

THE ARCANUM REVELATION SERIES  
COMPANION BOOK 0.1

# ROYAL ARCANUM

*"Would you sacrifice your life  
for the one you love?"*



K E E F E R . D



ROYAL  
ARCANUM

KEEFE R.D

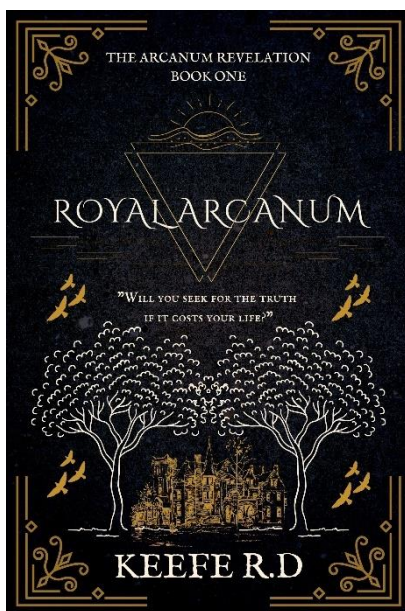


## Author's Little Note:

This story set in a different scenario than the reimagined version. In the alternate stories, things are different from the reimagined version that is more gothic and has a much more mature feel to the way the storytelling is established. This alternate series is a product of my learning process. This one focus more on Cathy's high school era. While the new version has a fast pace and rich insight into the world of Royal Arcanum.

The Reimagined Version is Available Now!

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The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

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THE ROYAL ARCANUM SERIES



# 1 ALTERNATE STORY



ROYAL  
ARCANUM

KEEFE R.D



Golden Arch Books

Indonesia

*For my beautiful mother, Dian A.W, who told wisdoms,  
and for all the people who seeks visionary dream.*

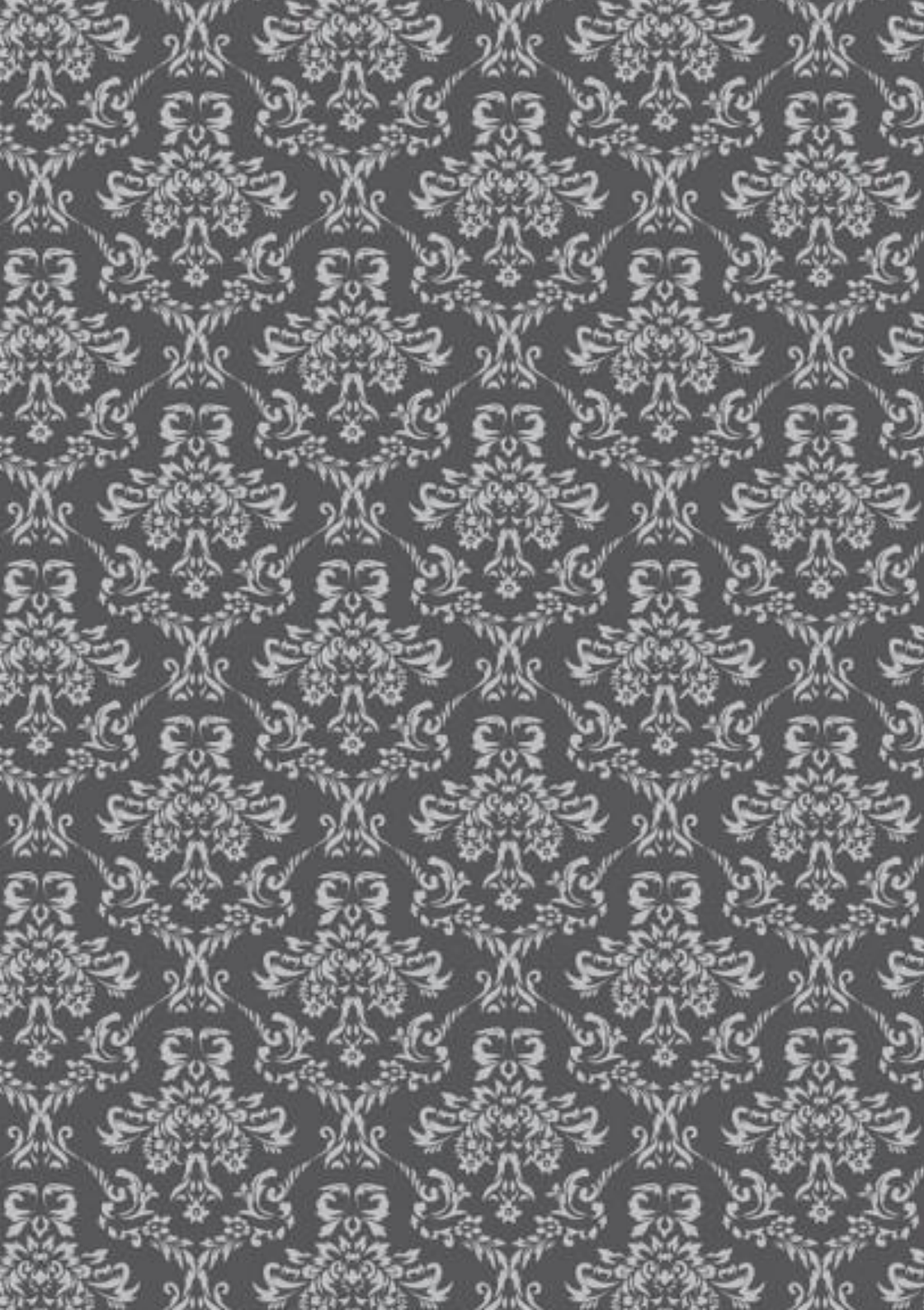
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*“The world you believe you live in,  
it’s never what it seems.”*

~ Chandelier Order ~





# PROLOGUE

UNDER THE DARK SKY, only the moon shone over the strange ravine. All that she saw was a girl who called out her name. If only she could tell who that white-haired girl was. She had a pale white skin covered with brown collared shirt. Her emerald-green eyes were remarkably bright within the darkness, staring intensely from afar.

Dreaming had never been so painful when it felt like sadness. She wanted to cry from all the things that had been terrifying her in the past three months. The haunting dreams felt like the projection of the past. She felt every moment when she saw that beautiful girl, but just—something wasn't human about her.

If this was real, she might scream and ran away from the dream, because the girl kept on echoing one name; *Kathleen*.

# I

## SENIOR YEAR

EVERYTHING WAS DARK as the moon covered behind the black clouds. The sky blurred and turned into the white ceiling in her bedroom. She screamed out and coughed painfully. It got worse once she realized that a warm hand had been patting her shoulder.

“Hey, wake up!” Her mom worried. “What happened?”

She tried to sit steady and woke up with her messy brown-mahogany hair and bad eye-bags.

Her mom sat worriedly beside her, bewildering. “It seems you have a bad dream.”

“I did,” she stared back at her mom’s brown eyes that looked deep and sharp. “The same dream almost every night. I told you.”

Her mom kissed her head, and went to open the curtains. “Come downstairs after you take a shower, the breakfast is ready.”

“But—”

She already pushed the door open, but she held still when she could feel her daughter’s restless feeling.

“She’s calling me *Kathleen* for million times,” her voice was hoarse. “Precisely, my name is Cathy, short for Catherine.”

“You had been consuming too much fairy tale in the past few months, it might manifest into a dream.”

“Those books and this dream are not the same—”

“If you want to discuss the superstition with me, you should stop and hurry to take a shower.”

Cathy annoyed when her mom slammed the door. It was useless to tell her about what happened in those strange recurring dreams. Her mom wasn’t the type who believed in any kind of metaphysical stories.

But what more absurd at this time, she felt waking up as if she had not slept at all since it happened. Although it was hard to ignore, she had to rise from bed.

When she took her cell phone, Josh had sent her a picture—the one that was taken with his grandmother in Austria.

He was her best friend, the best man who had been her closest friend since they were in elementary school. She smiled, looking at their happiness. She missed the good holiday, and there was just no time for the family trip since her dad was super busied with his work. At least, she enjoyed spending last month school holiday with reading books. Nevertheless, she finally felt ready to welcome her senior year.



The rain just stopped when she turned downstairs, and the delicious smell of food emerged from the kitchen, making her hungry. She saw her mom in there, serving the omelets on the dining table, while her dad already sat down, looking neat in his dark suit.

He paused from reading the newspaper as he stared up at Cathy. “Is this the right time to spill the beans?”

“Be silent, darling,” her mom bulged out her eyes at him and giggled.

Cathy dragged the chair oppositely from him, while feeling curious at their secretive manner. “What is it?”

“Oh, Cathy, look at my little baby,” her dad looked relieved somehow “—she will finally attend her last year of school.”

“The time has passed so fast, hasn’t it?” Her mom added and smiled cheerfully as she sat beside him.

“What’s the surprise?” Cathy rephrased.

“Should we tell her a little earlier, darling?” He looked at his wife mischievously, but she sighed in annoyance. “Will you wait for tomorrow, then?”

Cathy shrugged, showing her *whatever-vibe* to them.

“Anyway, why are you dressed up, mom?” She bewildered since her mom always dressed in pajama in the morning, followed by her routine of maintaining the front yard garden. “Are you two wanted to go somewhere?”

“We want to visit Mr. Burk,” her mom answered. “He’s going to celebrate the annual party for his restaurant.”

“Oh, right. Can I come?” She begged.

“Of course, we’re just going to have a little talk with him this morning. His party will be held tomorrow afternoon,” her dad shouted while chewing the omelet.

She nodded, relieved.

As soon as the breakfast had finished, they went to ride with his car—white *Ford Fusion*.

The morning sight had the slippery road for the walkers, although most people here felt glad with the temporary rain. This place had always been in a state of dryness, also as part of more than five thousand populations in this small town Bisbee, Arizona.

Her dad stopped the car in front of the white building that placed with a single wooden board written; *Welcome to Bisbee High School*.

She cringed at the idea of stepping her feet in there, and the thought of crossing with random crowds was somewhat terrifying for her.

“Be good at school,” her dad smiled.

“Don’t worry, we’ll be at home soon before you return. We love you,” her mom kissed her forehead at the car windowsill.

Although they smiled at each other, Cathy couldn't hide her anxious expression in front of her mom. Before her dad drove the car, her mom held her arm and whispered to her quickly, "High school will only last for a year. Be fear of nothing, my love."

The faith her mom gave, making her less nervous to walk through this nightmare. There should be nothing to fear in here, but her mind kept on playing a trick whenever she saw people. If the bad vibe was presence, it could make her body felt weary.

There weren't many students at seven o'clock. She walked anxiously toward the administration room to meet a middle-aged woman in red uniform, who sat behind a desk.

"Excuse me, can I get my class schedule?" Cathy asked. "My name's Cathy Charlotte."

