

HB / Son of Tamerran

# Half-Breed: Son of Tamerran

Book: 1

Elisha Cathey

HB / Son of Tamerran

© 2023 Elisha Cathey. All rights reserved.

This book is a work of fiction. Any names, characters, companies, organizations, places, events, locales, and incidents are either used in a fictitious manner or are fictional.

Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, actual companies or organizations, or actual events is purely coincidental.

For rights and permissions, please contact:

Elisha Cathey

1-202-507-2829

halfbreedseries@gmail.com

# To my Father and the Choco Man!

I dedicate this book to my father who supported me by paying for the initial cost of the contract for this book, as well as my grandfather who was the first to read the first draft of the manuscript.

Thank you for believing in my ambitions and supporting me through the many, many months of editing. It means the world to me.

## Special Thanks

I would like to thank the following for creating the illustrations of this book.

- Kenydi Cross, the first artist of Team Half-Breed and the one who helped create the foundations and final renders of the illustrations you see in this book. She also drew all the faces for all the characters in this book.
- Benjamin Boswell, the artist who laid the groundwork for the direction of the art style for the illustrations, as well as being the one who detailed all the pieces you will see in this book.
- Loida R. Jimenez, the miracle that came at the last moment to help us complete the illustrations of the book on time by drawing the rest of the foundations while helping complete the final renderings with speed and dedication.

To the ones who supported this project with donations, I would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for doing so. Especially you, Babushka! And you as well, Burris Family.

Thank you all, I will always be grateful for your dedication and sacrifice.

# Table of Content

## HB / Son of Tamerran

The Prophecy-----	7
Prologue - A Warm Ending-----	9
Chapter 1 - The Rebel-----	19
Chapter 2 - The House of Tamerran-----	53
Chapter 3 - An Unexpected Surprise-----	81
Chapter 4 - The Agatte Estate-----	93
Chapter 5 - Childhood Friends-----	117
Chapter 6 - The Invitation-----	149
Chapter 7 - The Beginning of Academia-----	171
Chapter 8 - An Unpleasant Surprise-----	191
Chapter 9 - The Proposal-----	209
Chapter 10 - Strange Encounters-----	227
Chapter 11 - The Cultural Exchange Student-----	255
Chapter 12 - The Turning Point-----	283
Chapter 13 - Strange Changes-----	315
Chapter 14 - The Return to Academia-----	343
Chapter 15 - A Good Deed-----	365
Chapter 16 - A Meeting in the Meadow-----	399
Chapter 17 - Dreams of a Forgotten Past-----	431
Chapter 18 - Visions and Nightmares-----	445
Chapter 19 - At the Heart of Hell's Mountain-----	479
Chapter 20 - Racing on the Edge-----	505
Chapter 21 - Duel of Fate-----	537
Chapter 22 - A Meeting Between Families-----	571
Chapter 23 - Dangerous Visitors-----	591
Chapter 24 - The Winter Festival-----	619
Chapter 25 - Hellfire-----	643
Chapter 26 - Night of the Blood Moon-----	654
Chapter 27 - The Huntress Returns-----	679
Half-Breed: Rogue Hunter // Book 2-----	707
About the Author-----	709

# The Prophecy

I see a Warrior rising up from the ashes to face two distinct paths. On the right, a path of treachery, pain, and suffering. To the left, a path of power, vengeance, and temptation.

The road he walks is made of sharp stones and jagged thorns. The load he carries is heavy and unforgiving.

He is made of two distinct bodies. One made of wind, leaves, and light. The other, made of thunder, fire, and metal. With these bodies separate, he can stand. When they are united, he is unstoppable.

He is one who has lived two distinct lives. One, a feared warrior; the other, a noble prince. One ending in heroic sacrifice; the other ending in horrific tragedy.

The Warrior is a Half-Breed, bearing the mark of two Nations, born from the union of two Guardians. A bridge between two Worlds.

He is given two distinct choices.

To rise up against an Ancient Power that predates Creation itself in order to protect a world that hated and rejected him; a world that ripped him from his mother's arms, soiled his father's name, betrayed his kindness, hunted him down, and persecuted his very existence.

Or...

To join hands with the Ancient One to unleash his bitter hatred against the world that abused him; to lay waste to the land that attacked him at every turn and stripped away his chance of peace and happiness; to raise the Sword of Extinction against his accusers and their armies; to hunt down his adversaries and drag

their souls to the Abyss, casting them down into eternal suffering, laying waste to their legacies.

He is the Chosen Warrior.

He will have many voices to guide him, and many perspectives to see through. But the choice will be his and his alone.

The choice to fight for Agarath or against it. To show mercy or wrath. To follow the narrow path of the Almighty. Or to walk a path of his own design.

