't been for very

long. I didn't even know how long it had been since I arrived here. The thoughts started to cloud, and when that happens I get very groggy and sometimes even fall asleep, so I try not to think too hard of the past. If she believed I belonged, shouldn't everyone, or was that a reason to detest my belonging? If they had just given me a chance to prove I was *smart*. I just didn't have the written version for my thoughts yet. They still were occurring; I had meaning for them.

I began to doze. My eyes had dried after I had sat myself once again. I could hear crickets now, despite the sun still being visible in the red distance. I heard something between the rustling of wild plants and dead tree limbs. It started off quiet, and then grew quite rigorous. It was coming closer.

I stood again, alarmed. I listened for the direction, and then when my eyes followed from where I had last heard the noise, I saw something dark and full of shadow, lurking just beyond the edge of the clearing. The noise started off slow again, scraping against the brush, and the low centered figure prowled nearer.

The things that ate little humans alive. The terrors that lived beyond the fence. It was something we all talked about, and we had always been advised to stay on the homestead side for the sake of our safety. They were here, at the door of the forest.

I started to run, instinctively, before seeing its face. I fell when I turned, bracing my palms in the cool grass. Then I heard Marry's voice.

"Enniah!" she was calling out. "Enniah, where are you?!" she shouted.

"Marry?" I lifted myself. "I'm here, over this way!"

We shouted each other's names until we found one another in the middle, nearly forgetting I had stumbled across a fenced terror.

"I'm glad you're okay," she said. "It's getting late, Aihdah and the others will be looking for you!" she was exhausted from her run.

"You came!"

"Yes," She cried excitedly but also awestricken, as if a terrible thing had happened.

“The others were disciplined, Aihdah saw through them, she says the dogs will arrive by nightfall! We must hurry!”

“What’s so bad about dogs?”

“They had to get their special gear to search for you, they figured you could have gotten much further early in the day. Aihdah says they need it for special protection from the spirits in the night. I couldn’t wait for them! Come Enniah, we should move!”

I could hear strange whining coming through the trees. The wind picking up sounded like a child whispering between the earth and woodlands.

When Marry turned to lead the way, she froze, and then when I looked I did too. A dog was wandering the exit of the clearing, I’d never seen one so ferocious and agitated. The eyes were narrowed and aggressive, glaring in the way of offense. The black of its fur was ridged and up on end. These perhaps were the fanged monsters, but how and why? It edged closer, ready to attack. The dogs we had on our side of the fence played and did tricks for treats. They never once looked at me in the way of this animal. I decided, as did Marry, that this was not the time to think of the obscurity. We both turned in one movement and sprinted for an exit in the next.

Marry panted, exhaling words on every available step. “I don’t think we can- out- run it!”

All I could do was try. I started to pull ahead of Marry, she was already tired and I was born to run. When I looked over my shoulder, I realized very suddenly, that Marry would be attacked first. I slowed to face our follower.

“What are you doing Enniah!?” She called out in a single gasp. “Run!”

Marry was closing the gap between us. The dog was seconds behind. I couldn’t out run the dog, neither could Marry. “What do we do!?” I shouted. I picked up a stone carefully zoning my target. I hurled it just behind Marry, and landed across the dog’s nose.

“We can try and fight!” said Marry now near enough to use her inside voice.

“I don’t know how to fight!”

Marry began searching the floor of the forest. She freed up a dried up lifeless branch. “I’ll teach you! I’ll teach you everything I know!”

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“How?” I shouted. The dog gained a step on Marry and she swung with all her might.

The branch broke across the dog’s neck, marry both attacked and evaded at the same time.

“You can almost always swing hard enough and fast enough to deter the approaching dog!”

The dog whined and howled, rolling for a moment while Marry had leapt to her feet. She began looking for another branch, particularly something larger, and I did as well.

The dog however was ready upright and closing in on Marry. The canine leaped at her, and soon after, the two were rolling along the leaf bed below.

“Noooo!” I cried while I hurried towards her.

I through down the branch with intentions of freeing Marry from the dog. I was too late, Marry’s arm was deeply penetrated beneath the shoulder, the dog would not let go.

“Run Enniah.” She cried again. The dog growled as I continuously beat the stick over its head, until it broke too.

“What are you doing!?” I voiced to the deaf creature. It began to pull Marry by the arm. She screamed.

I chased after them, suddenly fearless. I wanted Marry back. The dog finally got caught between two closely grown trees where Marry’s figure was too large for the space between.

I hurried to the side. I prepared for devastating pain.

I placed my hands around the dog’s neck trying to squeeze the life out of it. It bit down again, readjusting its grip on Marry. She must have fainted because she was not screaming anymore. *No, not Marry out of all people!*

I wedged my arm into the jaw of the attacker, and then my foot hoping my shoe would soften the blow from the clamoring teeth. The dog whined while I kicked at its ears and then it’s eyes. Why wouldn’t it let go?

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I was so consumed by anger that my temperature rose, my breathing, my heart rate, and my desire to kill had escalated, even after the dog showed signs of letting go. It bit her again, this time around her neck.

I screamed, no logical order came from my voice, just anger and hatred. While laying beside them I felt around with my free hand. I found a heavy rock and followed the desire to mimic what I had endured. Hatred. I lodged the stone first against the dog's head, and then when its grip had let up, I placed the stone, my arm, and my entire weight down the throat of the wild animal. It whimpered and howled against my lodged skin and rock, and I held it there for a long time. Seconds turned to minutes while the leaf-strewn bed of the forest blew against us, and then it finally died.

It suddenly seemed colder. My screams were sure to be heard by the others if anyone was near. My arm had endured many scrapes, and cuts, some that even felt like burns. The thing that hurt the most was Marry, for she was not breathing.

“Please wake up Marry! I don't know what to do!”

Her arm was mangled, torn, the deep patches of red where it was wettest, caused me to squirm. She was losing all her color through that wound. I removed my top layers, using my softer cotton shirt to wrap her arm. “Like this marry?” I sobbed. “Is this how I do it?” I had felt so cold and alone, all I wanted was Marry, her laugh, her protection, and her spirit.

“Yes, that's it. That's the right idea Enniah.” I heard her words of encouragement. Still she did not move. It was her voice in memory, my imagination. I removed her shoal and wrapped it tightly around her neck where the wound had escalated. I could still hear something close to her chest while I lay against it, I could feel its beating. Her heart was still there.

“I found this cool stone, I really wanted to show you.” I raked her dark hair with my fingers, removing the gritty markings of nature.

“Well than, show me.”

I blinked a few times. I realized I may have heard the voice from the past, but the experience was surreal and novel to me. It fit the situation only, it had never occurred to me before.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

“Marry, are you talking to me?” No, I thought. Marry was unconscious and unresponsive. She couldn't be.

“Describe the stone.”

I looked around, spooked even.

“Marry?”

“Just give me a minute, my body is resting.”

“How are you talking to me?” I asked.

“Temporal stone.”

I leapt for joy inside. “You're going to be okay then?” I asked quite happily.

“No I won't be.”

“Why not? You're breathing, somehow speaking to me, and your heart is still going.”

“I'm too far away for any kind of physical healing and I am bleeding to death.”

Marry's eyes opened slowly. She was using her lips to speak again.

“You're awake!”

“Where am I?” she replied.

I looked to her peculiarly with eyebrows distorted. “You were just talking to me!”

“I'm sorry,” she said. “I remember you told me you found something interesting.”

“You're dying!”

“I just want you to describe the rock thing to me again.”

I sighed. My muscles were tired, my body ached. “It was just an odd rock with the moon and sun on it.”

“The Sol-Sanctum of Luna.”

“What?”

“Yeah, it’s a place for the dead. It’s buried beneath the earth right now, right?”

“I guess so.” I sighed. “I couldn’t read the markings on it.”

“Well there is an entrance somewhere. It’s *my* biggest secret.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well it’s sort of *our* secret. There is something about the place that is strange, Aihdah keeps something surreptitious in there that she doesn’t want anyone to know about. The problem is, she doesn’t know how to get in anymore.” Marry attempted to stand. She felt the wound by gracing the silk around her neck. “It... hurts very badly, especially when I talk.” She turned to face me her blue eyes piercing in contrast, the reflections of the leaves in her eyes. All I could do is wonder in fear if these were some of my last moments with her.

“Take it easy,” I said. It was something Marry would usually voice to me. “We have to get you back.”

Marry fell roughly to her knees before fighting to stand back up again. “Alright. Let’s go.”

Marry somehow convinced me to let her guide. She told me that the entrance to the shrine was not very far, that maybe, just maybe, if her blood would hold in long enough, she could show me this secret.

The path was not an obvious one. Fallen trees, a creek, and a swarm of irksome insects Marry referred to as mosquitos, distorted our journey.

After about ten minutes Marry had lead us to a large valley in the soil, a place where the earth swooped down into a large crevice. There was an entrance of sorts, made of large grey stones, uniformly laid upwards on their sides fitting tightly together like the photographs of old castles. The near entirety of the castle, or shrine as marry called it, was beneath the earth’s blanket. Marry made her way to the beginning of the soiled slope, and I tried to persuade Marry to return to the homestead.

The Sanctum of Two Halves

The air here was warm, the second clearing in the forest was much like the first, the trees on the edge of the clearing stood tall, high above the horizontal line where the sky met the earth, like a protective and concealing wall of timber.

“Marry we need to get you to the homestead.” I rationalized. “You need help we don’t have time for this.”

Marry shook her head. “There might be another dog. We can’t risk it. There is something inside that may heal me.”

“Are you sure? We only saw one, and we beat it. The others may not find you here even with their gear,” I said.

Marry still seemed uneasy with my suggestions. “I have another idea on how to get down the ravine Enniah,” she said with a smile.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Okay,” her grin lessened intentionally. “Well, to get down, maybe I can use you as a sled.”

“A... sled?” I asked. “What’s a sled?”

“A transportation device, used in snow to get down a mountain,” she grinned. “erm sometimes in sand or dirt though...”

“-And you’re going to use me as a sled?” I glanced down the ravine, rocks and plants sprouted up from the decent. “I’m not sure that doesn’t sound like it would work.”

Marry limped to the edge and encouraged me over. She couldn't make it down without help, so she sat me down and spread herself halfway on my lap, with her feet hanging towards our destination. "This isn't how you usually ride a sled. It's traditionally more fun, we'll have to pace ourselves somehow, but I think we should move reasonably slow if we do it right and don't turn into a ball on the way down."

I was positioned beneath Marry for the most part with my back against the ground. She was sprawled out overtop, with her hands grabbing at the sides and her feet used to create friction against the changing earth.

We slid down the jagged path slowly, with small bumps and pauses on the way. Marry whimpered occasionally when we did hit obstacles, and had to re-adjust her bandages on one occasion, but for the most part we couldn't stop laughing. It was exciting when we hit less bumpy areas with grass. We hit a huge decent where it got suddenly much steeper, and we immediately flipped over and separated from each others bodies linked only by a mere three fingers. Marry grabbed my hand and with her grip, I pulled us back together while pushing my feet into the dirt and using a free hand to grab at whatever I could, little twigs and small groups of weeds. We began nearing the end of the steepest decent where it was about to turn rough again. Marry suddenly was quiet. I pulled her on top of me like a plank, and I endured the worst of it until our pace slowed again.

We were nearing the bottom of the curve, or what was left of it, I could tell because the earth was starting to grow like a large wall around us. I managed to steer around one last section of rock by placing my hand in the dirt, as I noticed this seemed to pull us in the direction where I created friction. I think Marry would have appreciated that small finding.

We made it to the bottom, Marry had fainted. I stood up a little wobbly. "Marry!" I voiced loudly. Strange noises of insects and animals filled the air. She was un-responsive again. I dragged her towards the large rectangular doors made of solid stone sheets. My legs ached. When I knocked on the entrance as if asking passage, the insides of the chamber echoed around which seemed strange for such a large structure. I pushed with my remaining strength, the door slowly slid across the beveled floor. The place was dark, the movement of the door gradually filled the first chamber passage with light during its glide. It finally locked against something with a large clunk. It was as if the insides of the first chamber were all made of marble.

Everything was reflective and luminous. I hurried inside, my eyes taking in the ancient feel of the structure. How old was this place? My every step surfaced an echo, otherwise the insides were sound resilient, and the voices of nature had gone suddenly extinct upon entering.

I hurried back to Marry and dragged her into the the chamber. I started panicking. What do I do? Where could I find help? There didn't seem to be anything beyond this room, and the far corners eventually became too dark to see anything. My face darted in every direction in hope of sign or safe passage. When nothing occurred to me I hurried back to Marry's side which was sprawled over the dark floor. She had come out of her swoon again briefly.

"There is something guiding me Enniah. We must do as it says."

"What is guiding you?" I asked.

"A female spirit..." She whispered.

"Like a ghost?" I asked.

Marry's words were all very similar in tone. "Yes. She wants to show you something," she said without flinching.

"I'm scared Marry."

"*She* understands. Go to the far wall, she says." Marry's arm lifted as if held up by a string.

I followed her observed direction and her will. As I ventured the first chamber, it's length a great hall, I came to a darker entrance where light dwindled into nothingness. Marry's voice called from a now distant entrance.

"Sing Enniah."

"I can't sing!" I responded.

"It's what the spirit wants!" She replied.

"I don't know what to sing!"

"She says a C flat."

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

I contemplated this. I didn't know what a C flat was. "Why don't you sing it Marry, you always had a better voice."

"I can't sing Enniah, I am too far away. My throat is damaged. Sing high Enniah."

"Like this? I narrowed the opening in my throat, and resonated using a slight vibration from my center.

"You're going to wake the dead with that voice Enniah! That's a screech!!!"

My voice cracked. I came to an abrupt close. "Isn't that what I'm trying to do?" I said matter-of-factly.

I guess so. She says you have to sing high, but not such a violent distorted pitch, it has to be consistent, like you are trying to shatter a glass window with your voice."

"I've never done that." I sighed. There wasn't a response to my complaint. That all sounded impossible, and if she was joking it wasn't funny. I cleared my throat and attempted again. It sounded like a fragile screaming, only that it could actually move a physical object or kill a mosquito.

"She says move closer to the center of the room!"

As I continued to belt out this terrible sound, I wandered forward towards complete darkness." How do I know where I am going?!"

"Listen to the recoiling sound!" replied Marry.

Right. Recoiling sound. I moved around directing my voice to the ceiling, the echoes did in fact help me navigate to the center! The sounds would get louder as I approached the walls, and then again the resonance would get quieter when I found a hole in the walls or route of passage. When I found where I believed to be the center of perhaps a circular room, Marry called me again.

"A little higher in pitch Enniah!"

I sighed. Was this still a C flat I wondered. I took a deep breath. *Really Marry this is exhausting!*

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

The sound that echoed the corridors even when I had stopped pushing out new vocals was very loud. It was powerful and deafening. I continued to fluctuate to Marry's cue, which now seemed quite far away. I had navigated around at least two angled halls before finding the circular chamber and it was so dark I couldn't even see my fingers.

"Just a little higher!"

I adjusted, my voice narrowing to a high pitch ringing. I wasn't singing, I was screaming...

"A little more, she says you're almost there. Your voice isn't the same as those who created the chamber. That's it, stay where you are! That's it Enniah, you're doing it!"

-This definitely was not singing.

I closed my eyes listening to the echoing madness and released as much vocal energy as I could.

"You got it! Don't stop!"

I opened my eyes, the sight was breathtaking. A different kind of beautiful I hadn't experienced before.

Dust and loose dirt started to pour from the uniformly spaced joints in the ceiling. Every few moments with the draining sand from above, more light had entered the reflective purple chamber made of sparkling stone. I could see my hair again, and my hands. The stone surrounding us was gritty and crystalized on the surface, but had a deep protruding mystical purple glow.

"I can't believe what I am seeing!"

This was so cool. The grains had left entirely now, a small square tile in the center of the ceiling had permitted a majority of the light. Now the room was bright enough to make out the unique markings and shape of the room, which actually wasn't entirely circular, it was angled with ten separate walls that surrounded the corridor evenly. Above where the fine stone and sediment had drained was large circular openings varying in size. The sound that resonated was so deep I could feel the vibrations throughout the chamber stone still shaking me!

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

On the far side opposite the entrance was a large mirror with identical ones at either side, slightly angled in towards the center piece.

“Now what Marry, what do I do? How do I save you?”

I felt a cold hand on my shoulder that made me jump. It was damp, wet even, but the viscosity was not like that of water. I hadn't realized that Marry had made her way into the room.

“Don't be frightened,” she said when I had directed my attention to her near face. She was smiling slightly; an eerie feeling arose that I'd never forget. The purple florescence of the room mixed with her cloudy eyes to create a stormy feeling, her skin was still pale where the light touched, only ghostly lit from all around.

Chapter 4

A Grave Pact

“I might be able to save Marry.” The words had come from Marry, but I knew now that the spirit was talking. “There is a very powerful energy beyond this chamber that grants access to such...abilities.”

I just stood there, spellbound. The voice of the cold spirit spoke again with Marry’s body and nothing more. It was chilling and off key, like a worn instrument.

“There is a condition, a treaty, a law, that you must not break child.”

I nodded.

“I will offer protection to Marry, if you never speak of this chamber again, or how you entered it.”

I nodded.

“There is something else I require to bring Marry back.”

“What is it?” I asked hastily.

“I will need your life.”

“What?” I balked. It would seem impossible no matter how much I wished upon it.

“Yes,” the spirit relayed. “But only for a moment.”

It felt hauntingly sinister, darkness had seemed to be creeping in from all directions as my despair had continued. Was the room losing its luster? My eyes darted around from the floors and to Marry, the shadows slowly drowning us.

“Yo-You can do that?” I asked shakily. I spoke in disbelief. “You can take life, and then give it back?”

“Well just to reach something on the other side of this mirror. I will need you to trust me. Allow yourself to die, but only for a moment. Together we can take something beyond this mirror that I cannot hold myself. Will you agree to give up your life in exchange for a chance to save Marry? I cannot guarantee that you can return.”

What is this, what was it thinking? It seemed so unnatural, however I shouldn't know.

“We were meant to make it this far, but only this far.” Marry frowned looking up at me. “Don't risk your life. You will accomplish great things and the probability of your death in this chamber are great, you should be wise and limit this possibility as much as possible. Sadness surrounded my weak figure, a cold tingling wrapped itself around my core, and my eyes watered. I knew what she was speaking was a dreadful thing, and it hurt to hear her explain this to me. “I am hurting bad Enniah, the spirit says this wasn't meant to happen.”

“What do you mean, how can the spirit know what is meant to happen and what is not?” I felt my eyes water. I watched her legs buckle, she held herself slighted against me. I lowered to the floor with her.

“Things don't just happen Enniah, there is always reason to them.” Her face changed to my disbelief. This couldn't happen. There was no reason in the world for Marry and I to endure the pain we had.

“Do you know what death is?” Marry asked wearily.

I shook my head angrily, “No.” Still my eyes were swollen and I began to endure the worst pain I would ever come to experience. “Don't die.”

“I can't stop it. It's part of the rules.” She said still frowning in the sparkling chamber.

“I don't understand...”

“You will...” She finally spoke after the darkness began filling in around me.

“Marry, you don’t have to go! Please stay!”

She didn’t answer. I shook her body beside me.

From this point forward I refused to believe that Marry couldn’t be saved. She could have stayed with the other girls, I could have just suffered and deflected the pain. The possibilities I figured were endless, and It could have been avoided, if only every other possible way.

“Hello?” I said finally in the still air. “Couldn’t anyone have helped?” I asked coldly fighting another resurgence of tears.

The quietness was acclimated by the stippling of rain overhead, and all around. Then I heard the door, sliding stone. Someone was here.

“Enniah!” The voice called out. I knew the voice, the mother of the estate. The Marter teacher, who taught the secrets of Marter ways. She is the one who provides a place for me to live, but because I wasn’t of Marter decent, was never permitted to be schooled with the others. She is nice to me, however distant. She keeps herself separated from me and never favors one person over another. She only speaks to me when I approach her, and her speech is limited to what I already know... If that makes any sense. I am not sure why this apparent realization is hitting me now. Her responses are limited because I am human, and nothing more.

I don’t respond at first. I am distraught. *Bring her back, bring her back.* That’s all my yearning calls out to. It’s how I feel with what little will I have left.

“Enniah!” The voice calls out again suddenly the room falls dark. The small holes that had allowed scattered light down from above the chamber had filled with mud and wet sand. The rain. There was a loud crackle through the sky that shook me and the corridors of stone.

“How did you open the door?!” The woman shouted...

-And then I heard another voice, the spirit of Marry or the one that had lied about saving her. There was no definitive sound only the message- her voice was not the same. It was distorted, an attempt to mimic the common language I had come to understand.

“Enniah,” The ghostly girl on the floor looked up at me and I reached for her without pause.

“Marry!”

-“No,” she answered, “Not exactly.

“What do you mean?”

“Marry is too weak to speak.”

“This is urgent, I did not mean to lie to you, Marry in a way can be seen again, just not right now, but you have to promise me,” the spirit’s voice was quick and purposeful, “you cannot tell the woman at the door how to open this chamber.”

“And if I keep it a secret I can see Marry again?”

“There will be a greater chance, a much greater chance.”

“What is a chance?” I replied. I had asked in a way that was quite literal, I didn’t know what it meant entirely. How could there be anything other than a promise or truth?

In the next moment I knew the spirit was gone. The feeling was dry, warmer, and somehow quieter than before. The faint ringing that seemed to protrude from my center head had faded. The little remaining residence of light had been swallowed by the mud-stricken pores from above. The mother of the estate kept calling out to me. “Open the door! Is everything alright?!” I heard the sound of a stone door closing, and another opening.

I kept the sadness locked behind my eyes as best I could while I wandered the darkness back to the opening chamber. All I could think about was Marry and never seeing her again.

Aihdah met me some where in the dark after following my cries.

“What are you doing in here Enniah? Where is Marry? Only Marter’s are allowed in this place!”

“Marry’s gone, she needed help and no one came.”

“Where is she? You must hurry!” Aihdah spoke alarmed. “What happened?” She asked while checking over my body with her hand.

“We ran away beyond the fence, the other girls were teasing me and then when we were running Marry was attacked by a *dog*.”

“Is she okay? Where is she?”

“She is not okay. She is dead.” I cried and Aihdah held me in her arms for a very long time until I was strong enough to clear my eyes and stand up straight. Aihdah didn’t say much following all of this, she only seemed to grieve for my sadness while grasping her pinkish stone pendant in her fingers that she usually wore tightly around her neck.

That week Aihdah allowed me to stay in the estate with her. I shared her room, I slept in a separate bed with candle light for the next ten days while the pain subdued. All the while she comforted me or at least tried while my curiosity grew. I wanted to know why the spirit requested that she was not allowed to enter the shrine or how I had managed it. The pain however was great, and Aihdah was all I had at this time. She personally prepared meals for me, prepared stories for bed, and generally defended my presence inside the household, of which mostly I never saw. Aihdah didn’t teach the other children those days, instead she spent time with me. It was very apparent that this was unusual. Me being here was unusual.

I passed Saidey in the hall one week following the day, she was accompanied by an older woman with messy black hair, the purpose of why they were seeking Aihdah together was unknown.

The floor creaked while they approached us.

Saidey’s hair under the low yellowish lights of the manor halls was more stark, the divots of her chin and absent smile were concealing of her proposed hatred towards me. In fact, it was strange to see her emotion so hidden, absent possibly. If only I could show her how much I hated her, perhaps we both hid our hatred, or maybe on the outside only my sadness was showing. As we paced ourselves closer, there was jealousy, I knew the look of it when she saw me.

Aihdah and I were walking towards Greystone, the name of her collection of knowledge and secrets. She called it a Library; a place where pages held the world in words, the telling of people both dead and alive.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

Their faces went lacking upon my close inspection. When Aihdah stopped, looked down at me and quietly spoke. “Go to the Greystone library, continue reading the material we started for today under the serpent medical keystone. Go to the table with your work, and I will be there in one hour.” She smiled rashly.

I nodded, turned from her and continued down the hall and made my way to the Library.

I must have stared at the book for an hour.

Seeker

There is something that will make this night unique and unforgettable. I will learn that my mother is wrong, the practice she does, and I will learn it all on my own, without the lesson being slammed down the weakness of my throat.

Although this should happen ordinarily with one's parents, doubting the authenticity of their morals and discipline, my mother was everything, all of my lessons and my deepest influences all stem from her, because I wanted them to, and well, because the number of existing sources was small. I learned from myself, the estate, and the land, and all of those things were Aihdah's as much as my thoughts were my own.

It's not to say that there weren't great things she taught me, because there were. She would teach me incredible secrets of magic, things that cheated the ordinary world, leaving everything at the mercy of our wishes. This was different though, she claimed we needed it to survive.

There is a ghost looking at me that I am unaware of. It is judging me uncertain of the path I have taken and checking to make sure that my health is in good standing and that I am making progress on my journey of growth. It looks at my soft skin, mostly unblemished almost too concealed from the world and its elements. Its looking at me for the first time in months, and I cannot see it. First, it is important to note that spirits usually can't be here and there is an unseen barrier that exists to push them away. It has important matters to attend to, if it wishes to keep me safe. It quickly leaves me to work on its mission, but not without longing for the poor girl sitting on the end of a magnificent bed, her long brown hair wavy and towel dried. Her mixed dirty green and blue eyes, her mind rattling off complex reasoning and discord from the week

before. There are sparking thin lines of colors spilling from her aura, they are crimson reds forming grids like the world's latitude and longitude for a disheartened aggression surrounding her center, gold criss-crossing between them extremely bright for her un-fathomable intellect of the subconscious mind working at the seams of what holds the world and the stars together. The spirit watches me stand, appreciating my figure and determination. It watches me hurry to the window, and then with fears of interrupting the environment, it quickly exits the realm and dissipates without my knowing.

I find myself gazing out through my frosted second story window. Snow is piling on either side. I often feel like the drifting snow pivoting over the dormer just above my head, chosen only which way to go by the effects of nature and of the wind, but is there something more to it? Right now I feel like I have little choice, as to where to go and who to be, much like those snowflakes just outside.

“Oh Paladete, what is the purpose of it?” I asked my snowy white owl.

She wooed at me from her small entrapment, a tidy circular cage placed by the end table furthest from the window so she didn't have to see out the window and dream of distant places. It all came together at the top with closely forged steel lines.

“I don't understand why the snow has options, I don't understand it any more than you do.”

Paladete turned away in that moment, it always looked so awkward, her eyes swiveling half a circle away to disappear without the rest of her body to follow.

“I mean really, what is it that Aihdah is trying to say?” She turned back around and continued to clean herself, pecking into her long white feathers. Her cage was an odd thing, shaped like the steeple of a church, and she was confined to so little. “I should feel lucky compared to you, but I don't and you complain only half as much as I do.”

Aihdah let me have her for company ever since that day we ran. “I feel so sad thinking about it. “I write about it in my journal you know, everything that happened that day just so I don't *forget*. I am so scared to forget, Paladete.”

She woos one more time and her eyes close and open chipperly. I am standing when I look to her and then to my large comfy bed cornered by four pillars of hand etched wood. I don't want to go to sleep.