The woman raised her chin with a frustrated look, and there was no energy on her pale face. It must have been a burden to sit like that all day long. She lazily took a piece of paper for her. Apparently, it was her everyday attitude as the school administrative.



“Thanks,” Cathy walked away immediately before it could turn awkward.

The first class she had was English course. The classroom door was opened, and Mr. Stalensky had arrived earlier than the others. He always wore eyeglasses and formal suit like a university professor. Everyone always wondered why he looked a bit strange like a scientist when he was in this class.

He glanced at her arrival silently, and then he busied again, snugging up some papers on his desk.

Cathy sat down in the first row next to the windowsill. She ignored him as well while taking out a notebook from her brown satchel bag. She just got bored and had no idea besides doodling on the notebook. She had always loved drawing since she was a little kid. But this one, it came out like some random wavy lines. It wasn't a good one, she thought.

Monday felt like a lazy day. She didn't know what today would be like. Until she saw someone with blue sneakers appeared.

“I saw it all,” the good-looking boy said. He was *Josh Kingsley*.

He was a boy with bright-brown hair, white skin, and body height of one-hundred-seventy-eight cm, while she was only one-hundred-sixty-five cm. His figure resembled those fashion models on the city billboards. In fact, many girls in school adored him, but he was always being ignorance as if nobody was interesting enough to look at.

No one here really knew that he was the hard thinker type, but he actually very friendly and introvert. Cathy was the closest who had heard all of his thoughts—happy or sad. They were best friend to each other, but Cathy had not yet realized the truth that he fell for her heart. Everyone thought they were lovers, but people knew nothing.

She stared up at him, uncomfortably. “What?”

“That sketch is a mess, just like your hair,” he grinned, teasing her. “Alright, I’m kidding. I mean, look at your worried face. Just tell me if anyone picks a fight with you, I’ll handle them.”

“No, it’s not,” she sighed, while holding her laugh. “It just feels like starting all over again—high school.”

The fact that they were connected, he could tell what she felt immediately.

“You want to graduate, sooner? Me too,” he smiled. “If I can win this baseball game for the scholarship, Martha will be glad to know it.”

“Oh right, how is she these days?” Cathy worried about his grandmother.

“She’s better. The Doctor said she has been enduring *Cardiac Sarcoma* very well. You know, it’s a heart disease.”

“Can I see her after school?”

He smiled, “As you wish, Ma’am.”

The awkwardness went in the air when Mr. Stalensky peeped at them secretly, but Josh ignored him while taking out something from his bag once he sat next to her.

“Here you go—a gift I got you from Austria,” he gave her a white charm bracelet, and then he started mumbling like usual. “FYI, my grandmother always mumbled about junk-food I ate in there, how upsetting—”

Cathy cut him off quickly as she was annoyed, “Hey, she was just worried about you like you’re always worried about her,” she couldn’t help but to admonish him. “Anyway, thanks for the bracelet.”

He sighed. “I got it. I just want her to take a rest all day long. Enough for thinking about me, and just bother the knitting and tea time routine. I want my grandma to stay healthy.”

Cathy looked at him empathically.

During the class, Josh continued mumbling next to her. She got annoyed whenever he wouldn’t stop talking about unnecessary stuff.

Finally, the bell rang at the same time there was a noise outside the classroom. Everyone astonished to witness two boys who brutally flung at the doorsill when a student opened the door. They were fighting each other aggressively.

The blonde one had a muscular body as he attacked the skinny boy who had so many bruises on his jaundice face. He was *King of Bully*—everyone called him that way. Cathy didn’t remember his real name though, and she won’t bother with it.

Everyone rose up from their chairs to record the fight scene with their cellphones, until Mr. Stalensky had to come down by himself to dismiss them.

“Both of you—go to the detention room, now!”

Every last of the student surprised to see Mr. Stalensky yelled out with a serious look, especially when he dragged the boys to the headmaster by himself.



“Did you see that?” Josh chuckled. “Nobody has ever yelled out like Mr. Stalensky at the blonde.”

They headed toward the canteen as having the conversation, but then Cathy got dizzy as soon as she saw the crowded space. He noticed her phobia with the crowd—it was like her thing.

Josh tried to calm her, patting her shoulder empathically, but he kept mumbling again, “I heard that Scott receives a warning without a serious punishment. What the heck?” He peevied. “He has been bullying people for many times.”

“C’mon, it’s not like he bother us,” she said and stopped in front of the food queue. “We should concern about what we’re about to eat rather than minding his business.”

“And right, I’m hungry,” he mumbled.

“Staring at the hamburgers reminds me of the Burk’s Resto. I’ve heard they’ll celebrate a small party tomorrow. Do you want to come?” Cathy asked.

“I’d love to—if all the Viking girls wouldn’t be there,” he pointed secretly at the clique group of girls.

The reason he called them with a silly nickname was because those girls had muscle in their arms. The girls were the most popular in school, empowering the school cheerleaders, and they were in the same grade as Cathy and Josh.

“They’re just doing a good sport and, they look fashionable,” she said awkwardly while staring at them “—and you have a heart of stone.”

Josh narrowed his eyes peevishly at her. “What a compliment. Don’t you think it is you? Thanks.”

She patted his arm quickly. “They’re coming—your fans.”

The clique was led by Liliana Rocha inherited Spanish descent and described by most boys as a noisy girl, gossip, rumormonger, and she had a flirty attitude, also she was a short girl with one-hundred-fifty-five cm. Different from her sidekick, Stella Laurance, half French

girl who was the tallest girl in school with one-hundred-seventy-five cm.

Liliana had a curly brown hair that looked like a puffy cake, and she had a tan skin, while Stella had short red hair, light skin, and thick freckles on her cheeks. However, they shared mutual interest as they had crush on Josh since the first year of high school. Everyone knew that Liliana didn't always show her true feeling because she didn't want to ruin her friendship with Stella, who was dealing with acute personality of shyness.

“Hi, Josh,” Liliana said flirtatiously to him, but squinted fiercely at Cathy. “Have you felt sick by having a hamburger every afternoon?”

Josh tried to finish his hamburger quickly. He was eating harshly, making the girls stared bewilderingly at him. Soon, he rose from the chair and said, “I suddenly feel a bad stomachache. I need to go to the bathroom!”

He also dragged Cathy hurriedly to run away from the girls.



As soon as the school time had finished, they went home together with his blue bicycle. She suddenly tapped his

shoulder alertly. He pushed the brake as they stopped in front of the small white house. However, his house was just a couple blocks away from this spot, instead they ended up in front of Cathy's house.

She peeped secretly behind the green fence, making him bewildered alone.

He followed to see what saw, and he asked, "I thought we're going to visit my grandma. What happened?"

"Wait, there's someone in my house," she muttered while staring at a stranger in her terrace house.

"You have a guest?"

Cathy ignored him as she walked into the front yard. He followed her quickly from behind.

The stranger was a beautiful girl, sitting alone while caressing the fluffy white cat. The girl had a fair skin, long-straight white hair, and she wore a floral dress.

The girl smiled innocently at their arrival.

"Your new friend likes to play with a cat, huh?" Josh murmured.

Cathy stood pondering, and she got astonished to remember clearly the strange existence of a familiar girl who owned a pair of emerald green eyes. Her head felt



confused since her mind got mixed up with random visions from the last three months. The flashbacks didn't exactly haunting her, but they were terrifying visions, and for a second, they started playing again on her mind.

It was as if she lived in another old era, and a tranquil place. It was very different from her reality. The presence of this new girl had reminded her with everything, and it was like an elastic magnet.

A vision came to her; of a woman that was riding a dark horse, and accompanied along with the warriors. They wore gold chain-mail clothes like royal armors. The flashes recorded clearly on her mind, of those memories that reflected vividly against her sleepy brown eyes.

Nevertheless, Cathy had a depth on her eyes, which was rare for someone with dark eyes.

"You've come home," her mom shouted from the door while bringing a box filled with garden tools. "It's time for a hot chocolate, won't you join us, Josh?"

The visions were gone as soon as she stared back at her mom.

"Thank you Mrs. Charlotte, I'd be happy to be your guest," Josh said politely.

As soon as he walked into the house, the white hair girl followed him from behind, looking cheerful.

Cathy confronted her mom, while she was placing the box next to the beautiful lavenders and lilies in the garden. “Mom, who is she?”

Her mom seemed conflicted to answer her, as if she wasn’t prepared. “I’ll explain inside.”



The phone rang when everyone already gathered at the dining table, her mom hurriedly ran to answer the phone that was placed adjacently behind the dining room. It was her dad, asking what food her mom had cooked today, which was a smoked tuna.

Cathy couldn’t wait any longer and left Josh alone with the girl. She confronted her mom directly, even her mom was in the middle of answering her dad on the phone.

“I need you to tell me, who is she?”

“Cathy, my love—”

“Please,” she begged, distinctly.

Nevertheless, her mom seemed like she was in the never-ending confliction about something, and she looked worried every time Cathy came to her for a clear answer.

“She is our distant relative. She will stay here for vacation.”

“We have a relative, but you’ve never told me?” Her rage was boiled up and ready to explode, but she had to endure it. “You’ve never told me anything about your family—*the Aloise*.”

“It’s hard to tell you right now.”

They stared intensely to one another.

“Mom, she’s exactly the girl I’ve seen in my recurring dreams!” Cathy muttered in a low voice.

“Just give it a rest,” her mom sounded bluntly, and they returned to the dining room.

The girl, she looked a bit older than Cathy and Josh. She had the fairest white skin, almost like the color of snow. She also possessed a very bright pair of emerald green eyes. Her body type was slender, with body height of one-hundred-seventy-five cm, making Cathy as the

shortest person in the room, since her mom was a few centimeters taller.

All that perfection didn't make her look like human. Moreover, it was odd that she looked physically nothing like Cathy or her mom who inherited Eurasian look.

"Hello there," the girl started speaking with a firm voice.

Cathy trembled with the feeling of those haunting dreams, because it felt exactly like this moment. The girl had such intimidating eyes, making Josh feel the same thing too.

However, he could break the ice. "The marshmallow taste good in this hot chocolate. Don't you all think so?"

"Well—" Cathy's mom started the real conversation, "let me introduce our distant relative, this is Sylvia Elle."

"I prefer to be called as *Elle*," she emphasized her name distinctly.

Cathy was nervous to say a word, but she had to pretend to look normal for a second. "My name's Cathy Charlotte. And this is my best friend, Josh Kingsley."

"I know," she smiled. "We've met before."

Cathy bewildered when Elle responded with such an odd statement. She kept on thinking where they met before this encounter—or was it in the dreams. The girl in her dreams looked exactly like Elle, the difference was with the dress, but that old style of fashion gave her the creeps. Elle was mysterious and unreadable.

Her mom suddenly exhaled heavily, along with the environment that felt tensed for the last few minutes. Elle didn't even touch her cup of chocolate. It was even weirder.