The world will try to prevent his existence and to destroy any chance of his conception. But it will be in vain. For he is inevitable.

He is the Savior and Destruction of Agarath, and her fate is within his hands.

## Prologue

# A Warm Ending

It was a calm winter morning in the northern province of Tavrobel. The sun, which had now begun to rise, hid its face behind the mountain tops, creating a display of colors that stretched out across the sky, painting the clouds with an array of orange, blue, and purple. The majestic mountains, which were stoic and wide, stood as a gate to the tundras of the North-East. An endless plain of ice and snow.

Resting at the base of these mountains was a thick forest of pine and birch, along with a valley that led to the South-West. But at the center of this valley was a house that rested on a hill, giving its occupants a decent view of their surroundings.

As the sun continued to rise, a man, who was dressed in dark winter clothing, stood at the precipice of the mountain tops while observing the sunrise. He had a striking appearance, with a rugged masculine face, intense icy-blue eyes, and a short yet thick beard. He also had a strong frame, which was as imposing as the mountains around him. But he was not like any other man; as he had pointed canine ears and husky white tail, which meant only

one thing. He was a Demi-Human of the North, a link between Man and Beast.

Despite his appearance being in his early thirties, he was actually nearing his hundreds. Eighty-six to be exact. Outside of his age, his right leg from the knee down was a black, polished, metallic prosthetic, which shimmered in the morning sun. As he stood in the freezing wind, he heard the call of a bird from across the sky.

Looking up, he saw a large silver owl using the wind to stay aloft. After he noticed her, the owl dove down toward a cliff beside him. But before reaching its edge, her wings began to illuminate with a light that enveloped her entire body, transforming her into her true form.

She was an Arctic Elf, whose appearance was that of a deadly Huntress and a skilled fighter. This could be seen by her tactical armor and the dark fabrics that fastened it all together. Over this, she wore a thick leather jacket, dark brown boots, fingerless gloves, and a black satchel around her back. She was also armed with a long metallic bow with a glowing string, a quiver filled with a variety of arrows, a dagger on each hip, and a pistol that was mounted on her thigh. Last of all, she wore a white scarf that partially hid her face, enhancing the mystery of her persona.

Now facing the man, the elf locked eyes with him, which he instantly recognized as they were a soft dark gray that matched the icy stones around her.

“Took you long enough,” said the man with a tired voice. “I’ve been waiting here for three hours. It’s not like you to be late.”

“Apologies,” explained the Huntress in a muffled voice. “There was a heavy crosswind.”

The man answered her with a grunt and walked toward her. After a casual hug, the Huntress continued their conversation.

“So, how is he?” she asked.

“Better,” said the man. “He is getting used to leaving the valley and meeting other people. He’s also gotten acquainted with the daughter of my good friend. They seem to get along well, from what I’ve heard.

“That’s good,” answered the Huntress. “Does he still have nightmares?”

“Occasionally,” answered the man. “He still sleeps with us every now and then, but he is getting better on his own.”

The Huntress nodded in understanding before peering down the mountain side and toward the house in the valley below. With her sharp eyes, she looked into one of its windows on the

second floor, seeing a child who was soundly asleep in his bed. She could not see his face as he was facing away from the window. What she could see, however, was a small Elf-like ear that poked out the side of his curly, dark-brown hair.

“It’s gotten shorter.” she said softly.

“Hmm?” asked the man.

“His hair,” she clarified. “Did you cut it?”

“You can see him from here? I forgot how sharp your eyes are,” said the man, slightly impressed.

“We decided to cut his hair a few months ago,” he explained. “It made it easier for him to see as it was getting in the way.”

The Huntress, who did not respond, took this chance to truly take a look at the child. From what she could see, the boy had been properly taken care of. His hair was clean, and his clothes were brand new. Plus, there were new toys around the room to keep him occupied. As the man looked at her eyes, he could tell what was on her mind.

“You can go see him if you want to,” said the man, now sitting at the edge of the cliff-face.

The Huntress turned her head to the man, as if she were surprised.

“Look,” said the man with a sigh. “I know it’s been three years since you’ve seen him, but I am sure he’ll remember you if you give him some time. Besides, you’re going to take him with you eventually. It would be best for him to know you now before the time comes.”

The Huntress looked back at the house with hesitation, not knowing what to do. As her mind went into a frenzy, the boy turned over in his bed, which made her heart skip a beat. After three long years, she finally got to see his face.

The Boy’s appearance was one of youth and innocence, which was something that she had always remembered him by. He was in his early adolescence (around twelve and thirteen years of age), and his skin was a dark tan, which resembled the color of mocha but slightly lighter. As she focused her eyes, she could make out something fuzzy in his arms, which was none other than a teddy bear.

The Huntress was amazed by how much he had aged.

