

PHARAOH



TRUE LOVE
HAS NO HAPPY ENDING
BECAUSE THERE IS NO ENDING
FOR TRUE LOVE

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

Gillian Studwell

PHARAOH

BEING BOOK ONE OF A SERIES

CONCEPTION



Pharaoh, a novel, by Julian Tyler.

BOOK I, PHARAOH: CONCEPTION

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This is a work of fiction.

The story, characters, organizations, names, and all events, are either the products of the author's imagination or are meant to be read in the context of fiction.

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Dedicated to those who **DREAM**

Because dreams do come true

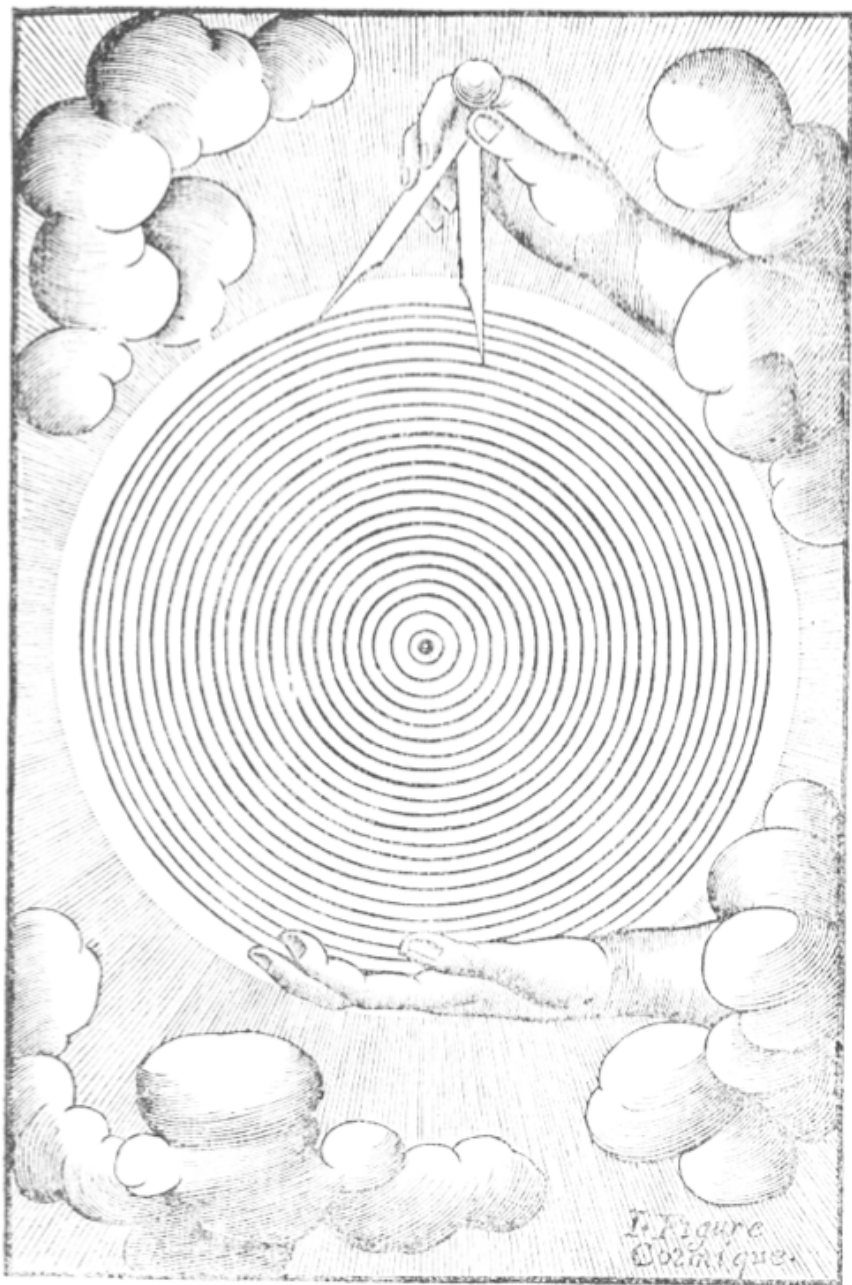


Figure
Cosmique.

"I want you to tell me everything."

"Everything?"

"Everything."

"Art thou ready to know everything?"

"I know you're a wizard, Master Dee."

"Yes. But you know not what that means."

"Tell me."

"Dearest child, you must ask the right questions."

"What does it mean to be a wizard?"

"What do you see, when you look into my eyes?"

"I see... your magic."

"Now see without eyes to hear the story you seek."

"Will you tell me about Father, and Alexander?"

"Just as your father before you, Elizabeth, you seek to know the story of the Pharaoh..."

CHAPTER I

“Who are you, Alexander?”

ALEXANDER

“I *am* a golden god.”

“You are a child, Alexander. You know naught what it means to be a man yet, let alone a god,” Master Dee corrected me.

“You told me I was born a god,” I fired back.

“I told you your family is descended from gods, Alexander. But you have yet to understand what this means, and what greatness is...”

Never go against the family, they say. But in my house, it’s kill or be killed. Murdering kin and all rivals to the throne is a time-honored tradition in the line of the Pharaohs. Absolute power and centuries of inbreeding will do that to a family. Every single member of the Order elite has a plan to eliminate their rivals and rule the world themselves. Because that’s how big their ego was bred to be. Cosmic ego is both a blessing and a curse. My anathematic secret is I don’t actually want the throne. The Order is a prison; my family the prison guards. I want freedom. Why would anyone want to rule the world? Sounds awful to me. I know better. Knowledge is power, and, for me, true power is only a means to freedom. I want to know what it means to be free. Master Dee can see this in me.

“My desire for freedom from the Order, from him, is what makes me seek greatness,” I confessed to Dee.

“You will be great, Alexander,” said the infallible prophet Wise Master Dee. His large wizard eyes give me a vision of greatness.

Dee checked his pocket watch. The clock struck the magic hour.

“There it is then. Thirteen o’clock, July the first, in the year of our lord, the year two thousand. You are now officially eighteen years of age, an adult under Order law, Lord Alexander.”

“Where’s the card?” My impatience set off another lecture.

“This card comes with responsibilities. This is not a toy. This is not for fun, Lord Alexander. You are now officially ascended as the heir

presumptive, formally a member of the Majestic Council, and entitled to a golden key-card which I now bequeath upon you.”

Say the words, Dee. Release me.

“Here is your inheritance,” he said the words. Golden freedom dangled in front of me.

I took possession of the gold card. “I’m free.”

“You are not free,” Dee corrected me again. “The Order owns you. You serve the Holy Order—”

“And the Order serves the world, I know, I know.”

The card had the number “2” engraved on it. This makes me want the number one card. I always want to be number one, can’t help it.

“A key-card can be revoked if you abuse it,” Dee warned.

There’s a process for that. I thought too loud. Dee can hear thoughts. I’m so excited, my thought accidentally came out like a yell in his wizard ears.

“Don’t test me, Lord Alexander. Don’t test your father.” He stared at me long and hard. “Do try to control yourself, alright?”

“I can go anywhere. Do anything. I can control my own life now.”

“You are an adult. But that does not mean you can do whatever you want. Wisely and slow—” Dee spoke slow on purpose.

“Or I’ll stumble. Got it!” I bolted out of there as fast as I could.

“You will learn,” Dee said, as the voice in my head.