“Josh, I think it's time for you to go home.”

Cathy stared back at her mom.

“Mom—”

He also looked taken aback with Cathy's mom sudden attitude. “It's okay, thanks Mrs. Charlotte,” and he stared at Cathy to calm her, “—Martha is waiting for me. I'll see you tomorrow.”

Through the kitchen window, Cathy saw him in the yard, walking away.

Afterward, Cathy followed her mom into the family room, and as she stood up on the wooden floor covered

with a Native American red rug in there, she confronted, “Mom, what’s going on?”

Her mom was sitting on the red sofa, where above it hung a painting of blue butterflies on top of flowers in a glass vase. Next to the sofa, Elle was observing the wooden bookshelves.

“We need to visit Austria.”

“What do you mean?” Cathy squinted bewilderingly at her. “The school already starts, the holiday is over.”

“We’re not going for vacation. We’ll meet a relative for a family matter,” her mom explained.

“What kind of family matter?” She peeved. “You’ve never told me any detail regarding your family, or even about Aunt Sarah. So, please tell me the truth!”

“Everything takes a process,” Elle shouted while her fingers randomly flipping the pages in a book. “The truth is something everyone afraid to hear. Shouldn’t you be ready for that?”

Cathy surprised that Elle didn’t talk like a girl at her age.

“She’s right,” her mom rose from the chair, looking depressed. “Time’s running, whatever will happen is getting closer. We should get ready.”

“Remember that I never like lies, Haile.”

Cathy squinted astonishingly when Elle just called her mom by first name.

“I know. I just need the right moment for this. She’s my only child,” her mom murmured and started walking back and forth restlessly.

“What?” Cathy confused. “I won’t go until you tell me the real deal.”

“It’s about the Aloise, but we’re not going to visit them. It’s just our distant relative, for telling you the history.”

“Why don’t you tell me by yourself?” Cathy confronted.

Haile stopped, and her eyes glossed when she looked into her daughter’s eyes. “You need to see the proofs physically—the manuscripts.”

“What proofs?”

“Your *royal family* who lives in Austria,” Elle snapped, making Haile agitated.

Cathy had her eyes popped out, and heart pounded unstably. She almost couldn’t hold her rage as she gazed at her mom with a disappointed look.

“You need to stop,” her mom warned Elle. “Let everything happen in time, this isn’t quite right.”

“Does dad know—about you being part of a royal?”

“No, I don’t want to involve him in my matters.”

“I just want to know, why did you hide the story from us?”

Haile swallowed her own saliva, feeling agitated.

On the other side, Elle felt that the situation didn’t look conducive between them, and so she took over the conversation, “She doesn’t want to lose you. Your mom wants to protect you from the malevolent ones. So, for the excessive atmosphere we have here, please calm down first.”

Cathy hated it when Elle stared keenly at her, as if she was the guilty one in here. However, she still needed explanation, “Why?”

“You can’t get through all of this without peace. Your fear might vanish as you understand the things,” Elle said.

Haile caressed her shoulder. Cathy thanked her mom for calming her.

Afterward, they went upstairs together, Elle smiled cheerfully at her. She was sarcastic a minute ago, but her mood had just changed drastically. She walked like a



happy little girl, although she was probably in her early twenties.

“For momentary time, I’ll stay next to your bedroom,” Elle said before they separated.

Cathy wanted to relate her dream with this situation, but her curiosity began to learn what that strange girl supposed to be. This shouldn’t be a nightmare.

# 2

## SMALLTALK

CATHY ALMOST DROWNED herself into the cold bathtub as her mind subconsciously recalled those strange visions. She coughed heavily, the pain swirled on her chest.

The visions looked as real as she could touch a towel next to her. Every detail depicted something about the past of someone looked so familiar. She struggled to understand it, of how to put all the puzzles together. What was more important, of how those visions could keep coming back into her head. Nonetheless, the recurring dreams had stopped since Sylvia Elle arrived yesterday.

She rose from the bathtub, and stood still in front of the mirror, looking at a reflection of a young girl with a

pale white skin as if she lost a lot of blood, and a pair of sleepless dark-brown eyes.

Her heart was beating stably as she intentionally recalled those strange visions again.

*A woman was riding a horse. She had red highlights on her mahogany hair, and her beautiful white skin covered behind a royal armor that smeared with gold and silver, symbolized the nobility of where she came from. Next to her, an old man came as the captain for the warriors who were always following both of them from behind. The wind blew ragingly, and a very tough battle was about to begin, but then, the vision blurred out once the enemy appeared...*

*Another vision came, but it was unclear; a beautiful view of the castle's front yard in the winter, with red roses grown withered into the blackness, but only one that outgrown perfectly fine.*

*A little princess came to pluck it. She was amazed with the flower that could survive the coldness of winter. But suddenly, a stranger was watching her. She stared back at that woman in black robe.*

*The woman was shy to greet the little princess, and feared the magnificent beauty that the little princess had always possessed. After all, the woman's heart was touched by the kindness that the little princess had shown to her when the only red rose was given for a woman of her kind—a pitiful one. And so, the little princess said that the woman was as beautiful as the red rose.*

Her senses returned like an elastic magnet when someone knocked the door. She walked out while her hair still dripped wetly on her white long sleeves blouse.

She surprised to see Elle stood frozenly in front of the door, staring with observant eyes.

“I’m just making sure you’re okay,” Elle said. “You were coughing and screaming.”

Cathy bewildered against her attitude. “I’m okay.”

“No, you aren’t.”

“I slipped, that’s all. There’s no need to worry,” she said and walked away ignorantly.

Elle stared quietly, looking at her back. Her face looked unreadable, and her atmosphere was somehow felt absurd as if something wasn’t click with the way she moved.

However, Cathy didn't want to make it as a big deal, and so she went to her own bedroom.

The curtains still closed, just like the first time she woke up. She noticed that her mom had not visited her bedroom this morning, unlike usual.

As her eyes hovered at another thing, there was something odd; a series of familiar books and journals about occultism suddenly moved from a storage room to her study desk.

"I put those on your reading list."

Cathy astonished to death when Elle suddenly stood at the doorsill.

"Can you knock first?"

Elle kept on staring back at her, with such a strange keen eyes.

"Does my mom know about this?" Cathy sighed, bewildering. "She hates metaphysical stuff."

"Does she?" Elle held her laugh, as if something tickled her throat. "It's odd. Is it counted as being a hypocrite?"

Cathy annoyed. "What do you mean?"

“By the way, your mom invites us to go to the beach this weekend. I’d love to go along,” Elle was just ignoring her question, and then she walked out from her bedroom while dancing happily. It was hard to understand the existence of that strange girl when both of them had just barely met yesterday.

Subsequently, Cathy went downstairs once she smelled the smoked beef aroma, where Elle wasn’t seen around in the dining room. Her dad already sat down along with her mom to have breakfast.

“Manson, can you be realistic?” Her mom giggled. “It’ll be an amazing gift.”

Cathy dragged the chair as she asked curiously, “What gift?”

“You’re just in time. I agree with your mom to give you a gift for welcoming your senior year,” her dad said.

“Are you serious?” She bewildered, in a happy way.

“Finish your breakfast first, and then we’ll tell you more,” her mom said while giving a plate of smoked beef to her.



Once the breakfast had finished, her parents led her to their green garage. Suddenly, her eyes bulged out to see what was inside.

“Are you serious?” Her eyes stared gratefully at the new silver car. “It’s *2011 Ford Edge!*”

“It’s time for you to drive your own car, since I won’t annoy Josh by letting you have a free ride every single day, and—” he paused, looking struggled to finish his last words “I won’t always be able to pick you up from school, because of my job lately.”

Cathy slightly looked disappointed at her dad for the fact, but she almost couldn’t hide her feeling if her mom didn’t shout out afterward, “Congratulation, my love.”

As her mom kissed her cheek, a memory from a year ago reminded her; it was a hard time when her mom taught her a driving lesson. She almost got a panic attack every time her mom yelled at her for the wrong move. She relieved that it was long over.

“The Police Department seems like hell for me now,” her dad said and sighed. “They’re holding a grudge too much for planning a big party in Bisbee.”

“What’s wrong?” Cathy wondered.

“It’s not normal to do that around here, even it’s about welcoming a professional detective from Portland,” her mom helped explaining, sounded peeved. “The new detective will be your dad’s partner.”

Cathy squinted bewilderingly at them. “There’s a new detective in town?”

“Gladly, Mr. Burk will be willing to help us to serve the food and beverage for free, since he’s our great friend,” her dad added.

“So, you visited him yesterday to talk about that?” Cathy wondered. “What about his little annual party for the restaurant?”

“That’s included. Just get ready this afternoon, we’ll go to his place,” her dad confirmed, and kissed her forehead concurrently.

Once her dad started his car machine, Josh arrived in front of the house while hollering, “Damn, Cathy!”



She realized that he knew about her new car. It did look like a sparkly new thing.

“C’mon kid, if you want to get a ride with her, please parked your bicycle in the yard properly. I have to go soon to the office,” her dad shouted at the car window,

Her dad was honking his car horn, telling him to move away.

“Alright, Mr. Charlotte,” Josh said as he moved quickly before he greeted Haile too.

Once Josh sat beside her, she spoke firmly, “First rule; no one allows to talk too much, or you can get out.”

“I’ve just going to say—”

Cathy stared in disbelief at him. However, he nodded right away, although he thought she was only joking.

“I mean, you have a shiny new car. Okay.”

Last thing she did from her driver seat was waving a goodbye at her mom.



They arrived at Bisbee High School in fifteen minutes. At the parking lot, no one saw her coming with the new car.

“I bet everyone will be amazed with your new car—”

Even when they headed toward Constitution class, Josh kept on mumbling. He also told her that he was glad to have his school schedule this year had mostly the same classes with her.

Once the bell rang at eight a.m., students entered their each class immediately.

They sat together in the back of the class, hiding from Mrs. Greene who would like to see her students dealt with hard questions, but what worse compared to when they saw Scott Herron sat in the same class as them.

Every pair of eyes stared secretly at him, mostly feeling terrified with his presence. No one had ever dared to stare directly at him, because it would be a big problem.

“What is he doing in our class?” Josh whispered, annoyed.

Cathy shrugged her shoulders, as she chose not to care and rather expected Mrs. Green to arrive soon.

He added then, “I’m grateful that Liliana and Stella aren’t here, but look at him—it’s the more terrible view.”

Teacher Pam Greene finally arrived and greeted everyone nicely, although she was late for ten minutes.

She was an old woman who was very patience and kind-hearted. Anyone could tell that she was a lovable and caring person. Her gray hair reminded Cathy of Josh's grandma, only that the teacher had a skinnier body.

She wrote the first subject on the blackboard; *Responsibility and Duty*.