*“Has it really been three years?”* she thought to herself.

As she continued to look upon his face, she noticed a thin white scar on his left cheek, which shimmered in the morning sun like a string of spider’s silk. After seeing the scar, her joy and excitement had dissolved into sadness, and with it, a realization of what must be done.

“No,” answered the Huntress. “He is not ready for the world he has to face. He needs to be protected.”

“I understand,” said the man while standing up. “Anne and I will make sure of that.”

“This will also be the last time we meet,” continued the Huntress while reaching into her jacket. “Take this.”

As she reached into her jacket, she pulled out a strange black device that took the shape of a spherical oval and handed it to him. This device, which was surprisingly heavy, was decorated with silver markings that went around its equator.

“I’ll contact you with this when I come for him,” explained the Huntress. “Until then, keep him safe.”

The man, who was caught off guard, stared at the device in his hand.

“Last time? What do you mean?” he asked. “We agreed to meet annually since you left him in our care. Why stop now?”

“If I continue this pattern, I may risk the Apostles discovering this location,” explained the Huntress as she moved away from the cliff. “There is so much more I need to know before I take him in. I still don’t know where he comes from or who his parents are. If I can’t uncover the full extent of the Apostles’ motives and what they are capable of, I won’t be able to prepare

him. This is the only way I can ensure his safety as well as your own.”

While listening to her explanation, a concerned look grew on the man’s face. He understood what she was implying, but one thing he did not agree with.

“If you do this, there will be no way for us to know if you’re even alive. You said it yourself; you still have no idea what you’re up against. Which means I have no idea what kind of danger you’re putting *us* in. If they kill you and you happen to have something that is related to us, they will find us and take him away. And I guarantee that they will leave no witnesses! I agreed to take him in as long as it meant that we would no longer be put in harm’s way. The last time those bastards came here, they took my leg and threatened my wife. And her life is something I am not willing to risk! If you do this, you must promise me that our home will never be put in harm’s way ever again!”

A long silence fell between them as they revisited that moment in time. The Huntress was not surprised by what he had to say, as she was there when it happened. But instead of giving false optimism, she did what she knew was best.

“You know I can’t promise that, Paul,” she answered in a sad tone. “No matter how hard I try, there will always be a risk.

Regardless of that, I ask you to trust me that I will do everything in my power to keep you and your home safe.”

She reached out her hand toward Paul.

“Do you trust me?”

Paul, who once again looked at the device in his hand, thought long and hard about what was being offered to him. He could remember as if it were yesterday, him screaming at the Apostles as his blood stained the snow, and the cries of his wife as she was held at gunpoint. He had never felt that level of fear and anger in his life, and he never wanted too ever again. As he looked up and met her eyes, he reached out and took her forearm, as did she.

“I trust you,” he answered.

They conducted a forearm handshake, sealing the promise.

Paul then placed the device in his pocket while the Huntress moved toward the other side of the mountain, looking toward the sunrise. While doing so, she pulled off her satchel and reached inside. From it, she took a fractured yet mended mask with no facial features and a scratched-out symbol on its forehead, which Paul could not make out. As she put it on, Paul made his final comment.

“We gave him a name.”

The Huntress paused, then turned around in anticipation.

“We named him Cole, Son of the Tamerrans. Or Cole Tamerran for short,” clarified Paul as he looked at her for the last time. “I thought you should know before you go.”

As the wind and snow continued to wrap around them, the Huntress looked to the side as she thought about the name.

“Cole,” she repeated in a quiet voice.

Now putting on the mask, she secured it tight as it hid her entire face. As the fractures began to glow, her body evaporated into a white mist, which was carried away by the wind and disappeared. Paul, now alone in the freezing wind of the Northern Mountains, stared out into the wilderness beyond and mumbled a simple prayer.

“May the Almighty be with you.”



# Chapter 1

## The Rebel

*Seven and a half years later*

Elsewhere, in a vast tundra made of stone and shrubbery, was a road that twisted and turned at the base of the mountains. It was the late afternoon and not much could be seen, except for the deer and small game that nibbled on the shrubs throughout the valley. But within this peace came a disturbance as a dark gray object approached from the south. As the object came into view, a trail of dust could be seen behind it, followed by the roar of a distant engine. It was a car moving at great speed, and as it passed by, it startled a hare that had been feeding on the side of the road, causing it to flee into its burrow nearby.

The machine itself was designed for performance from the tires up. From the sway bar suspension to the aerodynamics, it was a work of art. A true passion project. As a finishing touch, the name **Creed** was painted on the center of the steering wheel, a sign of the builder's appreciation.

At the helm of this black stallion was a young man with a firm grip on the wheel, dressed in all black with a leather jacket, fingerless gloves, and a racing helmet that hid his face. Within this helmet was a display that showed him his location, the time, [6:13 P.M.], and the weather of the surrounding area.