“Paladete you like me enough to come back, won't you?” I imagined her disappearing into the night and never returning. “I don't believe I should do this, but I want to be able to explore more myself. I figured you might feel similar confined to such a small cage.” I walked over to her cage and unlocked it by lifting a small lever. I took it and brought it to the bedside window before opening the small screen door. I struggled with the locks above the sliding window, but I opened those as well. “You are a lot heavier than you look you know.”

She hopped onto the windowsill with a hoot, and then she lurched out the window without turning back. I watched her quickly disappear into the snowy night. “I think if you had given me a turn or a nod, I would feel better about the whole thing.” It left me with a feeling of a hole in my gut. The cold forced me to close the window. I figured I would be here all night, so she could always knock...if she ever did return.

I brush the auburn hair from my face to get a better look through the glass, but then I am caught by my own reflection. I see a clear face one that ought to be pretty, and one that shouldn't hide. I should not be attentive to guests however, my face says. I am surprised to see that the crooked window holds any resemblance to me at all. My skin is transparent and paler than in bright season, however olive and shaded by my darker heritage. I am sure I will never know of my place or my beginning, so long as humans cannot remember their first years.

In the visible distance where the rolling valley meets the flats of our mansion, a greyish blue truck reclaims my perception. It stalls just long enough for my mother to open the gate remotely. When it passes through the tall and majestic wrought iron gate, I am able to see into the cabin. A man sits beside my mother. He has blonde hair, and a contemptuous look. I do not know him. After stopping to adjust something in the snow near the front tires briefly, he returns to the driver's side. My mother is beside the blond haired man, a droll sort of face, partially hospitable and half notably annoyed. If anything I ought to know of my mother, it was her face and the secrets it would tell. From here I can see her hair is wavy, and her eyes are dark even from the very large distance I am watching from. She has this deceiving smile she wears when she brings strangers home.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

I have very good eyes twenty over fifteen vision according to a test Aihdah had done on me. I'm not sure how much my world looks different from another person, but with it, I watch as the two steer around the U shaped driveway beside a collection of massive trimmed pine. They are carvings of novelty, each carrying a story of a beginning or an end, each neatly trimmed tree different from the last; they are a gift to all who see them and a warning if you will, to those who question the mastery confined within the estate's purpose and to those who wish to uncover unyielding secrets. Even I do not know the true purpose of our existence on the barren northeastern countryside, but given the unquestionable presence of greatness in architecture and mystery, one knows when they see our round about drive and the trees that accompany it, there is something grand happening here.

The trees are native pine, however grown tall and are beautifully sculpted with artistic precision. They no longer live; instead they are forever hardened with a sort of coating that resists the weather like wax. The strongest apex predators in Marter faith are lined along the rounded drive in the center most bed. The lightly powdered snow is just now accumulating on these structures. These are most foreign to outsiders, associated with myths and legend. In the center of all is the *sphinx*.

From the center left, a winged man with a beard stands beside an eagle, and to the right of the green sphinx was something lost to time, a capsule perhaps, winged as well, with a largely divided sphere encompassing the object or creature that is unknown. These structures are particularly strange. The only location I have seen these winged things was deep within the privacy of the second story library. Any questions I have asked on the subject have gone unanswered, much unlike the exhibits carved on either side.

What is depicted in this circular capsule looks sort of like a human being. Further on either side, are usual creatures found scattered across the earth such as lions and whales, even dogs and cats. The caretakers and gardeners are not aware of what they are carving and trimming; no, this is just a following, something Aihdah orders to be replicated from numerous shrines hidden across the known globe. Between the half circle drive and the evergreen sculptures stands a lone tree over 3,000 years old. It looms over our courtyard like a giant spider from above, and when the sun passes over our estate, the shadows slither like snakes, between the yards, the sculptures, and the three story stone walls.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

I am lonely, steering my eyes around my brightly colored room. It is the only room in the house that isn't a scale of grey, and is something of intense color. I like things of color, perhaps because it is different, and I am different. At least I feel like I am. The pink walls are separated by ribbons of red descending from ceiling to floor. Even my bed is red, the color of passion. I live with passion, I strongly believe in choice, and of goodness and joy. Those things seem absent to me in many of the numerous rooms of this aged home. Everything creaks, and every room has drafts. The windows are crooked, and the glass warped and single paned. I decide that tonight I'm going to pretend that I don't know Aihdah is bringing home a guest. I am going to meet him, this attractive man my mother claims to herself. Always to herself, I am lonely and my sisters have been away for some time now. I never hear from them, not since the summer of this year, and the rules have suddenly become stricter, and I have been punished without reason.

I return to the mirror I had left minutes ago, dismissing the sounds of the clatter below. The mirror I peer into is a gift Aihdah had given to me before my schooling a few days after she gave me Paladete. The trim is carved of rosewood, representing the stem of the rose and a duality in association. Thorns extend out and away from the mirror's edge in a chaotic pattern. My mother sometimes refers to me as a rose, a coming beauty in need of articulate protection. Those who approach me the wrong way may suffer wounds.

My hair is how it always looks, wavy brown, and uninspiring to me, however naturally reflective. My mother hates me for it; she wants my hair because it effortlessly captures the surrounding light. My nose is petite, ears larger than my sisters, and my lips encompassing those features. I push a finger to them; they excel from my face at a profile glance. My eyes are the only thing I consider appealing because they are different. A swamp from afar, but up close a combination of colors unique to my eye only- browns, greens, redwood, and the ocean all claim sections of my eye. The best part however, is the strange suggestion of lighting, a zig-zagging yellow line that surrounds my pupil. I place a hand over my bare chest, naked tonight without jewelry and my low riding pale shirt. I was going to wear something more grand, the clothing the graduates were supposed to wear. I had found this white corset, laced with silver and silk sleeves. I thought it was artistic, however slightly uncomfortable. Aihdah didn't care what I wore, because she taught me now, and me alone. I reach into the glazed burrow in front of me to place a gem under my neck. A simple black elastic band suspends a clear pendent like glass. It's

a crystal. It represents power of the mind, and of control. With this gift from Aihdah, she swears it greatens our communication with the celestial web, enough to communicate telepathically. It has never worked for me. My sisters joke that I was given a counterfeit, the reason, because I am adopted. I don't belong in the family, and where I hailed from is rumored to be the sky. All the other children always said the same thing, that I am a stork baby. I find trouble believing that a large winged animal carried me here, but Aihdah says she wasn't witness to the event and that I should trust my peers.

I'm a person who laughs a lot. I smile constantly, despite the people I'm surrounded by. They just make me laugh, they take everything so seriously and as if we really don't have a say as humans. I disagree with them, I feel like every decision you make in your life is controlling your future, and therefore a person is choosing their fate, rather than believing that someone else is controlling it for you. They tell me that you do have an ultimate choice, but then what is destiny? If you are given a prophecy of your destiny, and you decide not to do this, isn't that you controlling your future and ultimately your fate? They contradict to me. My opinion has changed several times throughout my life, but here while I was merely fifteen in my tight fitting corset and pale rags, I thought I controlled my existence in every way, and so I laughed and tied the pendant around my neck, and prepared to do what no Maghonohey daughter had done before.

"You guys are so *stupid!*" I spoke allowed. "It's *so* simple! See, this is me, controlling my future!" I slapped the ancient mirror down from its swiveling neck. *Why don't you people get it? If the course of our lives is pre-ordained, then my mother will be expecting this.* I reached out to stop the swaying mirror from the teetering base, but it was no use. I lifted it from its face after the loud clap. The damage had already been done. A sharp jagged line spanning the top of my reflection to my tightly wrapped chest separated my eyes, my nose, and a heavy portion of my disappointed lips.

I left the brighter of second story rooms and entered an elongated sky blue hallway with white trimmings and ceilings. This hall is bright, like my room, unlike the bedrooms, the halls and living areas are dissimilar. I passed old paintings, exquisite photography, wooden doors, and modern lamps. The top floor was much more like local schools, and of restaurants and shops of the public. When I ventured down a right angled hall and to a secret room using a sliding bookshelf, I launched myself down a dark circular hole that evolved into a metal slide at the

bottom. A few years ago, this was extremely fun. I slid to the end kicking into an upright position and turned the glass doorknob just beyond. I entered the next hall, now downstairs on the first floor. The door closed behind me, seamless with the wall, hidden behind a painting and the ends of a traditional room. These floors were mostly made of stone and occasionally hardwood mahogany.

I could hear their voices now.

“Yes,” my mother said with a heightened value of inspiration. “It is a bit *ancient*, isn’t it? Very old fashioned I suppose.” she said the word as if the thought had never occurred to her, that our miraculous estate from the late 1700’s, was completely customary to the average 20th century man. This voice was different, both a soft and deep voice portraying unfamiliarity. It was casual and low key, kind of like mine on any normal given day. “Yes, yes it is.” The man said taking a step further. My insides felt suddenly anxious, boys were uncommon for me. Marry told me about a boy once. That she had a crush on him, and he was sweet and good to her and that he would write her little stories she called notes. I had asked Aihdah why there were no male students that she taught and she said that she did, but that they were a distraction. So boys learned with boys, and girls learned with girls. Right now the others were off someplace else learning at an organized school she said, the ones that made it at least. The ones who didn’t I did not know where they went. She says she has thought of excepting both boys and girls at different times, and that her teaching methods were experimental at times. There of course were the care takers who worked the fields and plumbing they were mostly all men. I was always told I act like a boy, and for me I never understood this. I figured this younger male must be as old as my eldest sister or at least my second.

I came around to the living room side entrance, a large opening from the south end of the homestead. Here I could see their faces again, however partially unlit in the shadows of the next room. I was unnoticed and kept quiet, hidden behind a large sofa in the far corner. His face was full of interest, and to my surprise his hair was much brighter than I anticipated in the shadows of his truck. He gazed upon my stepmother vibrantly and her lacey black dress of woven spades.

Aihdah received the man’s jacket and hung it beside the double door side entrance on a wooden coat rack. The boy seemed eager to ask a question.

“You said something about needing a bearing or a fixture, something of the sort. I am sorry, my mind seems to have gone astray, I’m cloudy and I feel... lost.” The last word rang bells to my ears. It was common to me, being *lost*, it was taught from delusion. When a person is hypnotized, and they have any faint recollection of what happens, they often feel lost even though the reality is a higher expansion of consciousness. The speculation is that you literally leave your body behind so to say, and become fully introverted with your surroundings and your true self, however the other side of this, a needed respect, is that it leaves your mind open to be malleable. It is sometimes what I feel when my mother preaches her beliefs, or rather forces them.

Aihdah turned to the pale faced stranger, and placed her hands on his shoulders. “You, my dear, were going to express your deepest thoughts and fulfill your extensive desires,” - and to this I was curious at the time, uncertain to which Aihdah was speaking of. The next thing made me laugh, because I had heard the word before, and to me it was silly that these feelings were forbidden.

“*Beautiful,*” said the pale blue eyed blonde. “You look really great.”

A giddy laughter escaped my throat. I quickly tried to conceal myself, ducking further behind the sofa. It was of no use, I had been heard from the both of them; the weird looking stranger that provoked my mother to say obscure things, and Aihdah, who knew at once that I had left my quarters.

Even with her definitive knowledge, she questioned my presence aloud. “Enniah, is that you? Enniah?” she asked again. It was mere seconds before she was standing before me, our guest alarmed, and my mother angered. “Why are you awake, Enniah?” she whispered rashly.

“It is only eight, I was reading.” I lied. I stood innocently from behind the couch, my lower half in the shadows.

Aihdah forced laughter. “She’s my youngest; she’s usually in bed by now,” she bantered to the stranger.

The man looked to her, hiding his puzzlement while the gears in his head were trying to piece things together.

Aihdah muttered sinfully, a word I did not recognize, and swayed with a moderate sort of shifting as if debating on more than one action. “You never listen anymore.” She finally releases.

“I do.” I reasoned in my head. She was kind of right, I didn’t believe her, and therefore I didn’t listen. I wanted to experience the world with my own eyes, but I obeyed her more often than not.

The man now spoke, and surprisingly Aihdah didn’t stop him. It kept me on edge, because this wasn’t permitted to speak, especially because I was sure he was a stranger just as much to Aihdah as he was to me. “It’s okay; I was just like her when I was little.” He added, breaking the angst in silence. “I think I misunderstood your predicament, I feel as though I am in the wrong place.”

“Enniah,” Aihdah blurted. “You mess everything up.” She stood over me. “Do you really want to *see*? Do you really need to understand why you are sheltered?” she shook a feeble fist out before me. The man behind her didn’t move, although I was sure he was uncomfortable.

I didn’t move. I was in trouble, I could tell by that tasteless tone in her voice.

“Come watch then,” her words followed.

“No,” I said.

The man laughed. “Just like me.” He shook his head, unaware of the severity of my actions. This made me chuckle, and I for whatever oblivious reason, I admired his action and noted it as charm.

She grabbed the man’s shoulders and pulled him towards the far hall but he resisted. Aihdah turned over her shoulder, “Come,” she voiced starkly to me.

The stranger seemed confused and lost again. “Wait a minute, where are we going?” He observed his surroundings, taking in the halls, the paintings, and the high ceilings, just like he had when he had first entered. “I don’t feel so right.”

Aihdah stopped before the single existing downstairs bedroom, and in that hallway Aihdah delayed. “You think I am *beautiful*, remember.” she said rehearsed.

“I do find you attractive.” The man answered. “Why do you rephrase it?” He pressed fingers to his eyes as if he had grown fatigued, then he removed them. His eyes were bright blue, as blue as the fountains when the sun rose over the snow-covered courtyard. He was actually attractive not for my sake, but this time things seemed different. He was younger.

Aihdah sighed, and I could even hear that from the kitchen. “ENNIAH!” she shrieked.

I went to her at that moment, terrified to see what Aihdah was truly capable of. I was halfway there when she looked to the man again. “Please, can you go in and make yourself at home,” my mother gave the charming blonde haired male one last powerful glance, and closed the door behind him. She backed against the closed door as if something truly evil was soon to occur, silently frightened of the future she may have foreseen. She was tense and as if she had lost her wits and the positive outcome that was intended to come was suddenly tainted. I cringed, afraid that she may purge my mind. She didn’t, for the first time Aihdah seemed to conjure desires to physically injure me instead.

“I have no energy Enniah, I am completely tapped. You are just too indolent. I was told to watch over you and give the best shelter I could offer, but you give me no choice. She would never admit to who this person was that instructed her to protect me or raise me in the extent that she had. Tonight, you must learn the mortal way.”

I felt a cold tingle in my nerves, something begging me to cower away and hide. But I didn’t, this sort of fear was petrifying. This was unfamiliar and dangerous. Aihdah raised an aged hand high in the air, my heart stopping, and she swung. I closed my eyes, and then she must have held the blow. She hit me just hard enough to send tingles across the left side of my face, and when I opened my eyes she turned away discouraged, and for once I was sorry I hadn’t listened. For once she showed some sort of pain that was beyond her control. Even though I had never witnessed this, this strange new occurrence that seemed so foreign to me, it seemed that there were things inhumane about my step mother that she required to feel well, something perhaps she needed to survive.

“Undress.” Aihdah said.

I looked at her peculiarly almost with a laugh, but tonight the essence of the estate felt cold and serious and she did not smile back. Aihdah wasn’t always like this, despite strict rules,

she was very happy go lucky and a common stranger to some of my sisters. Weird, they would say, and abnormal. Tonight she was a lot like them, composure, command presence, sincerity, and the passion of control.

She glared at me, my face still stinging. “You can’t be serious?” I said, almost like my sister who visits from England.

She didn’t say a word; she raised her hand again and clenched her jaw. I backed away for a moment and suddenly grew self-conscious of my appearance, and curious as to why my step mother wanted me to strip naked. I started with my corset; I hated that thing anyway. She watched me for a moment before turning her dark eyes beside me.

“This is ridiculous.” I said. “Out of all the bizarre things you make me do, this tops the list.”

“Oh cut it out already. You are becoming a chore. Enniah, if you hadn’t been so sheltered this wouldn’t seem strange to you at all. It is my fault partly, as you have been here for quite some time. But this is ridiculous, I had higher expectations from you.” Her tan skin retained the warm season’s light, and it never seemed to fade. Her eyes were coarse, somehow more than before. “This is only weird because I hid it from you, if you knew it was how we survive, then you would be willing. You’re a little young for this, but exposure will make this normal for you, and later it will come easier.”

“What are you going to have me do?”

“I need you to invigorate this young man, see I am not as youthful as you.”

“I don’t understand?” I questioned gazing into her closer face. She blinked a few times as if pondering if this was suitable. Blondie had said she was beautiful, a dozen times. Something clicked in my brain then, but I was too scared to admit it.

“You must learn. If you wish to control fate, if you wish to see into the future, we need high energy, spiritual energy. There are many ways to get it, but this, Enniah, is one of the easiest ways.”

“I don’t have any interest in fate, mother.”

“You do, and you’re the only one in our family who believes in controlling your future, and your fate; however naively, you have passion. That passion is what invigorates the soul.” I made eye contact with anything but Aihdah.

“What does *this*, have to do with this?” I gestured to my dropped corset and untied lace and drafted see through under garment. My chest was unlike my mothers, hers was well pronounced and arching like the curves of her hips. I felt little beside her in every way. “If I control my future, which I say I do, then I can say no.” I lightly smiled. “I don’t have to do this.”

“You don’t even know what it is yet Enniah.” My mother retorts.

“It scares me, this is weird.” I admitted. “You don’t usually act like this.”

“It is only unfamiliar; you don’t even know what you are going to feel.”

“I am trusting my intuition. You taught me to learn from that.”

“Read deeper then, learn to trust the hand that feeds you. I am fading Enniah, and if I am not going to make it, you must live on. I failed to anticipate the coming events on time, I am not strong enough to provide a way out that doesn’t involve some kind of sacrifice!”

This changed everything. I looked to her more abruptly now, I studied her, and I looked for weakness and fatigue. I saw nothing I could relate too, until I saw her frown. I only understood fading, because this was taught to me. The strongest of our family would become masters of lore and of soul, and what we were capable of through means of our souls, were superior to those who lived outside Marter territories. A fading soul meant Aihdah was struggling, in another sort of way.

“What do you mean fading?” I asked. Our mother could only teach us so much; I knew there was so much more that I didn’t understand, because if you couldn’t understand something, it only meant that you didn’t have all the pieces of the puzzle and this Aihdah taught us quite well.

“Well, I will not be able to protect our family from perturbing spirits. I do not have any spiritual energy to resist the things that are coming.”

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

I had only seen a demon a few times, maybe only twice. That's just it, with demons it's hard to know if they are truly there, unless they physically interact with your soul. The first time I was a child, younger than this point in time. The other was in a dream, a very real dream, this is in fact where most people see demons, and when you wake physically impaired because of their presence you can be assured they are real. Usually a person is left unable to move, consciously debating whether their experience is real, or a dream. This is when they feed, in the dream state, the point where you are furthest from your identity, and closest to the ether.

They are actually inter-dimensional beings, spirits rather, that may be intelligent or unevolved who are unbound. They can travel between the physical and metaphysical and consume raw energy that traverses through the air, and from your thoughts. The physical responses with emotion secrete these energies, almost like the power one feels when listening to their favorite song.

I hadn't seen a spirit in years, I wasn't actually sure if I believed in the hypothetical dangers of Marter territory anymore.

"They are always here Enniah," Aihdah spoke, watching me as if reading my thoughts. "When I am unwell, like I am now, you will see them. It is our family curse; you must never forget."

I looked around a little spooked. What exactly caused her to be unwell? My eyes wandered from the dark hall, down along the cold floors, and into the territory above where I yearned for the faintest light amid a single hanging lantern. I was just at the point where you could hear the ringing in your ears, when suddenly your nervous system believes in the danger present heightening your survival senses, but not so scared I couldn't move. My family speaks of a curse we cannot escape, as if something fate has called onto us.

"What do I have to do?" I asked.

"We need to make him happy."

Chills traveled from my back deep through my center and into my chest and legs. I buckled. My mother tendered her hair, then mine, nodded to me in reassurance and opened the door. I was now cold and shirtless. I covered myself and wandered in.

“Hello,” Aihdah said lively. I stepped in beside her; the man was sitting on the bed located in the center of the room. I don’t know why I covered myself. I’d never seen my mother do that previously in front of me, and none of my sisters ever had after showering. If the old stone floors and foundation weren’t so cold, I’d believe our entire family would live clothing optional. This was a stranger though. I didn’t know what he expected, or what I was supposed to do, and for some reason I knew being naked was a part of this equation.

He was sitting at the end of the master bed in a fairly large room, but it wasn’t him I noticed, though most of him was covered in the bed sheets. The bed was raveled in *red* sheets matching the curtains and the draperies. A deep crimson, I was stunned at this, I had never been in the downstairs master bedroom, and my jaw hung loosely far too attentive to my surroundings to realize myself and my actions. The comforter was the same wild patters of gold, reds and yellows. I studied the walls with my eyes, half pointing in my admiration; no they couldn’t all be the exact same I thought, but they were with the exception of the ceiling’s height and a fireplace that had been lit at the opposing end of the room. Across from that was a large stained glass window with similar colors.

“They are the same.” I said, the quietness permitted a small echo.

Aihdah, although slightly puzzled at first nodded. I was sure she knew what I meant.

“The walls, the bed, *everything*.” I spoke heavily. It’s not that this should seem unusual for rooms to match, but I was the one who chose my colors. Those awful colors. She had asked me prior to moving into my room fully to pick something I liked, and a week later she had the tradesmen recondition the room to my liking. Small droplets of color neatly organized in rows with names beside them was the limit of my options, and they seemed few at the time. My liking was odd, to everyone. *Pink and red do not complement each other the people would say*. The colors do not accentuate one another.

Red was streamed between pink palace like walls much like draped wavering ribbons, taller, but very similar. For some reason this put me at ease and I was now interested in why Aihdah had created a room such as this, and which room came first? Mine or hers? Did Aihdah see something in me; did she secretly cherish what I felt for?

“Enniah,” My mother called to me, to regain my attention. She played a smile and a wince.

I looked to her, probably with too much appreciation, because her wince shined stronger. I corrected myself; I stood straight and comprehensive, ready for an explanation. Aihdah looked to our guest, something I had almost forgotten. Clinton was perched on the bed, legs crossed, and an emptiness still circling above him with his shadow dancing on the wall, however he looked comfortable and Aihdah looked to have been massaging him.

I believe he would have said something in protest, but my step mother put a hand to his mouth and in-between his pale lips.

“What do I do, I am not sure if I still should do this?” I asked looking away shyly. I’d never seen such a difference between a boy and girl, and it wasn’t quite how I imagined it. I had read about the differences in books but only that they existed, the parts that explained their purpose had been torn out in much of the available literature. Aihdah didn’t tell me to do anything; she just gave me a signal to wait.

She never moved though, but my mother’s face became darker and the room seemed to become still to me. Aihdah lifted herself from him, and she placed her hands on both sides. For some reason I had become nervous and I kept looking at him. His face was afraid; like I was of the dark. “Clinton,” I said. “Don’t judge me; I just hope I do not hurt you.” I sighed, and my mother looked startled by this, and before Clinton could say anything to match his disgruntled and displeased face, my step mother placed me down in a squatting position beside him as I refused to sit like a lady. “Relax. It’s important that you are comfortable.”

“I can’t do this.”

She nodded and whispered, “Enniah, this won’t work then. The only other way for this to work, for me to regain my power, is for there to be a great sacrifice.”

I looked to Aihdah and then to Clinton. It seemed that everything was moving so fast, and yet in slow motion, every detail on Aihdah’s smooth face was a difficult read. Clinton, in his sorry state gave away more concern for the next moments than Aihdah seemingly could while fully aware of the situation.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

Clinton shook his head, almost inherently, slowly but with a deep kind of fear between his very obvious blanks where all emotions had left him, he seemed aloof like he was daydreaming between moments of context.

There was a knocking on the window. Like a branch or something that seemed to wake Clinton out of his trance. He stood from the bed sheets.

“What am I doing here?” Clinton mumbled slowly falling forward.

“Re-lax.” Aihdah spoke in alarming undertone. Clinton locked in her eyes, and he into hers. He resumed into his daydreams.

Aihdah looked to me and signaled to the divided stained glass window that glowed from the embers on the opposing side.

“What would you like me to do?” she whispered ever so quietly, as if not to startle him from his reverie. I looked at him, his pale blue eyes, there was something about him that made my eyes pull towards him, but at the same time my insides repelled against this desire and I think it was because I wasn't sure of his true intentions or my own.

Again the window knocking returned, it spooked Aihdah even, and nothing spooked her. The window vibrated with intermittent tremors that seemed strong enough to break the glass if left to continue.

“Enniah we are going to fail, there is nothing we can do, the horrors of failure you could never imagine. Terrible things are going to happen tonight if we fail, I cannot believe that the possibility is imminent. We can't, there is so much potential here.”

“You're creeping me out.” I responded coldly.

Annoyed, Aihdah jumped to the window as if to try and see through the thickness of the stained glass window and its opaque cloudy colors of yellow and reds. It looked like an abstract star of sorts. And then the window cracked.

Now I jumped. What was happening, this occurrence sent chills down my spine.

Clinton murmured something, “not me, not I.” I think he said.

Aihdah thrust her hand towards the window shelf, trying to move it to the side to investigate, and Clinton rose from the bed.

“Stop him from leaving Enniah, comfort him, just say everything will be okay and look into his eyes! Hold his hands if you have to.”

“No way, I am not holding his hands!” I replied staring at his awkwardness that appeared to be waking again.

“Do it!” She whispered harshly.

I stared into his eyes on the bed, his deep blue eyes that swayed in the firelight, so gentle when he is not fully aware of himself. “Clinton everything will be okay.” I said.

“With more passion,” Aihdah suggested.

He looked at me in a funny way. I reached out and grabbed for his hands. They were so warm, surprisingly. He smiled instantly. It was better this way I suppose. I had eye contact now, and I looked at him and said again, “everything will be okay.”

He seemed comforted, and he smiled deeply into my eyes before nodding. He tried to stand for a moment, and his sheets fell to the floor. Aihdah’s body language changed in form that clearly showed disapproval, so I pushed him lightly from his dazed state and he fell back onto the bed in a sitting position.

“Well he is clearly happy to have heard *you* say it.” Aihdah remarked. Her eyes veered towards his significance in where boys and girls differ. I looked towards the troubling window.

Knack knack

This old window! Aihdah grumbled while fighting its antiquity. The glass window was then thrown aside in its hideaway before anymore knocking could presume, and Paladete came rushing through. Her figure glowed from the moonlight beyond her, her feathers lighting up like lit lamp shades.

I stared at her awestruck. She seemed different, hooing wildly. I was aghast, first of many things hit me and I’m not sure as to why this order occurred. First, did my owl come looking for

me? And second I took note that Aihdah would assume that I had released my recently gifted owl into the night, something that in darker times gave me so much joy.

“I- I can explain...”

“Don’t bother! It’s a gift! We can sacrifice her! We don’t have much time.”

My mouth extensively opened in a horrified manner I’m sure I had never considered ever in my life.