"God, please save me," Josh prayed a lot since the class had started. He had a bad feeling about this, and hoped the teacher wouldn't pick him to answer a question. Cathy couldn't blame him for being pessimistic since Mrs. Greene had always been intentional for doing that to anyone under her superiority, she acted that way because she was the oldest teacher in the school.

"What is your responsibility as a human being?" She asked the first question. "The duty we have ought to be the personification of positive vibes."

Her beaming green eyes explored each fearful faces here, until she ended up staring at Scott, who sat in middle of the class. "Mr. Herron, can you answer it?"

He always crossed his arms during class. He didn't seem like he would concern about anything.

“Do you really want to know my answer, or the one that you want to hear?”

Everyone shocked and chattered abruptly with his impolite behavior against the teacher.

“How dare him!” Josh muttered.

“He’s brave enough,” Cathy whispered.

Mrs. Greene gulped down her saliva, while trembling in rage before she rephrased, “Of course your true answer.”

Everyone waited agitatedly for him to respond.

Scott didn’t stare back at the teacher as he began to speak, “We have responsibility and duty to take care of this Earth. If we had realized about the environment since the very beginning, there wouldn’t be any stupid poster about *saving this Earth or we’ll get the burning ozone*,” and then he stared up boringly at her. “How is it?”

It was the longest words Cathy ever heard from him.

And so, the last two hours of Constitution class felt creepy for the students.



The canteen was their next stop, where the space looked more crowded than yesterday.

“That’s another proof to showdown Scoot in the principal office, or we can report him directly to the police, since your dad is a detective.”

“Stop kidding,” Cathy thought he was a maniac just now. “Don’t bother my dad with that.”

Josh giggled in his response.

Once they got tacos and soda cans, they sat next to the windowsill, and at the time, Cathy saw the clique girls arrived at the food queue.

“Oh, your fans are coming.”

“Look at their muscles, literally the Viking armies,” he mumbled.

“You need to give it a try. Stella has a crush on you.”

“I don’t need to care,” he snapped, hating her idea of getting out of his comfort zone.

Another second, Cathy saw something odd from outside the window. There was a strange white hair girl stood near the student camp, who looked like Elle from

afar, but she couldn't see clearly when that porcelain face overshadowed by the sun, and her hair blew along with the heavy wind, moreover, the old clothes that the girl wore made Cathy assured of what she saw.

“Seriously, I'm going to dead meat in here. Let's go to our next class,” Josh said and grasped her hand.

When she looked back, the girl had gone from her sight.



She hated sport forever, although Josh said that everything would be okay.

When he patted her shoulder, Mr. Clark the athletic coach approached him.

Once the coach met her eyes, he felt flustered because he thought she might have a particular sick because of her pale skin. “You're doing well, girl?”

Cathy felt annoyed whenever she met him, because he sounded more like underestimating her presence.

The girls would be playing the volleyball game, while the boys would take over the center of the gym, playing basketball.

Cathy felt awkward to take part, and she almost died from a heart attack when the volleyball flung from her tiny hand to snap someone's head.

Soon, Cathy stood frozenly when she realized who the victim of her careless act was. All the girls also got shocked when they witnessed who got it. Everyone stopped from playing in the gym, and watched the scene nervously.

His brown eyes turned sadistic while suspecting who would throw the ball at him daringly, and the pain he felt was like hell.

She tried to approach him to apologies without trembling, but it was useless, her legs felt almost paralyzed when they met face to face.

He stared in annoyance at her. It was Scott.

"I'm sorry, I wasn't careful."

He seemed enduring his rage against this girl, whose face always looked innocent as if without sins. The tension in the air haunted the students. They were all worried for her.

"Forget it," was all that he said. He went back to continue the basketball game with the boys.

She stood breathtakingly when knowing there was no doom. The girls surrounded her hurriedly, faking their sympathy. She thought they only exaggerated the moment.

“Are you alright?” A girl she didn’t know her name was shouted from behind. “I thought he would punch you in the face.”

“You’re lucky today!” Liliana added and exaggerated her pitiful expression. “He would usually pick a fight for a mess like that. Oh, gladly you’re not dead.”

“Shut up, at least she’s alright now,” Stella shouted while caressing her shoulder. She was the only one with the sincerity. “Don’t listen to the girls if they make you worry.”

They surprised when Josh barged in to drag her away from them.

“He didn’t do anything to you, right?” His eyes widely opened while examining her face. He always looked over protective to her.

“No.”

“Don’t come anywhere near him, you know his reputation—”



“He’s the King of Bully. Is that what you want me to say?”

“Yes,” he sighed.

Mr. Clark hollered at him again under the basketball ring, but he couldn’t just leave her peacefully.

“I won’t be able to come at Burk’s Resto party, the coach wants me to stay for the baseball practice,” the sadness written clearly on his face as he said that.

“It’s okay, you have to practice for good,” she patted his shoulder.

“Kingsley, come back here!” The coach shouted again.

Josh annoyed at the coach, but he had to decide. He glanced worriedly at her, and said, “I’ve got to go, see you later.”



The school was over at noon. When she returned, her dad was already at home.

Her mom greeted her with a warm smile from the dining room. Elle was there too, talking to her dad about the current news topic, something about criminal acts these days. It seemed that Cathy wouldn’t be able to follow their conversation since she didn’t like any of political issues.

“We’ll be going out after you take a shower, so be quick,” her mom said while serving a cup of coffee for her dad.

She must have forgotten to ask. “What time the party will start?”

“At two p.m.” her dad answered.

Soon after, once she got into her bedroom and realized that something was missing from her satchel bag, she frustrated. It was her notebook—the one that had random sketches. There was no clue where it was, but she remembered precisely that she didn’t take it out the whole day.

“I’m dead,” she muttered.

Josh couldn’t even find it anywhere in school when she asked him for help.

“Please I need it. I don’t think I left it in class.”

*“Cathy, seriously, there’s no book of yours,”* he sounded exhausted as he talked on the phone. *“Anyway, I just remember that this morning I rode to school with your car. How am I supposed to go home later?”*

“Oh, God,” she felt guilty by now, instead concerning about her lost notebook. “Big sorry, I literally can’t go

back because my parents are waiting downstairs. We'll be going to town."

*"Ah, it must be Burk's Resto,"* He noticed. *"So, what kind of friend are you who just abandoning me like this?"*

"Glad that Mr. Clark has a motorcycle. You're his top student. He must be nice if you ask for a ride."

*"Thanks for the very helpful suggestion. I must've been so unlucky today."*



The place was small and filled with wooden furniture of western style. There was a door in the back of front desk, which connected to the owner's living house.

The old song from 50's was played in the background. A few visitors started coming happily to this annual celebration, and they brought boxes of gift.

They were welcomed by the wife's owner—Wendy Jones. She was a very good person, and touchy at small things, and she might cry if someone was being harmed. Wendy was born Native American, she had sweet tan skin, and a long straight black hair, brown eyes, slender body, and average height.

Meanwhile, Fam Burk was busied taking care the special table for the Charlotte family. He was the owner of this finest restaurant in Bisbee town. He wasn't originally born here, he moved from California.

He had honey-brown eyes, white skin, and he was one-hundred-seventy-nine cm, which making Manson as the tallest man in this place since he was one-hundred-eighty-eight cm. Although Mr. Burk might seem older than his real age, they shared the same age of 47-year-old this year 2011. And they were best friends since a very long time.

"Isn't this the beautiful Cathy Charlotte?" Mr. Burk looked amazed as they shook hands.

Wendy added, "Oh, you've grown up so fast."

"Let's sit here," he led them to sit at the table with sofa.

They had a good time together for the last an hour. Talking never seemed enough for the parents. Cathy got bored for a minute that she wanted to observe the pictures they hung on the wall, but she was shy.

Nevertheless, she ended up asking another thing, "Mrs. Burk, where's the restroom?"

“Just behind the wall’s bar, my dear,” she smiled sweetly.

Cathy rose from the sofa to go to the bathroom. After five minutes, she finally spent time to observe the pictures on the wall. Her curiosity led her mind to catch something from a picture of a little boy, while the other pictures were only sceneries. There were words written below the brown frame: *The Loved One. 1998. Los Angeles, CA.*

“He’s my son from my previous marriage.”

She saw that her parents still at the table with Wendy, while Mr. Burk came alone to check on her, and yet, he looked very welcome of her presence and everyone here.

“Where is he now?”

“His mother took him from me. It’s such a long story and sad,” he managed to smile, and she knew it was the sadness.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Burk.”

“Why would you apologies for something that wasn’t your fault?” He giggled. “Ah, by the way, he’s probably about your age this year.”

“Is he 17-year-old too?” She wondered.

Her dad suddenly came behind them, and shouted, “Hey, what are you two talking about?”

Mr. Burk patted his shoulder and left to take some nonalcoholic wines from the bar.

Eventually, her dad went to the bathroom, while she returned to the table again, spending the last minute here. As the sky turned darker, the party finished at five p.m.



Cathy was lying down above the bed, and staring at the ceiling. The blanket kept her warm from the cold night. She couldn't sleep yet because of the creepy ambience had made her hard to fall asleep, and the silence idea won't flatter the owl outside to stop chanting.

The continuance was unexpected as she saw the vision again. Her eyes already felt weary to hold the confusion inside her head; there were trees on the winter ground, and the little princess had grown mature. She wore red-embroidered gown, covered with a navy robe, while standing alone.

*Kathleen—Kathleen—Kathleen.* That name echoed again.

Cathy astonished; as if the princess was staring directly at her, but it was actually something from the woods that she had seen through.

The girl who resembled Elle wasn't there this time. All that she saw was the beautiful princess whose face never been so clear. The vision blurred.

She heard the words that was being said with a flatter voice, and a sleepless possession that sounded alike with Gregorian chanting. The words demanded to be heard, the vision fell into place, and there she saw the castle building under the borealis green sky.

*The stars weren't falling from the sky, but to make them greener. If you could count them, your fingers would be infinite to condemn the immortality. If you ever knew the universe they had lived in, you wouldn't hinge onto the mortal sadness because the stars had never been as bright as the lights. They were angels.*

# 3

## MYSTIFIED REVERIES

*ANGELS—SHE REMEMBERED THE WORD*, and yet, the vision of the princess herself was odd. Something looked so familiar whenever she envisioned the appearance of the princess.

A little finger snap had surprised her. It was Josh, waving his hand at her face.

“What?”

“Were you gone or was it the reverie?” His brown eyes searched for something doubtful, and he even noticed a slight dust on her brown jacket.

Soon, she realized that they were in the middle of Spanish class.

“You haven’t paid attention for the last hour.”

“Liliana answers all the quizzes, right?”



“Mrs. Fullerton only stares at her since she’s the best in this school for Spanish,” he murmured. “Lucky, she will not repress us with a bunch of tasks today.”

Once the bell rang, all the students left the classroom hurriedly.