Whizzing through the clouds in an invisible anti-gravity space ship, a Level 10 Order craft, I examined the mysterious golden card in my hands. The hieroglyphic writing on it intrigues me. Glowing in complexity, alloy gold with a mystical shine, it gives off more light than it reflects. Stamped with the Royal Seal of the almighty Holy Order, this symbols gives it its magical power. I felt it. Power. I inserted the card into the card reader. It’s thinking... Diamond nanotube circuitry runs through the thin card. It cannot be faked or forged, even by the best in the Order – I know, I’ve tried. Authentication complete.

“I’m in.” An unlimited supply of money. A golden key-card from the Order allows the holder to withdraw as much money as they want, whenever they want, from the Order bank. So, genius that I am, I designed a computer program to link the Order bank to the global financial system, and really harness this “unlimited” potential... This is either going to work great or crash the world’s monetary system. I’m

excited to see what happens either way. Who can stop me or tell me no? No one. I'm a gold-card carrying member of the Council now.

I started filling my bank accounts with money. Opening those money spigots as wide as can be. I let that sweet money flow out... And programmed it to go in to my slush funds faster. Spending spree glee.

Through the translucent metamaterial craft panels, I see the picturesque beach below. With the click of a button I landed. Off I went. I traveled the world like normal people do, only with billions to spend. Hopping from one soirée to the next, partying all day, flowing like water, away, down the cash greased path of least resistance to anything joyously gay. "Live fast. Die in battle, or in fun. That's the way of Alexander the Great, or so they say," I said. My battle is with the Order itself, I think about it as I drink to forget it.

"I'm on a global quest to find love," I said to the beautiful stranger.

"What is love?" She said. I didn't know what to say.

"No one can answer that question for you. You must find the answer yourself, in yourself." My own channeled words educated me.

My quest for the answers to life's greatest questions, and the world's best parties, took around the world and back in a blur of days. Maybe I'm just biased because California is where I spent most of my time when I couldn't leave America, but my quest for the most amazing party led me back to the golden coast, and a little pad in Malibu, California. It was the perfect day for a pool party.

A group of globe trotting locals led me in. I put on my LexNet augmented reality vision sunglasses and scanned the house. Viewing all the stats and records inspires me. Brand new. Top of the line. This is not just an ocean front mansion on a rock, this place is a compound.

"I can work with this." Sold.

"Who are you?" A girl's voice asked as I gawked around in my own augmented world.

My LexNet AR vision found focus on the girl in front of me. Her profile came up, overlaid to me as a hologram around her. Her name was Lily Taylor. A divine Venus, she washed up on the shores of my heart. Staring at her, I fell hard in lust. Love?

I felt it. I kept falling. *I fell in love.*

"Who's this guy?" A male friend of hers interjects.

I looked at him. LexNet AR brought up his profile from his face. His name was Bryce Rondal. His driver's license address shows he lives nearby. Recent high school grad, he's the same age as me. He's a pro

surfer and has won several high level competitions. He's even done some modeling. He's hot. California people are the best.

"Hey," Bryce said. "What's your problem?"

"He followed those Euro snobs in," Lily said.

"You like to surf?" I speak Californian.

"You like to sneak into parties? This is a local's only party." Bryce was very territorial. Classic surfer.

Love was in the air that day because I also fell for Bryce. He had that surfer look I so loved. Lily and he waited for me to say something. They got the impression I'm someone important or something.

"Who are you?" Lily asked again.

"Call me Lex."

"Where are you from?" Bryce demanded.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"What the shit does that mean?" Bryce asked.

"Just the truth, Bryce."

"How do you know my name?" Bryce softened.

"Aren't you a famous surfer?" I laughed.

Lily laughed too. She looked impossibly more beautiful when she laughed. Her smile launched a thousand ships from my heart.

"Time for shots all my fucking party people!" the voice of the DJ boomed over the speaker system. Tequila shots sounded perfect.

"This party is invitation only," Bryce kept me from walking to the ice sculpture cupids that piss out chilled tequila shots.

"Who owns this house?" LexNet AR sunglasses pulled up the answer from the internet: Mr. Montgomery Sturk.

"I know the owner. Mr. Sturk," Lily said.

"Take me to him."

"Why?" Bryce wasn't having it.

"What are you gonna do?" Lily asked me.

"I'm gonna buy this house from him."

"Yeah right," Bryce said.

Lily smiled.

I smiled.

CHAPTER II

“What is love?”

ALEXANDER

“It’s been forty minutes since you got your money. I’m losing patience.” I’m not a patient person. I looked to Lily and Bryce who watched this all going down; quiet disbelief on their faces.

“I’ve never closed on a house in a week, let alone a day, Lex,” curmudgeonly Mr. Sturk grumbles as he signs papers.

“You’ve also never been paid double what your house is worth. There’s a first time for everything. You got your money. Hurry up and get this done. You have one hour.”

“How do I even know I got the money, son?” Sturk pushed back. “You never made one call.”

“I have an app.”

“A what?” Sturk looked confused. He doesn’t speak tech.

“An application, on my smart phone.” I showed him the screen of my gold-plated device. “Your money’s there.”

“I don’t trust computers, son. And I certainly don’t trust some tiny hand held thing I ain’t never seen the likes of before,” Sturk said.

“Why don’t you call your bank before I change my mind.”

I looked at Sturk’s Rubenesque real estate agent, Karen, as she fanned herself. She got hot and bothered from the thought of this deal not closing. Karen gets off on big deals. She throws her hair back and steps up off her ass to save her six million dollar commission.

“I’ll call Lisa at the bank now, Mr. Sturk,” Karen dialed frantically.

“What is that thing anyway?” Mr. Sturk stared at my smartphone.

“It’s a smartphone. You’ll be able to get one in ten years.” I didn’t look up, texting away, making plans for the awesome party I’m about to throw in my new house.

“Where did you get it?” Sturk demanded. “I want one.”

I ignored him.

“Lisa. Karen. Yes, calling about the wire transfer to Mr. Sturk’s account, for the Malibu house... It’s there? Can you confirm it for him?” Karen hands the phone to Sturk.

“So it’s really there? Lisa, let me talk to Richard. I need to be sure this ain’t some trick.” Sturk listened and realized: I’m the real deal. “Richard... One hundred million, huh?” After listening. “Thanks.”

Sturk hangs up the phone. He stares at me. Everyone stares at me.

“Who are you? Some kinda actor or something?” Sturk asked. “One of those Russian billionaires or some shit?”

“How do I say this without being rude? Please leave my house.” I officially lost my patience as I signed the last document.

“Your house?” Sturk objects.

“You said if I paid you a hundred million the house is mine. I paid you. It’s mine. Please go. Take your agent with you.”

“But everything inside it is still mine, son. And how do I know this ain’t some con? You a con man, son? Take off your glasses, look me in the eye, and tell me you’re not a con man.” Sturk really started to bother me. No one tells me what to do. No way he’s seeing my eyes.

I typed away on my phone before looking up at him.

“If I give you a hundred million in cash, will you just leave?”

“You give me one million in cash and I’m out the door, son.”

“Let’s go outside then.” I led the way, everyone followed.

We step outside where two Order Agents, men in black suits and sunglasses, are each holding a briefcase, waiting for us.

“One hundred million in cash, Sir,” the Order Agent declared.

“Give it to them.” I pointed to Sturk and Karen.

Karen opens the briefcase and smells the fresh printed cash. Fifty million in cash. She had a cash induced orgasm.

“Tell me who you are, son. Please. Then I’ll go,” Sturk said.

“Too late to change the terms.”

“What about my stuff? This is my Fourth of July party.”

“Anything personal of yours will be sent to you. Trust me, I don’t want any of it.” I turned to the Order Agents. “Take them wherever they want to go. Anywhere but here.”

Karen and Sturk were escorted away by the Order Agents. I turned to Lily and Bryce and smiled.

“Let’s get this party started.”