The man was a professional driver, which could be seen as he downshifted before pulling the emergency brake, forcing the car into a slide as he drifted around a sharp corner, creating a cloud of dust as fire erupted from the exhaust. Straightening the car at the end of the turn, he opened the throttle while shifting to a higher gear, reaching 150 mph within a few seconds.



The man drove off the main road and toward a dirt road, which led to the beginning of a canyon. As the walls of the canyon began to tower over him, the Driver noticed a sign in the distance, which read in bold letters, "**PRIVATE PROPERTY OF VANGUARD INDUSTRIES.**" Blasting past the sign, he looked far ahead of him, seeing the entrance of the complex before him. He then started a timer on his watch and braced for impact.

*BASH!!!*

The Driver plowed into the gate, snapping the chain that secured it and blasting through the other side. An alarm went off due to his intrusion which echoed off the canyon walls. Knowing that it was now too late to turn back, he floored the accelerator to regain his lost speed. As he neared the end of the canyon, he turned right into a vast surface mining operation.

Now out of the canyon, the Driver floored the accelerator, launching him to insane speeds throughout the mine. As his engine roared alongside the mechanical scream of the compressor, he could feel himself being pressed against his seat due to the sheer acceleration of the vehicle.

Moving toward the heart of the facility, the Driver bobbed and weaved past automated mining equipment and colossal ore-laden trucks, twisting and turning throughout the

facility while hardly slowing down. As he looked down at his watch, he saw that his timer read **[2:47]** (two minutes, forty-seven seconds).

It was a race against the clock. Every action mattered, and every correction cost time. But as the sound of the gravel road filled the car, the Driver looked far ahead of him to see what he needed to do to quickly make his way through the mine.

While on the move, the sound of whirling jets grew behind him. Now looking back, the Driver saw two men on hover cycles rushing toward him. They moved to either side of him, all as the rider on his left called out through a megaphone within the hover cycle, who seemed to be the leader of the duo. Due to their outfits and color scheme, it was clear to him that they were Enforcers.



“Rogue driver! You have violated article 6, section 9, paragraph 16! Pull over now and wait to be processed!” shouted the enforcer while signaling to him to park on the side of the road. Ignoring the command, the Driver continued to push forward, drifting his car on the edge of a cliff and barely making the turn. The enforcer then gave a harsher warning.

“Pull over now! Or violent force shall be used!”

Once again, the Driver pushed forward. But as he did, he saw a sign that read “**MINING VEIN #34/200 YARDS.**” The Driver then placed his hand on the emergency brake, waiting for the entrance to appear.

“You have three seconds!” shouted the enforcer as they drew closer to his car.

“Three! ... Two!! ... One!!! ...”

As the enforcer counted down, the entrance to the mining vein appeared around the corner. The Driver then slammed his brakes, causing the enforcers to completely overshoot him. After they passed by, he pulled the emergency brake while turning the steering wheel all the way to the right, forcing the car to slide to the left. He lost the majority of his speed from this maneuver, but still managed to position himself directly in front of the mining entrance.

Taking his chance, the Driver sent his car flying into the jaws of the mine, venturing deeper into the heart of the facility. At first, the caves were wide and spacious. But as he pressed forward into the mine, the walls around him became increasingly narrower, raising the lethality of any mistake he made. After a few moments racing through the mine, the enforcers from before reappeared in his rear-view mirror. But due to their smaller size, they had an easier time maneuvering through the caves. Now having the Driver in his sights, the lead enforcer contacted his superiors on how to engage the situation.

“Dispatch, do you read me?” asked the enforcer over the radio.

“**Loud and clear, Commander Thornwood,**” answered the dispatch operator. **“Have you apprehended the suspect?”**

“Negative, dispatch. This one is bolder than the others,” reported Thornwood. “Do I have permission to engage?”

**“That’s a negative, Thornwood. Those mines are laced with pure Terrarium. One bad shot and you’ll be blown into the stratosphere.”**

“Understood,” answered Commander Thornwood.  
“Maintaining pursuit.”

“What now?” asked his Lieutenant, who was not too far behind him.

“We’ll follow him for now. But if he continues on this path, he’ll run into a cliff at the end of the mines,” explained the Commander. “Once there, he’ll be ours.”

“Roger that.”

The enforcers continued their pursuit of the Driver as he ripped through the mines, twisting and turning through narrow passages while barely avoiding a variety of hazards along the way. As this was happening, the enforcers struggled to keep up with him, despite their smaller size.

“How is he doing this?” asked the Lieutenant, who had almost crashed into a mining drone while turning a corner. “It’s like he knows this place.”

“Just stay on him, lieutenant. We’re almost out.”