The owl screeched very loudly and its wings feverishly flapped about the room carrying the bulk of its body scappily behind. Clinton was startled at this as well chasing the shadows of the owl on the walls with his eyes.

Clinton presumed to stand, and that’s when Aihdah reached out with her hand into the empty air, and two large invisible chains shot out in impressive speed, hooking him to the bed. They were transparent, ghastly in a way, but it was clear that Clinton could not see them.

“Now that we have been presented with Paladete, the last of my energy will be used to guarantee that this plan works. The window withdrew from its hideaway, and slammed shut without a person’s aid.

My breathing was heavy, my chest lifting in and out over my organs. I was still in shock.

“You... You can’t.” I said shakily.

“I can’t what? This is perfect, your owl, I know you have grown fond of her, but you allowed her to leave. Maybe this is meant to happen? What other sign could there be? I mean what are the odds that she would come knocking at the door. You don’t want to participate in body chemistry, and that gives a lot of energy with the right person possibly even more so, but a sacrifice of something you care deeply about, giving it up towards a greater cause...” Her face was radiant, her seductive smile toothy, she hardly smiled like this. The fullness of green in her eyes were almost glowing. “It is something truly powerful.”

I was shaking my head, no, no. “I like Palatee very much.” She had landed on a desk lamp a few feet away from all of us, both the highest comfortable point and the furthest point from all of our reach. She twisted her neck to observe each of us all before wooing a single chirp.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

“The energy released from a sacrifice, love, my gosh it’s the most powerful of all.” Aihdah smiled again, it was as if the occurrence couldn’t have happened any other way in her mind. It meant something.

“Please not Paladete.” I said, the thoughts soon bringing me to whimper.

“Agh, its going to be so difficult, I am so fond of you Enniah. It hurts me to give you any pain, more than you can imagine. I won’t do that to you.”

I looked to her peculiarly. I know it was odd the way I looked at her. Even Clinton, through all of his scared and terrified recent faces.

“You mean you won’t?”

“I’m not going to do this, I’m older, I’ve seen so many things, I have never cared for a human like I have for you. I would rather sacrifice myself, than to see you in pain. I will let the entire world fail, destiny will be uprooted, and the entire universe will change because I won’t do what is necessary for the larger plan. If I am going to die, and if there is no way out for us, which there may not be, I refuse to allow you to question my loyalty to you.”

“I don’t understand.” I admitted.

“I just know you can’t see the larger picture, and if we aren’t going to make it, I’d rather your last memories of me be something other than something...”

“It’s okay, ill do the other thing.” I said, “Anything but Paladete.”

“I won’t make you do that either,” she admitted.

“Why not? I think I understand the gist of it.” I grabbed Clintons hands. “He smiles when he looks at me.”

His big blue eyes looked up at me. I touched his face, wondering what made men grow hair on their face, and his was short along the chin, it sort of shaped it a certain way, like his face was an art of symmetry that woman didn’t have. It was prickly against my hands. It all felt kind of funny, a new sensation that caused tingles to spread from my lower half.

“Yes, you learn quickly, faster than any human I’ve seen before you. Faster than all your peers, who snickered and feared you. It’s not about the curriculum either. My teaching is better

and evolved, my abilities are greater, my understanding of how everything works helped a lot, but you have something measurable in your being. I am humbled that in one life you are so grand, you are my prize, and it weakens me. I care about what you think of me, it is terrifying.

“Don’t you care about what everyone thinks?” I asked.

“No. None.” She tilts her head to the side. “Well except you.”

“You really think I am smart?”

She nodded.

“I only care about the opinions of people in my life that I care about and who make my life grander. That’s how you should be too.”

I smiled, I felt powerful, and adored in a way. “So what is there to do then? Is it as obvious as all that?” I pointed sitting further on the bed.

“Yeah, but I won’t let you. Here work with me, massage him and ill help and try to do the rest. I will control his desires. I will not submit something so sacred for the purpose of my survival, if it means you think less of me.”

Paladete hooted.

Aihdah tossed the dress that was at her feet against the wall, and it masked the room in further darkness.

—

She never told me that it would hurt, and I never fully understood what we were doing to the full extent.

She even knew it would hurt for me, and still she didn’t explain this. I bled, where occasionally it did. Clinton abruptly stopped, and he gasped, and that’s when I felt Clinton push me off of him. I flew, he was pretty strong, and his efforts had lifted me through the air and onto the floor.

“Get the hell off of me you wench! Disgusting the lot of you!” He roared. “Where am I!”

Pallate had launched herself about the room flapping madly with lust to leave. The white of her feathers scattering around in the confined room, it felt symbolic in the chaotic moment, I'm not sure how she would have banked her turns if not for the openness of it all.

I started to cry, naively at first, because of rejection for some reason I felt like I had failed at something and this was not at all what I was expecting. Then it was because of pain and confusion. The maroon Japanese flower carpeting was wet with many reds, colors were now darkened and tainted. I sat on my palms and knees, still partially dressed, not realizing how silly and ugly I must have looked. I really hurt my wrist falling on the floor without knowing I was to be flung out with hatred. My corset was hanging around my mid-section with my bundled rag-of-a-shirt holding it all together on my waist, I didn't even remember the clothing I had on, as if bits and pieces of time were lost to me.

“What’s happening, why can’t I remember?!”

My mind hurt so badly.

I looked down and my long skirt that was bunched up around my feet like a lassoed rope to permit me from fleeing. I stood up against Clinton and he tried to move past me. With his hurried and desperate movements towards the door, he thrust me unto the ceremonial carpet.

“Why?!” I yelled.

Clinton answered. “It was an accident I’m trying to get out of here. I am so sorry this is happening to you, but you both are at fault here!”

Paladete launched herself between us both and turned hard and sharply.

I looked down, and tried to pull my skirt up. I didn't get to wear a dress, like Aihdah's, this was my first thought for rejection, because I was naive. I heard a loud clapping sound. Then suddenly I saw my mother fall beside me, nothing moved. Her cleavage painfully spread under her weight and legs crooked from the fall, her dress was dragged around her body as well. My eyes moved to view hers, but they were closed and damp, mascara ran like a diverged riverbed that was drying at the lowest peek. At this I whimpered some more, mostly because of pain, and partly because this was her fault and she never believed in me prior to this point in time. My intuition was right; I didn't want this.

I turned with my hurting wrists. I pulled my dress up so I could move. I pulled everything that was bloody off of me, mostly just top layers, and I concealed myself, but then before me was a hand.

“You must know this is wrong...” Clinton said. “You don’t have to do this.”

“YOU HIT MY MOTHER!” I cried outraged. “She’s not breathing!” I finally found the courage to speak.

“I only pushed her.” He said calmly. “I didn’t want to do this. She is to blame, and she will be fine. But you should run, you have to save yourself from this madness.” Clinton spoke quickly.

I looked to her. She wasn’t breathing. Her face was piled against the floor; I reached out to adjust it, her eyes white and rolled back. “You did this.” I sobbed. The heat from the fires dried the tears before my lightly dimpled chin, the rest I dried with my fingers.

Aihdah’s eyes flickered. “Enniah, he is right for himself, you cannot let him see the bigger picture. He needs to forget, and I am weak. I cannot alter what he now knows, I was given little energy for our poor attempt. I am sorry for bringing you into this, but it was the only way. All is lost, however this was meant to happen. I couldn’t see it until now.”

“Bullshit Mom! You are fading and it’s because this man pushed you!” I looked to Clinton; he was taken aback, frightened even.

“Don’t be silly Enniah; you know why I am weak. Find it within yourself.”

“I DON’T BELIEVE IN FATE AND DESTINY!” I yelled. “THERE IS ONLY CHOICE! THE PLANETS DO NOT MATTER; A PERSON CANNOT BE TAKEN WITHOUT THEIR MORTAL ACTIONS BEING TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION!”

In that moment Aihdah’s eyes looked quite sad.

The fires at both ends of the building erupted and then dwindled within that very second, and in the next, the light was extinguished other than the red hot coals which had left our faces with an eerie red glow. Clinton’s large eye brows looked thicker in the dark and his longer hair

in the front caused the shadow's to confine his face further covering everything except for the lower measure of his lips.

We all looked around, my insides were screaming, my anger was infallible. Clinton presumed to dress himself and tidy his vest, hurried and disgusted. A crimson tassel caught my attention as it fell through the air. It graced my shoulder on the way down. I turned to observe where it had fallen from, I wasn't sure if it was causation to Paladete's panicked flight, or if it was the surge of heat that emulated from the fireplace just before.

Then I saw it, it must have been hidden from the middle most drapery. It was a magnificent silver sword, with a unique dial in the handle. It looked to be very significant poised high on the wall and it intermittently glistened in the light of the dying embers.

He wandered to the wall where the sword was mounted high with two wooden racks. He pulled the heavy sword from the rack and treaded lightly on his feet.

"Hey that sword, it's not yours." I said. "Many of the older things here are cursed, you should put it back."

Aihdah grimaced, a weird smile, strong and passionate. Her face neither confirmed my suspicion or denied it. Then she spoke. "The energy within you flows beyond this place. Such beautiful colors, I only wish it were not anger." She spoke directly to me, calmly, and like the fires that were drowning.

Clinton stood holding his sword out before us. He turned and raised himself onto the bed defensively as if we were frightening to him. "You know this is wrong deep down, don't you lady? I am sorry I didn't mean to hurt you; I didn't mean for any of this. I don't know how I got here..." suddenly his exhausted sentence was cut short, "I can't move." Clinton spoke quickly, until the last word, and then he froze like ice. His mouth closed, his eyes still glaring at me with honesty. Was he telling the truth? He seemed so different now, was it because what we were doing was *wrong*? I looked to Aihdah.

"It isn't true, Enniah!" she glanced to the petrified man on the bed and then back to me. I watched the sword fall beside him. "We had to do this. You may come to regret it through other

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people's exposure, but for us we had too." She rolled over to her back and attempted to sit, she was alarmed of Clinton's composure, and so her eyes filled with discern.

I looked at his face, every muscle frozen, his arms too, and his back stiff and upright and disheveled. He fell like stone, the weakness in the bed giving out under the offset in balance.

Then suddenly I was alert, I had seen this before, I had felt it myself, a demon was amongst us. I stood at the ready with rehearsed grace. "IF YOU ARE NOT OF THE HIGHEST GOD YOU MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE AT ONCE!" I pointed to Blondie.

Chapter 6

Demons

Aihdah glanced up at me, her eyes flickering for identity. “I’m physically weak Enniah, you must remember that a path for a person is only familiar to them, and that in order to judge another person’s actions you must see the larger picture.”

I nodded numbly. I had previously thought that Clinton was being the target of the spirit, but this perhaps changed.

“If I am ever truly gone, listen for me I will seek you out.” Aihdah attempted to stand, wavering to her feet, with her black iron clad dress also partially torn. He is the weakest of the three of us, the low born spirits crossing from other worlds will chase him first Her facial expression showed signs of deception and sudden confidence. What was happening to Aihdah?

“What are you doing?” I asked, her sudden composure threatening.

Clinton grabbed my hand, no longer consumed by the controlling fog. My blessing must have worked. “We should go. Your mother is unwell, and you need assistance. Whatever was holding me has let go, but I do not know for how long.” In his other hand he carried the strident silver blade; the spirit had surrendered to his soul.

For whatever reason I suddenly trusted the opinion of this young man, and I decided that perhaps I still wasn’t getting something. The bigger picture perhaps. We wandered after Aihdah, who was murmuring unfamiliar words and language I was sure she deemed sacred, and to it belonged the highest of Marters. “Do you know what’s happening to her?” I asked Blondie, suddenly curious that perhaps he knew more than I did in the situation, and I needed to reevaluate all.

He answered quite simply, “No.”

“Your answer is so plain.” I said with false hope similarly, my mother’s rants continuing in the background.

“I don’t have a clue as to what is going on, who you are, or your mother. I have a feeling you are one thing, but I do not want to be punished for saying it.”

“That’s silly, why would you be punished?”

“You may find the term... insulting.”

“Whores?” I questioned, and to this he did not reply instantly, but it seemed to make him ponder the possibility. I understood the term through gossip and summer blather from my sisters. Suddenly, I realized how derogatory the term was.

He paused briefly again almost as if trying to hide a sense of humor, “No, you’re witches,” he said with his blue eyes lighting up under his unkempt hair.

“What is *witches*?”

Then he laughed uncomfortably. “I think it is best we get out of here before speaking nonsense.”

I nodded. “Are you alright?” I asked.

“I am fine; just disfigured. You should be much more concerned than I am. Lead the way and please make haste.”

I quickened my step to pass my dazed mother, but she rejected the idea with an angry disheveled stare. She then led us more quickly down a familiar dark hall, but when she paused in this alleyway of old paintings and stone gargoyles, she turned to us, her pupils larger than the occasion.

“Aihdah, we should let Clinton go!” I pointed. “He can leave as if nothing ever happened.” One of the side entrances to the homestead were in our sights. It used to be for house maids, a tradition that has long been abandoned.

“I’m fighting the demon!” cried Aihdah’s voice abruptly. “I’ve lost.”

Clinton and I watched her own long fingers extend around her *own* neck.

I stood back away from her and Clinton. “IF YOU ARE NOT OF THE HIGHEST GOD LEAVE AT ONCE!” I shouted, mimicking the one time I had witnessed Aihdah banish a spirit. Nothing happened immediately. “IF YOU ARE NOT OF OUR FAMILY YOU ARE BANNISHED FROM THIS ESTATE NEVER TO RETURN!”

Aihdah leapt through the air, grabbing for Clinton’s neck, at which I panicked. He sidestepped from her path and she fell roughly to the floor. Clinton raised the jewel encrusted handle far above his head, waiting for another strike, pausing for her life, giving her more than she had ever redeemed, but then did nothing when noticing my exchange of concern.

Aihdah turned. “Don’t!” she cried. “Bring me to the rehabilitation center.” Her voice was burdened, crackling, fusing.

“Why are we helping her?” Clinton asked. He looked at me, my mother looked at him, and I looked to my mother. We all stared for several moments, a stranger looking out through my step mother’s eyes.

“I can tell your relationship with her is unsteady. You call her by her name one moment, and other times you contend to calling her your mother.”

“It isn’t like that.” I said.

“You were forced into this situation; your mother is *sick*.”

“I know; we really need to help her.” I answered.

“Not sick like that, like really *sick*, my god you’re brainwashed.” Blondie then gasped exasperated.

“Careful with the god’s name... it’s a rule of our house.” I frowned.

“Look, I am leaving, and if you try to stop me I will use this against you.” His attention shadowed the tip of the sword. “If you want to save yourself, you will come with me.”

He turned and hurried towards the main entrance, abandoning me.

Don’t go.

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My words cried out in my head. I am lost and confused. Pain still seeps where I was hurt, I am cold, and my mind is arching like compressed glass, spreading emotion in every direction with unforgiving angles and lines. I'm challenging every word, every detail. What is happening to me? What is my life, but a lie?

“Please...” I watched his shadows crisscross beneath the hanging lanterns as he departed. He slowed nearing the far depths of the hall. My eyes were watering now coming in and out of focus. “I need your help,” I said quietly, “if something happens I could lose her and so much more. At least let me know the truth, let me learn from my mistakes.”

“You have no reason to care for this woman.” Blondie pointed to the black of Aihdah’s eyes far beyond him, beside me cradling towards the floor. She was fading fast, to the extensive reach of another’s anticipated forthcoming.

I cried, and for the first time felt real anger, unguarded and undirected. “NO! YOU HAVE TO HELP ME!” I belched. “THIS ISN’T FAIR!”

Aihdah was kicking and squirming on the floor beside me, her eyes almost fully swallowed by blackness, it was terrifying.

To the next occurrence I was surprised. His voice was soft, and memorable. “You’re different inside Enniah, different than her, don’t let what you don’t know keep you locked in this awry condition.”

“What does that even mean?” I questioned still distant in my favoring of him.

He looked at me pitifully, “You really want me to help save her?”

“YES!” I cried, my yell echoing down to him. “I’ll do anything!”

I had no idea what Aihdah used this room for. I knew it was off limits to everyone who had not completed a number of trials. There was something so secretive to this room, there were usually hired guards blocking the doors, but still this is where she wanted to go. My sisters and I had reasoned that it held some sort of fancy magic, or even a powerful weapon. I was never allowed, even just to see.

We traveled further downstairs to the lowest level, both Clinton and I holding my step mother, her weight draining us physically. “Why are we doing this?” he asked aloud casually as if there were reason not to.

“We can bring my mother back I suppose.”

We approached the door and my mother fought to escape my arms. I relieved her, cautious to her consciousness and awareness. This steel door was locked with numerous contraptions, all of which were crafted from precious metals. She entered combinations by turning gears and cogs that extended out of the doors plate mail, a protective exoskeleton, large enough for a giant. The door upheaved, and slid on a cast iron guide escaping our sights behind the 18th century untouched original stone walls. In the middle of the floor a rat quickly scampered from the light beyond our door, and my mother reached along the sides of the shadowed wall and activated the lanterns above. The illumination method seemed both futuristic and ancient, there was a flammable substance along the high receding walls, a main wick was lit through the striking of abrasive stone, and fire traveled along the height of the walls like magic.

Clinton was amazed at this, he stood stunned and alarmed, and I had too because this room was untouched by modern man except for those permitted by Aihdah. It held a higher feeling, a gateway to something far away. I could feel the energy all around me; I glanced to cathedral ceiling and into the abyss.

“Bring me to the bed Enniah!”

There was an old wooden rack in the far side of the room, the bed I believed Aihdah was referring to, amongst the clutter of secretive chemistry, aged books, half eaten candles and a single telescope. I went to my mother to help, but something had taken her. She fell and I dived to catch her. She dropped in my arms, her eyes closed, and her vibrancy cold.

She reached for my throat. My air was suddenly salvaged, traded for pain and frozen fingers. Another voice raised from her chest, deeper, the peeks of resonance far apart. I watched her eyes change while Clinton stuck the sword between her shoulder plates, pushing through the satin lace and into her skin. He did not plunge, however he graced her layers. The long blade had extended deep from my peripherals, the two-inch heavy metal inches from my nose; I could lick his wrist, that’s how close this man was when he set apart my mother with his blade. I could not

speak, I could not cry for the fear of her death, and I could not stop him for my life was at her verdict.

My mother taught me to see, to look further than what physically met the eye. There was something there, I knew it, Aihdah knew it, and even Clinton knew it. How though, how could I control it? I had to believe, I had to know, and I had to express my vision in the ether and in my mind.

“Don’t!”

Clinton raised the steel from her back, I was pleased that there were little signs of blood, several laces had been cut and her left shoulder blade fell bare when she turned from me.

There it came, the soul fighting for her body, a golden glow, a ball perhaps of shredded light, hazy outlines of something else, a foreign being depicted in how my mind saw this negative cold energy. It rose and lowered, its extremities different than ours, a single band of cytoplasm, a blue arm of rich over saturated color extending from someplace above, or perhaps even below. It was symmetry; that was how we saw things, through the patterns of life and death.

Somehow she beat it; she defended her territory on this plane one last time. Her eyes opened and she looked to me, this would be the impulse that time had slowed down, Clinton’s eyes closing and opening, the fire rolling across the wall in one interval, and the call of her fate all in this finite second, the law that even Marters could not escape.

Aihdah stood and instead of running for the table in the far corner where rats hid from this commotion, she retreated to the near wall where the light was strongest yet still. There were two levers on this wall, neither of which was familiar to me. They seemed connected only through purpose. Aihdah looked to these levers, placed a hand around each golden crest, both the size of a candle stick in diameter, and she pulled down with her weight, lifting one heel from the floor. The sound that came would never be forgotten.

“Do not wait for me, but if you must fight, do as I do, and remember your soul is strong Enniah.” The levers rested low and her head shook violently against the wall behind her. There was a large whining, a distant echo over stone and a release of some sort, from a hidden chamber

above. The unlit chandelier high overhead started to descend from the darkness towards Clinton and I.

“It is charging.” Aihdah spoke grimly, the sounds of cogs and gears turning, biting through rust and tampered steel. She lifted the levers back towards the sky.

“What is charging?” I asked.

Clinton watched the chandelier dropping, as it got closer, the more anxiety surrounded me. My insides felt cornered and the warmth retreating to my heart and to my core. Her eyes rolled back once more, and again she beat it. Aihdah pulled the levers down again. There was a shift and distinct sound of metal on metal. Aihdah jumped, and her figure was masked with tremors. She had a difficult time keeping her hands to the golden levers, as if the grasp was burning her or fusing her with electricity. This was very much what she wished to do, but in a moment she surrendered to the agony.

“What is it Aihdah?” I asked. “Do you need help?”

Clinton stepped in beside me, as if he were to protect me from her. She wandered towards us, closer like something had taken over from within, but she spoke fragilely, and most like the kindest mother she had ever been. “Please, the sword. I beg of you, I need to save us all.”

Chapter 7

The Secret of the Room

Clinton stepped forward. “Why should we trust you?!” he argued.

Gears and cogs. Time. Together they continued to pluck away at each other in the dismal background.

“Please.” She whined taking a knee. “The blade.” She closed her eyes tightly. “Enniah, you are a good being, much too bright for this house. If you can muse the possibility to escape, do it now!”

“What’s happening Aihdah!?” I looked to my mother in hysteria and disarray.

“She’s possessed, she is gone! We need to kill her Enniah. We can’t trust her!”

“She needs it for something!” I pointed to the extensive silver blade. I couldn’t figure out why.

“To cut out our throats Enniah! Have you gone mad!?” He pulled the weapon away the infinite details of his terror showing through the miniscule candlelight three paces away.

I looked to her. No it couldn’t be. She reached out for Clinton’s arm, begging and direct, but he was not for this, he as my mother would say, had another destiny and perhaps my mother didn’t control her fate after all. He pressed the tip of the unblemished sword into her gasping mouth. “Let there be no evil.” He said calmly. He pushed lightly, a bit further until her mouth bled repulsively.

“No!!!” I cried. I threw myself at Clinton pushing outwards and grasping for an unguarded area. I came in hard from the side with all my weight thrown to the floor. While tumbling on the painful stone we collided into a wooden table with weak legs within the room. It

crashed onto us, empty bottles and all, some with deathly aromas levitating. A few shattered, others clanked loudly and wandered about the hard floor. My mother's blood was pooling from her lips now. I pushed Clinton aggressively away uncertain of her limits. She didn't move, her body became naked in another form, her colors dull and palest, her lips seemed never to dance again.

"How could you!" I swore in the sacred language. I stood and kicked him in the stomach while he was down. I thought of breaking one of the bottles in anger, even across his unblemished face, but then I heard a voice, she was still there.

"Enniah... only take what your soul can handle." She kept eyeing the golden handles off the far wall as if they had a purpose.

What did she mean, why would she choose to teach me things now, so late? I stared at their grand placement in the grooves of the towering neatly cut stone. The concave arch behind both handles traveled through the design, all the way into the shadows of the cathedral ceiling. They were otherwise strangely placed handles made of what looked to be gold, calling attention to observers. They were otherwise ordinary and looked as if they could hold a single wash cloth each, or if someone had extended their reach, they could be for hands.

I turned over Clinton, who rolled on his side to observe the situation his hair unkempt and eyes staggering searching to retrieve information that was foreign to us. When he saw me look to her, and she still aware, he reached for the sword. I then reached too, only he was faster. He elbowed me in the cheek and I bit my lip. I quickly rolled away bruising my shoulders and nicking one on shattered glass. I stood, and part of my dress fell to the floor. I was becoming more and more vulnerable. I shook in discernment, hatred. Why would I ask a stranger for help? I didn't know on the surface of it. We were too different it had been a senseless idea.

"Take a deep breath."

"I shouldn't have trusted you." I said, studying his still unflawed face.

"I shouldn't have trusted you," he chortled back just an octave above me. He waved the sword out before him. He had the advantage, and it maddened me that we were something he could dispose of.

“Enniah, cut the rope,” Aihdah coughed. “Pull the levers...” she choked again and again, the internal pain filling her lungs. Clinton stood between Aihdah and me. I was a pest, a failure, a loser, and the words kept surfacing. I watched her face grow still behind the strange man, and the image swam into focus, her fist and a delicate silver chain. She, with her last attempt, tossed me the encompassed pendant, one that was like the one around my neck. It wasn’t however; it came clear to me now, mine would have to be a fake. I pulled Aihdah’s pendant into my hand and listened with all my content. Blondie just stared at me, and I listened for the winds of change. I closed my eyes and listened for all the colors of the wild, the living essence of the Maghonohey estate; I looked for angels, felt for a god, any god, any who might help us, and most of all I listened for Aihdah.

Aihdah fell; her last breath was more than a minute ago. To this, Blondie felt at ease, his assertion was lifted and he dropped the sword. No words came, only the echoing shrill from recoil of steel on stone. I never heard my step mother, and I believed she was gone.

Deception. That is what I felt. I would use it too, as it was used upon me so many times. I cried. Loosely, the very truth of sadness streamed from my eyes, the loss of someone I held dear to me. I over sourced, I allowed my inner emotions to let go, let me be who my soul wants to be in grief, apprehend the jar that surrounds me fully. I will lease my tears harder, I would allow this man to think that I could not support my own weight from my cries, and when he was caring, enough to grace the pathetic girl who could not please, could not win, could not save, and could not listen, then I would strike upon his neck, or upon my mother’s wishes, but until then I would lie in the shadows, literally and poetically begging for our salvation and warmer end.

He eventually came to me while I cried, and by then I had almost given up. I almost wanted the sword for myself, for my own heart, I’d rather die than to take the responsibility of my sisters’ mother, my mother, my foster parent from the darker heavens. His hand was cold; the only way I would ever see it. I pushed it lightly away, to hide my anger, to portray grief. I sobbed and made it as boisterous and heart felt as I envisioned it need be. I walked towards my commitment.

“Enniah! We had too.” He contested my cries.

“There was never a *we*, Clinton!” My eyes stopped. The hurt ended at once. I looked around for the sword; I should be standing above it, where had it gone?

“Looking for this?” Clinton revealed the silver toned blade. He played with it lightly under his weight, tip to beveled stone. “You are as sick as she is.” He muttered. “An actress of deceit and wickedness.”

How could I be so stupid. The blood moved through my veins. It had become thick and hot. He turned away from me, pondering the lowered chandelier of frosted candles now centered above our heads. He seemed curious to the purpose of its lowered metal frame like the mystery of an ancient boogie trap. It had suddenly seemed more noticeable now that the grinding cogs had stopped turning, and an eerie silence had permitted.

I steered away agitated, I needed to focus; we had switched places, I was where I had to be to fulfill my mother’s wishes. *The rope. The golden handles.* The chandelier had lowered to the furthest possible point. This had to be the rope. It was the only thing I could think of, so I grabbed for a piece of broken glass and held it fragily in my hands, Clinton unmoved, hardly concerned.

“You’re not going to attempt that on me are you...?” His eyes lit up, the colors around him twirled in my head, blues and reds, smears of anguish and deception. His eyes lifted and then they darkened. He fell partly, and steadied himself with the sword as if it were a walking stick, but then suddenly his demeanor changed and his notice became fearful.