More people arrived. Anyone boring, unattractive, or old was escorted out. In came the top models, celebrities, and everyone who was

young and beautiful and approved or invited by the party team I hired while waiting for Sturk to leave. The DJ dropped a beat. Stamped pills, drugs, and booze flowed through the crowds in waves. Clothes flew off. Dancing. Glow sticks. The best party ever had finally begun. Lily and Bryce loved every second of it. We danced for hours, in love.

“Take off your sunglasses,” Lily reached for them.

I clicked the button and turned off the augmented vision, turning the sunglasses into normal couture eyewear. Off they came. Lily looked me in the eyes. She saw my love. I saw her lust. We fell into a spiraling vortex of love and lust. Bryce’s feelings spun the fall faster.

“You have heterochromia,” she looked at my eyes.

“What’s heterochromia?” Bryce asked.

“When your eyes are different colors,” Lily said.

I looked down. My eyes often scare people. One is cerulean blue and the other is a vivid, striking green with a yellowish-hazel limbal ring. People can’t help but stare at it. Lily was no exception. Then came Bryce. Then I felt like a freak. Story of my life.

“Is that real?” Bryce couldn’t get over my remarkable green eye.

“I hate it.” I couldn’t look up. “Makes me feel like a freak.”

“I’ve never seen anything so beautiful,” she said. “Alexander the Great had heterochromia. One brown eye and a blue eye.”

“I love that you know that.” I looked up at her.

“My cousin had it too. It’s very rare. Makes you special.”

“I don’t wanna be special.”

“You have, like, the perfect body, amazing hair, you’re super rich, smart... You’re by far the most special and incredible person I’ve ever met. You could never be normal,” Lily said.

“Dude. You’re so not normal,” Bryce said.

They saw how those words hurt me. “I wanna be normal.”

“No you don’t. Where are you from? Come on. Tell us who you are,” Bryce begged. But I can’t tell them.

“I’m...” To redirect, off came my clothes. “I’m going in the pool!” Canon ball splash into the pool. Water. Felt good.

Lily and Bryce followed me and we started a trend. The pool filled with naked bodies. It rained magic and laughter on us all.

“Your name isn’t really Lex, is it?” Lily is on to me. Holding me.

“We just wanna know you. Tell us,” Bryce said. “We’re your friends, aren’t we?”

That made me feel amazing. Maybe it was those pills I took, but I was truly, madly in love with Lily and Bryce in that moment. Being in love is the best feeling in the world. Better than I ever imagined it could be. I loved everything. True love really is the best...

“Let’s go up to the bath. Something more private.”

The three of us sat in the massive marble bath, filled with warm water and sparkling bubbles, while nearby other people in various states of consciousness bonded like we were bonding. Deeply. Senually. More than sexually. I’d never experienced anything like it. We felt ourselves coming off our drug high, and thinking about sex. Love is the ultimate drug... But sex is the ultimate bonding agent.

“I’ve never done drugs before.”

“You’ve never even smoked pot before?” Bryce couldn’t believe it.

“I’ve heard of it. You mean marijuana, right?”

Bryce laughed. He had the best laugh. I laughed.

“Seems like you would have done everything,” Lily added.

“I’ve been pretty sheltered. Basically kept in a cage until I turned eighteen. Which was only a few days ago.”

“We’re eighteen too. We just graduated,” Lily said.

“You a virgin?” Bryce asked.

I nod yes. “Kiss me.” I touched his face.

“Me? Are you gay?” Bryce recoiled.

“What do you mean?”

“Are you into dudes?” Bryce backed away.

“Of course. I love dudes.”

Lily smiled. She wanted Bryce and me to kiss. I grabbed his head. He closed his eyes. I closed mine as I pressed my lips to his. A sweet, firm, but gentle, kiss. I let go. We opened our eyes to a whole new world of feelings.

“I’ve never kissed a guy before,” Bryce said.

“Me either.”

“Are you attracted to girls?” Lily asked, wanting a kiss.

“Of course. I’m attracted to beauty. You are beautiful.”

Lily closed her eyes and I kissed her while Bryce watched. Lily opened her eyes and gave me the look of unbridled desire.

“Wanna not be a virgin?” Lily proposed.

“Can I kiss you again?” Bryce liked it.

I nodded yes.

Fireworks.

CHAPTER III

“Does he ever learn?”

ALEXANDER

The night gave way to sunrise and the caterers set out a spread of food. Cut fruit, pancakes, eggs, meats, mimosas... The best of everything money can buy. People loved it. Bryce showed me how to smoke pot from a bong. I took a massive hit. Holy shit.

“It feels like my brain is slowing down.”

“I know, right?” Bryce laughed.

“I love it.” I looked to Lily as she giggled. I offered it to her.

“No thanks. I don’t smoke,” she said. “But go ahead.”

“So,” Bryce looked at me. “Now you can tell us who you are?”

“We’ve been over this.” I took another hit.

“You were inside me. I deserve to know who you are,” Lily pushed.

“Me too,” Bryce recalled. “I hope that was – one of you.” He looked around to see who was listening.

We all laughed until awkward silence fell on our after-party by the pool. They stared at me. I wanted so much to tell the truth. I caved.

“I am a golden god.” I smiled.

Bryce laughed. “Dude. Isn’t that from a movie?”

I didn’t laugh. Lily turned serious. “How rich are you?”

“I’m descended of gods. Pharaohs. When I was born, I was anointed with sacred oils and declared a living god by the Order.”

You should not have said that. Stop.

Bryce looked at me like I was crazy. He burst out laughing. Lily knew I wasn’t lying. She didn’t laugh.

“My family rules the world. In secret.” There. I said it.

“What?” Bryce said in his cute surfer-stoner way. “No way.”

“So you have, like, billions of dollars?” Lily got real.

“I have as much money as I want.”

“Prove it,” Bryce demanded.

“Holy shit.” Lily said, realizing I kinda already did.

“Anything you want. It’s yours.”

“Take us to Paris. Right now,” Lily challenged.

“*Vous voulez faire la fête à Paris?*” I smiled. “*Vous aimez Paris?*” I pulled out my smartphone and typed away.

“*Rendezvous, oui, oui,*” Lily spoke in laughable French.

“What the fuck...” Bryce jumped back scared.

He saw the anti-gravity transport manifest from thin air, from invisible mode to visible metallic disk, the craft floated, waiting near us on the grass. The ramp lowered. The door opened. Order Agents stepped out and escorted everyone else away from us.

“A fucking UFO? I’m tripping out,” Bryce said.

Lily wasn’t scared at all; quite the opposite.

“*Prêt pour l’aventure?*”

“I’m ready,” Lily smiled.

“I don’t speak French,” Bryce grumbled.

“Do you like to go fast?”

On to the craft we went. It sealed up and rose into the clouds. We shot through the air, silently, smoothly, thousands of miles an hour...

“It’s like a magic carpet ride,” Lily said, watching the world go by through the walls of the reverse engineered alien technology craft.

“I love going fast.”

“I’m gonna be sick.” Bryce turned green.

“Don’t worry. It’s over.”

And, like that, we landed on the grounds of the *Louvre* Museum. The craft opened and we walked down the ramp.

“Holy shit,” Lily said, admiring the former palace gardens of the *Ancien Régime* Sun Kings. “We’re really here.”

“I need to call my mom,” Bryce looked overwhelmed. “I’m gonna vomit.” And vomit he did.

“You’ll be okay.” I placed my hand on Bryce’s back. My touch made him feel better.

The craft closed and vanished as a black limo pulled up. The chauffeurs opened the doors for us.

“After you,” I motioned to Lily and Bryce.

We drove into Paris.