Moving through the tightest parts of the mines, the passage led to a wide and straight tunnel that led to a small light in the distance. Seeing this, the Driver floored the accelerator, launching the car down the straight away as the roar of his engine bounced off the tunnel walls.

“He’s getting faster!” shouted the lieutenant over the radio as they moved through his cloud of dust.

“He’ll stop when he sees the cliff,” assured Thornwood. “Just stay close and watch the walls.”

As they moved out of the tunnel and into the sun, they entered a large platform that held containers with landing pads and their hovercraft right beside them. As they moved forward, they approached the end of the platform, which led to a sheer drop toward a canyon floor. Despite this, the Driver pressed forward as he increased his speed, rushing toward the canyon without hesitation. Seeing this, Thornwood was left in shock.

*“What is he doing?”* thought Thornwood to himself.

“Commander?” asked the lieutenant, his voice filled with worry. But there was no answer, for he did not know how to react to the situation. They then drew even closer to the edge, all as his body began to shake.

Five hundred meters ... Four hundred meters ...

“Commander?! ...” pressed the lieutenant, now realizing how close they were.

Three hundred meters .... Two hundred meters ...

“COMMANDER!!!” shouted the lieutenant.

“Disengage! Disengage!” commanded Thornwood as he forced his hovercycle to a stop alongside his lieutenant. But as they abandoned their pursuit, the Driver went straight off the edge at high speed, right above the canyon floor below him. As he fell into the canyon, he began to feel the loss of gravity as he, along with

the other items in the car, began to float in the air, with only his seat belt keeping him strapped to his seat.

Before he could fall any further, the Driver pulled a red handle above his head, causing a square-shaped panel to eject itself from the roof of the car, releasing a large parachute that was designed for heavy loads. The enforcers then watched in disbelief as the Driver glided down toward safety at the bottom of the canyon.

From inside the car, the Driver controlled the direction of his descent with a joystick that was duct-taped to the center console. As he neared the ground, he pressed a button on the dashboard that extended the suspension of his car, giving him an extra six inches of clearance. This was to dampen the force of the landing. Once he hit the ground, he bounced a few times before skidding to a stop. He then jettisoned the parachute before racing down the canyon floor, away from the mine and into the vast and rocky terrain of the North-East.

“He’s insane,” said the Lieutenant in bewilderment.

Having the same thought, the Commander radioed his superiors.

“Dispatch. Do we continue the pursuit?”

“That’s a negative, Commander,” Replied the Dispatch. “The suspect has left your jurisdiction and into

**No Man's Land. This is now in the hands of the District Troopers. Report back to your post until further notice."**

"Roger that."

Commander Thornwood then turned his hovercycle away from the platform's edge. But before he could speed away, his Lieutenant decided to speak his mind.

"So that's it? We're just letting him go? After all of that?"

"Unless you want to take a thousand-foot drop to get to him, be my guest. If not, turn around and get back to your post."

Thornwood then sped off into the mines. As his lieutenant looked back to see the Driver disappear from sight, he shook his head in disbelief before following his commander.



\*\*\*\*\*  

---

Elsewhere, over an hour after the chase, the Driver found a steep path up the side of the canyon wall. After reaching the top, he was met by a crowd of other racers who were gathered underneath the ruins of a massive bridge. As he slowed down to park in front of them, a portion of the crowd cheered at his arrival, while the others greeted him with harsh glares.

Within the center of this gathering of Arctic Elves was a group of three with expensive cars and equally expensive clothing. They were young men, from the ages of twenty and twenty-two, and with their fine haircuts and good looks, they had no problem entertaining the erotic girls that lavished them with attention.

As the Driver stepped out of his car and into the light, he removed his helmet and placed it on the driver's seat, revealing his identity. This was Cole Tamerran, now in his late teen years (nineteen). Apart from his disheveled hair, pointed ears and facial scar, his most notable feature was his odd yet strangely attractive eyes. They were a rich dark blue, with traces of violet in some areas. At first glance, they looked like any Human's eyes. But as

the evening sun reflected off of them, they revealed their ability to contract vertically, like that of a cat or lizard.



As he walked to the trunk of his car, he picked up a package he had placed there. After closing the trunk, he walked toward the group of three, who were also walking toward him.

“I have to hand it to you, Snake Eyes. I’m surprised you followed through,” said the man in the middle with a smooth voice, who appeared to be the leader of the group. “But then again, you were never one to walk away from a wager.”

This was Justix Honor, and he was a part of the noble class of the Arctic Elves, which could be seen by his pure white hair, pale skin, sharpened ears, and brilliant silver eyes, along with his good looks and angled features. To add to this, he was a member of a long line of wealthy lords who had investments and finances all across the continent of Agarath. He also wore a silver and white racing suit to match his car behind him.