The two of them walked through the corridor. For a second, her head felt dizzy as if she floated in the air. Josh stared cautiously at her, as if he knew what about to happen.

“Are you sure you don’t want to visit the nurse’s office?” He asked while holding her hand as if she might fall down. “Your face looks literally pale.”

“It’s not necessary,” she sighed.

“C’mon, you’ve been very quiet since this morning.”

“How about our previous plan—let’s visit Martha after school,” she said, feeling the sudden rush to meet her today.

“Just great,” he sighed in response.

0 0 0

After they had lunch quickly in the middle of the crowded canteen, their next class was Biology with Teacher Coppola. He was a tall man, had very thin body.

The students entered his class as soon as the bell rang. This time, Josh picked up the seat next to the windowsill, which was the closest spot to the teacher's desk.

“Wait, do you see that punk?” He beckoned his chin at one of the boys who sat in the back of the classroom.

She turned her head to realize that one of them was Scott. “Yeah, what's wrong?”

“Did you feel anxious yesterday?” He narrowed his eyes while asking.

“Pretty much, I thought he would kill me,” she said boringly.

It was like a lightning bolt, Liliana suddenly landed on their table. Josh blinked astonishingly, followed by Cathy who looked bewildering against her goosebump approach.

“I've heard that Mr. Coppola will make a pair for us, how lovely!” She strangely giggled and widely stared at him. “I mean, Josh, you'll never be disappointed in this class since Stella is amazingly smart in Biology, you can ask any glossary to her—” but then she turned her head and realized that the teacher had just arrived “—ups, got to go!”

Afterward, she ran away so fast to the back of the classroom to sit nicely beside Stella, who waved her hand and smiled shyly at the two of them.

“Why would she say that?” Josh felt the creeps.

Cathy shrugged her shoulders, ignoring him. “I hope there’s no frog and blood during class.”

Mr. Coppola was about forty and always wore a plain shirt every day. His appearance made him unsuitable to teach in Biology class. It was a matter of stereotype among the students. Mostly agreed, he should exchange part with Mr. Stalensky in English class. After all this time, it didn’t matter.

The teacher clapped his hands to stop the chattering students, and he started shaking a plastic bottle contained with folded papers. He took out one of the folded papers from the bottle, and said, “Starting from now on, all of you will do a task in pair. I’m going to pick anyone’s name in random order.”

Everyone’s heart pounded hardly and nervously to witness him making a decision upon their fate.

Cathy prayed that everything would go smooth and well this semester, and she hoped a good thing for Josh too since he was sweating so bad, and he looked worried.

She hoped he would be her partner since he was the only one in the universe that could understand her inner feeling, but eventually, the fate said otherwise.

“Josh Lyn Kingsley and Liliana Rocha, please take a seat together,” said Mr. Coppola.

Stella had her eyes on fire at her best friend. Liliana tried to calm her, as she didn't want to ruin their friendship. On the other side, Josh peevd enormously.

Mr. Coppola continued, “Scott Elm Herron, and—”

The students bulged out their eyes nervously, while waiting who would be the unlucky one.

Subsequently, everyone breathed in relieve when he finally announced it, “Cathy Haile Charlotte.”

“What?” Josh muttered bewilderingly.

“Please be nice to each other, and take a seat together,” Mr. Coppola emphasized his words since he knew that Scott had been dealing with an ill manner. He said it as a precautionary measure.

Cathy felt breathless as if the sharpest knife stabbed her body. She would never have imagined the exact two semesters she spent face to face was with the blonde boy.

Liliana had waited for Josh at the table beside them, but he had not moved from his chair while looked excessively worried, and pissed off.

“Just be careful, okay?” He whispered to Cathy, who could nod weakly.

Cathy pretended as if she didn't aware that the boy walked toward her table. Scott threw his bag harshly on the desk, making her startled. She felt like a total stranger as they sat along. She tried not to be trembled, but her heart kept pounded unstably.

While Mr. Coppola was still in the process of announcing the next pair, she heard the boy suddenly talked to her, “Why don't you write more?”

Cathy squinted at him. She wasn't sure if she heard him correctly. “Are you talking to me?”

He nodded, staring softly at her. It was so unlike him that she felt odd about this.

“Write about what?”

“The one you wrote in front of the school’s fountain, throwing those poems were such a waste.”

Cathy remembered the last time she wrote a poem was in sophomore year, while waiting for Josh to finish his baseball practice, but now, she only spent a lot of time with drawing and reading books. There would be million contingency behind his motive, which she wanted to understand.

“When did you exactly start stalking me?” Cathy confronted.

“Did I?”

She realized his instant crossing arms were a defensive act for what he wanted to say.

“It was just weird whenever I caught you sat alone in that place. You never seem close with anybody, except with your little friend over there—”

She followed his beckoning stare at her best friend. She realized that Josh had already paid a great attention at them since the very beginning.

“And what?” She asked.

His brown eyes didn’t blink, and he looked tensed. “I’ve read it.”

She shook her head and didn't believe him. "Why would the poems interest you?"

He struggled to answer her. His hands were hurriedly looking for something inside his black bag, and surprisingly, it was her lost notebook.

Her face turned red, feeling an excessive astonishment. She took it immediately from him to check that all the pages of her messy drawing were still in good condition.

"I'm sorry that I forgot to return your notebook, just to make sure if there's any poem."

"Did you plan revenge with this, because I hit your head so badly in the gym yesterday?"

"Why would I?" He looked stressed out with her confrontation. She could see a slight of guilty feeling within his eyes. "I took it before you even accidentally attacked me."

The stolen notebook had returned, although stealing was a bad idea, so she said to him, "You can always ask for the next time, and I'm sorry for the accident."

He was giggling by himself, in which way he left her feeling baffling and uncomfortable.



They entered the terrace, and Josh started ringing the bell at the door. Soon, an old woman dressed in red blouse welcomed them with her wrinkled smile. She had a pale white skin and short curly gray hair. She seemed too fragile to move, so he hurriedly held her small body.

“Cathy, how have you been?”

They hugged each other compassionately. Cathy felt so happy to see her again.

“I was just about to ask the same question.”

Martha couldn't yet wipe away her exaggerated feeling to welcome her. “Please, come in.”

The house landlord wanted to make a hot tea for the guest she loved so much, and the mango puddings was already served on the dining table.

Cathy sat down next to the windowsill when Josh ran upstairs to change clothes.

The house felt comfortable. The birds chanted outside the yard, as seen through behind the window of this small living room, and the view looked refreshing with the backyard full of sunflowers under the bright sky.



“I bought this tea from Krem Town in Austria,” Martha said as she put the tray on the table, Cathy helped her to take the cups. “The lovely jasmine scented.”

“This is great.”

The tranquility felt eternal in here. She imagined this little space as her second heavenly place to read a book after her bedroom.

Nevertheless, the previous topic had reminded Cathy of her mom’s plan of a sudden overseas trip. She still felt restless about it.

Martha was a sensitive person, she could sense immediately if someone gave a different vibe, and so she asked, “What’s wrong, my dear?”

Cathy sighed for a while, before admitting the problem, “My mom suddenly has a plan to visit her distant relative in Austria.”

She almost broke down the cup as her hand was trembling. “The Aloise?”

Cathy bewildered. “Yes, Mrs. Kingsley.”

“It’s such a long time. Does she really have courage to come back?” Martha looked worried.

“I’ve never seen any family from my mom’s side, except Aunt Sarah who lives in New York.”

Martha was looking at her cup of tea for a second, contemplating something on her mind, while Cathy didn’t know what to say further since she felt guilty to make this 86-year-old woman overwhelmingly worried.

“Do you believe in past lives, Miss Charlotte?”

She surely astonished at Martha’s simple question. It shocked her heart, mind, and soul. Her eyes blinked out a couple of times, and she thought it might be a tricky question. “No... I mean I don’t know.”

“It’s normal to confuse, you’re still so young. It takes time to understand, you’ll learn things someday,” Martha felt relieved to say it out. “Is there something you wanted to tell me?”

Cathy gazed at her deep blue eyes and hesitated to tell the thing she had never told anyone before. She was afraid if someone thought of her as a crazy little child for believing in superstition stuff. She had heard many cases in the television about people who got cursed for believing the impossible. Some said they should go to the

mental hospital because their brain wasn't working normally.

"I dreamt of sadness, it wasn't a nightmare, but it haunted me for the last three months," but then she wanted to take her words back, it was embarrassing for her. However, Martha had been listening so seriously. "The visions about a princess and her empire, and then there was the war. I don't know about anything but everything feels familiar, I think it's someone's memories that accidentally buried in my head. It's crazy—"

Cathy closed her eyes for a second, the moment felt quiet.

"No, go on, dear," Martha held her hand gently, supporting her. "Everything that enchanted take a pride to say. Never mind others opinion, sure you can tell. There's a phrase—"

*"Everything you can imagine is real—Pablo Picasso,"* Cathy knew what it was.

They smiled at each other. The comfortable feeling heightened during their conversation that felt more contented.

“I had recurring dreams where I saw a white hair girl. She said something about a strange folklore—”

“What is that?”

“I’m not sure, but it seems related with the princess.”

“Perhaps, you’re the *reincarnation* of the owner of those buried memories, the person who born again when she died in her own past lives. Some says they exist for the mission they had failed perceived in their previous life,” Martha said, while caressing her hand warmly.

“The odd thing is—” she struggled to say it, “the white hair girl looks exactly like my distant relative, who just arrived two days ago at our house. There’s something not click about her.”

“From your mother’s side?” She asked, doubtingly.

“Yes.”

“I want to see her some other time. But, perhaps she just dyed her hair?”

“She looks naturally white, although it’s more like vanilla color.”

“How could the Aloise family born white hair?” She narrowed her eyes in disbelief. “I met them a long time

ago. Your family doesn't physically look like that. They've always inherited Eurasian race in every generation."

"You knew them?" Cathy bewildered.

"My dear, I don't think I'm the right person to open the secrecy for you. Is that why your mom wanted to bring you to Austria?" Martha paused for a second before she murmured mysteriously, "Finally."

Cathy wouldn't want to let go of this conversation. She needed to know more. "Why I don't know anything about my mom?" She sounded depressed. "I'm old enough to know."

"When it's time to know, you'll know," Martha said gently.

The conversation ended immediately when Josh walked downstairs to see them. Before Cathy returned home, they ate mango puddings together at the dining table. She surely enjoyed the time like this as she had them like her own family.

At five p.m., she waved a goodbye at the terrace, and whispered to Martha, "You're the only person that understands about my dream, thanks for making me relieves."

Josh didn't know what they talked about since he busied washing the dishes in the kitchen that located three meters away from the entrance door.

Martha smiled, while holding her hands tightly. "You should tell your mother too."

Cathy had not settled her mind about that yet. "My mother never understands, she never will."