“I don’t know what it is Enniah, but I cannot control myself! I wasn’t intending to hurt you, but something inside me does wish this onto you. I would run. I am unfortunately very capable- whatever it is, I cannot fight it like your mother.”

I looked at him puzzled for a moment, but decided against it. I wouldn’t harm him like he had my mother. He could be saved. “Try to fight it!” I called out.

He was gone though, much faster than I had anticipated, instead of limping with dysfunctional legs, he moved quite freely with hatred and black eyes. I backed to the center of the room and I climbed up onto one of the flimsy tables. It gave side to side, and in the last

moment I balanced myself and reached out for the rope and lowered cast iron chandelier. I couldn't quite reach it.

Blondie was at my feet, he swung the heavy sword without grace, to strike and to kill. It missed my right foot, digging into the wood of the flimsy table. I jabbed my raised leg onto it and forced the blade onto its side with Clinton's arm still extended to the handle. I kicked hard against his perverse face. He dropped backwards onto the floor taking the sword with him. He quickly stood again, lingering in consciousness. I went for it. I launched myself outwards and onto his shoulders, a wooden shoe anchored into each shoulder. I prepared for the jump, both hands reaching out extensively. I threw myself from Clinton onto the simple circular frame littered with ghost white candle sticks. It swung when my weight came to it, my right foot breaking a candle stick mounted on the outer ring. I turned to face my fears. Blondie lifted an arm and swung at me again.

"If you are the highest god, I beg for your absence! If you are not, I shall attempt to expunge you!"

The spirit did not surrender, and Blondie didn't break. I started working the glass against the grains of the heavy glazed rope. It was tough, a lot stiffer than I imagined. I was cutting into my skin deeper than the suspension cable. The room grew so cold I could see my breath; there were more than three spirits in this very room. I felt a pinch in my neck, my highest point of my spine, my mind froze and I watched the sword hurl towards my face. I let go of it all. I couldn't feel anything, not the cold, not the fear, not remorse, not even the sway that saved my life. The blade fell right between my legs and the wooden chandelier began to spin. I felt a burst of energy from deep within, and the tampered arm that had reached out for my soul was scorned. I breathed violently and quickly while grabbing for the suspension cable to catch my balance. What I did next was due to time, the need to survive, and the act of repulsion. I hurled my weight against the chandelier, enough to make it bounce and rock, and when Blondie swung again I had tilted the entire frame on its side. He swung so vehemently, the sword lifted me upwards with contact to the suspension cable. In the next moment, the weight of me, and the entire chandelier, and the reach of gravity pulled what remained of the woven cable and we fell at freefall.

The frame collided with Clinton below, soundly breaking a bone or two, and then further smashing into the fieldstone floor. During the sound of the crash, there was a heavy whining like

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a locomotive in the walls to either side, and during this, the cut suspension cable wound up into the ceiling in a shadowed rectangular crevice. Was this the charge Aihdah was referring to? I felt another spirit latch onto me, but I ran. It tried to penetrate, but it fell quickly off of me. Was this my fate, was this how Aihdah and I were going to fall. No, it wasn't. I was choosing my fate, not like this, not right now.

I ran to the two golden handles extending uniformly from the wall. I didn't know what was to come of this, so I thought curiously with the only second I had, grasping the soft precious metal in my sweaty palms, wondering of the wellness of Aihdah and Clinton, imagining the spirits floating around within the chamber. I pulled the handles back down like my mother had previously. That was it, never expected it like this. I died, on the spot.

Chapter 8

Transparent

I didn't really know what the golden levers were for, but they had generated something deep under my skin. It was like the palest drop of blood to a stranger's lips, I had become lost and afraid, unaware of the purpose of words, the deep encompassment of all, and of the ignorance of freedom. The whining sound that came before would never be forgotten, a precursor to murder. It would forever send a pulse revering up and down my spine, of course for this fear I would have to be alive. That's just it though, my thoughts carried as they normally would, only they were flawless, I never stuttered even in my mind while thinking three words at once. There were no mistakes here, even when all was dark.

The conclusion would be that I had died. I cannot confirm this. I am still breathing and somewhere I am still conscious. I couldn't be dead, but I can see myself transparently falling from where my body lay beneath the two golden handles that executed me. The recreation room is still partially lit from the wall mounted flames and it resided as it was; only now it was deprived of all spirits but one that seems to be feeding on me.

I prey it isn't a demon trying to salvage my body for its own bidding. Aihdah is still lifeless further from my side. I can see all of this through some sort of transparency, I am lying slightly below my body in spirit form, only instead of seeing the stone floors that should have blocked off all of the recreational room above, I can see through this as if it doesn't exist, although I know it does. The golden handles are still vibrant above the foreign spirit and my body, the mechanism that I understand now. An electrical current had passed through me; the result was a perfect tipping point where my soul would be removed from my body by force- a

point where most would die, but the body would be put in hibernation. All my inner components are still functioning, except for me, the connection to the inner self.

My head fell heavily beneath my lifeless corset completing the separation. Fear of this new place overrides me and I stare down to where I believe I would die again. Instead of falling through dirt and soil, just beneath the landing there was a hidden well, consumed in darkness. I fell slowly grabbing for my sparkling silver corset and skirt, hoping to catch the sleeping brown haired girl. I couldn't move at all, my soul was quite literally shocked.

I fell down the long well, its walls black like the depths beneath me. I hurled around, my stomach lifting, arms wailing. I hit nothing, even when I believed the walls were an arm's reach apart. There was a woman caroling lyrics from Miranda Lambert's house that built me.

"I thought that if I could touch this place, I'd feel it... This brokenness inside me might start healing. Out here it's like I am someone else- I thought that maybe I could find my-self.- If I could just come in, I swear I'll leave, I won't take nothing but a memory..." It was once a gift my mother had brought to me from the outside world, a CD. She called it a piece of modern technology. There was the sound of running water, a shower, and the drums of an old furnace kicking on. I could smell joy and lust; feel the hand of one of my sisters, one of who was asleep. I looked to the warm feeling in my hand, but there was nothing there.

A woman awoke, my sister, peculiarly from a standing position in her porcelain shower, or what I believed I was seeing. The imagery made only partial sense in relation from the world I had left. Things were missing, like the walls of the bathroom, the ceiling, the doorways and their doors, and even the logical placement of towel hangers and curtain rods. Even the toilet bowl was placed on a vertical angle that would have resulted in the containments draining to the floor. The missing things had been replaced by a steaming fog, as if the hot shower was an excuse for the peculiar absence of ordinary things. I looked to this very familiar woman standing just beyond the curtains in wonder, as if perhaps she was an illusion. She was smiling, like she had been expecting me. It was slightly eerie. My heart rate had increased since we had made eye contact. She had these perfect yellow brown eyes.

Her hair was soaked, dripping heavily through the fog and to the porcelain at her feet. She was the tallest of my sisters, and her skin was most like mine, bronze. Her eyes were awe-stricken amongst surprise of my placement with her, and her body was bare and naked.

“Katherine Story,” I called to my sister with an English accent, using both her first and middle name. It was a habit our family shared.

“I need to tell you something Enniah May,” she waved me forward. “I need to tell you a secret.” Her crystalized golden eyes were assuring, comforting despite the coldness and eerie feeling of it all. Some of the water from the vertical toilet began to spill.

This was my wise sister Katherine; anything she would tell me would be appreciated and accepted because she was fair and forgiving and I adored her for it. She was my favorite sister, the one I would always remember for believing in me. She gave me trust and I would always give her mine.

I nodded.

Something happened. A slight pain in my head called out to me. Something from inside was blocking her, an excruciating degree of awareness through body and soul. They were both being taken from me. Something from someplace else was trying to use me, a restless spirit, a false god, an imposter, a liar, a cheat.

This was not my sister; this was the spirit that had been feeding on me. This would teach me something I would never forget. For whatever reason, spirits could reach into your memory to take bits and pieces out, as the illusion I had just endured told me so. They could be used to gain your trust, and used again to steal from you.

I saw the real world once again, the dream world fading in and out, the place of which I died but my body would not let go of. This my mind hailed true, the physical world. I had been electrocuted through the purpose of self sacrifice. The two golden handles branded to the walls in the rehabilitation room were meant to die, but why? I saw the purpose vaguely now, Aihdah meant to fight, without her body, because she knew she wasn't strong enough to defend herself in the physical world. I looked to the corpse below my face, my resting bloody white skirt beneath a red and silver corset; still this image lingered through my eyes, both coming and going.

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What I had left of my mind was screaming and fighting for control. “I AM ENNIAH! I AM ENNIAH MAGHONOHEY! I AM ENNIAH MAGHONOHEY!!!” I shouted, very loudly in my brain. Even though I could still see my dress, the man I recalled for his hair, and the sword he had dropped, I couldn’t move. Not even my eyes I watched out from. I was forced to stare at those three things, while my brain continued to scream, “I AM ENNIAH MAGHONOHEY!”

Clinton’s eyes in shock and show, the still hard sword on beveled stone floors that appeared to be melting against the distant candle light. And there sits my body in fettered attire beside it all. Red besmirched against the canvas of my skin.

The spirit or demon had released my body once again, freeing my mind. I saw it rise off of what was laying there. It seemed to gain essence and material existence in the form of beads of light before suddenly dissipating. And that’s when I saw my life flash before my eyes, a small segment of it at least.

That day, when Marry and I decided to run. I lived it again, for the first time it seemed I could continue with the journals I was writing, because I was finally going to remember what happened that day after Marry punched Tonya in the face. Then I followed her, I wasn’t going to be beaten. I was going to remember right now.

I was returned to the time just after I had pulled the golden levers in the rehabilitation room. When a wandering spirit had been feeding on my sudden partial death. Where no time had passed since this moment at all, only the flashes of my previous experience before the tomb that day. All so clearly I remembered it all.

My heart raced, but still I was dead in the rehabilitation room. I realized this when I presumed to lift an arm. Nothing moved. I could move, but only from my body. Everything had lost color, at least in the way that I used to see, and now the brightest of light fell from above in giant streams of electricity, from where it hailed I did not know, but its meaning and energy observable and desired. This was the light people spoke of when they died. I looked at it, and

wondered why it was so far away, was there any way for me to get to it? For some reason at once, I knew that for others it was closer, but what did that mean? Was I being judged? The spirit that had given up on me, looking fixatedly, blank and miserable, not a human face, no something foreign to me like the colors of another world. It steered away quickly and retreated to the darkness. Behind me I felt something powerful, and so I looked with all my strength, my soul reaching out from my head, and there stood my mother like an angel. She did not look like angels from Christian faith nor of Roman depictions or even of Marter depictions; she was a halo of light that fell from overhead, her body and face just as I remembered, both the light and my physical memories of her portraying her visitation before me. This seemed to reflect all of the religious mythologies in one. Maybe they all knew something after all.

Aihdah's angelic figure reached out for me.

"Do not look to the light Enniah, we are not done with the physical realm. You must hurry, and stand."

I tried to do as my step mother told me, but I was weak and my soul did not want to stand. What was standing in this place I wondered... couldn't I just fly?" Realizing this belief, I lifted out from beneath my heavy body; my light was blue and transparent. I felt so cold, and also sad, I couldn't leave my body, my heart was still beating. "I'm still alive..." I said sadly. "Why is this happening?"

My mother's physical face flashed in warmth before me in a surprised way. "Bravo Enniah, you are already aware of the differences. It takes some much longer to adjust, but you must hurry."

I waited for an explanation, but then I had so many questions.

"Why is it that I know everything, I can give forgiveness for those I have despised, and for those who have wronged me, I understand now in all fairness why they may have felt one way when I felt another. The understanding it is growing."

"You see the grand connection Enniah, you see all paths, especially all your paths and all numerical connections, all possibilities and the elements of time and of nature. This is not entirely uncommon for wise people to see after life. It is unusual for someone so young."

“Besides you, I don’t see you, I don’t understand. I get so many things.” The conscious voice inside my head was making calculations, far reaches I could never have imagined I could have done while I was alive. But even with all this sudden knowledge and enlightenment, I didn’t understand Aihdah. I couldn’t see her, or picture the face I have come to know.

She stood puzzled by this, her fluorescent glow a white fog. “You can’t see me?” She questioned herself, searching for an answer. “You can’t see me because I am here, and you are here, you can only see what is dead and what is alive.”

“But we are dead.” I said wearily. I saw my body again and somehow saw Aihdah’s still bleeding from the mouth. I quickly hid the image because it caused grief and an unsettled stomach. She was right though, wasn’t she? My heart was still beating and I could still feel hers.

“We are not dead. We are not alive either. Perhaps you don’t understand. We are between.” Aihdah magnetically pulled me into a follow, pulling me away from the images of our bodies. “Come with me.”

“Can you see my face?” I asked during her escort.

She never answered me.

We didn’t go very far until she stopped. She led us to the end of the rehabilitation room and paused at the walls as if debating to pass through them. I could feel her desire and her purpose, but still she explained it to me.

“You must go to the furthest northwest room on the lowest level, and there you must trip a switch with electrical energy. It will purge our house of all spirits. You will understand it when you arrive. I must defend our bodies from the family curse-” and by that Aihdah was referring to the hundreds of angry spirits, another thing I never understood.

“Why do they hate us Aihdah, why do they want to stop us, end your reign of control, why do they want to stop you!?” I bombarded her. “Why do they refer to you as control, their thoughts, I feel them.” The message was new, something I had never witnessed before, the family curse. It wasn’t so much a curse as it was a very angry number of families and spirits who despised Aihdah so much as to deface the entirety of the earth of our name to ensure that none of her blood lives in the physical realm ever again.

They wanted to surrender her soul to the underworld. These were just thoughts I was imagining. That's all it is, isn't it? What would cause so much hate? There was something else I felt that made me flicker and Aihdah beside me too. A very powerful ebbing energy was heading our way. It was only seconds before these things would arrive, and the one most powerful, had arrived just now.

"What is that Aihdah?" I asked quietly. "Why can I feel something coming towards us?"

"Run Enniah. Run now, and do as I said." Aihdah spoke with absolution and calmness.

I did as she said. I floated through the three story walls and Aihdah turned and presumed to fight off what would come to claim our bodies. I did as my step mother said with haste, the darkness from one room to the next breaking across my forehead as I crossed through the stone and wood. At first I pushed through with my hands as if expecting some sort of resistance, but there was nothing, and in my surprise I cried out expecting some sort of feeling that never came. I was the wind and there were no obstacles, only force.

I reached the northern most room to the west side of the homestead, or at least to the surrounding corridors. For whatever reason my thoughts carried my attention above, through the ceilings and to the storm overhead of long tunneling lights, like arms of a giant octopus. The golden arches that appeared in a potent white flare, why was it so far away? I couldn't get used to seeing through walls to save myself from disgruntlement, and so I gathered my mother's wishes with a hush to my personal fulfillments.

I couldn't cross through this black marbled stone, but why not? I studied the walls, there wasn't a single crevice or loose piece bared enough for even a finger of my spirit to pass through. My frustration heightened when I could sense the urgency in time, it was a burning sensation of sand, drifting away through a small neck of a glass vile. I looked to this strange warmth; the thought of glass brought me to jewelry, and then suddenly to an unfound necklace my spirit wore. It couldn't be, I was wearing my mother's crystal pendent, and upon recognition she spoke to me.

"Enniah, you cannot enter the room with ease, you must answer with a type of code. You need to enter it digitally..."

“What the hell is *digitally!*” my head exploded, an angry radiance spewing all around. Why didn’t I even know the term, why is it that I understood every personal relationship and mistake I ever made, but my mother bears one foreign word and it corrupts my soul with unfamiliarity and peak aggravation.

I can’t tell you what you don’t already know Enniah, you must find it within yourself.”

Another fiery burst of exploded from my radiance, splashing through the surrounding area like a tidal wave. “I don’t understand!” I kicked at the granite wall with my feet. It was as if I was still in a human body, a pain in my toes.

“There are high levels of sodium sulfate in the walls; most metaphysical things cannot pass through its density and its compounds. There is a way to manipulate the lock because your spiritual existence slightly distorts the physical world. That planning was of a higher entity, and believe me some curse them for it. I’ve suddenly realized that you have been sheltered for too long. If we survive this, you are to attend un-Marter leisure.”

Sometimes my sisters and I would get really agitated with Aihdah’s teachings. We would constantly argue with her, but somehow I knew Aihdah thought I was the worst.

“WHY mom! Is it because of my English; is it not wordy enough for you?”

“Things you should know and things you shouldn’t know were very important when you were younger. Clearly there is a miss balance weighing heavily on the do not know side of things.”

“Always in the balance! If you would you just explain it to me, then perhaps I would understand!”

“I can’t explain it here.” Aihdah’s voice rang soft and forgiving, whatever she said next was transparent to me, “*%\$(34*HN#421\$DS#.”

“What?”

“See you wouldn’t understand because it is not a part of you.”

There was a sudden pause where neither of us could put a time on how long, because here I'm not sure if there was really any sort of time at all. Instead, there was only the memory of time and how it was vaguely important.

"Enniah don't shift from me!" Aihdah's eyes lit up. "I need you, I need your help, we all do. *He* is here."

It was as if suddenly I realized that perhaps I was dead, and that maybe I wasn't meant to go back, although it wasn't really a thought or a challenge in my curiosity, it was just sort of a feeling. I glanced at the impassible black marble slab. It pissed me off. I was dead I should be able to do whatever the hell I wanted.

"Enniah, please do not abandon me. Do this for Katherine. Do this for Mia, and Luna, Lexica, do this for Marter territory. You're not dead."

"I obviously have heard the word *digitally* when I was alive, or else it would be coming in all discombobulated. The word..." I called soundly, "I must have heard it somewhere, why don't I know it?" I sort of was asking Aihdah, and sort of asking myself and the entire universe.

"The word is *digital*, Enniah, I used *digitally* because I was using the word as if you were to pursue the act of completing a task with a particular method. The method was *digitally* and you heard the word through a conversation Katherine and I were having about outsiders and their technology."

"I don't understand." I sighed. "Can't you just teach me as if I were alive, by taking pieces of information I do understand, and reflecting upon them?"

Aihdah smiled. "You need a brain for that Enniah."

"I have a brain!"

"No, actually you don't," she laughed. "You're a ghost," she said with a small joy derived from my attention.

"Well then how am I speaking to you?" I asked bluntly, "and furthermore, how did I retain the word *digital*, off of the memory of the word *digitally*, I would need to calculate the

difference and realize that each word has a slightly different meaning...and for that mother, I would need a brain.”

Aihdah was silent for a second. “That is fascinating Enniah,” she spoke calmly, exhausted however and out of breath.

“Not a very good brain, but still, something.” I added with a secluded laughter. I felt as if I was pondering, or was I...Maybe I had heard the word digital during my life as well... I wasn’t quite sure. It was a good point though wasn’t it?

...

“Mom, are you there?” How could my mother sound as if she had lost her breath, if a ghost didn’t need oxygen?

I felt an immense pain in the back of my head, just off center. I saw myself still lying on the stone floor; it was a bitter reminder that I was still alive, and for some reason as if I was calculating with that brain, I had singed that conjecture in my neurons forever to last, even though the experience was external. I had a brain, and I was somehow still connected to it. What if I had died though? What would happen to a soul then? How was this even possible? Maybe that is what my mother was referring to as a spirit that had no living body left, no brain, and no heart. Perhaps then, when you are a wandering soul such as I was right now, you forever exist as yourself, for what one endured as a living person forever.

Forever, without a brain. Forced to be what you took in through your senses.

“Well, that’s what many believe is heaven and hell.”

I steered around to the powerful frequency of a timid angel. This translucent entity was transparent in many ways. It was a winged being, with a faceless top and a crown of glow, a middle segment, and a wider extended bottom that wisped away in an invisible breeze like a long summer dress. The wings were undefined, almost as if formed by the cross beams of radiance overhead. “In a sense they aren’t wholly wrong.”

The Faceless One

“Who are you, and why don’t you have a face.” I asked.

“I am your guide. Not everyone knows their guide,” the spirit said.

I looked at the snow angel that effortlessly hovered in the nakedness beside me. I remembered my task and the large marble box of a room I had to get into. “Where are you going to guide me?” Perhaps this superior would help me enter the room.

“I’m here to lead you to the light. Sometimes it’s difficult for souls to see.”

“Like me.” I said plainly, looking up. I didn’t see anything.

“Sometimes it is a glitch, sometimes souls are not worthy or not ready, and sometimes they don’t want to see it.”

“What happens if a soul is not ready? Like me. I think I want to live.”

“You think you want to live?” The spirit asked curiously.

“Well, I mean look at this place it’s so cool. There is so much to explore.” I wanted to live, to make better of the life I had already had, but right now I just wanted to see more of this.

The angel glowed, as if it were blushing. I couldn’t tell if it was pride, or if it was because I wished strange things. “It’s usually not a choice kind of thing, if your assigned body has sustained too much physical damage, you cannot continue on this plane. You have died, and you are meant to move on. It is why you bleed, it is why you feel pain, and it is why you *die*. Your placement however is unique, which is why I have been sent to you.”

I felt my mother calling to me, again out of breath. I felt the pendant necklace around my neck. “Don’t listen to them Enniah! Do not go! You are alive!” Her voice faded again.

“My mother is in trouble.” I whimpered feeling hopeless. “Can you help me?”

“She isn’t your mother; you don’t know your mother. If you knew any of your family, they would be here to guide you. No one who has lived and died in your life, is worthy of guiding you.”

“Well, that is because I don’t know anyone in my family that has passed away. Everyone I know is alive, and I haven’t witnessed a death of a close friend.” I shrugged.

“Aihdah is dead, and she is not guiding you,” said the faceless spirit. The voice was so cold to me it seemed icy in the way of fear, the sincerity of defenselessness in his voice. *Your mother is dead.* I heard it twice. *She is not guiding you.* The words rendered again.

I shook my head from this manikin of light. I waited thinking it would speak again, but it did not speak for me. Instead, it waited.

“I don’t understand,” I complained. “Why is it that we have to go anywhere?”

“Well, when people die, they are usually judged and moved to a better place.”

“Better?”

“Yes, the physical world is meant only to test a soul. To see potential, and to see goodness and quality.”

“But I like it here.”

The spirit swayed side to side, as if for an emotionless thing it needed time to think. “You like to learn and you like to help people and solve problems. Those are good things, but what about everything else. Don’t you feel lost and afraid, how is it that you don’t feel lost here?”

“My mother taught me of the grand connection. I know of purpose. I have a vague understanding of the world in which we left.”

“What is that?” asked Faceless approaching near.

On the ground on the hard stone floors there was a particle of dirt, a piece so small I would refer it to the atom. A single grain of sand. No, I suppose it was much larger. I finally decided to materialize my thoughts. “You see that speck of dirt there, the one between the grooves of stone,” it had fallen perfectly into place beside the black granite room. “That piece of dirt, came from something that existed before you and I. It is lifeless, and construct. Whatever allowed that grain of dust to exist, through whatever combination of elements, has a twin, an evil twin I might say. An opposite, a negative. In order for something to exist faceless, there needs to be an opposite. My mother taught me that.”

“Whatever it is she has taught you isn’t all correct, it can’t be. I am not all knowing, but I know for certain that a grain of sand can’t have intent and therefore an opposite that has means for another form of intent. Other than that I cannot speak much on your lesson or how it must have a co existent.”

I just stared at his bland drapery of omission and again it was quiet as if he was waiting for me to make the next move. When I didn’t he finally spoke again. “I personally don’t know your mother, but it isn’t safe for you here.”

“It isn’t safe?” I suddenly felt compelled, obstructed, see even those presented by someone greater in the next life wouldn’t always understand. This is why I wanted to stay with Aihdah and it is why I loved her so.

“I can’t protect your soul from all the spirits coming.”

“Well you’re a guide, not a colossal spirit fighter!” I laughed, all seriousness had left me. “That’s why I need you to help me get into this room.” I turned towards the hard marble slab and the containments of the purge.

The spirit looked to me vaguely before hurrying to the marbleized granite barrier. “I cannot pass through this.” He said immediately upon inspection.

“That is what my mother intended.” I smiled. “There is some sort of digital code. Does that make sense?”

“These are the things your mother gets in trouble for.” The spirit quipped. “I feel mica and gold linings around the stone. I am not sure what its purpose is for. Please we must hurry to

the lights. You are my responsibility sent from the highest god to serve you. I do not wish to fail your greatness.”

I blushed to the faceless thing. “Why do we have to fear other spirits if we’re already dead? I thought our bodies were the only thing a spirit could take, and my mother is defending ours right now.”

“Your mother is already dead. I am not quite sure if I understand your condition, you are neither dead nor alive.”

“What do you mean?” I cared not for my condition, I was alive and I knew it. “I can still feel her heart beating.” *Mother.*

“When was the last time you checked?”

Jolt.

“I... I... didn’t realize.” I flickered once, and then twice. My whole being coming in and out of existence. I didn’t feel her anymore... or anywhere.

“Any spirit can take a living body, but it is forbidden unless that body was assigned to you.”

“What do you mean?”

There was no movement in his figure.

“I am a spirit, are you saying I can take any body I want?”

“No.” he said restlessly wavering in his colors. His head rocked back and forth as his condition worsened.

I felt a sudden degree of panic from the spirit. “Yes that was what you were inquiring.” I said definitively.

“Souls become disconnected with their bodies and sometimes we have to guide them back to them...or away. It isn’t usually a problem however; a soul without a body will not remember much, if anything when reconnected to the body.”

“I am different.”

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“I see that Enniah, this is why I don’t understand your condition.”

My condition was that I somehow still had a connection with my body, other souls don’t remember anything because they don’t have the means to remember, or rather the hardware. Without a brain to hold memories, the soul forgets what it experiences outside of the body because they are external.

“I’m a threat then, I can pursue other bodies.”

The ghostly guide seemed to ponder this as well; there was no facial expression to be sure, just the moment’s pause where he rehearsed his next words. “It is forbidden; a soul is given only one body to partake in. The woman you call Mother breaks this rule.”

“Well how come she never gets in trouble for all these forbidden things?” I thought of a time I was eleven, and I had brought home a field mouse. I got grounded, paddled, and spent a night in lower cell, just because my mother told me it was forbidden for us to have outsider pets. I could have just said I found it upstairs. “I always got in trouble for the dumbest things growing up.”

“She is in trouble. You don’t want to go where they want your mother Enniah.”

“How do you know my name?”

“I am your guide...”

In the meantime, I was experiencing something while feeling the exterior marble.

I found something unique. My fingers began channeling into the wall through two interlocking components, like I was pressing myself into a small metal funnel and coming out in a faraway place.

“What is in that room that you plan to die for? Is it to hide? What will happen to your body?” The spirit asked.

Without answering the problem, a new one arrived. I was going to do what my mother asked of me, a switch to purge all spirits of this place. Inside this room was a defense mechanism used to thwart off all spiritual energies. But if Aihdah was dead, separated from her body and in

spirit form, where could she hide from the blast? What would happen to me, and of my innocent guide to the heavens?

I turned to him, a large spectacular spear of rhinestones and rubies extended from his mid section, as if homogeneous with his body. He plunged through the heart of a colorless spirit that had appeared beside him. The near phantom evaporated, as if it were a body of water that had just settled on an immensely hot space.