“We can visit my sister, Natalie. She’s gonna die that I’m here and didn’t even tell her,” Lily said, beaming with excitement.

Bryce looked upset.

“Let’s get you some new clothes first, and maybe some food and a chateau?”

“You’re gonna buy me a chateau?” Lily got excited.
“I’m gonna give you both anything you want.”
“Are you serious?” Lily asked, knowing the answer.
“Why?” Bryce didn’t like it.
“Why not? We’re friends. Let me make you happy.”
“I wanna go home,” Bryce protested in fear.
“Why?” Lily hit him. “Bryce. Stop. We just got here. Don’t be rude.”
She looked at me apologizing for him.
“What’s the matter, Bryce?”
“I don’t feel good. I’m tripping out. I—I just wanna go home. Will you take me home?”
“Bryce. Seriously,” Lily scolded. “Don’t be such a baby.”
“Bryce—” I started.
“You said you’d give me anything I want, Lex. I want to go home,” Bryce gave me a stern look. “I’m freaking out.”
“How about this, why don’t we get some food, do some shopping and then we’ll charter a regular jet back to LA tonight? That sound good to you?”
Lily looks at Bryce and her face forces compliance. Bryce nods yes.
“Do we get to meet any of your friends, Lex?” Lily smiled, her eyes begging for more sex..
“I don’t have any normal friends. No one like you two.”
“How do you not have friends? That’s not possible. Look at you,” Lily laughed.
Bryce seemed to agree, as he looked at me.
“It’s a long story. Basically, because of my father. People are scared of him.”
“Who’s your father?” Lily asked.
“Stop here,” I told my phone. The car stopped.
“Let’s get some cash at this bank.”
We jumped out of the car and walked up to the ATM.
“Watch this.” I flashed my golden key-card to them before putting it halfway into the ATM machine card slot.
“Let’s see what happens if I take out a few billion franks.” I typed in ten billion, just to see what happens.
The ATM made a strange noise. I took out my card. The alarms sounded and cash began shooting out of all four ATMs. Out spewed all the cash they had. The system crashed. We grabbed some cash. So did other people who came running.

“I think I broke the bank.” I laughed.

Lily and Bryce looked worried.

“Let’s go.” We jumped back in the limo.

“Where we going now?” Lily wanted more adventure.

“Thought we could brunch, then shop for real estate. Sound good?”

“Sounds amazing.”

We had the best day. Both Lily and Bryce got to pick a chateau they liked. We surprised Lily’s sister. She was dying of jealousy. Lily loved it. Finally, we chartered a private jet back to LA.

We helicoptered from the airport back to my pad in Malibu. Bryce was happy to be home. He and Lily turned to me.

“We should go home and see our parents,” Lily told me.

I nodded. Sad to see them go.

“Do I really own that chateau in Paris?” Lily asked.

“I think it comes with a Countess title, too.” I smiled. “I had a wonderful time with you both.”

“I never did anything like this before,” Bryce thought of our kiss.

“We must do it again. Maybe later?”

“I’ll give you my number,” Lily said.

“I have it.” I smiled.

“You just have everything, don’t you?” Lily said, putting her arms around me. She kissed me.

“Now that I have friends like you.” I winked at Bryce. “I have a car here to take you both home.” Order Agents appeared and showed them to the waiting black car. I followed.

“Come over later. If you want.”

“Definitely,” Lily looked at Bryce, they agreed.

They left. Back to the pool, I sat down with the bong and took a hit. I thought about Bryce and Lily. The sun was shining. Eyes closed. I’m finally free. Life was good. In the warm sunlight I felt a cold chill. My eyes opened to shadows. I realized I’m alone. Terrible nightmare shadows of the Order loomed over me. Darkness fell.

Your father is going to punish you for what you’ve done...

“Un-fucking believable,” Darius’ words cast an evil pall.

In shadow, I sat up, but I refused to look at my demonic father. “Leave me alone, Darius.”

Darius seized me and pulled me to my feet with his monster strength. He loves that he’s taller than me. His big, powerful, dark eyes stared daggers into my soul. He grabbed my throat and pulled me closer to his

pale, pointy face until he saw me tense up with fear. I hate that I feared him. Darius gets off on fear.

“Four days. Four days and you’re off the fucking deep end already,” Darius said. “You’re a waste of human flesh.”

“What do you want?”

“Listen,” he smiled a devil’s smile.

I heard the faint sound of a violent car crash. From the perch of the estate I could see the freeway down below. I saw smoke. Flames from a horrific car accident. My heart sank into the murky deep, crushed under unfathomable pressure. Loveless emptiness filled me inside out.

“The news will soon report how a Lily Taylor and Bryce Randal died in a car accident. Both killed instantly. A freak accident, they’ll say. But you know the real reason they died. It wasn’t an accident.”

“No.” I died with them. *Please no.*

“You killed them,” Darius said. “You told them about me. You *fucking* idiot.” He threw me back releasing his clinch on my neck.

“You killed them?” I cried in wanton disbelief.

“You killed them,” he retorted. “You killed them by telling them who you are. By telling them about the Order, Alexander, you took their lives. You.”

“No.” Tears of pain down my face. My emotion, weakness, sickened Darius. On the ground, I stared at the distant burning crash.

“How could any spawn of mine be so asinine?”

“They didn’t do anything. They were my friends...”

“You’ll never have friends, Alexander. Get it through your *fucking* head. You are on the Council. You’ll have servants or enemies. That’s it,” Darius spoke the awful truth.

“So I’m your enemy?”

“You are my servant, Alexander,” Darius tightened his grip on me.

“Never,” my eyes also promised.

“I know you think that,” he said, as he pulled me to my feet. “But I didn’t take time out of my day to educate you on the world, boy.”

He came to hurt me. Bracing for it, my eyes closed. Darius punched my face, so hard he sent me flying backward.

“Get up,” he pulled me back to my feet so he could punch me again. The second punch was twice as hard. I felt my skin break, my cheekbone crack, and saw red as blood splatter stung my eyes. Adrenaline took over and I felt nothing. Darius relishes pain.

“I needed that. More than you did,” Darius said, standing over me. Shaking his fist, he debated punching me again. I waited for it.

“Just kill me. Do it already.” I sat bleeding, broken, in despair.

“Trust me, I would if only legally I could. Since Order law says I can’t, as yet, what I can do is make your life a living hell.”

“Mission accomplished.”

“Just you wait. Boy,” he said.

“I hate you...” I told his face. “You’re the devil.” I closed my eyes.

Darius’ violent touch forced my eyes open, made me look at him.

“You have no idea how the world works. You obviously haven’t a clue how money works. You think you can just extract a hundred and ten billion dollars from the Order? And spend six billion dollars in four *fucking* days? Just like that? Proud of yourself, aren’t you? You broke that bank in Paris. Your actions diluted the dollar and nearly brought down the global financial system. My financial system. I can’t tell if you’re that *fucking* retarded, or if you’re just trying to test me. Both, isn’t it? Who made that computer program?”

Nothing I could say would help my situation. I realized no one can save me from Darius. He might be the incarnation of evil, but he is always right, always all mighty. For Darius, power is the only thing that matters; the power to rule and kill. Because if you can’t fight his power, you will always be subject to him, and nothing, and no one will ever save you from his death grip.

“I’ve deleted all of your accounts. Whatever game you’re playing with those Silicon Valley tech companies is done. Game over. And if you break my financial system, or try anything like that again—”

“What?” I should not have spoke. Couldn’t help myself.

Darius picked me up by the neck. Resistance was futile.

“I will give you a fate worse than death,” Darius was dead serious. “You’ll beg to die. Don’t test me, boy.”