Martha looked so sad at this current situation. She remembered the old days when Haile was sharing all the things that happened within the Aloise family. The elders knew about the secrecy. She wanted so much to tell her the truth of pain in the family that was endured for all the years, but it was just undone as her heart got shattered, and she knew that sadness felt immortal somehow.



The sky had turned darkly red. Her dad's car wasn't seen in the garage yet when she went home. Eventually, Haile had been expecting her in the kitchen, which located next to the entrance door. She leaned down behind the sink where there was a window above it.

"Hi, mom."

She smiled at her daughter. “Can you accompany me in the garden after you take a shower?”

Cathy nodded agreed. “Okay, I’ll be in a minute. Where’s Elle?”

“She goes somewhere,” whenever she mentioned the white hair girl, her mom wouldn’t want to stare back at her. It was getting odder by days.

Subsequently, she took a shower and changed into her plain t-shirt and polka-dot trouser. There was one habit she always did, which was ignoring to comb her wavy long hair that already resembled a puffy cake.

She went to the garden, looking for her mom.

Haile was watering the flowers. She loved the smell of flowers that they always felt like homesick.

Aunt Sarah’s house in New Rochelle, New York used to be her mom’s house too, where the yard planted with many of lavender, lily, and jasmine. The view looked exactly like in here, but her mom added white roses in this garden.

Cathy was lying down on the stone bench, while twirling the wind chimes above her. Every time her mind went blank, her reverie would appear vividly. She might

want to consider Martha's suggestion, but she hesitated to do it since she was afraid of rejection.

"Mom?" She wanted to ask. "Do you think past lives exist?"

Haile suddenly went frozen, and her hands stopped watering the flowers. She tried to reconcile her own senses before responding. Meanwhile, Cathy didn't notice her mom's shocked expression.

It took her mom three seconds before she answered her, as if nothing ever happened, "You like imagining things."

Her mind was silent, like a river in the dark. It took her a deep breath to say, "Yeah, probably."



# 4

## THE PARTY

**THE SLIPPERY ROAD** in the morning scared her, and her teeth started chattering from cold. She drove her car alone, while the classical song of Frederic Chopin played on the background. Eventually, the extraordinary monotonous day began again on Thursday.

Trigonometry was her first nightmare, also for every student in the classroom.

Mr. Hansen, who was born half-African, had spent about half an hour by writing endless formulas on the blackboard, making everyone bored. There was nothing much to know about him besides, he always wore eyeglasses and formal suit.

Cathy didn't pay attention during class, instead her eyes were observing the sky that had turned bright again.

“Are you alright?” Josh asked worriedly. “Martha said you were unwell yesterday.”

She smiled. “I’m good, of course.”

“Judging by the look of our similar white sweater, it’s not like we’re going to go picnic or something, right?”

“Yours is a gray jacket, there’s a different,” she giggled. “Alright, let’s take a ride with your bike. It’s sunny in the park.”

“Are you suggesting we’ll be going out to Patagonia Lake?”

“A greener place, yes—” she said, sounded exhausted, and her eye-bags looked even worse. “I just need to breathe a fresh air.”

“That won’t be a problem, Ma’am,” he responded.



School finished at eleven o’clock. Soon, she drove home, before getting into his bicycle.

It took a long time to ride a bike to the destination from Bisbee. They spent about an hour and a half road trip, although it went well. People referred the greenish street around here as Patagonia Lake, where the place was located near Tucson City.

Cathy enjoyed this trip, feeling the wind touched her cheeks tenderly. She threw her hand in the air, pretending as if she would touch the sun, while her other hand was holding his waist tightly. At the time, she saw something sparkling like tiny dots that yet looked strange, but beautiful. Those strange dots flew everywhere around the clouds.

Meanwhile, he rode his bike enthusiastically as if they were going to a mountain. There were big trees along the road, which surrounded by dirt stones. They headed to a little river that had a few ducks in there, and stopped by at the park, where there were birds and the sound of rustling winds.

They were lying down on the weeds, with the view of desolate pond in front of them. It was the most comfortable spot.

“Can you see those flying dots in the sky?” She asked, still observing them.

He gazed back at the view. “Yes, it’s glowing.”

“Do you think everyone can see it?” She wondered sometimes.

“I don’t think so, not just everyone. I mean, besides the fact that no one really pay attention at them,” he explained his opinion. “My grandma once told me that these tiny dots are such energies—good and bad randomly.”

Cathy narrowed her eyes at him, bewilderingly. “How could you differentiate between good or bad?”

“The good one is what you currently see, while the bad one is called *the floaters* that look like some of black amoebas,” he explained.

“Oh, like what I saw in the lab last time—the amoeba,” she murmured, amazed.

The conversation stopped for a while as they enjoyed this comfortable silence.

Cathy felt relaxed to be side by side with him. This moment had reminded her of the childhood memories she shared with him. The first time they met was when they turned 8-year-old. There was the time when they ran along through the yellow grasses, playing and laughing together crazily. They just clicked together, in the way they knew each other’s feeling without need to talk about it. It was like telepathy or something.

Another memory she remembered was when they were on the crowded beach. They were 12-year-old. Josh was sitting down on the shore alone, and she barged in to accompany his solitude. When she asked him to swim together, he refused, said that he was afraid of the water. She calmed him, telling him that it was okay to feel afraid since they were still a little kid. It was their bonding moment.

Once she returned to her senses, she just remembered that his dad received a special invitation of the local police's party. Nevertheless, this should also be the right time for her to wash away her mind from the strange visions of the princess, although she didn't see any of it today.

She exhaled deliberately, and closed her eyes while talking, "My dad will attend a luxury party in town. He wants my mom and me to come. There's a new detective who just arrived three days ago from Portland."

"Seriously?" He sounded excited than she was. "Can I come?"

"How about Martha?" She squinted wonderingly at him. "It will be held tonight at eight."

“Ah, right, dang it,” he stressed out. “She just got better after routinely taking a medicine, but I still worry about her.”

“We love her so much,” Cathy added.

A moment of silence filled the air again. The winds rustled against their skins.

“So, it’s like a formal-luxury party?” He asked, bewildered.

“Everyone in the Police Department has been waiting three months for her arrival. They want to give her a huge respect and honor as the new team.”

“Why would Bisbee need another detective apart from your dad?”

“I’m not pretty sure what’s going on,” she couldn’t understand that one case.

“Does your relative will come too?” He wondered.

“Probably,” she doubted it. “I haven’t seen her today. I’m not sure where she’ll spend her vacation around this town.”

He bewildered too. “Being alone without a tour guide?”

“That’s what my mom said,” she chuckled. “I feel like they’re hiding something from me.”

“Well, it makes sense, since Elle physically look nothing like you,” he giggled back. “Martha was crazily bewildered when I described what she looks like.”

She rose from the ground and murmured, “I know, somehow I need to find out.”



Manson had already returned home from the office to pick up his family. He sat down along with his wife at the dining table, while waiting for Cathy and Elle to finish dressing.

His wife gazed at his brown eyes intensely, “You look so overwhelming at this point, is she even your boss?”

“Sweet darling, she takes this job seriously. She is even four years younger than me,” he tried to make her understood. “Wait till you see her.”

“You’re forty-seven now,” Haile muttered. “Whatever, she sounds like a busy person.”

Elle just walked downstairs, looking beautiful in her navy-blue dress.

“Good evening, Mr. Charlotte.”

“Oh, Sylvia Elle, right?” He asked, friendly. “We barely met since I’ve always come home late.”

She walked toward them and smiled politely.

“Don’t you have last name?” He wondered. “Is it Aloise, since you’re Haile’s relative?”

“I don’t need any last name,” she said, clearly.

He glanced, bewildered at his wife who looked as if she didn’t want to involve in the topic.

Cathy came subsequently, wearing a floral dress that looked perfect on her pale skin.

“So, is this really going to be a formal party?” Cathy asked as she approached them.

“You’re not allowed to wear a jacket and jeans in there, trust me,” he joked and giggled.

Haile dragged his arm hurriedly, and shouted out, “C’mon guys, we don’t want to be late.”

0 0 0

They arrived in twenty minutes to downtown by a car trip. There were several cars in the parking lot, and some people had just arrived.



The place located in the best restaurant in Bisbee. The restaurant was renovated with the new look of fresh white-painted walls, although the ambience still felt old and western. However, there was no sign to identify whether this place was a restaurant or not from the outside, since it looked more like an office building

“Mr. Charlotte!” A man greeted her dad. He wore a police uniform, his hair was like a peanut color. “And your family—welcome!”

“Oh, Mr. Wagner, how’s everyone doing?” Manson asked.

Before they entered the place, they had a small talk first. Haile was listening to their conversation, while Cathy and Elle peeped from afar at the huge lobby.

“They must be serving a good cake,” Cathy assumed, as she beckoned her chin at the huge table of food and beverages that seen from behind the pillars.

Elle didn’t respond, in fact, she had always looked expressionless, and she was so quiet, although her eyes were carefully observing random people’s arrival.

Cathy’s cellphone suddenly vibrated inside her purse, as she checked it out quickly, it was Josh. “What is it?”

*“I follow your dad’s car to the restaurant,”* he said on the phone.

She astonished, and accidentally got cough. Her mom turned to her in bewilderment.

Haile caressed her back instantly. *“Are you alright, darling?”*

*“I need some fresh air. Don’t worry, mom.”*

Cathy went outside hurriedly, as she reached to the parking lot, Josh was already there with his bike, stood next to the payphone. He wore a white long sleeves blouse and black butterfly-tie.

He approached her while waving his hand cheerfully, but then she confronted him, *“What are you doing?”*

*“The party must be serving yummy food, can I join?”* He literally looked starving.

*“First, shame on you. Second, they absolutely have delicious food,”* she giggled, but then she looked worried. *“Does Martha know?”*

As they walked together to the building, he answered, *“Don’t worry. She’ll be fine as long as I don’t eat any junk food. So, what’s this party all about?”*

Her eyes were searching for the new face in the crowd as they went inside, but she only knew some familiar people that all dressed in formal suit and gown. “I haven’t seen the main guest yet.”

Elle stood next to the long table filled with various food and beverages. The two of them caught her gazing oddly at the food.

Josh approached her first, while Cathy picked up a guava juice. “Do you know what you want to eat?”

He wanted to help Elle to choose the best Italian food that was seen on the table—Beef Lasagna. But she had not yet answered him when someone came greeting them.

“Hi, kids, look at how well you’ve grown up!”

He was the same police who welcomed her dad before. At the time, Cathy just realized that he resembled a boy from school, and it turned out that he was Jordan’s dad. His name was Luke Wagner, and he turned 51 this year. Surely, he looked older than her dad.

“Who’s this beautiful stranger?” He was enchanted by the girl’s presence beside them.

“She’s my relative, Sylvia Elle,” she introduced her.