“Oh my god! What did you do?” I felt the division; the spirit was gone forever, unborn from existence from all phases. Death was one feeling, this was something more definite. Whatever Faceless had just done, had left my survival instincts in overdrive. This was the moment I realized all divergent feelings including fear, were embodied at the core. Even brainless entities were bound by these rules, and now I knew why even spiders, feared death.

“They are coming for you Enniah, we must hurry.”

“I figured it out though.”

The white angel had departed into the nearby fog before pausing. He backtracked, stabbing another bizarre looking purple spirit with towering arms and legs like a giant star fish.

“Please Enniah come with me; it is safe, you can learn. The blond haired man who spoke tonight... he is right you know. Your mother does unfair things to you, evil things.”

I turned from the strange passage way that pulled my soul through its bizarre walls. My arm was half devoured by the granite stone, my fingers, wrist, and forearm magically transported into the room. I stopped for a minute to think of what the spirit thing had said.

“My mother does strange things, and yes she has kept large secrets from me, things she means to teach me.”

“She means to use you Enniah. Learn while you still can, save yourself. If your body dies now, you might forget all of this...even if you so much become detached from your brain. I am not sure how it is possible that you even are still one with your body, both standing before me in spiritual form, and yet actively responding to your physical characteristics.

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As he was saying this, I had hunched over to feel for my stomach. It hurt, my head, the balls of my toes, everything felt tense and as if they were all bleeding, but I stood flawless here. I wanted a vision of my body again, to ensure its survival, but I couldn't summon the imagery.

I felt like crying, that's how hopeless I felt. I just stood there with my arm in the lock.

I returned to my previous thoughts. Aihdah had never lied to me as far as I was concerned and her very life depended on my objective. Marry said she had never lied to her either. I could run and my body could suffer either way, my spirit would be protected in the room, and perhaps Aihdah would meet me inside. If she never came, perhaps she could find a way to communicate with me there. I did still have her crystal necklace.

"Why doesn't this make sense!? I hate the stuff my mother doesn't tell me!" I reached further into the lock, my arm shoulder deep into the granite, extended, misshaped, and distorted to fit into the metal channel. I closed my eyes and felt for some sort of sign.

"I thought you figured it out!" said the faceless guide.

"I do feel something!" I said agitated more so and again suddenly I had the urge to move in a new way. I had a spark of inspiration, that this vibrational energy inside me was the relative force of two motions. The password was STARDUST. It was a family spoken word since I had become a daughter of the estate a few years back. There were two directions my spiritual energy could be channeled like the movement of a stream, I would alter the current and act as the force of the lock. This had to be what my mother was talking about, if only I knew how she wanted me to enter it. I reached in with my hand, and I summoned all my concentration on the forward movement of time, like I was pulling the current around me like the tail of a fish. The current was relative to the passing of time, and the time was the moving water. Instead, me the fish did not move, it held its place in the current, and the only thing that moved forward was the time in response to my entered code- the tail of the fish. The experience played out in less than a second and I had entered the password using my soul's pulse in *relation* to 1's and 2's or rather yeses, and nos. With the ones added up to represent the letter in the alphabet by not confirming true to the letter, and 2's to confirm the desired letter I had used. There was not a physical reality of numbers being used, only the mathematical existence of it represented with my soul's pulse. A being 12, S being 111111111111111112. The code altogether was quite long.

had warned me of all of this so many times. Spirits coming to take over the homestead. There were times where I tested her and I had failed.

“My mother ordered me to enter the room... but what if we go back to my body instead? Will she be okay if we purge the walls of this estate?” I asked.

“No.”

He read my face, clearly an unpleasant one that brought about a weary conclusion.

“Well then I should go with you. It’ll give my mother a chance to survive, right?” I asked in a high voice. “She can find a new body, or return to her own after fighting off the intruders.” I said this in a hopeful and curious way.

“It is a terrible, terrible thing to take a body that isn’t yours! It is a very dark thing to do, to steal another body for your own... I’d rather see to it that you do as your mother wishes and destroy all spirits in the estate, including myself, just to see that Aihdah Maghonohey is dead to all that see her.”

I pulled my arm out of the socket and metallic force that attracted my arm into the barrier. I stood against Faceless, sort of taken aback, and again sort of angry. How could she be so bad, this woman who gave me both hope and chance? She has taught me so many of her secrets, of math and of science, life, and shelter. She was strong and powerful, privileged even, to be able to do as she pleased and have little restraint to any obstacle that would hinder any normal person. Just to see the way she did things was a gift, but she gave me so much more, and I knew there was this emotion she had for me, something that made her give me more than she would give anyone else. She had to love me, so how could she be so cruel?

“Just stop talking about Aihdah in a negative way; you don’t know her like I do.” He approached me, unbound by gravity.

“You don’t know her Enniah.”

“I know,” I answered instinctively, I believed I knew her. “I can feel it.” She promised me something greater than anyone living person could. I was hers until this wish was fulfilled. Just then, I felt a burning sensation around my neck and stronger centered below my collar. The

necklace, the true crystal pendant, however not existing on my visible figure, was calling out to me. I now heard Aihdah's voice!

"Enniah, reach in, open the door... once inside, connect the live current with your hands... this will save us!" her voice was hesitant and breaking, still undergoing some kind of fusion.

"Mother!" I cried aloud. Faceless became disoriented and confused.

"Do not listen to any of the spirits here! They wish to take you from me! I cannot speak any longer, I am to find shelter in my body, and you have thirty seconds on my command. Your timing is crucial Enniah! If you do not purge the house in precisely thirty seconds I will not be in my body, and I will be gone forever! If you wait too long, I will have died in my body and I will be forced back out again- and I will perish when the connection is made. Now count Enniah!"

1...

2...

3...

"Don't do it Enniah." Faceless frowned.

4...

I reached into the socket once more, and answered quickly to the circulating pulse. My body and all my light lifted expanding and constricting like my hearts beating from far away. The door opened to the pattern I submitted once again.

I could now follow through to the other side and into the secret chamber.

"Come faceless! You have to come with me!"

"I can't Enniah, I can't pass through this. I cannot do as your mother wishes. I will not."

"Faceless, you will die." I said tragically.

"I am not sure what a purge will do to me, I suppose death in this phase would be to be unborn. I will be completely erased."

“Stop it, you existed and nothing can change that. Break your orders and come with me. This is your last chance.” I was counting the seconds with my pulse. I had lost track as my core began to beat faster. Was I at fifteen, or twenty-five? My light was a dwelling blue, transparent and quickened.

“I can’t!”

“Then you will be gone... Don’t you understand? I have to do this Faceless!”

I entered the granite barrier and passed into the room through the small funnel. I could still see Faceless on the other side of the dark stone several feet thick. The insides of the small chamber were similar black granite slabs uniformly fit side by side, each a bit larger than I could be with my arms stretched out over my head. The room flooded now, with a blue tinted light pouring from my personal fluorescence. There were two metal extensions in the crowded far end opposing the wall, metal chains that hung freely a few feet apart, neither of which could quite reach each other.

“Please don’t do it Enniah!” The voice carried lightly through the stone, distorted and far away.

It was too late. The purge would travel miles around the estate claiming every lone spirit in the blast.

“Go!” I cried.

Even faceless knew the time had passed.

Faceless glowed all kinds of dark panicky colors. “I thought you were strong enough to fight this! Faceless ran, abandoning me and any hope he saw in my choice. I couldn’t choose him though; I wasn’t meant to be here. I was alive, and I needed Aihdah to guide me.

I extended one of my arms to the metal closest me, leaving one end open for my free hand. A powerful electric current began accumulating inside me. I shook, violent tremors consuming my light; distortions of me filled the room. I saw bizarre and out of place memories from far and long passed. I saw now in every corner of my eye, and I saw even what had seemed like hours ago, a dangling chandelier with Clinton below, my mother forcing me to strip myself of my clothes, and the glazed evergreen structures that circled the drive beneath the massive

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splitting tree outside. I had extended my other arm, the circuit formed and I felt the painful release that followed with a blackout.

Dread Return

The feelings I had towards my guardian guide were passionately vibrant. The last time I trusted a stranger I had good feelings about, my step mother had a thirty-six-inch blade pressed to the back of her throat, and I then I was turned upon. I needed to save her if that was at all possible, because for one she was my mentor, and for two because there was a part of me that believed Aihdah was going to answer all of life's questions. *All of them.*

I stared up at the near black stone ceiling, speckled with different layers of density. It's how I felt, layered, only right now I was thin and at my core. I needed to reclaim what I had lost merely an hour ago.

All of the spirits were gone as I flooded through the house, looking for signs of Aihdah. When I couldn't find her or call to her, I returned to my body that laid directly over a buried well. I walked through the rehabilitation room, rats unaware of my presence, the candles lit and stiff with no wave due to my entrance. No I hardly existed. I was shielding this pain I held in my gut. The emptiness I now felt, Faceless was gone. He had taken a small number of steps before I claimed his life...so quickly for this woman I called mother. Surely Aihdah should answer to me now, I did it on time, hadn't I? Or was I too early or too late? The place was empty from all other glowing forces. Please, I begged in the form of voiceless prayer. My hands knitted tightly together, until I couldn't hold it in. I kneed against my cold body lying spoiled over the floor. My eyes staring back at me wide, clueless, yet connected. I sobbed.

"Please. Please, let them both live." Other mental snippets played hurriedly in minds sequence like a bad dream.

We can both retrieve other bodies- but why and how?

Aihdah, Answer me.

Faceless... I am sorry. Please forgive me.

I played around with my body, feeling it with a hand, touching lips, caressing hair. One of the rats scampered to my side, beside my knees. I was too hurt to care of its presence. It curled up beside my body. I felt nothing. I did the same to Aihdah, gracing her sleeves, no pretending too. I couldn't move anything physically; it was all imagination. Her blood had wandered the floor to the deepest crevices and cracks in what held the stones together. The mortar was dark and saturated beneath her body. Could she really have survived in this corpse? She might be gone, and I might be all alone. Just me and the rats. I hadn't thought of running from the estate in a long time. Maybe tonight was the night; maybe faceless was right about everything. Maybe I should wander the forbidden parts of this home, explore more of my hidden mentor. I needed my body... there is no way it could last much longer without me. I lay inside it; it was the only logical thing left to do.

Seconds passed where I didn't feel much of anything. *Think Enniah*. You know more than you should, for some reason being a spirit gave me strange mental abilities. I should be able to figure this out. I reach out with my hand, it didn't stick. All I had left to do was to close my eyes and go to sleep...

Another hour had passed or so, before I felt something on my arm. I awoke in the low lit room, just as it had been left; only a handsome young man was peering into my eyes. I had looked up at him, and pulled my arm away from his.

"You're okay?" He said in calmness his blue eyes sparkling in the candle light.

I felt a little foggy in the head but yes, I was okay. I was alive and back in my body! I sat up looking around, passing judgment of possibility. Had those things really happened? "Clinton, what happened to you?"

"What do you mean?" He asked charmingly beneath his blonde hair.

"You were crushed by the chandelier. You were possessed by a spirit, and even before you were possessed, you had become a monster."

He kned the floor with a groan. "I do believe I have a broken ankle and rib. Whatever was holding me has let go, and you must understand what your mother looks like from an outsider like me. We have to get you to safety and me to a hospital."

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“I understand, but you must understand how you look to me. An outsider and a boy. I have never met a boy you know around my age, not that I can remember, and you are so different from us. Like I really wanted to like you, but you were terrible and un-trust worthy. You did not listen and you struck my mother, and she may never come back.”

I inched beside her. Her face was still colorless, especially from her darker tones. I looked to Clinton. “Do you think she will be alright?” I didn’t know why I was asking. Clinton shouldn’t know, but I should. We had briefly studied the human anatomy and health just recently. Her lips were dry now, a small line of blood stained to the low corner. I listened for a pulse, pulling myself over her chest.

“She may be okay,” said Clinton.

“How do you know?” I looked up angrily. I felt her wrist, a minor augmentation.

“Her heart is still beating isn’t it? I tilted her head up and made sure her air pathways weren’t blocked. The damage wasn’t as bad as we had previously thought.”

“Perhaps.”

“Haven’t you started to question her actions and her plans? How long have you been locked up in this prison?”

“It’s not a prison.”

“Then what is it?” he stood.

“It’s my home,” I said attempting to stand as well, partly resting halfway with my hand anchored to the floor. My words were growing in volume and passion as I lifted, “and it’s where I learn. It’s a school and a library, and a place for my sisters to visit. It’s also a gateway of secrets that you have trespassed upon.”

“I don’t know if you can recall this,” he said hiding behind disgruntlement, “but your mother kidnapped me. I never willingly came here.”

“You seemed willing at the door! You wanted whatever she called onto you. Why didn’t you turn away and leave then? Why did you escort my mother here in the first place?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you. She’s already in your head, whatever she is, and you may be... it’s not normal...for people like me. She has a way with words, she is hypnotizing. She can make ordinary people like me do what she wants.”

“How so...” I asked fragilely weary of the truth ...Now I partly understood and expected the similar words. I knew what he meant, he didn’t need to explain. My mother could wipe a mind clean if she wanted, as long as she was well and healthy. If she wanted she could hypnotize a person, the things people would do then, even me, was limited only by her imagination.

“She made us do what pleased her Enniah, a sadistic joy found from our participation in her will; she made me do things that I would never have done.”

“There’s more to it. When a person is hypnotized they truly are unlocked, easily persuaded maybe, but still you.”

“I can’t believe you are defending her!” He spoke loudly. He rose to me, a little stricken and tarnished with woe.

“She, I guess needs certain things for her powers. She made us want to do those things.” I said.

“I can’t believe you and her are for real.” He said in a shocking appraisal.

“Does it hurt for you like it did me?”

He shook his head. “You have had everything given to you all wrong, but I suppose it would only make you wonder yourself to misery talking about it. I just can’t fathom what you desire in her.”

I finally allowed the bruising on my legs and back to weaken me. I fell to my side on the stone, just as uncomfortable as before only my muscles had released their grips. I sighed when his blue eyes looked at me. “You want to know the truth?” I asked hospitably. “I mean I don’t usually have people to openly talk to, so there isn’t a reason to think of the possibility of one understanding.”

He looked at me painfully.

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“Just it’s overwhelming. You don’t know or understand anything of our world. You don’t know about your soul, you don’t know what just happened to me, or even what’s happened to you.”

“I believe in souls. Greatly, and I am very aware of what happened to me. I never would have believed it until this point, but it is clear, I was possessed by something else, and all that mythical dark stuff, it’s real. A lot of it has to be, I always believed in the inner self and the soul, so that’s not a stretch.”

“Okay, ill brief you, and that is all. I can’t believe I’m talking to you; I should hate you and despise you. But here I am, somehow still within your merits.”

He nodded.

“I was neglected from everyone here, all the other students. I lived alone; there was absolutely no one in my life, no parents just the children who lived here at the estate.”

“The estate, you mean this mansion? It doubled over as a school?”

“Yes, there were several other daughters to the estate. They were allowed in the building and they were taught all kinds of lessons, math science and that nature.”

“And... you weren’t?”

I stared at him not sure of his point, or if he really grasped it that quickly.

“Allowed... in the building. I wasn’t permitted to see the learning halls let alone...learn.”

Clinton looked at me peculiarly, as if it hadn’t quite made sense to him yet. I was surprised he followed any of it.

“You see, they didn’t just learn math and science lessons, they learned about everything you’re experiencing tonight, the glitches and the unspoken, the foundation of it all. It wasn’t fair to me, at least that’s how I saw it, and I was alone, a child who was found on the front steps one morning. My mother says a giant stork carried me in.”

“ah crap, you actually believe that?” Clinton cringed.

“Some days I wonder. It still didn’t change the fact that I am not of Marter blood line, so I was not supposed to be taught.”

“But you are taught, you seem like you know a thing or two.” he said. “Is there more to it, like magic?”

“Yes I suppose, the unexplainable all seems like magic, doesn’t it?”

He made an awkward smirk as if contemplating to wake up from his dream.

“So Aihdah teaches you now, so you like her. Where are all the other kids?” His face changed then, like he realized I wouldn’t consider myself a kid. “Wait a minute... how long have you been here?” He asked most sincerely. It all seemed like it was starting to creep him out. He glanced around before inching away from the damp stone beside him and crawling to a closer space beside me in the brighter fraction of candle light.

“Okay so, the other *kids* don’t come here anymore.” I said. “They were absolutely terrible to me...” Bringing the memories up surfaced all kinds of negative perils. I hated thinking of the past, I hated it so much my fingers clenched on the stone beneath me. It even made my eyes water, thinking of Tonya and Saidey.

“Are you okay? Clinton asked. Are they... gone like dead?”

No, they just moved. Aihdah had them taught someplace else, so she could teach me instead. I don’t want to talk about it, I realize now that it isn’t important and currently has no impact on our situation.”

“Okay well maybe another time. Maybe for now we should just get out of here.” Clinton ached while he attempted to stand without assistance from the wall.

“I don’t know what to do. I am supposed to meet my mother, I was attacked by several spirits, and I met a good one who helped me. I did what my mother wanted, and I purged the estate of all the spirits...but I did something terrible.”

Clinton looked at me from his hunched position. An empty response.

“The one who helped me, he wouldn’t come with me and I had to do what my mother said...”

Clinton just shook his head like he always did when mentally disagreeing with me. Can we just get out of here? I really need medical help; my insides are in great pain. You were unconscious for more than an hour, and should be checked for a concussion.”

“A concussion?”

“Yeah, you must have hit your head or something.”

“Oh no... I don't think I hit my head...” after reevaluating the situation, I decided I wasn't going to explain what really happened. Not to him, I had already said too much, but maybe this would be a good reason to leave the estate. “Maybe I did hit my head. I don't remember.”

“Well, we are going to my truck, and I am going to find help.”

I agreed nodding and taking the first steps towards the exit of the rehabilitation room. I glanced one more time to my unconscious mother. Clinton followed just slightly behind and to my side. He stumbled at first, almost annoyed that I hadn't offered my hand to help him. When I realized his pain and despair I allowed him to use my shoulder as an anchor to his step. It prolonged our journey through the old halls full of paintings and dull colors. When we reached the side door where he had first passed a chance to escape, I decided to ask him, “Do you believe in fate?”

“I'm not sure.” He replied.

“...like everything happens for a reason?” I asked sincerely. I was questioning my loyalty to the discussion. I was angered by my approach to the side door, and I looked longingly at it while we stood under the crown molding. If Clinton had just gone when we had first passed it by, my mother would still be alive, none of this would have happened. Wouldn't she be?

Or was this meant to happen, as fate believers would say? Did Clinton's rib and ankle break so I would have to carry him, where I would hold him closely, a point where he was vulnerable, just enough to give me confidence to ask the question of fate in the first place?

“I don't know not really the type of person to think about it. I know plenty of people who do though.”

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“I used to say that if you want something you just have to go get it, and you’re in control as long as you play by the rules.”

“Rules, what rules? And how long ago did you say that?”

“The rules of the universe of course. As long as you follow those, you can do anything you imagine.”

“Sounds deep.”

“and I believed in that until just now, well I am unsure.”

“And this experience has changed that for you?” he sighed. His large blue eyes studying me intently awaiting my response with genuine promise.

This...maybe, and the one I wasn’t going to explain to him. Maybe it’s like some suggest, that “god” plans it all out for you. Still I was undecided, and I still felt it strong in my heart that a person’s soul had a choice in the matter.

“So now...”

I nodded with a sigh. “Reasonably uncertain.”

He opened the door and the cold air blasted our faces. The wind was howling and there was a glow amongst the courtyard from the lit windows reflecting off the snow.

“Those structures are amazing, does someone trim them constantly?” He asked observing many of the marvelous pine sculptures around the drive. His eyes lay on the whale. A humongous section of pine that must have been six times larger than his truck that had been parked here before. When I didn’t answer right away he elaborated. “You know to keep them looking as well as they are.”

“No, they are not alive and they are preserved in an amber coat, the amber coat is reapplied over time.” For some reason saying this aloud made me aware of the time and effort that went into such a feat. I mean for the trimmings of trees, pine trees, to actually look like animals, down to the tail of a whale and the talons of an eagle it was magnificent.

He trotted a few steps in the light snow breaking away from my side. “Wait a minute, where is my truck?” he gasped.

I looked around. Smaller carved bushes ran along the drive about two feet high disappearing in the poor visibility. The night was dark now, pitch black with small amounts of light pouring from an occasional window. “You parked in the front didn’t you?”

“I don’t remember much honestly.”

There was a high frequency stirring through the wind. It made me pause briefly to exercise higher concentration. I thought I could vaguely hear Aihdah’s voice; a woman’s most definitely ringing out from somewhere far away.

I looked to Clinton, he couldn’t hear it.

It was her, definitely in pain and very far away.

“Enniah, please don’t leave me. I am here, I am alive in my body!” her voice was panicked. I don’t have much time and the estate is no longer protected from spirits.”

I listened for further instruction or elaboration. There was no sound of Aihdah, just the wind howling and Clinton’s feet pattering against the snow.

“Wait!” I cried.

“What is it?” asked Clinton, a hand to my wrist.

“Nothing, my mother, she is alive. She needs my help.”

“Oh.” He said uninspired. We just saw her in that room, she hasn’t moved. How are you talking to her?”

I nearly gestured to my neck, but stopped myself. The pendant necklace of crystal and unknown chemistry and origin. I decided for him I would leave it a mystery. I shrugged, and I think he caught it, but ignored the indication. He gave me that look again, the one he wore when he exclaimed, “you’re witches.”

“Maybe someone moved your truck.” I said. And then I asked a question I was always interested in. “What exactly makes it move?”

“Who else here could move it?” asked Clinton.

That was a good point. Other than the landscapers and caretaker, no one should be here. The care taker hadn't been here for almost a month now, he'd been on a long vacation and the landscapers were permitted day access only unless authorized by Aihdah. The hire for the rehabilitation room weren't here either.

"There aren't any signs of footprints near the truck, just these paw prints everywhere."

"What?"

"Yeah, do you guys have dogs?"

"Not necessarily." I said vaguely.

"What do you mean not necessarily?"

I lowered myself to the pattered snow to get a closer look. "There are lots of wild dogs... usually they can't cross the fences. Sometimes in storms like this tree's fall down and make a path through the fence. Sometimes the snow is so high they can jump it, but this doesn't make sense. There isn't nearly enough snow, and the winds are not violent enough to take down a tree. We have to be very careful."

"Should I be afraid of dogs?" He asked.

"Yes."

"Like ordinary dogs, they're not like wolves or anything?"

"There are wolves too, but they aren't usually a problem. It's the black dogs you have to worry about."

He sighed. "Just a superstition I hope."

"They just attack, don't ask me, I'm not a dog person."

"Wait like, you have literally witnessed dogs attacking people and don't know where they come from or why they attack?"

"I've seen a dog take my best friend's life." I said it. I had almost mentioned it earlier, about Marry. "There was one estate daughter who was different. She was my best friend, a dog attacked her, and she died."

“You should look into that; dogs don’t just attack people. They are just like you and me. They make friends and enemies based on what they feel. It’s either that or they are trained to attack. Or maybe they sense something about you that they don’t like.”

“Whatever you want to believe Clinton, but if you see a black dog, I suggest you run. I am going back inside, and I am going to see to it that my mother is alive.” I wasn’t going to wander the dark and cold night looking for his truck. I’d find Aihdah awake, and she would fix all of this.

I turned from him and wandered back to the door.

“Wait, I am coming with you.”

I turned over my shoulder when I reached the front step to find him close behind. My hair was whipping wildly and now wet and cold. I tied it back behind, and while he watched me the entire time, I gave him a wince. “You will most likely have to leave, and if you want to remember anything I’d suggest you’d go now. Now that Aihdah doesn’t have any use for you she would probably convince your mental structure that we never existed and that you were never here.”

He gave me an awkward expression like he was surprised by what I said, and shortly he wore signs of scare.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if she held a grudge after you put a sword to the back of her throat.”

“She was possessed Enniah, she could have killed both of us. You saw it.”

“I did, and you were worse.”

“You trust me now though, right?” He asked breaking before the side steps.

“Right now...” I felt speechless. “I don’t know.” I didn’t know why I could look him in the eyes as I was now, and see nothing there to fear. He had been so awful. All I saw though was these large crystal blue eyes reflecting the window lights and the doorway behind me. There wasn’t an immediate threat, or the worry of conspiring. He seemed accepting, curious even and

protective. He was still holding himself in the lot of snow, three steps from the door, judging me as I was judging him.

“I don’t know Clinton. Follow your heart.”

That was all I had said to him without giving it another thought. I moved quickly indoors and turned on the lights. Even after closing the door, the house seemed much cooler, the side entrance here beside the coat rack. It seemed too cold even for just having let the wind in. I quickly turned left through the old kitchen for servants and down a double step landing. I followed the crimson red and black carpet through the dark sage hallways, alone. Walking alone always made me pay attention to detail. It was still too cold, and the air seemed to move. Parts of the hall were damp, wet even along the floor. I sprinted now. I didn’t want any spirits to have somehow trespassed again. Maybe the purge didn’t work, or they could travel faster than my mother ever anticipated.

“Faceless?” I asked coming around the corner of the descending stairs. There was nothing, just the wavering of candle lanterns. I looked down the dark stone stairs that lead to Aihdah and the rehabilitation room. “Aihdah?” I couldn’t understand this feeling, I felt very much like I was being watched, and at the same time I felt alone. I stood at the top of the stairs listening. There was a Portrait in a circular ornate frame, delicate looking almost the metal was tarnished around the edges and there was no telling how old it was. In the picture the woman looked like Aihdah, but younger. Her hair was wavier in the photograph, and she stared out blankly. Underneath it was a photograph I heard a fragile whistling and another blast of cold air swiftly wrapped around my neck and stifled my movement. I knew it was coming from the next room. I tiptoed around the stone stairwell and beside the coupled wall. I peered, one eye at a time, around the rock corner, one hand tightly bound to it. Slowly a curtain, and then the window, and then the remaining floor space came into view. The curtain was blowing in on the corridor, flapping emptily. The window behind had to be open. I approached it cautiously, growing colder as I approached, still spooked from prior events. I placed a hand on the curtain and pulled it to the side.

There was only the movement of snow drifting in the air, the window had been smashed open, but by whom? There was blood trickling down the cut of the sharpened edges greasing the glass into an opaque palate. I ran my finger along the top jagged edge where there hadn’t already

been soiled glass, as I was curious to how injury could occur. Was it because of the force of entry? Or was it a slow sudden crash that wasn't the result of intentions to enter the homestead. My finger slid down the glass and started to bleed with deep pain almost instantly; I kicked myself for not realizing how stupid this idea was. I'd never done this before, but it seemed like an incompetent thing I should have foreseen. Either someone was injured here by the window, or someone broke through and cut themselves while passing through the shattered opening. A sound echoed. It made me turn quickly with a spook, my eyes darting through the dark corridor to the lower levels.

I held my breath.

I moved quickly to the stone stairs leading to the rehabilitation room and the basement. Beside me was a single pantry room, usually ideal for cleaning supplies. The wooden door jumped at me, slowly at first, as if opening the door was a learning exercise, and then heavily as if forced by strength. It hit me in the forehead as I had approached to listen, and I stumbled back to watch the figure's entrance.