The companion on his right was Beleg Fodreth, a noble family member of high-ranking military leaders and government officials in the Eldorannian Empire. He was well built with a short, mild gray haircut, had a chiseled jawline, along with bold eyebrows and a small scar on his upper right eyebrow. For clothing, he wore a military jacket with arctic digital camouflage, along with a pair of steel-toed boots and a knife at his side. As a final touch, he wore a set of reflective aviator glasses to compliment his military aesthetic.

The companion on his left was Haleth Malacar, who also came from a line of nobles, making him the future inheritor of one of the largest merchant companies in the Northern Nations. He was taller and thinner than his companions, which strengthened his bombastic persona; as he was wearing neon yellow and black clothing made from the finest materials, along with neon lipstick, eye shadow, frameless glasses, and crystal earrings, which all hinted at an “alternative” lifestyle.

Due to the nature of his family’s enterprise, he had access to a plethora of precious resources and technologies, along with a seemingly endless flow of income. This made him a strong ally to Justix’s and Beleg’s families, along with everyone else in the Imperial Government.



But before Justix could continue talking, Cole tossed the package at his feet, taking him off guard.

“Next time you place a bet against me, don’t mess with my gear,” said Cole with a calm yet serious tone.

Taking the package in his hands, Justix opened it to reveal a parachute wire with a thin yet deep cut that had been highlighted with neon paint. After seeing this, he chuckled as he looked back at Cole.

“You inspected the entire parachute?” he asked with a smug grin.

Cole did not respond and only stood in silence.

“Fair enough,” concluded Justix as he tossed the package to the side.

Justix snapped his fingers at one of the girls behind him, who then walked over to Cole. While doing so, she pulled a golden card from her cleavage. And as she stood before him, he reached out to take it, only to have her drop it at his feet. Seeing this, the crowd burst out in laughter.

As the young woman examined Cole, she sneered at his appearance before returning to Justix and the others. Despite the inconvenience, Cole knelt down and picked up the card before

him, resulting in more laughter from the crowd. The rest of the women then went out among the crowd to deliver similar cards to certain individuals.

“A deal’s a deal, Snake Eyes,” mocked Justix as the girls returned to his side. “You won the wager, and with it, 50 percent of the pot.”

“With the rest going to the ones who were crazy enough to bet on you,” remarked Beleg as one of the women took his arm.

As the laughter continued, Cole used a device to scan the card. Once the analysis was complete, he stood back up and turned to Justix, who was walking toward him.

“So then, do we have an accord?” asked Justix as he reached out his hand.

As he stood before Cole, he showed that he was taller than him by at least four inches. But despite his presence, Cole ignored him and continued to look at the card in his hand.

“What did the recipients receive from this wager?” asked Cole, still looking at the card.

“What?” asked Justix with a raised eyebrow.

“What did the recipients receive from this wager?”

“Imperial Credits, as usual,” answered Justix, as if it were a stupid question, which triggered a chuckle from the crowd.

“Then why is there crypto on this card?” asked Cole as he finally looked him in the eye.

The smile on Justix’s face disappeared, followed by a small murmuring in the crowd. But as he tried to formulate an answer, Cole cut him off.

“Because if this card has crypto on it, what’s to say that there isn’t crypto on the others?”

As the murmuring continued, Justix looked around him, seeing how the situation was turning against him. But before he could defend himself, a person in the crowd raised their card in the air and broke the silence.

“This card has crypto too!” he shouted, waving the card in the air.

Now the crowd was in an uproar as they surrounded Justix and Cole, pointing their fingers at Justix while asking a thousand questions.

“What do you mean crypto?” ask one.

“We were promised Imperial Credits!” shouted another.

As Justix’s companions watched from afar, they murmured to one another their thoughts on the situation.

“You think he can turn this around?” asked Beleg to Haleth.

“Have faith, Fodreth,” answered Haleth as he took out a vape from his pocket. “He has seen worse odds before. He’ll turn the tables eventually.”

Haleth then took a puff of colorful mist before offering it to Beleg, which he waved away.

“He better,” remarked Beleg in a cold tone, “or he’ll lose a lot of clout being outdone by a half-devil.”

“Relax. Relax,” said Justix while keeping his calm demeanor. “The crypto is backed by silver and has the same worth as imperial credits. The Code states that wagers can be paid with anything that is equal to the amount that was owed.”

“As long as it is accepted by the winner,” countered Cole.

“And why won’t you accept it?” asked Justix, still trying to keep his prideful tone.

“Because this crypto is tied to your family bank under your name,” answered Cole with piercing eyes. “Meaning that if you decided to sell your shares in the currency, it would lose its value by multiple percentage points. If that happened, a massive sellout would occur, resulting in the crypto losing all of its value, leaving us with worthless code.”