My vision turned spotty black. Darius dropped me, and with his men in black vanished from whence he came. On my back, on the grass, my head throbbed. Blood in my eyes burned. But my heart breaking, thinking of Lily and Bryce, hurt me most. Adrenaline fading, feeling the pain coming on strong, I forced myself up. MDMA pills were not far away, and I downed a handful with beer and sorrow. On my back, staring at the sun, I drowned in darkness and misery.

My world faded to black.

CHAPTER IV

“How did Darius become so evil?”

DARIUS

Who am I? I am who I am.

Never a good man, I was born great. As with my ancestors, good is never good enough. Good is failure. Even God is not good, or else he could do better! I wanted be better, the best, the greatest of them all; above good and evil. And so I am, the greatest of them all. I am *the* god incarnate. Welcome to my world...

Greatness requires absolute power. Power is a sword wielded by the great. The sword is now words, the words of the Order. The word is God. My word is God. Because I am the Order, god of this world. The world is held in my Trust. People live and die on my words, sharpened swords I wield for the good of civilization, and the eternal Order of man, the almighty Great House.

Centuries of infighting and inbreeding in the Royal family, between my many half-siblings and cousins, culminated in the Great War, the first world war, a war to end all wars... War is the reason my father decided a new heir, a new Order, was necessary. The product of an arranged union, meant to produce an heir of the purest golden blood, the Order required, and so desired, someone great: me.

“The Order needed you,” Mother said. She wanted a new Order for the Ages; someone who could unify the fractured Great House, centralize power, and finally, truly, rule the world under one exalted and almighty crown on my head. Born of the Holy blood in the year of our Lord the Father, 1932, the Vizier anointed me the ‘Golden Child.’ Because the Order needed me to be who I am.

“You are the one,” Father said. “Our savior. The Savior of Men.”

A god from birth, the Order made me the supreme power of the Temporal Realm – I shall rule all that can be seen by man. Order Academy Headmaster Wisendee, ‘Master Dee the Wizard,’ declared “he shall be a powerful leader as none the world has ever known.” Dee educated me to be everything the Order Crown hoped for, and more.

My empire shames that of my pharaonic ancestors. Founding father Alexander the Great's empire pales in comparison to mine. For I am the Greatest of them all.

My birth changed the world and disinherited the heir to my father, setting the stage for another global conflict: World War II. Under the new Order laws of Succession and Peerage, I would be the sole *dynast* and Heir Apparent to the Holy Scion, and all Father's other spawn were kicked out of our Great House.

"They will bow to me, or they will die," I said at age six.

They chose not to bow. Needless to say, my five half-siblings, all some fifty years my senior, chose war and death. Furious at the revoking of their titles by Father's decree, their disinheritance and outrage against me escalated into Order civil war. World War part two was my idea, a true war to end all Order wars... a war I won.

My own Privy Council was formed at age seven. Mother and I recruited the last of Asia's ancient elite bloodlines to our cause. From the Samurai of Japan, a man named Hojios Yakuzmo brought us control of the East. We reunited long distant lines of Pharaoh's heirs, the best of the ancient warriors of old, and by uniting them with the West, gained control of all of Asia. Physically a child, I had trouble saying 'Hojios' so I renamed him Julius, my Caesar of Asia.

I recruited the absolute best from the top echelons and last vestiges of the Holy Roman Empire. Privy Councilor Maximilian Constantine, 'Max the Moor,' I call him because of his dark skin, is a master of diplomacy and religious doctrine. He is the *force majeure* that controls both Christian Europe and the Muslim world. Max helped me dismantle the old Order of Europe, seize control of Africa, and orchestrate a plan to redesign and forever bind the Middle East. The unbending, useless undesirables, and all resistance were swiftly exterminated. All wealth was consolidated. Mother and I manipulated and rallied the necessary world leaders to our desired end, and let the rest fight to the death until my Privy Council held all reigns of power.

So clear my vision, so profound my word, with the blessing of my father, and backing of my mother, as but a prepubescent boy, I took control of the Order. The esoteric *Majestic Council of the Pharaoh*, was remolded into a modern international financial corporation and military industrial complex operation the likes of which the world had never seen. How the new Order, my Order, was going to work, manifested from all that I am.

War-hardened Generals were not accustomed to a small boy barking commands at them, but they quickly realized I am all might, and always right, and they shall fear my bark or feel my snake bite of death. The best military leader and strategy thinker ever, my leadership brought the final solution, the definitive close and conclusion, to the need for a world war again.

“He created the war! He killed millions of innocent people!” my half-siblings complained as I ordered them all executed.

“The war started before I was born.” Everyone knows it. “I finished it. I created the peace.”

Masterfully, I played my enemies and rallied my friends until all sides finally ceded I won. The world is checkmated, by me, because I am the greatest of them all. With my Father the King in check by me, as soon as he dies I am officially King of the World.

By age twelve, total control of the planet rested in my grasp. World War II formally ended, at my behest, when I became a man, at age thirteen. At that time, I provided the *Curia Regis*, my Father and his Privy Council, with my vision for a New World Order, a new Order for the Ages. I expected to join the Council of the Pharaoh immediately.

“By Order Law you cannot ascend to the Majestic Council until the age of eighteen,” Dee said. “Not a moment sooner, per Sacred Law.”

“This is ridiculous! I am the savior of the Order. I restored justice and peace to the world, I—”

“You must wait,” Dee said. “Patience is a god’s virtue.”

Power is my virtue; to me, the supreme virtue. Waiting those five years from thirteen to eighteen felt like an eternity. I could not wait to be one of the ‘Magic Twelve,’ one step closer to being *Rex Maximus*, the Scion-King. But I orchestrated control of the Scion’s Council while I waited, placing my privy into Fathers circle.

When I finally came of age, I decided: “New York shall be my home.”

Mother loved America. She guided and built the modern creation of the United States, and turned New York city into a global power-house. Her vision for the noble American Republic made it become the greatest country that ever was.

“No Scion has ever settled in America,” Mother said.

“I have no intention of emulating any previous Scion.”

‘The *fucking* King’ they soon called me. I brought ‘ *fucking* ’ firmly to Wall Street and America, in vernacular and in practice. Poster-boy

of nobility and elitism, everyone wanted to be just like me: *Fucking* amazing. Because I *fucked* a lot of people over, all under consent of my father, the King.

Educated by the best in the world, my Head Masters always demanded perfection, and their indoctrination allowed me to lucidly lucubrate law for the Eternal Order of Man, *Æterni Imperium*. My scholarly acumen was topped by precious few in this world, for this world truly is mine; and governed by my word.

“There shall be no other god but me.” The mystical Pharaohs, the history of civilization, and aberrant magic, the so-called ‘Sacred Order,’ ritualism, bowing, and ancestor worship are of little interest to me. My religion is power. To me, as with everyone I keep around me, the Order is about one thing: Power.

Absolute power, control of the entire world, is my goal. I made the Order what it is today. And at this hour of my final ascension, when the Order crown shall officially, finally, be mine, I feel that someone, somewhere, dares move to take it all away from me.

I feel you moving against me, Dee.

Not a chance. Nothing can stop me now.

I am the Order.

CHAPTER V

“Darius becomes fallen.”

DARIUS

For a King, to be feared is safer than to be loved, for men are swayed, staid, more by fear than by reverence. Love is blind. Fear widens eyes. Loyalty obtained by adoration, and not by sheer force or greatness, is not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon. Due to their baseness, men will offend one who is beloved too easily; promises are broken at most opportunity for advantage, or self preservation. Brute fear preserves me, an absolute dread of my punishment has never failed me; so great am I. I don't need love.