What had emerged was looking down in a way that I could not see the eyes. It was hard to decipher whether it was a woman or man, the existing hair was fading out on the scalp, and the skin was darker and discolored in sections like trauma had occurred all over the body in a single incident.

The filth and aroma that surrounded this figure made me question if it had been buried for a time, traversing only an undeniable puddle of deathly remains. I almost vomited on sight, in spite of overwhelming anxiety. Instead of blood to fuel the body, there was something else, when the head rose, an aged face of decay approached me. I knew this person shouldn't be alive, and here this person reached out for me, moaning insignificant words and uttered madness.

I turned and ran. It attempted to stop me, moving only briefly, no this thing could not chase. It was as it were, lacking. It mumbled again as if there were no lips with its arms extended out in the darkness towards me. "wease..." It cried. "weasee... itttnnn."

I ran through the dark hall, retreating back from this thing and observed it from a safe distance. I was beneath a single squared wrought iron lantern again in a similar hallway to the

previously traversed halls where Clinton had tried to reason with me about my actions and my mother.

Upon this realization, a rodent swooshed passed my feet causing me to jump towards the drafty window and the living dead. It quickly disappeared as abruptly as it came in the darkness along the floors. The feeling upon seeing this shadow scurry beneath my pivoting legs gave me a woozy feeling, and a horrible dark sensation of terror anchored over me after.

What the hell was going on here? In the next moment the creature had grabbed me with both hands and in the next second I was staring at baby blue eyes, immaculate eyes placed upon decaying flesh. Its grip tightened on my arms at my side and thrust me towards the floor. It seemed to try and bite me when I turned to stop its attack, holding its face at bay by its squeamish shoulders. I restrained its torso pushing away while it tried to smother me. It seemed to lack normal intelligence and ability, but it was noteworthy that it was able to achieve any cognitive ability at all in such a foul state.

“Easeeee littenmn.” It slumbered.

I through everything I had in flipping me on top of it and when I finally managed to accomplish this feat smashing its shoulders into stone, it grabbed for what I believed to be my throat. Instead it managed to grasp the hanging stone from my neck! The chain snapped and then my pendant was gone. *Gone*. It grabbed my hair while I tried to recoup my necklace and it pulled until a chunk came out, I yelled and it burned heavily on my scalp. I reached for my hair over my forehead, and I watched the remaining chain get sucked into the open mouth of this decaying carcass and then disappear. I punched the face as hard as I could. It didn't work like I had previously been shown, my clenched hand giving into the soft tissue, tore through skin and into the cheek of the dead monster. My hand was covered with the insides of this things now severely deformed head. While squirming to support my hair with my other hand to refrain from losing more of it, I pushed away the dead's prying second arm away. Suddenly that arm lurched and extricated from its own socket, and I was released. It was putrid. I quickly stood up, but to my amazement so did this creature, much more energetically than before. I panicked, I couldn't believe it just ate my necklace! I wished I had the sword so I could carve out the neck of this thing, as I'm sure that was where the pendant was still lodged.

Chapter 11

Thieves

I had to keep a clear head, it occurred to me that I was in a mental battle. I was trying to find Aihdah to question everything she ever taught me, or was I trying to question her intentions with what she was teaching me? Was it because I believed she was going to save me from the miserable beginnings? The more I thought about it, the more I wondered how everyone had a back story, except me. I don't know why her existence suddenly frightened me. I was actually asking myself if she was the bad guy, like in the books she made me read. Was that my new goal, was I supposed to run away?

Everything became so haunting. Death seemed to be lurking everywhere, this coldness that seemed to surround me this evening just kept growing and consuming more of me. It brought up memories of my friend Marry and negotiations I made in the chamber that I swore to secrecy. All because a spirit told me she could bring Marry back. But when, and was this ebbing ghastly thing telling the truth? I was becoming darker and darker in a disenchanting way, mostly in anger and despair, and yet, the unsettled questions poked at me as if to ignite my embers and drive to survive.

I wanted to live just so I could curse the person who had created so many wrongs. Who did I want to hurt the most? Was it this animal? Or perhaps it was the ghost my mother warned me about who caused the cascading events this evening?

It staggered towards me, and my heart began to pulsate stronger. I wasn't going to communicate with this thing. I decided to wander back to the rehabilitation chambers. Maybe I should have gone with Clinton, this whole thing was beginning to cause panic. It's just then when I heard the crashing down the hall which sounded like windows being smashed.

I decided I would go *investigate*. I ran through the corridor, surely the undead would follow me, and it did wobbling about the quarters in chase with its arms stiffened for a reassurance in its terrible footing. My steps echoed through the hall and then *its* did. I distanced myself further from where I had left Aihdah's body with every pace. I paused every few great lengths to listen for noises from the direction of the disturbance, and also to turn and look behind to face my follower yipping on about nothing. The foul-smelling thief was still in pursuit, however the faster I moved the less I worried about this creature and its filth. I never explored this one particular side walkway in which the entrance was magnificently decorated by a carved wooden door frame. I walked through it.

It all seemed halfway submerged below the earth, the windows were raised from the walkway, half the length of the room's windows are just above the height of my face, where the dirt lay even with the bottom of the window. Each window was spaced several feet apart, I wasn't sure where this partially underground corridor went, but it was forbidden as all unseen places here were. It was mostly a blanket statement. There was so much here, that she didn't feel the necessity to explain, that anything she hadn't shown me became off limits until she was ready to show me. I actually didn't do to much exploring in the estate at all, I was lucky enough to visit the library at times before Aihdah permitted it, and eventually after she had caught me sneaking in, she had taken that privilege as well. She said there were terrifying books that could conjure things and change real unspoken things.

Knowledge and power, as long as I kept towards a promise of attempting to open the distant shrine buried beneath the rolling hills of the courtyard. I wonder if tonight had anything to do with those hours of my life, and Marry. It couldn't have, tonight was about a single entity that Aihdah had foreseen for months now. Possibly longer. Now that this thing was upon us, I only wished I had paid more attention to her warnings. Maybe this really was all my fault.

Just then I heard a crash. A window shattering. Then more shattering. Glass was being flung across the stone floors in a room not far from me. I was terrified that there would be dogs. I wondered where my Paladete had gone, I missed her right now.

“Paladete is that you?” She had knocked on the windows of the downstairs master bedroom before. Maybe she was looking for me then. “Oh Paladete you should have flown as far away from this place as you could. I hope it is you at the window and not the dogs.”

I pictured Marry that day being attacked and strangled to death, I had saved her but only for mere hours. I wanted Marry in a time like this, and Paladete. Even Aihdah on a good day, but now I wasn't sure if I was scared of her. I had hidden myself in a wooden barricade in the hallway, some arches had acted as small dividers for this long quarter, separating it into four quadrants. Each of the four lengths had two windows. In-between there were these articulated wooden doorways and arches differently sculpted. Because I had been running I hadn't taken notice to their significance in what was depicted, only that it was fancy attention to detail in the carving.

I hid behind the second one. If they were dogs, they would probably smell me. This was a bad idea. I looked out and the crash grew louder, and I was almost certain that it would be dogs. Black coats. Four legs, a snout divided by gnarling yellow and white teeth. But it wasn't, at least not the kind I had come to know. The figure grew quickly in my sights much larger than a normal dog, bright blue eyes beneath a pair of pointy ears, human almost staring back at me, there was still colored glass shards no larger than a nail head in it's mane which was elegant, like a horses where it was longest, and the rest however did look much like the black dogs I had seen in the woods beside the hills of the valley.

“It's a Wolf!” A man shouted. I quickly recognized him as Garry the grounds keeper. He was wearing a tan jacket, made of leather that was heavily worn. Even his pants were of similar color, and he wore this attire almost every time I had ever seen him. The only part of his body I suppose that wasn't covered in the leathery material was his face and head, which was instead covered by a large cream colored hat.

“-A what?!” I replied aghast, looking beyond the man, where a large door stood ajar, the man emerged from just past the fourth quadrant and closed the door to observe this beast. This creature was massive compared to the dogs I had seen beyond the fence.

“A *wolf*! Be careful it might be infected!” he replied.

The hall fell silent just then, and still, except for the cold air that was coming from the broken stained glass window. It just looked at me and waited, I was in shock. “What is it doing?” I asked.

“I don’t know Enniah, what are you doing on this side of the home stead? You know you are not permitted to be here!” The man called out.

“What do you mean it’s infected; do you mean like the thing that’s chasing me?”

“I’m not sure what you mean.” He said. “What’s *chasing* you?”

I turned around. There it was raging towards me mumbling again. “*That!*”

“Oh my goodness, what is *that!?*”

“I have no idea!” I screamed in the last second as both the mysterious creatures decided to close in on me at once. The Wolf, to my left, and the walking corpse shutting me in on the right. I wasn’t sure what to do.

“Duck!” Garry Shouted.

I lowered my center body, and at the same moment the wolf lunged, these massive paws leaping out towards me, I thought for sure this is where I would meet the similar fate of my beautiful friend Marry. My sides would be torn and scathed from the slashing of its violent paws, and after my leg would be vetted apart for the better meat, I would be crippled and dragged through the house, my limbs lumbering into the walls and doorways. The visuals were dramatized, I knew they were, that black dog had caused unimaginable pain. The nightmares would never end. I would be like this dead human to my right, except, I was certain that in the end I wouldn’t be able to move, and maybe I would end up like Marry, a spirit trapped in the confinements of my resting place to never leave again.

It tore deep and hard into the tissues. But it wasn't mine, I turned from my lowered position pivoting on my toes, the room spiraling around me. Garry went absent, and now, I saw the lumbering flesh divided by the snout of the beast. I heard it's gnarling teeth sawing through flesh, although dryer flesh than I had come to expect. It had gone for the throat specifically. I watched the head dangle, one of the free hands grabbed the mane of the wolf and the neck, and for a much slower thing it was able to subdue the beast for it's last moments. It cried out one last time, uttered madness for sure.

“Weaseee whisenn wank waggee.”

My eyes grew in shock, and astonishment. What was this thing trying to say? Did it just call me... Blank Page?

The wolf didn't go for me. It went for this terrible creature. I watched the neck tear along the throat line, and I looked away from the frothy discharge and stepped back turning my eyes away. I heard the head fall against the stone and tumble before I managed to look at it.

The creature sniffed at the remains and gently retrieved the pendant necklace, it turned towards me and gave me an intentional blink and nod with these bright yellow eyes, and then it dropped the chain at my feet. I was terrified still, but it was clear that it wasn't intending to hurt me.

“Enniah be still, don't make any sudden movements! It seems to be making a bond with you!” Cried Garry now holding the door knob at the far door.

I lifted my hand, partially in defense. Immediately it snarled, and turned its head towards the open window where snow was beginning to drift in.

I looked to where the wolf's attention had been drawn, Garry too looked. There was a hand and a glove that came around the yellow figures in the stained glass, and then the glass was pushed in onto the floor with further cracking and shattering. The air blew harder and the temperature continued to drop. This man wore a worn out jacket and had rough and tethered yellow blond hair, and he spoke out specifically looking for me without having known the people in the hall. It was Clinton. “Enniah are you in there?! I've found help!”

I was shaking now from the cold. Strange red and blue lights were being cast through onto the green paint on the opposing wall, but as it hit the flurries and white powdered snow that was drifting beyond the shattered window, it was clear. The snow pulsed in a bright red, and then blue, and then red again in perfect sequence. The wolf snarled louder and approached him, but only briefly. Maybe it was because he had carried the sword, but the creature wasn't overly fond of him by any means. Why did it spare me, why were these crazed animals sparing my life over the others? First it was with Marry, and now this undead corpse figure, and seemingly Clinton even, only I seemed immune to the animal's concentrated hatred.

"Look Come to me. I can help you," said Clinton eyeing me.

I looked to our groundskeeper. He seemed bewildered.

"What do I do Garry? Aihdah is hurt inside. She needs help." I turned to address Clinton beside the stained glass window. "I can't leave my Mother, there are things here. Evil things. We need to save her!"

"She is fine; you have to trust me! She's already being taken care of!" Clinton replied.

This time, Garry spoke. "You need to do what you believe in Enniah, if you have made promises to Aihdah, I would try to uphold them, but if you don't see a way out of the situation you must do what you must to live another day. We will come find you."

The wolf snarled and sniffed at Clinton.

"I am fine Garry." I said. "What are those strange lights?" I asked.

"It's from an ambulance." Clinton said matter-of-factly eager to regain my attention.

"A what?" I asked again.

"An ambulance."

"I don't know what that is." I admitted.

"It's here to help you." He replied.

"How the *hell* is that thing going to help me?"

Clinton shook his head and spoke quietly trying to calm me. “Look you go inside they wrap your injuries and they bring you to people who can help you.”

That sounded a lot like abduction.

I looked back towards the hall where myself and the dead thing came. If Aihdah was back there, she needed me. I looked to the wolf’s feet. I had to grab the pendant necklace. I reached down very slowly, making sure the wolf was okay with my decision, and it let out a high pitched chirp of a whine that seemed unthreatening, but then my pendant necklace started to move. It wiggled once, just a little, and the wolf seemed puzzled at this, tilting its head awkwardly to the side. Then it took off, my eyes wandered across the floor chasing it and to the to the apparent little creature that was pulling the chain. Why, it was a mouse!

I reached out to grab for it but it had just made it out beyond my reach and then under the feet of the wolf which quickly tried to stop the animal with two large snaps of it’s jaws. The small critter was surprisingly fast and agile dodging the jaws of the larger beast. It squeaked and pulled the pendant through a small hole in the bottom of the window, but this didn’t stop the wolf, it quickly smashed through the remaining glass of the window presumably to steal back the pendant necklace. Everyone seemed to be partially amused by this, except for me. Garry even laughed out loud!

“Hey! That’s mine!” I shouted. And Clinton Rose his sword to defend himself against the passer by, but at the moment the wolf wasn’t interested in him in the least, instead it hurried out the window, “What in the world?” He said. “What is with the animals here?”

He looked around at all of our faces, all of us were no longer frozen in fear, and Garry and Clinton didn’t stand like cut timber anymore.

“They certainly are unusual.” said Clinton. “Come, the ambulance will take us! I am starting to have difficulty breathing, do to my ribs.” He braced himself against the sword, like it was a cane.

I followed Clinton to the window. Garry walked over too, and the three of us sat in the light of the bizarre looking vessel outside. It was so strange, I looked at it for all it’s obscurities. I had never seen anything like it, it was like a giant box on wheels with magic lights on top, and

they were very fast in the way the two colors swirled around on the roof reflecting upon all the snow piled around. There were giant plus signs in red on the corners of the cabin, and on the side larger yet.

At least it stopped snowing I thought to myself as I veered around. There seemed to be foot prints that ran along the side of the house, at first in either direction, like the mouse had jumped around dodging the wolf before sneaking off someplace that couldn't be seen. The wolf too was gone at this point, but the tracks wandered as far as the eye could see to the end of the complex. From this side hallway that led to a smaller complex of corridors that only had two stories as opposed to three, you could only see about half of the evergreen sculptures piled high into the night from this side of the drive. Now you could see the stars above us as well, and amongst the still and suddenly quiet and frigid air it was all sort of alluring.

Path 1, choose to stay.

Path 2 choose to ride in the "Ambulance."

"Well, I don't feel great Clinton, but my head feels fine. I am staying, you must go. Please, and leave the sword." I pointed awkwardly, I wasn't sure why I had such a fascination with the thing, but I believed it would make me feel empowered to a degree, and it was rightfully mine more so than his.

Clinton looked to Garry as if for permission, like what he was asking of me was for the best interest. Maybe it was reassurance of some kind, but Garry kind of just looked at him and gave him a slight sign of disapproval.

"You are not safe here Enniah."

"No," I said. "We must stay here; I will be fine. We have a lot to do here. I have questions for Aihdah when I find her."

Clinton seemed uncomfortable with this, looking at us for what seemed like ten seconds, with a huff, he nodded and turned out towards the snow. "I'll come back to look for you!" he

shouted back towards the opening. Then we could hear his foot steps pattering against the snow as he departed, and this made me think of the whole choice thing and the snowflakes falling over my dormer earlier in the evening. What a night this had been.

“Please don’t.” I finally replied, at a normal tired volume in which Clinton’s ears would never hear. He took my damn sword. I figured the probability of Clinton coming back seemed slim, because typically strangers were never seen again. I took a step back towards the starry night and stained glass window opening. The glass seemed to have depicted angels standing around a center figure, in a very simplistic form. Whatever was in the center, was spread about the stone floors and no longer existed as a part of the gallery. The surrounding angels however were merely a three-piece structure, a triangular white torso without legs or arms, a teardrop shaped grey wing, and the same color circle presented for a head. Garry placed a hand on my shoulder gripping it tighter moments later. I suppose this wasn’t a normal night though. I was tired I actually needed dinner and sleep.

“Garry is there something we can eat? I am starving.”

He looked at me peculiarly, but he nodded. We watched the strange red and white vessel squeal away in the snow, through parts of the lawn it seemed to get stuck, and just when I thought it would finally stop and give up on its efforts it would pick up speed again diminishing in its appearance on the cold dark horizon. I actually thought it looked like a piece of snow cake against a chocolate sky. My stomach actually grumbled. Did this mean, the evil spirits were all gone?

“Do you think the night is over?” I asked. “I mean do you think it’s safe?”

Garry put his hand over the broken area, presumably I imagined he was thinking of how he would fix the issue of the now snow and glass littered hallway.

Garry’s voice was much deeper than Clintons, but also a little raspier. He was older possibly in his forties and when he talked he almost did it as if the sound came from his gut. “I do have a hunch, but it’s a very broad hunch.”

“A hunch?” I replied.

“I think that if you are thinking about food, that it’s safe to say you believe the threats are gone and you know more than I do.”

“Such thievery this has all been...” I whispered. “I mean think about it.”

Garry scratched his head, in a manner I was sure was deliberate. He didn’t get it.

“A mouse stole my necklace! Clinton stole my sword, the wolf stole a dead man’s life, I paused contemplating if there could have been any more thievery in a single evening, “and then you have that bizarre cabin on wheels that took Clinton and my sword away.”

“*Your* sword?” Garry asked. “I reckon you stole that.”

“Well, it wasn’t his, and what belongs here and to Aihdah... She let’s me borrow things here for learning.” I tried to explain.

“That’s stealing.” He replied.

“It wasn’t stealing if I was going to use it to protect Aihdah.”

Garry put his hands on my shoulders his large brown eyes looking deep in mine almost with a puzzling question ringing inside. “I don’t know much about Aihdah. One thing I do know, I would not assume the ownership of any of her possessions, especially those with unknown origins.” He sighed releasing me. “The consequences of taking the wrong possession could cost you something dear.”

I looked sternly at him, and he at me, then I nodded.

“Follow me to the kitchens.” He said.

Alchemy

Garry took me to the kitchens. “Aihdah came to me, she told me to give you dinner and to put you to bed. She also said to tell you that you don’t need to worry about her, and that if you were to ask questions about her not to answer them.” I would be staying on his side of the Estate tonight.

He reheated some duck stew on an open flame stove top. I was interested in learning what had to be done and he explained the simplicity of it eyeing me over the pot. Holding the copper ware in front of himself in that way showed that he had large forearms covered in hair, and a tan. I could already smell the contents mixing.

“You take everything left over from the week prior and put it in a pot.” He paused for emphasis holding the deep copper pan in the air, “and then you *cook* it.” It’s really that easy, he gave me a sorry look. “Sometimes you just use the juice of the meats for broth, and add salt and pepper.”

“But for how long?” I asked.

“That’s the great thing about stew, the longer it cooks and simmers, the better.”

“But then, what is too long?” I asked.

He looked at me as if I was possibly asking too many questions. Then he answered, his words picking up rhythm and speed as he expelled them. “Well, if it starts to burn the bottom the pan and the water content in the stew evaporates, followed by the contents in the pan igniting, smoke running about the house, the darned sprinkler system turning on... well then Enniah, you cooked it too damn long!” His eyes were so wide and open, they looked like they could roll out

of his head. “Gosh you sure ask a lot of questions when I see you.” He sighed again. “But you know what, I like you.”

“But, what does evaporate mean?”

“Enniah!” he stood openmouthed. “Do you really not know?”

“I’m sorry Garry... It’s just...”

“You don’t have to explain it; this is a place for strange beginnings. Evaporate means to disperse water particles into the air. When water hits a certain temperature, a high one, it acts differently. It rises into the air.”

“Thank you.” I said.

He smiled.

I nodded I just had to ask one more... “but like does that mean it separates, and disperses into the air because of the difference in temperature and pressure in comparison with those around it? I mean, because that’s why clouds exist right?” I laughed. “I learned a little about liquid to gas last week!”

Garry just stood there staring at me. “I’m confused, so why did you ask what evaporate means if you understood any of that?”

“Well, I learned about liquid to gas state, and about the freezing point and boiling point. I was assuming that maybe evaporation was the process of visible liquid being dispersed throughout the air. Aihdah always tells me to think of our physical existence as little spheres, and that they push off of each other kind of like different oils and many of these spheres aren’t even visible. So when I picture water as little spheres and you apply heat to the bottom, I imagine them heating up. Which, Aihdah says causes vibration, the more heat the more vibration. This means the little spheres would make more contact with the air above the pot, because they are moving faster, and because heat typically rises. But all this depends on the pressure of the spheres above it. I don’t know I’m still trying to understand it all. I mean I don’t really understand why heat is considered rising, when the entire planet takes place in a sphere. Doesn’t that mean to the people on the other side of the globe, that heat is *sinking*?”

Garry stared at me in a much more unusual way.

“What?” I asked. “She was teaching me about this stuff so she could make gold.”

“Gold?” he asked. “And it’s just that your thinking is very unusual, but brilliant. You don’t have all the pieces and I’m not sure if its all correct, but you are thinking of complex interactions when you don’t know how to cook a stew, or know what the word evaporate means. Also imagine that those spheres get stuck together, because they aren’t moving at all, well when water molecules, or these spheres don’t move at all you have a solid, called ice. In English, we call those spheres molecules.”

“And that’s how we have snow flakes.” I smiled.

“Yes.” Garry nodded. He almost was at a whisper now, and left his bowl untouched while I dug deep into my bowl to grab for more of the hearty pieces of carrot and duck. “But why is she talking about *gold*?” he seemed particularly interested in that word. “You can’t *make* gold you have to find it.”

“Well, I don’t know why. Is making gold a good thing? Does it have to do with energy, I mean she is always going on about how it’s all nearly impossible, but by using the normal routines of nature there is a way to enhance the energy gained from something she is working on, maybe enough to make gold, or gold is to make the energy, I’m not really sure.”

“What else is she teaching you, and why?”

“Is this not normal for her to teach?” I asked.

“Nothing about Aihdah is normal. But it is peculiar further yet.”

“You know I am not allowed to discuss Marter teachings, if that is what you are asking. But is there something special about gold.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know,” he replied.

I stared at him. It was so obvious. “But you *do* know. Why won’t you explain it to me?”

He pushed up from his seat, and thrust the chair underneath the table and grabbed his bowl and fork. “I am sorry I don’t, you need to eat and get to bed.”

We remained in eye contact, and then he quickly turned away when he noticed I was taking him in fully, judging him even his worn clothes, and large brown eyes and thick short hair, I noticed that he had some grey strands scattered throughout like his body was disagreeing on how old he ought to be. His face was tired in this light and marked from age, but he was still handsome. The strangest of all things was that Garry was using a fork instead of a spoon.

I laughed at this.

He lifted another fork full, the broth instantly left behind in his bowl.

“It would work better if you used a spoon.” I said.

He rolled his large eyes with a grin and placed his hands on both sides of the bowl. On his 4th finger, there was a worn ring of bronze color.

I just didn’t understand the importance of gold. I knew Aihdah obviously cared for it, and that he did too, the way his eyes lit up when he thought Aihdah was making it. He wasn’t being honest with me; I could just feel it, but I also didn’t feel like he was doing it to harm me. What was the point of hiding that information from me, and what purpose does gold have?

“Look, please just tell me Garry.”

I was surprised at how eager he was to answer. “Alright, well just remember you’re not supposed to talk to you about things and Aihdah is very specific about these things. You know about what you can hear, and learn.”

I stared at him.

“It’s used to make jewelry.”

“It’s also in the rehabilitation room! I know the golden handles in there had electricity.” I said. My mind filled with the events that happened there. It all seemed like it couldn’t have happened in a single night.

“Well I don’t know anything about that, but I know people like the jewelry.” He scratched his head. He looked *nervous*.

“So that’s the big secret, you think it’s desired because it makes bracelets and earrings? I don’t understand.”

Garry nodded. "Well gold doesn't tarnish. So it holds up very well."

"Your ring looks worn, is that gold?"

"Twenty-four Carat, its gold and some other metals, but what you see is surface scratches because gold is inherently soft, and the rest of its grungy color is from dirt. Look we have to stop talking about this, it can interfere with what Aihdah wants."

"How, why would she care?"

"Just trust me, when she is teaching you she doesn't want someone else coming in and telling you something different than what she says. I am done on the subject." It appeared as though Garry was becoming frustrated.

"How often do you stay here?"

"You mean to ask if I am here full time?" He asked after swallowing some duck he had managed to balance on his fork. He wasn't getting to much broth that way, so he ended up putting the bowl to his beard, and drinking it instead. When he brought it down, some of it was captured by the timber of his shortly trimmed beard.

"I live here whenever Aihdah wants me to."

"Do you love her?" I asked.

"Love Aihdah." He balked. "Child, you are something."

"It's just I read about love, and it sounds so magnificent. I don't know I feel like bits of my past are starting to come back to me and it has to do with love. I just know it does." I said.

Garry perked up in his chair and looked eager for me to continue.

"It's just there is this guy, you met him, Clinton. He is so annoying. Like I felt like Aihdah wanted me to love this person, but I just don't have this feeling of love that I read about. I mean I liked him, I just didn't feel like giddy. It just sounds all different. Is there something to it?"

"I don't have any idea Enniah. Come on let's get to bed. It's 2 hours past morning."

Garry made me close my eyes and said I wasn't allowed to see this part of the homestead just yet. That I would be safe here. I agreed. I covered my eyes when we reached a certain point and I tried to remember my footsteps but it was difficult.

Tonight I realized I would be sleeping in a bland room. It was mostly all wood, no paint. The wall was made of boards running horizontally and the ceiling had more wooden boards running in the same direction except they were much narrower and the floor was the exact same thing. There were not any pictures or paintings or clocks. Just a room with a bed and a dresser. You could see tiny thin nail heads every so many feet that held it all together.

"I kind of like this too." I whispered to myself.

"What's that?" Garry asked.

"Nothing, I like the way wood looks." I nodded. "Where is Aihdah, is she okay?"

"She is fine."

"But how do you know?"

"I just do, she told me she will see you in the morning. She told me to lock your door and make sure you don't come out."

"What if I have to pee, like I do now?"

"There's a bathroom right there, it's not a closet. Aihdah had the servant's quarters redone years ago. This one now has a bathroom."

"I should really change my clothes. This is uncomfortable." I pointed to my silver strung corset.