It was at this point that Justix’s calm and cocky demeanor began to show cracks of anger and frustration. As the crowd

continued to pester him with questions and threats, he looked down at Cole with a fire in his eyes.

“And why would I do that?” asked Justix. “The currency is performing well.”

“Because you would have everything to gain from that decision and no legal repercussions to face for it,” explained Cole. “Due to that contract your lawyers coughed up, you were required to hold your shares in that currency for one year after its debut. It has been seventeen months since then.”

“I would have my reputation to consider,” argued Justix, his voice now cold as ice.

“Just like you did with Envidia?” countered Cole, his eyes still locked with him.

Justix fell silent as the whispers of the crowd surrounded them.

“Wait, he really did that?” asked one of the people next to him.

“Yeah. Back in the quarter of spring,” answered one of them while looking at Justix with disdain.

“You see, Justix, I’d rather not place the value of my wallet in the hands of a man I don’t trust,” continued Cole as he recaptured his attention from the crowd. “Besides, if you refuse to

comply, I will have every right to take what I believe is necessary to settle the wager, as the Code dictates.”

As Cole said this, he looked back at Justix’s silver and white car as it glistened in the evening sun before looking back at him with a raised eyebrow. This got to Justix, which could be seen as he turned red in the face.

“That car is worth more than this wager!” barked Justix.

“I know,” answered Cole coldly as he dropped the golden card at his feet. “But I feel that it is necessary—”

It was at this point that Justix started to lose his composure, and as he looked at the people around him, he realized that there was no escaping the inevitable.

“And what would the winner of this wager desire as an alternative?” asked Justix with a growl.

“Imperial Credits. As usual.”

Justix closed his eyes and swallowed his anger before taking a checkbook and a pen from his pocket. As he wrote down the necessary information, he tore it from the book and handed it to Cole. But as Cole tried to take it, Justix refused to let it go. Cole then looked up to give another smart remark, but was taken off guard by the cold smile on Justix’s face.

“What’s wrong with you?” asked Cole with a slight tone of disgust. “Did something break upstairs?”

“No,” answered Justix in an unpleasant tone. “I just realized why you fought so hard for this.”

“Because I won it,” said Cole in an annoyed tone.

“Because this isn’t for you, is it?” asked Justix, his smile getting wider.

Cole quickly pulled the check from Justix’s hand and walked away. But before he reached his car, he stopped in mid stride before turning back to Justix.

“You doubled it?” he asked in confusion.

“Yes. Just in case your ‘family’ has a difficult time finding a loan in the future,” explained Justix with a cruel and vicious grin. “Or should I say, more difficult than they already do now?”

Cole’s heart skipped a beat, resulting in cracks forming in his calm persona as he gritted his teeth with a quiet growl.

“Seeing as my family owns the largest bank of all the provinces, I have access to all the financial records at its disposal, including everything related to them. Such as the file of Captain Paul Samuel, Son of the Tamerrans.”

As Justix continued to speak, the spark of anger lit inside Cole’s chest, starting a fire that began to spread. But he could not let it get the best of him as it would undo any victory he had accomplished.

*“Just stay calm,”* Cole thought to himself. *“Just stay calm and walk away.”*

But before he could walk away, Justix continued his speech, further revealing Paul’s personal life.

“From what I read, he left the comforts of citizenship as a high school undergraduate to join the ARROW Division, the most distinguished branch in the Eldorannian Military. Here, he served in dozens of deployments and fought many battles to reclaim the borders of the Eldorannian Empire from the clutches of the Battle Orks,” proclaimed Justix as he turned toward the crowd. “Tamerran then became the greatest marksman in the Northern Province, solidifying his name in history as the Shadow of Death, and bringing honor to his departed family as he was the last member of his lineage.”

Justix turned to Cole with a glare in his eye.

“But then came you, the half-spawn of a heretic Forest Elf and some wretched Reptilian,” he said with a glare and words filled with disgust.

“In spite of the nature of your blood, he and his wife took you in and claimed you as one of their own, despite knowing it would have taken them out of the favor of the Empire he swore to defend,” explained Justix as he walked toward Cole. “Quite foolish, honestly.”

A wave of anger washed over Cole with so much intensity that it threatened to burn through his chest. But as the crowd began to chuckle at Justix's remark, he could not help but have a tear fall down his cheek. Seeing this, Justix grinned, knowing he hit home, and he was going to make it hurt.

"Shut up," said Cole with a growl.

"Honestly, I have no idea why they didn't submit you to the authorities after finding you half-dead in the mountains, most likely abandoned by your whore of a mother."

"I said shut up!" shouted Cole as he crumpled the check in his hand, resulting in a laugh from a portion of the crowd.