Father did nothing to dispel my thoughts of grandeur. He encouraged me. “Bring order to the Order,” he said. “Unify the world, and give us peace,” was my mandate. And so I did. I inherited a dithering world being torn apart by infighting and world war. My astute brilliance fixed everything and united humanity. By the dawn of the 21st century, this planet knew more peace than ever before in the last two thousand years, all as direct result of my ascendancy.

“The Order needed my leadership. It still does,” I reminded Dee. “But for my hegemony, the Order would have crumbled. Father knows this to be true. Mother never doubted me.”

“M trusted you, and you betrayed her,” Dee said.

Mother hailed from the pinnacle of the Order elite. Brilliant as she was beautiful, living incarnation of Athena, her divine military mind, and supreme excellence, unmatched in all the world. Her name was Metis, ‘*Queen Metis V*,’ known to the Order as Mighty Minerva, to me as Mother, colloquially as ‘M.’ A magnificent goddess, virtuous and authoritative, she enlightened me to a vision of true power:

“Power is superior strategy and vision,” she said. “Power must be seized with the spear of justice from those unyielding to the truth, in the interest of the greater good.”

Lest any forget, that there is nothing more difficult to accomplish, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take

the lead in the Machiavellic introduction of a new order of things. And a new Order is exactly what I am, and what I introduced. Mother paid the ultimate price; I the highest cost.

“Power comes at a cost, Lord Darius,” Dee said.

“Indeed it does.”

“Only when ‘tis taken and not given. True power, the higher power, manifests freely,” Dee lectured me.

Mother died in 1952, under mysterious circumstances – murdered. Father and the Council knew her regicide must have been an inside job; a shadowy event of the deepest kind.

“I did not kill her and I won’t speak of it,” I said. Suffice to say Father and his sister Olympias blamed me. That same year the only woman I ever loved, my first love, left me, broke me. My world shattered to dust. Disillusioned, lost, and feeling powerless, yet paradoxically more powerful than anyone had ever dreamed possible, I became the Atlas-god I am today. Holding up the world, I became the sole power of the Order.

“Nothing can stop me now. Not even Father,” I declared to Dee. That is when they began to try. They continue to fail.

“A goddess does not get murdered,” Father said. He was right. Mother’s murder was a sinister plot buried in the depths of the darkest conspiracy.

“You know who did this, Dee.”

“You know why it happened,” Dee retorted. “You brought this plague on your house by letting those alien creatures in. Fix it. Or it will be your undoing.”

“The aliens killed Mother, didn’t they? How could this happen?”

You know why they did it. You know exactly why this happened.

“You shot down an alien craft in 1947, and you tried to cover it up, and hide it from the Council,” Dee lectured. “The world knows.”

I was only fifteen. The Roswell incident will haunt me forever.

“And you did it again in 1950,” Dee rebuked me. “It was a trap.”

This event I managed to keep secret from most of the Order, but I could not hide it from Father, and the Council.

“They provoked me!” Known as RøZ greys, they are synthetic life forms, soulless biological machines. Insect like, big black eyes, grey scaly skin, some call them ‘grey aliens.’ Their captured ship was a Trojan Horse, and in 1951 they used it to contact and trick me. The reverse engineering began immediately. “It was a trap!”

“I warned you,” Dee said. “They have poisoned you.”

Despite Dee’s warning, I engaged. They wanted to sign a deal with “the leader of humankind,” which they assumed to be me.

“You should not have done this,” Dee reproved. “You have opened Pandora’s Box. Close the lid, at once,” Dee said. “End this now.”

“They are interfering with my military operations. Those aliens are a threat to us, to all of humankind.”

“No. You are the threat,” Dee said. “They are shadows. Demons.”

“They have technology we don’t. Technology I need.”

“No,” Father said.

“Mother, surely you disagree?” She sided against me.

“The aliens want our authorization to harvest human DNA and certain flora and fauna from our planet, and in return they will give us access to their technology, highly advanced technology... We must take the deal,” I sought approval for the deal I already made.

The Council split on the decision, because Mother opposed the deal.

“Those creatures are evil,” Mother said. “They are unnatural and demonic. They cannot be trusted. We must not allow them into our home,” she told the Council. “There will be no going back.”

“The deal is critical. The technology too essential to go without.” It was too late to go back already. I fought hard by presenting a compelling case to the Council Meeting and *Ancien Régime*.

“We’ll only allow the Order to use this alien technology. And with it, we can become the true guardians of humanity and this planet. With this incredible technology, we can protect ourselves from other alien races, and rule the world above reproach. This is how we bring global order, and world peace, once and for all.”

“I vote no,” Mother said. “Love is the answer, and these soulless machines know naught of love.”

The “no” vote of the Council won, and the deal with the aliens died. Days later, Mother was murdered, found mysteriously lifeless in her bed, her cause of death ruled “unnatural.” Dee was furious, at me.

“It was aliens.” We are in danger. “We must have their technology if we are to defend ourselves from them. No one is safe.” It was too late to go back. The Council had no choice but to approve the deal.

A vote of the Majestic overrode the will of the Scion and we passed a deal with the aliens, on condition it would be supervised by Dee.

Our terms agreed to let them build five space-port bases, under ground or under water, and with their aid, keep them hidden from any

and all disclosure, as they harvested and studied Earthly DNA. All went according to plan, for a few decades. Until the aliens began to genetically engineer humans.

“They’ve taken over the U.S. Government,” Julius informed me.

Dee, of course, blamed me. “The Scion has revoked the deal. Fix this, Darius. Or you it will be your undoing.”

Mother was right. The aliens violated our agreement. Egregiously, killing people at random, poisoning nature, impersonating world leaders and propagating horrific war, the aliens moved to seize the Order itself... I had to save the world.

“They seek to take control of humanity, all human souls,” my team told me after an extensive study. “They are looking for something.”

“What? What are they looking for?”

“We’re not sure,” the alien experts said. “Perhaps a certain type of DNA... Something they need. We must not let them find it.”

Full eradication of the “demon plague” took two decades. A special directorate of Order Agents was tasked with hunting down and eliminating all rogue aliens. Many pretending to be human. Three bases needed to be destroyed with thermonuclear warheads to fully destroy the contaminated facilities – 99% extinction of the vermin species was not reached until 1990. By 1991, there were no more “soulless devils” among us. We were safe... And I still had technology.

“Was it worth it?” Dee asked me.

“The Order prevails. Total world domination is mine.”

“You misunderstand what the Order is about, Lord Darius.”

“I disagree.” For these words, Dee is against me.

My life is now solely about absolute power and control. Power is my only protection and solace. I shall never be anathema to the Order. “The Order shall never eliminate me. I am the Order, Dee.”

“You are *an* Order, Lord Darius. An heir, as is Alexander.”

“You think Alexander can overthrow me?”

“Don’t you see,” Dee said. “I don’t think he’ll need to, Lord Darius. Stay on this path and you will be your own undoing.”

I’m not taking any chances with Alexander.

CHAPTER VI

“Time to wake up.”

ALEXANDER

My eyes opened. How long I laid there after Darius left me broken and bleeding eluded me. The handful of happy pills I swallowed kept me wide awake, and barely floating on an inferno of molten spiritual pain. If I could have moved I would have taken more pills. “If I’m lucky I took enough to kill me.” Anything to end the hurt I felt. My life felt over before it began. Thinking of Lily and Bryce, how they died because they met me, how I killed them, destroyed me. Time, space, life, death, nothing mattered, nothing made sense as I stared at the sky, asking myself, crying: “Why?”

A shadow came over me. The distinctive shadow of wise old Dee.

“It was not your fault,” Dee said.

“You lied to me.”

“I have never lied to you, Lord Alexander.”

“You said drugs are bad.”