"You're exhausted. You will fall asleep in no time. There are probably loose clothes in the drawer over there if you need. Some of the other girls have stayed in this very room for their lessons, but you knew that."

Actually I didn't know that. But I didn't reply.

"Now, I don't actually have to lock this door do I?" He asked.

“No please don’t.” I said. “What if anymore of those things come?” An image of discolored skin fading into a pinkish grey, lifeless bodies stacked against a wall somewhere. Maybe a group of dogs jumping the fence where the snow was piled high enough, or that strange gigantic relative of theirs Garry called a wolf.

“That’s a yes. Ill lock it.”

“NO!”

“You’re safe in here.” He closed the door and I heard his decision become finalized. *Ca-Click.*

I stared blankly at the wooden door and its simplicity. I knew it was locked, but I checked anyway. I was kind of scared actually. How could someone shut this door on me after knowing very well what was out there? I went to it and shook it, pressing in the metal door hook for the lever to lift and to open the door. I pushed and nothing gave more than a centimeter. I was certain I could break the door off it’s hinges, the wooden faced door felt light and weak.

“Enniah go to bed,” the voice came muffled from the door. “You are safe in there,” said Garry.

I sighed. I didn’t feel safe. “Okay.” I couldn’t believe he just locked me in here. “There’s no reason to lock the door.” I said.

“You’re already trying to get out. I was going to lock it anyway, I just wanted you to be at ease about it. It’s better to stay in there and wait things out, you have to trust me, I understand why you would want to leave, but I also know that you’re upset about the things that happened today.”

I felt partially puzzled. Why wasn’t he more concerned with what he saw, and suddenly now why did it seem like Garry knew more than I did? Maybe not on Marter things, but with generally what was going on. I sat on the small cot of the bed in the corner of the room, the bed springs cried out when my weight pressed down onto it.

“Just go to bed,” he said. “Aihdah or myself will return to let you out come morning, just go to sleep. You need it.” Then I could hear his feet wandering away. When I couldn’t hear them anymore I waited a little longer and sprang from the cot.

How could I go to bed when I wasn't sure I was safe here. I felt like I couldn't trust anyone. Not Garry, not Clinton, not even really Aihdah anymore. Well the weird thing was that I trusted Aihdah for the things I witnessed, I never saw her do anything wrong. But my spirit guide Faceless sure had a few things to say about her. Why did spirits travel to her location in an attempt to harm her? I really didn't understand people in general. I started to wonder if everyone was this bad, there had to be other nice people like Marry right? I think Garry is nice, but why does everyone hide things from me? Why couldn't Garry talk to me about my lessons? Why was it such a big deal? Why didn't Aihdah tell me why she wanted so much gold, or the purpose of it? See, even she was hiding things from me. Other than watches, rings, and earrings, the only thing I understood was that the golden circlets in the rehabilitation room had electrocuted me. That made me want to get out even more.

I searched the drawers to get out of this stained silver corset and cream tights. Inside the drawers there were casual clothes that the other girls sometimes wore on recess or when we went to visit the animals on the farm. I slipped on a tank top and a pair of pants that were unusually soft for a material that looked sturdy. I wondered whose room this was. Better yet why were some of their clothes left behind if this person no longer was staying here. I did see something that stood out to me. A simple white dress. It looked very much like the one Tonya wore, what seemed like distant memories until now. It had these tilted creases over the mid chest that were unmistakable. I pushed it to the back of the drawer. *Bloody hell I hated that woman.*

I walked over to the door feeling much more comfortable but also very tired. The wooden door was kind of flimsy so I wondered if I could find a way to manipulate the lock from here, or maybe punch a hole through to the other side to see where I was, but I quickly realized I didn't have to. There were small holes occasionally where it looked like the knots of the trees once were, before it was made into boards, and someone removed a few leaving small gaps in the wood. There was one that was lower to the floor, about a foot up that I believed I could peek through. I kneeled down, and not quite low enough so I rolled onto my back and pushed myself closer to the door sliding against the glazed flooring. My left eye veered through the pin hole. I saw the hallway, and a candle holder, and another similar door across the hall. Instead of there being a candle light there was a lit oil lamp suspended just beside the holder.

I thought if I could lower myself I might be able to see more. I lowered down as far as I could, and then I realized something. I quickly looked around the room, looking for strong objects. I had to get out of here. On the dresser there was a mirror, a small one that was clouded and aged. "I am still controlling my future." I went to it, and I took it upon myself to wrap my fist with my worn out corset and linen. I broke the mirror against the wall with a loud crash and picked up a shard of reflective glass into my protected hand. First I tried to lift upwards along the seam of the door near the handle to see if it would lift the lever. It didn't work. I took the narrow most shard and stuck it in the bottom of the hole redirecting it until I could see upwards along the plane of the door.

The reflection revealed my upside-down door, locked with a bright yellow contraption that didn't look like anything in this room would cut it. I would have to break the door down to get out of here. It was made of light wood, how hard could that be? Why would they go to such great lengths of keeping me in here? Was there something of significance here? I kicked the door in the same spot over and over. Then I noticed something, one of the boards was coming off on the bottom. So I kicked it again, and again. I dropped to the floor to try and pull off the remainder of the board, but then that's when I realized it would be impossible to escape this way. Confined inside the wooden boards was a bronze metal plate. I pulled off the board and it revealed cross beams traveling throughout the construction of the two layers of wood siding. I reached between one cross beam and lifted another board off, once one came off the rest kind of fell off with a light tap. I just stood there spooked a little. I mean why would this door be reinforced with metal? There were no windows in this room, there was no way out. I had to wait for Garry or Aihdah.

"Let me out of here!" I yelled. And then I suddenly felt more terrified. What was the door intended to keep out? What could it possibly intend to keep in? I just didn't understand it. I didn't understand how ghosts were attracted to my "Mother." I didn't understand how she was able to do the things she did, and why the place where we now lived had so many mysteries. I didn't know why she would purposely electrocute herself for the purpose of walking outside of her body, or why I was able to do so myself. Why was I learning all of this tonight for the first time? I walked back over to the cot, and laid face down into the covers.

I started wondering about how I knew what electrocution was, when I experienced it. When Aihdah had explained it a time ago.

We were outside at the time in the fields after a few weeks of her lessons and after sweet Marry was taken from us in the chamber. It was also during a rainy day much like the dark glowing sky that would conceal the chambers of the Sol Sanctum by filling the pin holes at the top of the pyramid with sand. There were violent winds, and flashes of light. Aihdah and I were walking through the fields, when she said, “There is no need to run the lightning will not strike us.”

I remember asking her how she knew this, it started off with her saying. “Relax Enniah, I *know* that lightning will not strike us.”

And it was so strange, I felt safe, I had no concerns for lightning at all. We continued walking through the wet fields towards the flats of the homestead without any fears at all. It was just a magnificent force in nature that had incredible power. It was because she said there was no reason to fear the lightning and everything Aihdah ever said was true. Then when she spoke again almost as if correcting herself, “the probability of lightning striking *us*, is very low,” and everything changed.

I just remember my gut sinking and having this deep awful feeling that suddenly I could be struck by lightning. She had explained what probability meant with metal dice. How no matter what the odds of the dice, eventually all the numbers would come up. She also explained that it wasn't a true random number generator, because no matter how small the role of physics played against the dice, no matter how long they were in the air, that it was always mathematically calculated. There was always a reason they landed the way they did. And so in a way she explained that rolling dice, wasn't *random* at all.

That's when I realized it wasn't chance. Lightning could take me, *whenever it wanted*.

I continued walking but I was suddenly terrified. My face drenched by the cold, the rain. Aihdah staring at me unusually, she gravitated her hand to her throat and to her reddish crystal amulet wrapped around that neck. It wasn't a bright reddish pink like it usually was. That's when things were unusual. “I am telling the truth, I did mean it in my heart, Enniah.” She said.

This confused me.

She read my face of confusion and suddenly seemed panicked. That's when we ran for no reason at all, well I mean there wouldn't have been reason, if we had not to worry of *lightning*. To see Aihdah run for her life, to suddenly fear something. She held her amulet harder than I had ever seen and she was faster than I ever imagined. She lifted her hand and started to part the air above us. She was using incredible power; the blue of the sky was fighting against the dark. And then her Amulet went dark. An amber colored ruby, encased in elegant yellow gold. My heart was racing so fast and I tried to keep up with her. The sky closed back in and the storm grew darker than it previously had. Lightning flashed every few seconds. We had almost made it back, before the largest and nearest lightning bolt I had ever seen, shot across the sky, tearing it in two. It was so bright, the darkness that had been created by the arms and hands of the blackish grey clouds, reversed. For a second when Aihdah looked back at me, her pupils minimized and her face fully lit up, as if the earth was a box light shining up on us. Then as I felt that we were disappearing I heard a voice. "Fiiiind itt Enniah, I am stilllll hereee, don't forrrrgett. I am on your side." It sounded like a whishing crackling voice, without orientation, it was more like the sounds of a distant fire talking to me.

I was short on breath.

I sat up very fast. Just as I did, I believed I witnessed myself in an outer body experience, but within moments I was looking out from my eyes up at the simple ceiling. I did however see what looked to be a ghastly light leaving me behind, floating upwards from just overtop of me and out in a very fast movement, that traveled like a ray of light through the wooden ceiling before vanishing.

I rubbed my forehead. I couldn't believe I had fallen asleep. I had similar dreams in the past about the day, but this seemed exponentially more important and visually clear. At least it wasn't a dream about the other girls trying to make me eat something unusual, like a clay brick or a worm, in an attempt to teach me about it. I just wish I had my crystal necklace, Aihdah would explain everything, wouldn't she have?

I became exhausted again, and darkness pulled me quickly back into a slumber.

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MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

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ZZZZ

...Zzzz

“Enniah!”

I looked up and outward. I wasn't sure how much time had passed because there was no light source from the outside world but it seemed to be many, many, hours. “Yes?” I replied looking in his direction. It was Garry, he had come back.

“What have you done to the door?” he asked.

“I felt trapped and un-safe. You locked me in here!”

“Enniah, we did that for your protection, my gosh you ripped it all apart. Well I suppose that's okay.” He said sternly. He looked at me with puzzling eyes, a deep concern, he almost looked sad. I just didn't know if it was real.

“Why would you have to lock me in here!” I shouted. I listened for sounds alarming outside from insects or birds, but it was so quiet where we were.

“Enniah, what if one of those things wanted to get you? I don't know much more than you do, but if Aihdah thought it was safer with iron bars under the wood, then maybe she fears something that she doesn't want to concern you with, or maybe it was something she was concerned with two-hundred years ago. You can't just rip things apart, she means the best for you, and everyone else who has ever been here. You have to trust her if you are going to learn from her. This is not my job requirement; I like you but it's really not about me.”

I stared at him wondering what he had meant. Did he even realize that he said it? No, the face looking back at me still was pity. *200 years?* He still thought I didn't understand something, or he was concerned for my well being. I just didn't understand what he was thinking or why he didn't realize that Aihdah was concerned with something that existed 200 years ago, or the fact that Aihdah was alive to make decisions at that time.

“You said maybe she thought there was something she was afraid of 200 years ago. What does that mean?”

He looked at me peculiarly. “I mean that anyone in her position... this building has been here a long time, maybe someone did that long before her life, and maybe it wasn't her at all. I must have miss-spoke.”

I nodded. But only because I was scared that they both knew something I hadn't. “You said that she refashioned these rooms. You said she did it, to make them more suitable. Garry if you let me out, ill tell you everything. I don't know if we can trust Aihdah. Please let me out. Maybe she is behind all those terrible things. What if she is bringing those dead people come back to life?”

He closed his eyes and smoothed out the facial hair on the side of his face. “I really don't know what to say.”

“Oh my, you are scared of her.” I complained. I covered my cold face on both sides and knelt to the floor. “You are scared of her too, probably in the ways I get sometimes.” I began to rationalize. I saw the moments where I had witnessed Aihdah's attempts to erase memories with Clinton not long ago with those powerful green eyes, and I also remembered something strange I had written in my hidden diary. I hadn't understood its meaning entirely, it read something like, *when she glares intently and changes her tone, people seem to go awry*. While I thought I had been immune to her efforts, it occurred to me that I very well could have forgotten those times she decided to clean my slate.

There was a crossing of words calling out from my mind's eye, trying to find contact with my vocal chords. The older man with a scattered beard perched his lips to the side while observing my discomfort. I finally found my voice... “We should have left. We should have gone with Clinton. You know what's out there don't *you*? Other people I'm sure like the builders and the caretakers who visit. More strange people like Clinton.”

“I haven't left the manor in years Enniah. I don't know what's out there.”

I should have asked him, but I could tell he was trained very well. “You knew what an ambulance was, I could see it in your eyes.”

He shook his head.

“Why aren’t ambulances or trucks mentioned in *books*?” I asked. Out of everything I read, there was never a mention of digital things, or vessels that humans could navigate with from the inside. None of those things were mentioned, and yet I read about the behavior of electricity. The scariest element of all. “Clinton thought I was the strange one.”

“-What?”

“You were not puzzled. You think Aihdah is hiding something, you take orders from her because you are scared... just like me. I felt so good when she took me in, because this is all I’ve ever known, being lost and starving in the fields, I don’t even remember how old I was! There was a sudden moment of change where the unknowing girl abandoned by a forgotten life was suddenly allowed to live under the company of Aihdah and the others. I was then home schooled, by Aihdah and whoever she left in charge those weeks after being accepted. She discovered that my peers were mistreating me, and she took a liking to me because I stumbled into the chambers of an ancient shrine deep in the valley. It was an accident. When she discovered this, everything changed. She wanted me to be her pupil.

My head began to hurt.

I had normal classes with the other girls then after, and after half of what they called a semester of teaching, Aihdah finally asked me how I did it. How did I enter the shrine? I told her I didn’t know, but that was a lie. That’s when she started teaching me more, in hopes that I would again be able to open the shrine. Instead of my parents holding a special name or my bloodline holding secret powers, Aihdah believed I was one of them who had gotten lost along the way. You know, parents that must have had me in secret or something like that. It was a lie I remembered how I entered. I wanted Marry, that was all. She had her secrets, and although on most days I forgot mine, whenever I checked the hidden place for my diary, I knew I had a mission to re-enter the chamber, and bring Marry back to life. I just needed to be comfortable in attempting to enter the shrine again on my own, or asking Aihdah if such things were possible.

My head began to pound between my temples. I pressed on my temple trying to relieve pressure but it was so sudden. “Alright stop thinking. Relax.”

“I am relaxed.” Replied Garry.

And then I saw him, my world came back to focus.

“It’s just my head. It hurts so badly. I think I’m going to be sick.” I reached out and grabbed the bars holding them for support, my fingers turning from the pressure.

“Try not to think so much and relax. Maybe you are overtired.” said Garry suddenly anxious.

Foot steps were coming from down the hall. I saw her shadow first, and then she spoke. “Don’t alarm her.” I knew the voice well enough. I was still holding my head from the intermittent pains.

“Garry, Move aside please.”

“Yes.” Garry nodded and distressingly stumbled on his own feet in the process of sidestepping her hurried stride.

Aihdah reached for the lock with an outstretched hand fidgeting with the lock. “Key?”

“Aihdah?” I asked allowed. “What happened, what’s going on?”

“I have regained some of my power.”

“How?” I asked. She was wearing the crystal pendant of pinkish color. Right now it had its brighter hue, not necessarily glowing or dark and out of place like it appeared in the dream, however it was worn differently. She wore it in a golden neck piece made of several plates that were made of thin sheets of gold. It looked kind of like a crown for the neck, the amulet fastened to the face of the choker under her chin. There were separations where a single chain link mounted the individual plates of gold allowing the circumference to expand to the width of the neck. This was unlike the simple gold chain it usually hung from. This is when I realized she almost always wore it, and that the amulet itself was moved to different pieces of jewelry. Some days it was tucked in her dress or shirt, sometimes she wore it like she did now, brilliantly bound to her neck in plain sight.

“You’re so, clean. New clothes, you look well rested.” I said.

“As do you.” She replied. Garry handed her the key. “I am sorry for everything that happened.”

Part of me was nervous, and the other half of me was so happy to see her. “You’re okay, your wounds they are healed.”

“Yes, I have restored my power enough to keep weaker spirits away again. We must return to your teaching immediately but after we address some clear problems, and there is so much to discuss, *so much*. I am so sorry.” The door creaked and opened. She looked emotional, sad to see me in such a state. Even her face was glowing full of vitality and color. The metal door opened and she ran to me. “Everything is going to be okay.” Aihdah said while her arms were thrown around me. She just held her position jarred against the bed with me in her arms. I could sense Garry was watching, his shadow still cast from the oil lamp in the hall. It was important for me to notice that Aihdah had not treated me in such a manner since the event under the stone shrine in the valley. She hadn’t shown weakness or sadness of any degree.

“Aihdah, you have to tell me everything.”

“As do you.” She replied instantly, as if she expected me to answer.

“Garry can you fetch me an elixir for Enniah, the best kind.”

Garry’s shadow wavered. Aihdah turned her head from me over the bed.

“-Yes.” Garry replied and walked off in the other direction.

The Amulet of Truth

“Has Garry mentioned anything to you?”

“What do you mean,” I asked.

“Anything unusual, things you didn’t know before?”

“I am not sure I know what you are saying.” I admitted half truthfully. I didn’t know what she meant. She retreated from her embrace, her hands shaking. She stood and pulled the nearby dresser with the broken mirror closer to her, without giving it much more than a glance over. It’s recent destruction and halfway open drawers didn’t cause her to question anything. She sat herself on top of it, the corner closest to me. I did find it unusual that she hadn’t commented on the dismantled door either.

“Look it’s no secret that there are lots of things hidden from you. Tonight was my worst kind of lesson, the worst I’ve received from my mistakes in quite a long while.” Her eyes batted side to side as if justifying this statement. “I could have lost everything, and most importantly you. I could have lost you Enniah.”

Why me of all people I wondered. What about Garry, her other students. Why *me*? *In a way she could have already lost me.* I was starting to wonder if everything I was learning was worth it. If maybe there were other people just down the valley that could have found me. People different than us, and maybe everything would be different. But that would mean so many things I learned would be for nothing. That would mean I never would have met Marry. But she is gone

and all I had was an aching pain in my stomach and deep sorrow from her absence. Maybe I would have been better had I not been here, in fact wouldn't Marry still be alive?

I continued to look at her and she at me, the presence of her mood amplified by the shadows of dim yellow light and her disinterest in the chaos around us. All the questions I wanted her to answer. I'm sure she could see them, circling above me, my energy, she was so good at that. So why didn't she choose to answer them tonight? She would see them, and I was learning to see hers, but that's the thing with Aihdah, she teaches me everything so she knows exactly what I'm looking for. She knows what I'm wondering, and she knows how to hide the answers, or the proof that the same concerns are somehow constantly being refreshed in her mind. So when she teaches me to read people and their signs, well, I expect that she knows how to hide hers.

"I couldn't have predicted this; I am missing part of the equation. I know things have changed along the way, that things went unplanned for me. You won't like everything you learn about me or this place." She frowned. I almost believed she would cry right now. "You started saving information outside of the lessons, which greatly changes the course of our lives. You did it without my knowledge."

"I don't know what you are saying Aihdah." I admitted. "I do have questions, and I want you to answer them." My heart hurt, I believed it actually was pumping stale blood at this point, through my chest and arms. They were shaking. I was finally going to do it and confront her. The cramping and the pain of everything was coming together. "I want you to tell me something." I said wearily.

"Enniah," she sighed, tears actually falling from her face. Aihdah's never cried. She lifted her hand to the pendant supported by the golden choker in the shadow of the doorway. She leaned slightly into the light, and its glass like florescence glowing a bright powerful reddish pink. "Look, you can ask all the questions you want in time, but right now I just need to tell you a few things."

"When? I want to know now." I said. "I want to know if you are capable of raising people from the dead. I want to know if you can help me. I want to know if I should fear you, as Clinton does."

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

“You weren’t meant to meet Clinton for that very reason.”

“Why? You wanted to keep him a secret. What about my spirit guide?”

“I can’t answer any questions yet. I’m not even sure I know all the answers.”

“Why not!?” I asked angered.

“You’re angry?” She said quite blandly.

“Of course I am!”

“There is something I need from you. I need to know how you entered the shrine. I am going to try and allow you to ask questions, but first you need another day of rest and some more training, and then after the test, maybe I can tell you more.”

“Why, what test?”

“After the lessons, I want to test you before showing you larger more important desires you might have.”

“Like what?! What could I possibly want that could lead to more of this?”

Aihdah stood from the broken vanity Mirror. “Look, it’s exciting and scary. I know you wonder about true love. Don’t you? What about helping people, you know that together we can help so many people.”

“Who do I want to help? All I cared about was pleasing you and you can’t even tell me the *truth*.”

“I always tell you the truth! *Always*. I can even demonstrate this. It’s just sometimes people aren’t ready for the truth, sometimes the timing isn’t right and they have to see an order to it. You cared about Marry didn’t you?” Aihdah’s voice was very weak. “Look, this here on my neck. There is something special about it. I will tell you the secrets, all of them like I promised. You just have to hold on a bit longer, and unfortunately the cards fell in a strange arrangement, but maybe for a purpose. I was supposed to teach you everything, then test you, then grant you the award of all the truths you could ever want.”

“All I want is Marry back.”

Aihdah seemed a little distraught with this.

“Was she kind to you, out of all the girls, she was the fairest?”

“Yes,” I started to cry. “She was the fairest. She was more than fair, she taught me things before anyone else, how to stand up for myself.” I sniffled pulling some of the covers over to the side and sitting up. I shook my hand while talking. “She was the only one, out of all those cruel little girls. I remember everything she ever said.”

“You think you do,” Aihdah sighed. “But the mind forgets.”

“No, I remember everything.”

“Every *word*?”

I just stared into her mesmerizing eyes. “I think I do.”

“It must have been very important, but I still think you will find that you only remember the most noteworthy of the situation, your mind forgets things to leave room for growth.”

“I don’t get it. Am I allowed to leave?”

“Leave where, this room?”

“That, what about the whole estate. What if I just want to be an ordinary girl now. I don’t want to be a Marter.”

“Enniah, I captured Gracious Last night. What happened here. It’s all madness and chaos, but there was a reason for it I think. I can’t be as certain as I felt before, but I captured him, when I could have been erased by him or worse, taken into his army. You think those little girls were bad on the hillside, they were nothing compared to the evil of Gracious. We stopped him together, at least for now. There is more that needs to be done immediately before he starts regaining energy and power. I need your help and trust.

“I don’t trust you.”

“Enniah, I can prove it to you, the truth. But I need you to go with me. I need help with one last thing and while you help me, I can answer your questions at the exact same time. But I

know you have lied to me, which I have never done to you yet. I have reframed from telling you everything at once... but I have not told a lie.”

“Impossible. Look at you, there is so much your hiding. You can’t explain anything, people despise you. My angel, my guardian angel, spirit guide, something moved beyond the physical world gifted permissions by something much higher than us, has challenged me in my trust of you. He had good reason’s I think.”

“Enniah if you help me now, you will learn the truth, and maybe I can help you. Maybe I can bring Marry back.”

“What do you mean, bring Marry back?” My heart exploded, my chest was heavy however, I was scared even. Like every word was going to be chased by some kind of repercussion or counter balance to the good I had just heard.

“The problem here, is that you have been tainted by things. What if I was allowed to just tell one lie, for the lie you have given me?” Asked Aihdah standing passionately. “I think that’s it, it took me a long time to come to this conclusion, but I realized it now. If we are going to play by fairness, as if we are keeping score, fine. You lied to me.”

“Bullshit!” I yelled. “When have I lied?” I walked towards the door. It was left open just a hair. **I lied needed to get you to help raise my power to erase the tainted memories you had created. Then I needed to open the chamber in order to fight gracious at full power, he was placed in a binding spell to keep him in the small creature.**

“You said you wouldn’t sneak into the library or any other places of this home. You had to come out to meet Clinton. The disturbance altered my ability to bring power back to me. I made mistakes that never had to occur.

“I’ve captured Gracious.”

“Gracious,” I asked superstitiously. “The strong spirit you feared?”

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

There's a few basic rules that set forth everything, that life is just the existence of tiny building blocks trying to organize themselves in response to these rules.

The Heat Death of the Universe

The forbidden laws if broken to a planet would kill the planet

What happens when the power is unleashed causes the reactions and the end of entropy to that planet.

Enniah has to answer questions of truth- So Aihdah offers the Amulet to Enniah, not realizing how powerful it makes her. She finally asks about Marry, the entirety of why she chose her. First she asks where she came from. Enniah Tells a lie, and without knowing why she's gaining power loses it all in a single moment, which allows Aihdah to regain control and take the amulet back.

"Aihdah, what happened to Marry? Please tell me. I beg you."

Enniah, you know I never lie to you, I have nothing to benefit from it. I literally believe you are everything important to me. We had some terrible things happen the past few days, but things that were inevitable. We don't know how Gracious got to our location so quickly."

"Why are the spirits so mad?" I asked. "Why does my face-less spirit guide, tell me that the world despises you."

“I DO NOT KNOW OF YOUR FACELESS SPIRIT WHO WHISPERS HIS DESIRES IN YOUR EAR!” She roared.

I stuttered and limped backwards. I had never seen Aihdah so angry in my entire life.

“I couldn’t possibly explain everything in my universe to you now, there isn’t enough time. But he is a part of something much larger, a collection of which I do not fully understand, but he can only help you in the ways he believes are best. If you trust his actions more than mine, then I do not know what to say, you can only trust the people you wish too. You are learning to much information at once, without time to understand it all, and you will gain emotions in favor of another viewpoint.”

“You can’t accept that, that someone wants to look at the world differently than you?”

“It’s not one person or one soul Enniah, if it was it wouldn’t be an issue. It’s the people that are against me that think that way and that’s why it matters. You will fall to my enemy.”

“And who is that?”

“Enniah, I am revered for being extremely powerful, I am dis-obeying the desires of a few who control the entire world, places far beyond earth, I have discovered ways to break the rules of a world that is meant to be fully controlled by the likes of these few individuals, it maddens them that I can do whatever I want, when I am at my strongest point, and they view me as a threat. I have a mission Enniah, I am going to make it so every single human being, every dog, every little girl, every testosterone filled boy, can act on their wishes, and the repercussions of their actions will only be dealt with by the world around them. But imagine further, that you didn’t have to answer to the cravings. Pretend that you never grew hungry. Pretend that for some reason, you didn’t have to experience negative emotion to later experience the casual likeliness of joy. They think that because I can escape their control, that I cannot be tamed. They think that they should be able to kill people whenever they want, and they cannot kill me. They believe they should be able to choose the paths for souls, and choose the wants and needs in my next life and yours, and the strangers you never met. They believe that this is a sandbox, a place for humans to play, but only with who they want.”

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

“Who, is they?” I asked, among all the expression she had, all that seemed to facilitate importance was the individuals she believed had a say over everything’s existence.

“All I know is what the other girls told me that day.”

“What did they say, did they tell you that they mistreated me and that they made fun of me because you never taught me the differences between things. That you never taught me why

Aihdah would typically need to be really concerned for what Enniah would ask her, but she should never have to ask the questions under normal circumstances, but the single evening makes her ask more questions. Her spirit guide

Sacrifice

Not being able to erase outside influence specifically Clinton and what he says.