"And you know the best part?" asked Justix to the crowd, who were no doubt entertained by the argument. "He was found with amnesia, which is undoubtedly a blessing in disguise to that 'mother' of his, knowing the shame it would have brought her."

"I'm warning you, Justix!" yelled Cole, tears stinging his eyes.

"You know, others would have thought they had pity on you when they saved you from that mountain," said Justix as he turned back to Cole, looking him directly in the face. "But honestly, I think it was to numb the pain of their stillborn child."

"JUSTIX!" shouted Cole as he neared his breaking point.

“But let’s be honest, you could never replace their child, Snake Eyes.”

Cole snapped as he charged at Justix with his hand in a fist.

“I SAID! SHUT! UP!”

But before he could land the blow, Justix caught his fist, pulled him in, and flipped him on his back with a slam, knocking the air out of him. But as Cole forced himself to his feet, Justix continued to talk down to him as the crowd cheered for the fight to continue.

“You really are a half-devil and a selfish one at that,” said Justix as he dodged Cole’s punch and hooked him in the jaw.

“If you really cared for them, you would have redacted their name to restore their lost integrity. But you can’t do that, can you?” continued Justix as he uppercutted Cole in the mouth before he could recover from the last hit.

“Because it was never about them, was it?” interrogated Justix, followed by a jab, a block, and two shots to Cole’s ribs.

“You know what I think it was? I think it was because you were just too busy *leeching* off of their name to give a damn about what was best for them!”

Justix bobbed and weaved through Cole's sluggish attacks before grabbing his head and kneeing him in the nose, stunning him.

"And you know I'm right, don't you?" concluded Justix before rushing Cole and uppercutting him in the diaphragm with so much force that it lifted him off his feet. Cole then fell to his knees and onto his face, all as he struggled to regain his breath as stars danced in his eyes. Before he could regain his senses, he was met with a sharp heel to the eye.

As Justix continued to stomp Cole into the ground, a large portion of the crowd cheered while the rest watched with no regard. None of them really cared for Cole, including the ones who bet on him, for they were only interested in the money they won, not the one who won.

Once the beating was over, Justix stood above Cole with a checkbook in hand, scribbling a new check as Cole groaned at his feet.

"Here, have another one," said Justix as he dropped the paper on Cole's face. "For we all know, you could never repay their sacrifice."

As Cole gradually rose to his feet with his hand to his side, he picked up the check and looked Justix directly in the eye. He

then snorted and spat a glob of blood-filled mucus on the check before shoving it on Justix's chest.

Breathing heavily, he remarked, "I don't take handouts," while stepping back as the check stuck to Justix's jacket.

The crowd hooted and hollered at Cole's brashness, all before Justix retaliated with a rage-filled punch to the face. But instead of being knocked down, Cole stood his ground by leaning into the punch as he used his weight to counter the hit. This itself did not take Justix off guard, but the fact that Cole retained his eye contact through the entire punch. As Justix looked into his eyes, he was startled by the sheer hatred behind them with a rage that bored into his soul.

Justix then jumped back from a sudden panic in his heart. But as he stood in front of him, he turned to realize that the entire crowd had fallen silent, as they too, were startled by Cole's glare.

"Are you finished?" asked Cole in a cold voice, which Justix had no answer to.

"Then we have an accord," he concluded as he limped back to his car, putting the original check in his pocket. After igniting his engine, he drove off towards the West, leaving the crowd in silence.

As Justix watched him drive away, a person from the crowd walked up to him to ask him a question.

“So— where’s my check?”

Justix looked at him with a glare, which startled him.

“The accord was settled,” explained Justix with a growl.

“Now piss...off.”

Justix then marched to his car in anger as he took the check off his jacket before tearing it in two and throwing it on the ground. Seeing this, Beleg turned to the crowd and barked a command.

“Scatter!”

Without hesitation, the crowd dispersed as they rushed to their cars and began to move out. As Justix sat in his car, one of the women from the group tried to console him.

“Here, babe. Let me get that for you,” she said as she tried to use a napkin to clean his jacket.

But before she could touch him, Justix smacked her hands away from him, sending a clear message that he did not want to be bothered. He then watched Cole drive off into the distance, all as he gritted his teeth and gripped his steering wheel with hate.

“Cursed half-devil,” he growled.

\*\*\*\*\*  

---

Meanwhile, in his car, Cole could feel himself shaking from the beating he took. As he placed a hand on his swollen cheek, he looked into the mirror to see how badly his left eye was swelling up, along with the nosebleed and busted lip that dripped down his chin.

“That hurt,” he mumbled to himself.

He took a napkin to blow the blood from his nose before looking down at the crumpled check in his cup holder, which was worth fifty thousand Imperial Credits. As he sat back in his seat and sighed, he said with an apology.

“I’m sorry, auntie.”