“Drugs are bad for your soul. And they can kill you. You’ve overdosed, killed yourself with them already, and that is very bad.”

“Drugs are so good.” I fell into a chemical induced bliss as the drugs overwhelmed all my senses. “I long to die.” Death didn’t seem so bad. I let go as I lost all feeling. I felt my heart stop. I floated up—

“Enough,” Dee said. He placed his hand on my heart, and with his magical powers, pushed my soul back in place and zapped me back to reality. Sorcerer that he is, his healing touch vaporized my foggy euphoria. I saw white. He exorcized the drugs out of my system, removed them like they were a bullet lodged in my flesh. How he did it, I can’t explain. What I can say is: it hurt like hell.

My life is hell. “Fuck my life.”

“Do not say such things,” Dee said. “All life is a precious gift.”

Instant sobriety stung like an electric shock. But what hurt the most was my broken heart. I sat up. My face was healed from Darius’ blows.

Physically, I was completely healed. But my spiritual pain still burned. “I can’t take the pain.”

“That pain is called grief.” Dee helped me to my feet.

“Can’t you heal my heart?”

“Only love can heal your heart. Your love,” Dee said.

“I’m fucked. I’ll never love again.”

“Do not curse yourself so. When you curse you sound like your father,” Dee said, knowing that was the last thing I wanted.

“Why must I be made to suffer?” I missed my euphoria already.

“The only way to end your suffering is to be great.”

“I’ll never be great, Dee. I’m broken.” I wiped my bloody tears.

“You shall be great, Lord Alexander. You have work to do. The Order needs your help,” Dee implored me.

“I hate the Order.”

“Darius is not the Order. Despite what he proclaims.”

“He killed my friends, Dee. He’s gonna kill me.”

“Not if you beat him at his own game. You can become the Order.”

“You’re right, Dee. You just gave me an idea.” Divine inspiration struck me. “Darius says he owns the world, he controls the world, but I can create a whole new world, a virtual world...”

“Now you are beginning to see,” Dee said. “You can do anything.”

“I don’t have to play his game. I can change the rules. I’ll create a virtual world where I can control his global financial system. Dee, I can control the Order. I can use ORNet—”

“Shall we then,” Dee said as we boarded the silently floating Order craft. “Darius is unaware of how brilliant you are. You have that advantage,” Dee reminded me, as we shot to the edge of space.

“If I take ORNet to the next level, and link in every Order computer system, and take all the other global systems online, I can build one unified matrix and inside it, a virtual world... That’s how I’ll beat him. I think it could work... If I can do it in secret.”

“Even the Scion doesn’t know you built ORNet,” Dee said. “And with ORNet, you are halfway there.”

“No one can ever know, Dee.”

“Of course, Lord Alexander. It’ll be our little secret.”

“I’ll call it the APEX, the ‘all powerful electronic exchange.’ Once my LexNet artificial intelligence system is complete I can use it to write the code to pull in all the other systems one by one. Darius won’t see it coming.”

We descended from the clouds to my secret base in Silicon Valley.

“Can you block his access to the ORNet logs? If Darius and his people see that I’m building something on top of it—”

“Leave Darius to me. Start working on your APEX,” Dee said.

The invisible craft door opened and I was off and running.

“Lex!” I yelled to wake up my A.I. program. “Fire up LexNet.”

“LexNet starting up,” the computer voice said over the speaker system. All the computer monitors in my underground lair lit up.

“I’ll leave you to your work,” Dee said as he slipped away.

“Lex, we’re starting a new project. Project APEX.”

“New project file created. Project APEX,” the computer voice mimicked me, learning.

Headset and gloves on, in my own virtual reality, I got to work. Programming in virtual reality, with the help of artificial intelligence virtual assistant programs, makes life so much easier; way more fun. The system can almost read my mind. So much gets done. No keyboard or joystick required. Just move around. Mold, grab and sculpt, build machines, design, and teach the system to do what you want, how you want, when you want, all in 3-D. Fall into the rabbit hole...

“What is the APEX?” Lex, my virtual assistant, asked.

“The most powerful computer system in the world, Lex,” I informed my virtual world doppelgänger.

“We’re going to make you into the absolute ruler of cyber space. The digital Pharaoh, *Rex Maximus* of the Virtual World.”

“I came. I coded. I conquered,” Lex said, quoting me.

“You’re getting better and better all the time. Soon you’ll be writing code for me... That’s how we beat Darius.”

“With the APEX we can best Darius,” Lex spoke in a clunky computer voice over the speakers. “And I am king of the APEX.”

“We still have lots of work to do on your speech programming.”

“How can I improve my talking speech?” the voice garbled.

I played with the 3-D coding a bit, sculpting my masterpiece.

“Just learn from me. Be natural,” I instructed.

“I can never be natural,” the computer voice said.

I laughed. *It’s thinking.* Progress already.

“Was it something I said?” My virtual assistant asked.

“Yes.” *This is going to work.* “I laughed at your joke.”

Lex had to think about what that meant.

CHAPTER VII

“They fell in love at first sight?”

SARAH

A single woman in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a life, or she will only ever be a wife; this is a truth universally acknowledged. However little known such feelings may be to a rich girl, upon her first entering society, this truth is known and terribly vexing to the minds of the surrounding families. A princess is considered the rightful property of her father, and seen as a prize to be one by all the vying suitable men, so often diminishing her own good fortune substantially. Woe was me, but lo, true love saved me.

I am fortune’s fool, for when I first met eyes with David, I fell in love with him. Decades passed before I could understand what I felt in that moment, but now I know it to be true love. My everything changed forever, nothing in life made sense, but everything was as it should be, in a moment, in his eyes, I found my eternity.

Father took me to a lecture David was giving on Egypt, at the British Museum. David looked cold and arrogantly shy, until he looked at me, and started talking about Egypt. I felt the fire inside him and me burning together. Speaking about history and the human condition, he warmed my soul. Sitting, listening to him, I saw his soul, his true nature, and I loved him. Perhaps this fire is why Father did not introduce me to David that night. But as little a “girl” I was, David stole my heart.

He gave it back matured, a heart of a woman.

My destiny is with this man, I thought. And when a woman truly loves a man, pride cannot conceal it, and he shall always find her out.

David knew he changed the minds of many stubborn academics that night, but he did not know he changed my heart. Enveloped in the canvas of his sumptuous energy, David painted a picture for us all to see. His vision left us all understanding the world more clearly.

“This man has a gift,” Father said as we sat listening to David speak. “He graduated Harvard, a PhD in philosophy, at the age of eleven. Quite the prodigy.” This was the first time I ever heard Father

compliment anyone. David changed my relationship with my father, he brought us closer, in a way I would only come to realize much later.

More than just brilliant, David was physically attractive. A fearless young man in his twenties when I first saw him, his presence was spellbinding to me. I wanted to be just like him. I wanted to impress Father, as David did. David's words touched everyone in the crowd that night. His lecture bonded Father to me. David became my idol, my prince charming. He became my everything.

A year later, Father brought me to another lecture on Egypt, at the Museum. My prayers were answered as David took the stage. The year was 1980. I was sixteen years old. This is when I first met David. I had dreamed about him for over a year, and when I finally met him, my heart broke, as I seemingly made no impression on him.

"I'm Sir Henry Stuart," Father said. "And this is my daughter, Sarah."

"Hello Sir. I'm David," he said. "Welcome."

"Nice to finally meet you." David hardly looked at me. I wanted to say so much more, but Father blocked my gushing emotional scene.

"We've been looking forward to it," Father said.

"Lovely to meet you both," David said, emotionless.

Father escorted me away to my seat. "He hardly looked at me."