I pictured Marry

The next day or so they rest Aihdah’s body in a warm bed and she seems to be in a comma state. Enniah starts piecing together the dog and the wolf, needs to find the sword. Discovers Gracious is still here. He was the mouse.

Things that are valuable to story for engagement-

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Introducing love characters or next book prior to tomb

****things need to return to normal. Back to classes learning a schedule.

Witness Aihdah committing to the wolf, after she befriends it

During this time Enniah can figure out the wolf thing, Faceless can come back, (dreams)
She still needs to have the final test.

The truth amulet lets Enniah ask if there is a way to bring Marry Back,

Enniah witnesses the truth of Enniah, and that she originally intended to take Enniah's soul, and place it in captivity and to use Enniah's body for her next life. Make

Genome

Biological teleportation

Writing DNA from a distance biological

Synthetic Cell

Pre Organized

Digitized Dna Code Rna Proteins or Viruses (net flix)

DBC

Activated genes by choice

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Clinton –

Aihdh – in the wolf

Faceless- tears aihdah from the wolf

Paladete

Grounds Keeper

-Aihdah is the dog- next time she is the wolf

-Paladete is killed by the blast add this scene. Enniah has the ability to rewind time as long as she is joined with (planetary aligned zodiac faceless and characters from next novel. She goes back in time to alter only the breaking of the room window from that master bedroom so Paladete can survive, this interferes with nothing else. But why would Paladete be knocked out anyway from a soul blast?)

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THE AMULET OR TRUTH : You can ask Aihdah anything you want. Choose your own adventure / Mobil app interaction scheme. Question< Answer

Have you ever killed Someone? Yes.

Have you ever erased my Memory? I Have.

Have you ever wanted to erase my memory? No, in the fact that I never intended to have to. I always wished that my efforts worked the first time, that your experiences would lead you on the right path, but I have made mistakes, and you have wandered from the path I wished you to take.

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How many people have you killed? I don't remember.

Have you ever erased input <character name>'s memory?

Have you ever transfigured into a dog? Yes.

Have you ever transfigured into a wolf? Yes.

Do you know who Faceless is? No I do not know who he is. > How do you know Faceless is a male? The spiritual energy is of masculine origin.

Do spirits have a sexual orientation? A spirit is actually a connection to something else, often the result of unintended purpose has an orientation of direction, in human written spiritual text, these directions are labeled the male and female spirit which can exist together or independently with one outshining the other, and when applied to the life of living cells, the directional outcome is decided prior by genetic code, the way new genes are expressed are the result of this input during cell growth and creation. When they form, the masculine direction expresses certain genes, and the feminine expression gives rise to other tendencies and gene expression. These two labeled expressions would be similar to the south pole and north pole on a magnet, but this doesn't imply that there are only two directions. It's important to note that my answers are limited to your vocabulary. How you understand what each and every individual letter means or has understanding is demonstrated and contemplated by the observer.

Can you bring Marry back? I can resurrect or call out to Marry's soul, and give her life again. > Are you telling the whole truth? I can give Marry another form of life or beginning, and you will be able to see her spirit in the physical realm. > Will she be the same, will she remember me? She will not be the same in the manner you expect, as her experiences form who she is, but we can make her remember.

What is a spirit? A spirit is actually just a connection to something else. Your expressions are left behind in fragments across the physical existence. Your interactions on a quantum level make changes to an environment. The way this connection is utilized is similar to the effect of pushing electrons through an insulated conductor, the end result of the flow is that the electron at one end of the conductor, effects the electron where the destination of both electrons would go.

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

The one moves in relation to the other at the same time because one directly relates to the movement of the other, even though they are not connected to one single expressive atom. Similarly, if you were to pull one end of a rope, the other would follow. The information passed through happens on both ends, because it is shared. A spiritual connection is the processing and transmission of a distant input, that is permitted to interact with the 1st 2nd 3rd and 4th dimensions.

Punch zombie in face

Make joke Clinton sees-

She learned it from Saidey and Marry

Dog attacks and tears throat from zombie

Disappears lots of thinking about past and foreshadowing.

They need to go to hospital- Aihdah shows up ten minutes later- the spirits are purged They just need to heal, and in clinton's case - escape. The zombie was faceless (imbued)- and when the zombie is destroyed a sparkling ball of light flies off from the zombie- this is faceless again in his spirit form- and there will be clues. The Mouse was Aihdah, traversing beneath Enniah when the spirit is passing- she needs to get to the Dogs body to destroy the attacker, and the possibility of Faceless interfering with her work again.

When Aihdah returns to state that everything will be okay- Blondie proposes to take Enniah to the hospital (and himself for his ribs and wounds, and also for mental evaluation of ENniah but doesn't vocally explain address this, and Enniah agrees and wants to see the outside world.) Aihdah needs a way to control the situation and track them but faceless or another realm

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of needed attention comes up and she MUST tend to it. (Also Rehabilitation Room is still unset from last purge.) Also Lukhawrn is still present. Clinton leverages against staying in the estate in a manor that forces Aihdah to reconsider this level of control. She is still too weak to have another fight and Clinton has the magical sword that is now activated and he threatens her and Enniah is still protective of Aihdah, but Clinton makes a deal, or threatens to truly commit to killing Aihdah if she does not permit leave. Aihdah understands that this is an ultimate death and that even another body couldn't save her and she would lose all progress with Project Enniah. (After purge the sword dial rotates and becomes a powerful soul bound weapon for smiting spirits and living alike.)

-library coolness side notes – Sword of souls – how it works

Library test flash back next chapter 9 when Aihdah begins teaching Enniah, and also returning her memories from previously erased life.

-Enniah is the perfect soul- she holds the powers for true love and connection to the ancient blood- also a chapter in the library and foreshadowing to the previous book MIND LEAK A tale of Supernatural things.

Enniah experiences technology for the first time (very cool experience and will make it limited for fun factors in the next book) and a hospital and possibly foreshadows the next book by meeting main characters possibly Doctor Edmund, and also Matthew.

A True Act of Creation:

I was too pained to actually accomplish anything. I was devious now. I wanted answers that I didn't have and I wanted to know why Aihdah had them. There was a book propped open on the long table at the entrance of the library. I briefly remember it having to do with spelling and literature. Still nothing of the Marter sort, this I knew. I placed my head down on the table thinking about everything. The running. My clenched fist colliding with Saidey. Was that why this happened? What would have happened if I had just taken it like I always had. What if I didn't fight. I thought about how I had stricken Saidey. What she and others said to me. Upon these thoughts I drifted, my jaw clenched and a hand tightened similarly. Candle light above made the shadows of stacked books upon the aged table dance around my arm and tattered hair.

“I want you to think of something that doesn't already exist, and then I want you to describe it to me.” – Aihdah

I veer around contemplating this sentence and its meaning. Everything immediately flooding to me exists, in fact the abnormality in this notion is what is so bizarre, I'm trying not to think of things that exist, and its as if every memory of existing things came barging through the back door of my mind.

“Like something I haven't seen before?”

– Aihdah nods, she takes the green book with the hand sketched asp on its spine, and tucks it under her arm. With the other she gather's the parchment paper.

“You wouldn't have seen it, but I want you to take your time. Come to me when you have your answer. Make sure it doesn't exist, *at all.*”

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Enniah fails the first time.

Aihdah said she had ways of teaching me faster than her other students, and had there been a reason for me to engage in the higher purpose of Marter teachings, that she would teach me everything that I had missed from being absent from any particular schooling. Aihdah sometimes told me that I was purposely blocked from other things and that in time the reasoning for it would be shown to me.

After Life 2

It's so much simpler than people make it out to be. I hate blind people the most, the ones who don't believe in souls and things like that. I hate when they don't believe in anything. I'd rather you believe in something than nothing, even if it's sort of wrong, but for the sake of your brain size I hope it is at least somewhat tangible. The worst part is when people disclaim the belief of anything because of their so called knowledge and science, and really they haven't got a clue in the slightest bit. I hear them all, in restaurants and grocery stores, shopping malls. Places like this, not that I spend much time here. I've only just recently explored the new world, and it sickens me. I was so excited, but this part of my trip or my placement in time rather, is severely testing me.

To resist bumping into this woman standing in front of me with intentions of knocking her food order to the floor, it is a feat all on its own. All of this emotion and self-ridicule is for some cheap french-fries and a soft drink in the fourth line over in a crowded food court. I stare out at the large red sign with golden arches and a dark beverage they call a Coke. The restaurant sign reads: *Enjoy Happiness*. I hate it here, even their words are stupid.

Saying this sort of denial has been a disappointment is an understatement. It's actually embarrassing, a point to wear I want to cry sometimes. To see someone absolutely coherent dismiss you over and over again, to test everything you have acquired through the personal experience with what they believe, it's painful in the stomach. I turn red in the face, I feel hot to the head, dizzy and overwhelmed. Could everything I learned be wrong, no... and they're thinking the same thing. So what do you do then? First if you're going to say you're an atheist, a skeptic, or a person who will die and turn to dust as one without a new beginning, or rather some sort of existing follow up is absurd to my thinking. I just want to tell these people that if they

don't believe in the life after death that they are soulless and their life is meaningless and they should just go die.

That would be terrible though, because the soulless could quite easily exist, and in larger numbers than previously thought possible as modern society continues to implore itself into the mechanical existence. As science grows, people and their machines will co-exist, and they will learn to replicate their bodies without spiritual resurrection on a genetic level, and this does not mean that the things they will create will be a necessary evil, for they could be quite kind, it would just be that they wouldn't be able to permit a soulful life. If only I could explain this to the people who laugh at me in our three minute conversations. No, they still wouldn't believe because they are too busy making fun of my clothing, or snickering at the way I talk with my hands, the language I use and the order in which I use it, apparently even the way I walk is strange. It's as if everyone thinks I have dropped from the sky and the mother ship left without me.

If those without souls reproduce, then eventually there is a possibility that many would become soulless, which is all. For some, this may be concerning if they fear an end to the truth and the core of our existence, and for others, un-doubtedly the soulless, this would be just fine even without them knowing about it, which is the worst part, because existence without souls is quite meaningless. The entirety of existence in the third dimension or with our physical bodies and war and fast food- it's all just preparation for the real test that follows, all this is, this place, is a precursor to the truth, and some sort of consciousness has created a machine if you will, to test us and prepare us for what will truly come.

The table turning- when Aihdah eventually explains the real problem with the prison for souls, the spreading of soulless beings becomes a good consideration, until people start to wonder if perhaps it is better here.

I didn't know the name of a solid material building block once, named a brick, and as punishment they made me eat it. I remember trying it against my teeth, and everyone laughing at me. I knew it was too hard, and if I failed at what they would ask they would do much worse

things. I eventually ended up smashing the brick with a rock until it was small deposits of clay and grain, and I ate it with grass. Needless to say I had a terrible stomachache and nearly died, but it wasn't the first time they had me eat something in hopes of teaching me its name.

“I want you to think of something that doesn't already exist, and then I want you to describe it to me.” – Aihdah

I veer around contemplating this sentence and its meaning. Everything immediately flooding to me exists, in fact the abnormality in this notion is what is so bizarre, I'm trying not to think of things that exist, and its as if every memory of existing things came barging through the back door of my mind.

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“You wouldn't have seen it, but I want you to take your time. Come to me when you have your answer. Make sure it doesn't exist, *at all*.”

- Perform a true act of creation. Impossible.

“We are the applications. We take what is existing, and we modify it, but only by reconstructing what already exists, therefore we are indeed, caged, with a limited amount of possibilities. Look at yourself, you seem masterful, we seem masterful as a species. In the past your acceptance of other standing up right beings in theory and thought seemed improbable. But it isn't, the greatest of evolved beings will stand tall, they will have hands, and they will

manipulate what they can with their minds and their hands. They will take it further first with their technology before the essence of time and gravity will ever pull their shapes to a higher form, and this Enniah, is where we are now. The present.”

“But still here, I don’t see it as clearly as you.”

“You will.”

“How, with so many possibilities, so many elements, so many combinations, why this form?”

Gravity, the planets size, the feeding, the necessity, the athletics, the brain, it is all relevant. There will be some abstruse creatures, but the path is clear, those who can first accept the environment in memory, and apply change physically, will be the first to inherit the ability to make change, and with the ability to make change, the requirement to compete against those who can make change will grow, and when it does the existence of memory and those connections will prove most dominant, and memory in the purest form is intelligence, with the exercise of those changes and the desire to push those ambitions to survive, the mappings of those intelligent structures will solidify the physical structure onto their children and smaller forms that exist only to replicate evolution and what exists to carry soulful beings and the active environment around them. And those structures inheriting the mappings of mixed predecessors before them become more coherent and more abundant through reproduction and natural selection through the repetition of all those mentioned above through both the death of themselves, environment, and the competitive desire to survive.

(Aihdah may lie and say that the universe is a lie, and that the universe is just a projection, humans being the development of those listed above, only through permission of changing past present and future are able to modify those changes at one point in time, by actively re visiting a specific time period and making modifications. The access to time travel is through a few different ways, one space time travel, and the other teleportation, and the third possible theory relating to the speed of one independent consciousness observing the movement of surroundings to be slower or faster than the environment of the individual observer. (Much in the way that time moves faster (without an observer) for denser objects to the information being

larger actually takes more time to process than less dense obstacles that can enter shorter actions of code to finish constructive possibility through quantum.)

- A plague branded to most created beings with the act of thinking- to perceive the ultimate form, for whom or what remains to be discovered by those created, at least on earth. During this search for such forms, another group of benevolent beings, who may have or may not have connections with the creator(s) of the physical dimension, and the underlying metaphysical that forms those invisible lines, like cellular communication and electricity, and opposites and math- have generated enough information and knowledge to create a passage or place in which they control the foundation underlying those two fields, and here they challenge us with a technology so advanced that the connections in the human brain alone cannot manipulate the information in a computable way without the source, for us, or any of the living world, we would need to join our thoughts together, and take roles to understand the value of this formula and its parts to decipher it whether with individual specialty studies, or with supercomputing. The number of combinations through connections in the brain is exceeded by the common foundation of nature. Neither is required to accept its existence or to question it, only the idea of association and comparing are required.

Adding is to create, but to create in which already exists. Subtracting is to subtract one from another, what already exists what is there, or what can be *imagined*. Imagination is the ability to recall information from the past, and add isolated memories preexisting, current, or achieved through adding and multiplication, and the difference. Multiplication multiplies what exists. Division divides what was once there. Everything that exists has to have a negative, or an opposite, in order to exist at all. A thing that exists can continue in a line, and the line will always be infinite in both directions, until proven otherwise.

Electricity is a constant, but there is still a positive and a negative charge. Softness has hardness. Fast has slow, just like forward has backward. Time- Time is a fabrication; it only exists because of the objects passing by one another and the active reaction. Color is actually a

MIND LEAK: AFTERLIFE

line that goes from negative to positive, or positive to negative, depending on where you start. Light will have dark, like warm will have cold. If I were to place us as a point on a grid, I would place existence just above the line, in the goldilocks zone. Like if you could continue past one million degrees Celsius, you would eventually come back around to very cold, instead of a segment, you would have a circle partaking in the two dimensional grid, perhaps it is an illusion, like the three dimensional world.

Why three red blue yellow? If you need a line that doesn't end in both directions to carry the elements of positive and negative, if blue yellow red are connected, how do they stand alone to create the colorful world? They must all be in the same line for it to work...

If imagination is creation, we are limited to only the memory in which we have recorded, the imagination resulting from the mathematical implications of the memory previously taken in. The universe has a set value, a number of existing variables our mind is allowed to borrow and take in to form our memory and our creations. This would mean that the universe holds all of the existing possibilities.

A cubic inch of vacuumed air space related as a variable in existing matter cannot exist as zero, unless the universe is infinite.

There might be a shape to represent the implications of the physical world, it has to consist of a line or multiple lines that join together, however flow respectively like electricity, so a sphere like shape using a grid to join them would be ideal, but perhaps it is the *Taurus* or the *triple Taurus, for the power of three.*

10/ 22/14 Perhaps rather, it is like a tile with 4 symmetrical main directions with eight symmetrical folds, there would be four 'ears' on each angle, that would not portray to the divisibility or equality of symmetry (except for its exact opposite), this would be where the sources of nature would come in above zero, and there it would stay due to the inability to drop in one major direction. It would be similar to $x > 0$ but less than D (D the highest possible

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location on the ear), which would have a variable field where the fold weaves in and out before returning to the line of symmetry 0.

8

K

M O -an oval has a unique system of symmetry where at the corners a fold would place one side higher in the negatives where vice versa the opposite would be in the positives

E

Dream 18

Spiral of possibility is the end

Sacrifice undercover with a military group, we use my truck to strap explosives to a unit (not sure what but it blows a hole in a defense grid) It will blow almost all of our cover- even though what brought us to this group or organization in the first place was some sort of union for a better cause, we need to escape and this also allows someone conceived to be evil out again, and one of the high ranking military advisors gives us clearance to do this and he knows he is sacrificing himself to the obvious guilty verdict, (so the act makes a clear suspicion to his part) my part is less guilty, and the base was built in our home town in Stuyvesant Falls. One of the pillars of this defense grid is built into the Stuyvesant falls power plant that was inactive for years. He allows the pillar to explode and I have the ability to return and leave the unit on foot, in a chance to still not be a part of the act. hold some form of trust and can still be used on the

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inside for a small part of time if I am not seen at the site, (I must have had a roll there) and I walk out of the vehicle when we slow down (it has no doors.) I need to get to my small truck for a second attack. I walk home. I own a garage where my parents house used to be and that house is still there but this is an add on. I bought a cheap pick up truck we could use to equip explosives and take out a second pillar. It's a rusty 80's ford ranger category with a tow attachment arm. (maybe there are pillars everywhere.) the idea is that we can make an opening in the "grid."

The grid might be what is connecting consciousness to the higher power, and by breaking the connection the thoughts of those people in the grid have time to escape. The momentum of knowledge shouldn't be known.

To break out of the prison the belief and total truth of something has to be known by a character to crush some other known element of the accepted laws of physics. It means this person has to overwrite an audience or find a hole in that audience large enough to create a new truth.

Opening the dimensional door requires to create a physical reality with more than four cardinal directions and the depth of space.

"Pray fervidly to Him who alone has the power to create new hearts, to give you that which will make you capable of great things that I have to teach you, and to inspire me to withhold from you none of the mysteries of Nature. Pray. Hope. I eulogise the eternal wisdom which has been placed in my soul and wish to disclose to you its ineffable truths. And you will be lucky, my son, if nature has placed in your soul the resolution that these high mysteries will demand of you. You will learn to command all Nature. God alone will be your master, and the enlightened Will alone be your equal. The supreme intelligences will glory in obeying your desires. The Demons will not dare to be found where you are. Your voice will make them tremble in the pits of the abyss, and all the invisibles who inhabit the four elements will The Black Pullet - Science of Magical Talismans. esteem themselves happy to administer to your pleasures. I adore you oh Great God for having enthroned man with so much glory, and having established him as sovereign monarch of all the works made by your hands. "Do you feel, my son, do you feel this heroic ambition which is the sure stamp of the children of wisdom? Do you dare to desire to serve only the one

God and to dominate over all that is not God? Have you understood what it is to prove to be a man and to be unwilling to be a slave since you are born to be a Sovereign? And if you have these noble thoughts, as the signs which I have found on your physiognomy do not permit me to doubt, have you considered maturely whether you have the courage and the strength to renounce all the things which could possibly be an obstacle to attaining the greatness for which you have been born?" At this point he stopped and regarded me fixedly as if waiting for an answer, or as if he were searching to read my heart. I asked him, "What is that which I have to renounce?" "All that is evil in order to occupy yourself only with that which is good. The proneness with which nearly all of us are born to vice rather than to virtue. Those passions which render us slaves to our senses which prevent us from applying ourselves to study, tasting its sweetness, and gathering its fruits. You see, my dear son, that the sacrifice which I demand of you is not painful and is not above your powers; on the contrary, it will make you approach perfection as near as it is possible for man to attain. Do you accept that which I propose?" "Oh my Father," I answered, "nothing conforms more to my desires than that one should choose propriety and virtue." "It suffices," answered the old man. "Before unfolding to you completely the doctrine which will initiate you into the mysteries, which are most profound and the most sacred, you must understand that the elements are inhabited by very perfect creatures. The immense space between heaven and earth has inhabitants far more noble than the birds and the gnats. The vast seas have many other hosts than the whales and dolphin. It is the same in the depths of the earth which contains other things than water and minerals, and the element of fire, more noble than the other three, has not been created to abide there useless and empty. The air is full of an unnumbered multitude of beings with human form—a little proud in appearance but in effect docile and great lovers of the sciences; subtle but obliging to the great Mages and enemies of the foolish and the ignorant: these are the sylphs. The seas and rivers are the habitat of the Ondines, the earth is full practically to the center of Gnomes, guardians of the treasures and the precious stones. These are the ingenious friends of man and easy to command. They supply to the children of the Magicians all moneys of which they have need and only ask payment for their services in the glory of being commanded. "As for the Salamanders, the inhabitants of the fire regions, they serve the philosophers, but they do not seek the attention of their company. "I could also talk about the familiar spirits: Socrates, as well as Pythagoras and a few other wise men, had his. I have one also; he is near me when I have need of him. This will no doubt seem strange to you, but even if your eyes do not convince you of the truth, you will be able to believe it if you have any confidence in Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Proclus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Ptolemy, Trismegistus and other wise men to whose enlightenment one must add those who give us the natural knowledge. "It remains for me to speak to you of the Talismans, those magic circles, which will give you the power to command all the elements, to avoid all the dangers, all the snares of your enemies, and to assure you the success of all your enterprises and the fulfillment of your wishes." He arose, opened a chest which was at the foot of his bed, and took out a cedarwood box covered in gold veneer and enriched with diamonds of an extraordinary brilliance. The lock on which was engraved hieroglyphic characters was also of gold. He opened this casket, and I saw a large quantity of talismans and rings which were enriched with diamonds and engraved with magical and cabalistic symbols. It was impossible to look at them without being dazzled. "You see, my son, each one has its virtue, its peculiar virtue, but to make use of it you must understand the language of the Magicians in order to pronounce the mysterious words engraved thereon. I will teach them to you before working with you on the great performance with the spirits and the animals who

are submissive to my authority and who obey me blindly. 'You will see when you have been initiated into all these mysteries of how many errors the majority of those who pretend to be servile to nature have been guilty. They love the truth and believe they have discovered it by means of abstract ideas and lose their way in the faith of a reason of which they do not know the limits. "The vulgar or common people do not see over the world in which they live other than an arch of glittering light during the day and a scattering of stars during the night. These are the limited ones of the universe. Certain of the philosophers have seen more and have increased (their knowledge) up to nearly the present time to the point of affrighting our imagination. Further, what prodigious work is offered at one stroke to the human spirit! Employ eternity even to survey it; take the wings of dawn, fly to the planet Saturn in the skies which extend over this planet. You will find without ceasing new spheres, new orbs, worlds accumulating one above another. You will find infinity in matter, in space, in movement, in the number of nuances and shades which adorn them. As our souls expand with our ideas and assimilate in a certain manner the objects which they penetrate, how much then must a man become elated at having penetrated the inconceivable profundities. I am an upstart thanks to wisdom, and you will reach this point too." He arose and took up several manuscripts which were on the table. "These precious books, my dear son, will acquaint you with things unknown to the rest of humanity and which will seem never to have existed. These books escaped the fire of the library of Ptolemy. They have received some The Black Pullet - Science of Magical Talismans. damage, as you see; in effect, several pages have been blackened by the fire. "Ah well! It is by the knowledge which I have been able to draw from these works that I have the authority to command all the beings who inhabit the aerial and terrestrial regions, known and unknown to man. "Oh my son! Prostrate yourself before the Divinity, deplore in His presence the errors of the human spirit, and promise Him to be as virtuous as it is possible for a man to be. Guard against studying moral philosophy in the ignorant writings of the multitudes, in the schemes produced by the heat of the imagination, by the restlessness of the spirit, or by the desire for celebrity which torments their authors. Seek guidance in those works where, having no other interest than truth or other aim than public usefulness, they render to morals and to virtue the homage which they have deserved in all times and from all peoples." I listened to this good old man with an admiration mixed with respect; he had stopped speaking and I thought I heard him still. A sweet majesty reigned in all his features, and the persuasion seemed to pour from his lips like a limpid stream running down a slope to fertilize the prairies. He noticed my admiration which was akin to ecstasy. "My dear son," he said, "I pardon your astonishment. You have until now lived in the society of men who are corrupt, who have learnt to doubt everything and to forget the respect which one owes to Him who has brought forth all from nothing. Wisdom for them a meaningless difficulty, but as you learn it, it will become for you a practical virtue. You will look on it as something very simple, as natural to you as the air you breathe and as necessary to you for your existence. Your wounds are healing. Tomorrow I will commence your education in wisdom, and I will give you the first lesson. I am now going to my aviary to feed my prisoners." "What!", I said to him. "Your prisoners! With your philosophy and the love of humanity which characterizes you, do you deprive living creatures of their liberty?" He smiled at my observation. "My dear son, that which I do is necessary to facilitate my mysterious operations, but the destiny of those submissive to my laws is perhaps sweeter than if they enjoyed complete liberty. Besides, they have never known the prize and so cannot desire it. Tomorrow you will have the answer to all these enigmas. He then left me to enter the cave where he had led me when he showed me the chests filled with gold and precious stones. Soon he came back. I got up. He told me to approach the

awning so that we could eat something before going to sleep. He picked up the papers that were on the table. He took a seat and told me to sit by his side. I obeyed, but as I did not see any food, he laughingly added that this food was not very substantial but that in a moment I would see that he had cooks and slaves equally clever and intelligent. He immediately pronounced these words: Ag, Gemenos, Tur, Nicophanta, and blew three times on a ring which he had on his finger. Immediately the place was lit up by seven chandeliers of rock The Black Pullet - Science of Magical Talismans. crystal which appeared from the void. Nine slaves entered bringing various viands on golden plates and wine in vessels of the greatest richness. Incense burned in tripods, and celestial music could be heard. Everything was placed on the table in the most beautiful order, and the slaves stood to attention around us to serve.

What is absolute truth? Is someone is wrong when their brain tells them they are right? What if in their universe they are right and they are rewarded with it. What if to everything they know to be true, is proven by more truths of their own.

What if when two people explain their beliefs and they are both right?

Opinions. I mean if I tell you I know that this will make you more attractive. Dressing fitted. Clean. Its true for one person and not for another? How can this be. How can two physical objects have different identities from two observers if they have the same information at the source. An atomic structure has perfect variables. Why would you have two results from a observer if the object is absolute.

Why can a few written words mean something for one specimen and to another they cannot be felt or read.

What if I tell you to do a flip, and you say you know you can land it, but you land on your back. What does it mean to be wrong? You landed on your back and not your feet, you couldn't have been right. How can we make calculations that are so vastly incorrect and absolute truths to someone else? We can guess. But is that what we are always doing? When we record something for its color, and we recall differently, is their always a margin of error?