However, Elle hadn't changed her expressionless face that looked unreadable. She stayed silent.

"Does Jordan come too, sir?" Josh asked.

"He's too sleepy to walk," he giggled about his son. "Anyway, enjoy the food, kids."

He left them to greet other guests who just arrived at the door. Subsequently, Josh smirked as if something was hateful.

"Who's asleep in this barley time?" Josh muttered. "No wonder that Mr. Clark didn't accept him in the baseball team."

No one was aware that Elle chuckled in disbelief at him.

Soon, the rustling sound came from a microphone, making every guest turned around to stare at the small stage that designed with red curtain.

"Test, test..." Manson stood there, holding a microphone. "Ladies and gentlemen—"

The guests began to sit on their chairs when he started speaking.

“Let me introduce our new detective, who finally wears our special badge of Bisbee,” he sounded excited. “Please welcome—*Chantel McIntyre Herron.*”

Everyone applauded mercifully when a beautiful woman dressed in a long white dress and big gold earrings was coming out from the stage’s red curtain. She appeared like a goddess, who possessed a flawless white skin, sharp blue eyes, and she had a short wavy black hair. Moreover, her charisma was outstanding.

Meanwhile, Josh and Elle still stood side by side with Cathy near to the table of food and beverages, watching the detective’s arrival. Cathy remembered that the woman had the same surname as Scott’s, but she couldn’t be assured.

“Please, call me Chantel,” the woman said, with such a deep and wise voice. “Thank you for your concern and hard work for welcoming my late arrival, since I had things to take care urgently in Portland. This is my pleasure to start living here for a few months, maybe forever. Who knows?”

The guests giggled along at her humor. But suddenly, Josh bewildered at the view, “Hey, where’s your sister?”

Cathy rolled her eyes back and forth, until she baffled to understand how Elle already managed to stand near the stage.

“When did she leave us?”

He noticed. “Did she sneak out, I mean—”

For a second, Cathy noticed something slightly odd with the view. “Does the new detective staring at Elle?” They stared coldly for a split second, but she wasn’t sure. “Maybe I was wrong—”

An old waitress dressed in black uniform came to her, informing, “Your mom is calling you to sit at the table number one, Miss.”

“Thanks,” Cathy nodded and smiled at her.

“How about—”

Josh had not finished talking, and she already knew whom he referred.

“She’ll be fine.”

He panicked afterward. “Wait, don’t let your mom see me. She’ll yell out if she knows I’m being an intruder. She’ll probably call Martha.”

Cathy grimaced at him. “My mom isn’t that bad.”

“I’ll wait here,” he smiled, relaxed.

“Are you sure?” She pitied him, and then he nodded assured.

Cathy went ahead to search for the table number one. There were not many tables in the room, but the space got crowded with random people, making her almost fall weakly on the floor.

Soon, she saw her mom was the one with hot-red lipstick and wore a white dress. Her mom sat along with the police, and they seemed to have a little talk.

The podium speech had finished on the stage, and the next schedule was dinnertime.

Before she dragged the chair, her dad called her name from afar, while Detective Chantel walked beside him.

“Please, let me introduce the woman behind the new badge,” he had an impulse joke.

“Such a humor,” Chantel shouted.

Somehow, Cathy sensed that something was pricking beneath her skin and crawling all over her body, as if she stung by an electrical jolt. Her instinct told her that the source was coming from that new detective. Seemingly, her mom was the only one who noticed that same

sensation too. However, she had to endure the uncomfortable feeling in front of many people here.

“This is my daughter, Catherine Charlotte,” her dad was so proud to introduce her.

Chantel stared differently at her now.

“Your daughter?” She sounded surprised for a moment. “Beautiful.”

“Thank you,” Cathy said, innocently.

“And I am her mother, Haile Charlotte,” she pushed Cathy to stand behind her, like guarding a little child from something dangerous. They shook each other’s hands carefully. Cathy wondered with her mom’s sudden protective act.

“Haile?” It seemed Chantel tried to remember her as if she had heard it before, perhaps from a particular event. “I thought, I may know your name somewhere?”

“Maybe out of the line, cocky to think,” her mom sounded a bit sarcastic, Manson choked his throat on purpose to give her a warning sign.

“You’re totally not an American, I supposed,” Chantel narrowed her eyes at them. “For instance, I am born half Romanian.”



This charismatic woman was truly tall compared to her. When she stood along her dad, they seemed to have almost the same body height, although she only wore five centimeters heels. If she stood without heels, she could be as tall as Elle.

Now that she remembered about that strange girl, she hadn't seen her anywhere in this room. When she gazed back at the guests, Chantel was still giving her a polite smile.

“You have a beautiful daughter, since my son is handsome too,” she added a humor to break the ice, just like what Manson did.

There was something on the surface that didn't look fall into place about this woman. Cathy wanted her instinct to be wrong, but the vibe had given a clear sensation that couldn't be vanished. Her mom also acted unusual, suddenly looked overwhelmingly worried.

Each tables displayed with a pretty banquet. Every guest enjoyed dinner together in this party. Meanwhile, Cathy sat at a few tables away from the new detective. Sometimes she stole a glance at her, while thinking that there was something definitely wasn't right—something *evil*.

Cathy couldn't tell if her judgment was right or wrong, it was as if she could see the unseen fire on her bright blue eyes that looked sharp and intense. The voice echoed inside her head, telling her to stay away from the unwanted danger.

At that second, Chantel caught her staring, and so she smiled back to her.

Her mom looked worried, and asked, "Are you okay?"

Cathy tried to hide her feeling, although she knew for the fact that it was wrong to feel that way toward that woman. Besides, she noticed that her mom knew what she felt. It conflicted her mind, whether her mom was someone who skeptical or not about such a thing. It was the hardest part to believe.

The party ended at midnight. All the guests enjoyed the food and beverages, and they thanked Burk's Resto for the accommodation.

Josh had returned home earlier when Cathy waited her parents doing a formal farewell with the police staff, where she could see them at the building terrace. At the time, Elle just came to the car, surprising her.

"Where have you been?" Cathy asked bewilderingly.

And she answered her in a mysterious way, just as usual, “Just around.”



Chantel knocked at the door, of the place owned by her son. The place wasn't far from downtown that she only took fifteen minutes by car. She parked her black sedan in front of the unlocked fence.

When she rang the bell again, a tall boy opened the door.

“Hi, son,” she tried to hug him even though her body felt tired, but he pushed her softly.

“Mom, please don't,” his words made her sad.

She sighed, and then went inside with her son.

From the outside, it looked classic and small like another house in this neighborhood, but the interior was minimalist, and mostly dominated with gray color.

They stopped in the dining room. He sat at a glass table.

She followed to sit oppositely from him, and asked yearningly, “Don't you miss me, Scott?”

He heard that melancholy tone, but he answered her constantly, “Don't say that.”

“Scott—”

“Look at us, you ruin this family by abandoning your husband and son,” he was despondent at his own words. “This is your fault.”

“I come here for you, not just for my job,” she perplexed, disappointed. “How could you say that?”

The silence between them lasted for five minutes, since she couldn't continue this awkward conversation. Her body felt wearily after attending her first longest party this year.

“Isn't it miserable?” Chantel said rhetorically. “I did this.”

She walked away unsteadily, without knowing that Scott wept silently while looking at her back.

In her bedroom, she stared at her own reflection, against the mirror of dressing table that engraved with silver frame. She stared at some of small wrinkles on her forehead that would only appear when she removed her thick make up.

“Such a trouble,” she muttered to herself. “This isn't the life that I want.”

Suddenly, she shivered from the coldness when a curtain flew open, letting the winds swirled strongly, pushing down the window to open.

Behind the shadow of the night, a creepy tall figure appeared to see her. He had black skin as if it was burnt down in hell, horns like sheep, and dull wings. “Is there any particular mess, my *Queen*?”

He called Chantel as his queen, he hailed to her.

“Could you see the girl who saw me with light eyes,” she sighed, still staring at her own reflection in the mirror. “All I could feel was hate and revenge. I still perceive it like an open wound in my heart since it won’t ever vanish.”

The silence intimidated the room. Subsequently, she gazed at his burning red eyes, and his face that was like a monster. He was the devil’s minion. She called him *Wrezire*.

“She’s not human,” her voice sounded weak, and then her tone turned into a huge rage “—she’s an angel, precisely an archangel!”

She beckoned her finger at the window, “Like the one from that empire, our wretched old times.”

“That white hair angel is shape-shifting into human form,” *Wrezire* said creepily. “She’s our biggest obstruction.”

“Why would she be sent here when we already have arranged such a good plan?” She asked, and then screamed out angrily.

She threw away all the cosmetics on the dressing table, and the next second, she chuckled insanely. The demon watched her well-wary and didn’t dare to say anything.

“Why would she exist to surround that royal?” She thought hardly. “Is she reincarnated like me, or what—”

The demon nodded, he knew the right time to answer her real question. She rose from her chair to approach him. They stood in the same body height now.

“We need to open the portal,” she said as her breath got his nose tingling. “Only by their real descendants it will be opened profoundly—*the Aloise*.”

“Their only descendant who is destined as *Puissant*—will be a hard one to find,” he chuckled afterward. “We can get the kid with the brown hair, if we don’t have a chance to get her mother.”

Chantel stared at him, relieved. “Ah, Charlotte’s daughter.”

When he had done whispering, he disappeared into ashes of the cold night.

# 5

## INEXPLICABLE MYSTERY

FRIDAY WAS THE EXUBERANT DAY for her to go to school, where Art class was the first thing in the morning.

Cathy smudged her sketch once again, but the scratch looked disturbing. She drew the wrong line that it turned grotesque.

“Miss Charlotte?”

She stared up to meet Mrs. Garcia’s blue eyes.  
“Pardon?”

“You haven’t answered my question. What’s wrong, my dear?”

Mrs. Garcia was an old woman with a short gray hair. She wore a pearl necklace and vintage suit. As a matter of fact, Cathy was her favorite student.

Cathy didn’t pay attention when the teacher had been standing for a minute in front of her table.

Mrs. Garcia kept smiling, and at the time, she gazed at her sketch paper. “What have come into your mind to draw such beautiful angel wings?”

“I don’t know,” Cathy murmured and shrugged. “The idea just came from nowhere. I think—angel is a beautiful creature.”

“Oh, child,” she caressed her back and sat down beside her. “Have you heard the story about *angel and demon*?”

“Their legend?” Cathy was instantly perplexed at the sudden question. “It’s written in any holy books, angel guides us to heaven, demon to hell.”

“Demon was fallen angel—part of it,” Mrs. Garcia chuckled for herself. “Well, I read books these days.”

But suddenly, a skinny boy came abruptly to the teacher, astonishing everyone in the class.

“Teacher, do you think a fellow student from another class is allowed to pick a fight?” And then he whispered to her ear, “In front of our class.”