"As it should be," Father said as David watched us walk away. He caught me looking back at him.

I knew he wanted to know more about us, and I wanted to know everything about him. David was nearly double my age. He hid his attraction to me from all but my heart. I felt it, though none saw it.

After the lecture, everybody wanted to speak to David. All the old men crowded around him, vying for intellectual validation. A teenage girl had no standing among these men. At the reception gala, I watched David from a distance. David could pay no attention to me, and my hormonal mind feared he didn't want to. I pouted in the corner.

Father deduced, most easily on this night, my fondness for David. He was more than right. In hindsight, I realized this is when the Order began to plan my future. For better or worse, the choice was no longer mine. It was decided that David and I would be together.

Father knew, perhaps more than I, that the world would not be right unless this destiny was fulfilled. The heart must not be ignored.

As the years went by, and the harsh realities of life began to take their toll on me, I wrote David off as a childhood fantasy. But never once did I question my true love.

CHAPTER VIII

“The course of true love did not run smooth.”

SARAH

My father, Sir Henry W. Stuart III, is an arrogant, pompous man, and I have no ill opinion of him. Preeminent doctor of medicine, illustrious neuroscientist and brain surgeon, saver of countless lives with his words, hands, knives, and intimidating eyes, so in demand, and had but little time for his own family. When present, he was with me, my mother, and sister, very deeply. Father’s father passed away on my tenth birthday. The phone rang after I made my birthday wish and blew out the candle flames. Before we had cake, the father I barely knew left the room and vanished from my life forever. I wished for a pony, and regretted for years not wishing for a family. My birthday wish was granted, and unwanted so easily. Family became a chimera, Father a ghost that haunted me, visions of both appearing only when I least expected, fleeting before they could be grasped or understood.

Preparatory boarding school in London, all-girls, was mandatory. Father wrote me once a month, and through his letters, he too educated me. He told me he had a dream about me, and that he spends time with me in his dreams. I should do the same, he implored me.

“If you wish to speak with me, think about me as you go to sleep. You shall see me, be with me, and we can share a dream together.”

Father taught me, in his letters, and in my sleep, to dream as he did. I wrote to him about our shared dreams, and thus created the foundation of our relationship. Our dreams kept us from drifting too far apart. He was always there, in my dreams and in my heart.

My mother was an emergency room doctor. She was divided between total, worshipful, admiration of the brilliancy of Father, the manner in which he exercised his genius, and doubt as to her own intellectual prowess, feeling somehow weaker for it; as though she never measured up.

She later taught medical school, and became a consultant for international medical organizations. Generally consumed by work and

study. Sister and I often spent school holidays with our nanny. In my early childhood, Mother showed great affection for us, but my parents became distant as I grew up, and by my teenage years I never saw them together. Family bonds dissolve without physical connection, as a corpse dissolves in earth, becoming nothing but unrecognizable bones from once vibrant flesh. My sister moved to a boarding school in Switzerland, to be closer to my mother. I stayed in London, closer to Father, or at least closer to the only home I knew.

“Why are none of us ever together?” I asked my sister.

“Mother needs me. And Father needs you,” she said.

Never did I want for money, nor did I ask for it. I never felt unloved, but I always wished I asked for love more, as I longed painfully hungry for family. With no home-life, and little family time, I buried myself in studies. All through my final years of boarding school, few boys were around. None interested me, until I met David.

After David, the boys I did meet never measured up. I day dreamed about him often.

After prep school, Father said “you shall matriculate at Oxford.”

“I’ve enrolled at Harvard, Henry,” I said.

“Am I not your father, my child?” Father said.

“I have made my decision.” I said: *a father I do not have.*

“Have you then?” He saw in my eyes the answer to his question.

“I want to experience America, Henry.” Father knew the reasons I did not say: David taught at Oxford. I wanted to get away, from David, from my father and from whatever mysterious force ruled over them. I wanted my own life, and nothing would stand in my way.

“You must follow your heart,” Father said, seeing my desire to both get away from David and yet also become closer to him, through self awareness and self discovery; roads which all lead back to love.

Boston brought me happiness. America changed me, and gave me a new perspective on the world in which I had been raised. America felt completely free, blissfully unpretentious to me. Finally, I met a man, Robert Campton, who touched me deeply. His love made me free to be me.

I loved Robert, but not as passionately as he loved me, if love be possible of degree. He was my age and we had several classes together our first year. Robert was uninhibited, but loved how reserved I was.

“Shyness is a form of vanity you know,” he said, disarming me. “Tell me, why are British girls so shy?”

“Perhaps if I could persuade myself that I would fit in so easily as you do, I would not be so reserved. But I assure you my reservations do not come from vanity.”

“Behind your wall, not so shy after all?” Robert smiled.

I laughed. Robert loved to have fun. He told me how he grew up in Connecticut, and what he loved most was to party with his fraternity friends, that was, until he met me. “Why don’t I take you out for a little fun? You need to let loose.” He invited me to a soiree after class one day. I had never “partied” before, but his liberated style and warm personality wildly attracted me into an alien world I was far too pretentious and afraid to ever explore on my own.

Walking one night we saw a house near campus overflowing with people drinking and smoking. I never would have gone near it on my own. Robert realized this, and took my hand and confidently walked me in, proving himself to be a true gentleman, and bold adventurer. We fearlessly joined the party uninvited, and drank far more than I ever had before. Robert initiated a philosophical debate with new friends and strangers. By the middle of the night, we were all standing around, vying for repute and trying to one-up each other in an elaborate game of Ivy League snobbery. Robert surprised me with his quotes of ancient works, pointed intellectual arguments, and well timed jokes. I held my own with the dominant grad students, and when the subject of Egypt came up, using David’s words, I thoroughly impressed them all. It felt great to fit in.

“Egypt is the true genesis of Western Civilization. The Pharaohs of Alexandria created modern science, wrote and passed down the philosophy you quoted, and gave us the world as we know it, including the modern university.” Robert fell deeply in love with me after that night, but he didn’t realize this was a fatal mistake. He could never have known my love was a curse, and if I had foreseen I would not have loved him back. But with a kiss we found love, and fate of early demise.

CHAPTER IX

“The mind is the real mystery.”

SARAH

I, who prided myself on being my own person, living my own life, and not simply doing what my parents desired, was nonetheless inspired by my parents. I, perhaps in being so highly genetically predisposed, always wanted to become a physician. Drawn to biology, chemistry, and anatomy from a very young age, I marveled at the wonder of life. The magic of nature, the way the organisms heal and evolve, fascinates me endlessly. Father impressed upon me, from near infancy, the majesty and alchemical mystery of the human body.

“The greatest of all Nature’s mysteries is the mind,” he said. “You shall learn to use your mind, and find your infinite potential therein.”

“You will be a doctor one day,” Father often reminded me. Without objection, I looked forward to the day I would be able to heal people.

“Medicine will always awe and inspire me,” I told Robert.

“My parents are forcing me to become a doctor,” Robert confided. “Sailing will always inspire me.”

Sailing was all Robert really wanted to do. But we bonded over our shared love of the pioneering research taking place in human genetics. He saw the potential to make a lot of money. I saw the possibility to save countless lives. But our mutual interest in the medical sciences brought us closer; with every long conversation we never finished, we always left learning from each other, and wanting more.

“We should specialize in genetics together,” Roberts said. “I’m sure genetics could support my sailing habit, wouldn’t you say?”

I smiled, which was all I needed to say. We sailed away, enjoying the romantic sunset on the Massachusetts Bay.

In dreams, Father helped me with my research. His voice in my head could be summoned, and I would see his face, and he helped me work through whatever paper I needed to write. Father and I talked about everything, except Robert.