Her eyes bulged out as she walked hurriedly to see the view in the corridor. The teacher found Scott as the real troublemaker in this peaceful school. It turned out



that he was fighting with Jordan Wagner this time. However, Cathy remembered his father was a police that she met yesterday at the party.

Josh patted her shoulder from behind. "Seriously?"

"What?" She blinked out, bewildered.

"Your sketch is amazing, I should hang this on my bedroom wall," he said and giggled.

As he sat beside her, she responded concurrently, "Oh, shut up."

"There was nothing wrong at the party, right?" He squinted at her.

"Yeah, that new detective—her eyes," Cathy wasn't sure about it, "there's something not right."

"What do you mean?"

"My mom seems to know something about Detective Chantel Herron. She was being defensive against her yesterday."

"Does your mom know her?"

She shook her head. "My mom never does the social thing with anyone, except with your grandmother. She's introvert like me, but her manner was unusual yesterday," she paused for a moment before telling him

something. “Anyway, I’ve given a thought about the detective’s last name.”

“Herron?” He rubbed his chin, thinking. “Don’t you think her surname sounds familiar with Scott the badass, you know, the one who’s causing a big uproar in the corridor?”

Cathy nodded agreed. “That’s what I thought. I want to ask him about it.”

“I don’t get it, maybe this time a thunder hit your head, huh?” He looked at her in annoyance.

She got annoyed too. “What’s your problem?”

“I saw you talked to him in Biology class like the air was a dangerous possession between you two. Now, you want to directly ask over his personal thing?” He rubbed his dark hair roughly. “Perfect.”

Cathy ignored him. They were silent for a moment.

“Fine, let’s check it out if the detective is really his mom,” he finally surrendered, although he still felt unwilling to help. “If it makes you feel better.”

While the students were still chattering noisily, they sneaked out from the classroom.

There was no one seen in the corridor when the two of them stopped in front of the principal's office. He peeped at the gap in the window, where he saw the teacher was admonishing Scott and Jordan because of their disturbance act.

"Can we ask him later?" She changed her mind suddenly.

"Are you afraid if he'd punch me because of your question?"

"No," she quibbled. "It seems not a good moment now."

Mrs. Garcia walked out from the door, followed by the two boys. She bewildered to see Cathy and Josh stood still in there. "What are you two doing in here?"

"We have something to talk with Scott, Ma'am" Josh talked in a flatter voice. "We'll be back to class as soon as we finish."

"Better hurry," Mrs. Garcia gave them a chance.

Afterward, Scott gazed at both of them sarcastically. "What do you want?"

"We're just wondering if your mom's name is *Chantel Herron*?" The atmosphere was changeable as soon as Cathy was the one talking.

He stared softly at her and took a deep breath. "Yes, you've met her at the party?"

“Yeah, she had a good speech. Is she living with you now?” She knew it was a bit too soon to ask him that way. “Sorry to bother.”

“She lives in my house, are we done?” Scott wanted to return to the class hurriedly. He looked annoyed to talk about his mom.

“Thank you for your confirmation, Mr. Herron,” Josh said as he dragged her shoulders like a kindergarten kid.



Soon, they went to the crowded canteen after Art class finished.

“Oh God,” she sighed to see the food queue was so full with a bunch of starving students.

“I know,” Josh said, gazing at her dizzy expression. “You’re not going to fit in, especially wearing that retro dress.”

Nonetheless, she wore a floral brown dress, covered with a long black cardigan. “It’s actually vintage.”

“What’s with your taste, lately? So old,” he snorted. “Where’s your leather jacket?”

“And what’s with your navy blazer?” She annoyed as looking back at his appearance. “No one asks for your comment.”

During their exasperation moment in the air, a girl with sunbathed tan skin named Sophie was approaching Josh. She never smiled, her mind only seemed to concern for the volleyball games. She talked in a heavy voice that somehow sounded like a guy, “Mr. Clark is calling you to talk about baseball game, now in his office.”

Josh bewildered at her spooky ambience. “Thanks.”

He looked at Cathy, smiling sadly. “Sorry, there’s some business of man to man.”

He would want to beg for her forgiveness in this situation, because he had forced to leave her behind in the middle of this crowded room. However, she nodded, understood.

After he was gone, her stomach started to feel crunchy. She felt lazy to wait for a very long food queue for a tray of bacon and soda. She would rather go into another part of this school to sit alone.

And so, she decided to reunite with the school’s little park. It had been two years she wasn’t there. She missed

hearing the sound of water drop that came from that mid-sized stone fountain. This was a very solitude place. A few students were only passing by through the corridor that connected to the canteen.

While waiting for Josh, she sat alone on the wooden bench that placed in front of the fountain. She breathed deeply before taking out her notebook and pencil from her brown satchel bag. She started drawing a line, picturing the fountain in her sketch.

It took her a few minutes to realize that someone was watching behind her shoulder. She hated the idea of anyone who stole a glance at her work-in-progress. It was a great distraction to stop her from drawing.

But then, the figure came to sit along, and greeted her, “Hi.”

She surprised to see Scott in here. It seemed that they encountered each other more often during this senior year.

“Don’t you have any class to attend after this break time?”

“No—here,” he said while giving her a piece of bread bacon, he had one for him too. “You haven’t eaten anything in canteen.”

The hungry feeling had aggravated her stomach that she didn't have a second thought to grab it from his hand. "Thanks."

Before she ate the bread, something crossed on her mind. "Your mom seems different."

"Yeah, I guess her disease has relapsed again," he muttered.

"Why do you call it a disease?"

"What do you call someone with a split personality?" He snapped so bluntly that made Cathy astounded.

"Well, your mom had a great speech. She's polite and friendly, but—"

"Did she give you a look of *bipolar*?"

"I'm sorry, Scott," she shook her head hesitantly. "I just feel something not in its right place about your mom, and—" she stared bafflingly when she realized that Scott had brown eyes, "you don't have blue eyes like her."

"I look more like my dad, nothing like my mom. You don't find me alike with Romanian faces either, huh?" He chuckled.

"What's with the bipolar?"

“She screamed out in her bedroom, every night and then. My dad gave up, and divorced her, but my mom took me over to Portland and left him in California. We had a bad relationship. When she started abandoning me, I left her by moving out to Bisbee, although she insists to pay my school fee.”

“You’re from California?” Her eyes beamed wonderingly as she interested to listen more to his story. “I heard they have a beautiful beach.”

“Yes, around Santa Monica, but I was born in Los Angeles, California,” he informed and giggled at her naïve look.

“Are you living with someone in here?” She wondered.

“I live alone, and I have part time job in town sometimes.”

“Do you keep a contact with your dad?”

“I don’t know where he is now. It seems he moved somewhere as soon as we stayed in Portland,” he looked sad.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have asked you so much—”

“No, I’ve never told anybody but you now, and I feel relieve.”



“Must have been hard to live like you,” she didn’t even remember there was a warm bread bacon in her hand, and she kept talking. “I feel sick sometimes too, when my mom told me to get a hospitality treatment whenever I mentioned anything about superstition. She kept on cursing *crazy* word, if I wouldn’t stop talking about it. Isn’t it a horror when the parents don’t understand about fairy tale?”

“You’re not crazy, I know,” he smiled. “Why she hates fairy tale?”

“Back when I was in elementary school, I told her I saw a ghost, and then she deliberately took away my fairy tale books and threw everything in the storage room. When everyone unfriended me in school, Josh stayed by my side, and that’s why we become a good friend until now—”

Scott moved his body a little bit closer to her. He observed her face, understanding her depression. “Is that why you’re not close with any friend here, like starting all over again?”

She kept her eyes staring at the fountain. “I couldn’t adjust with anyone. I’m the category who fit in as a bookworm, well, I supposed.”

They giggled along.

This time, Scott wanted to know one thing that he had been wondering since a long time. “So, he’s not your boyfriend?”

Cathy laughed at his idea. “Josh keeps me company like a brother. I’m grateful.”

“And you see ghosts?” He wondered with that one too.

She pursed her lips, “Just that one time, and I didn’t remember the rest.”

They continued eating their bread bacon while listening to the sound of water drop from the fountain.

She contemplated the time she had as a child, but she just realized that something was lost in her childhood memories, it was before she met Josh, there was something related with the essence of fairy tale, as if she had déjà vu.

Scott stared at her for a moment before he giggled alone.

“As I’m listening to you, I think my mom is the real horror story. You wouldn’t want to live under the same

rooftop with her. She's holding up some witch tools in our old house in Portland; the paganism books, candles, reversed-stars, and whatever."

"Why would she have reversed-stars?" Cathy wondered, since it was odd for a detective to keep something dark like that.

"Perhaps, her ancestor was a witch," Scott said, he sounded like a stranger to her own family. "I don't understand her for that. Well, she's the best when it comes to occultism things. I don't believe if I have inherited any of her witch blood."

"I guess my mom is the opposite, then," she murmured. "It seems that you're not like her."

"I heard sometimes ago, she mentioned the name of her ancestor named *Kyra*, described as the woman who had curly red hair and wearing a robe," he sighed for a moment. "Yeah, I just remember, she does have the witchy blood in her veins."

"*Kyra*?" When he mentioned her name, a strange sensation had hit her body. "You don't know anything else about her?"

He seemed to think harder. “It’s none about Kyra, but I had witnessed my mom’s evilness when we travelled to Brazil. She suddenly became a gemstone collector.”

“What’s so evil for being a gemstone collector?”

He giggled sarcastically as if her question was a joke. “I was ten-year-old when we visited a gypsy in winter. I remembered my mom was scarier than that dreadful woman. She forced the old woman to give her a gemstone necklace. They had been *cursing* at each other, and in the end, the gypsy was frightened against my mom. Funny, isn’t it?”

“Poor old woman,” she murmured. “But still, it’s your mom after all, she gave birth to you.”

“Yeah, whatever, she’s a strange woman,” Scott said, and then he drank his soda. “She doesn’t look like what she seems. My dad never knows about *the witch* part.”

“Does *Herron* is your dad’s surname?”

“No, it’s my mom’s maiden name. She determined me to use her surname after they got divorced,” his eyes stared sadly across the fountain. “I wouldn’t stand to use my dad’s name in my life. He’s a good man. This way I can hide, just in case if I come across to him.”

“Scott, why would you hide from your dad?”

“It’s been ten years we haven’t met,” he clenched his fist tightly, enduring his pain longing. “I don’t want him to concern about my mom and me. I want him to be happy with his new life.”

Cathy stared at him, pitiful.

She had no idea what to say since it wasn’t appropriate to give a comment at his poor circumstance, but at least, her wondering questions about that woman’s oddity had been answered.

Soon, Josh shouted from behind, and bulging out at their togetherness.

“I’ve got to go then,” Scott murmured.

She noticed that the atmosphere between these boys wouldn’t be any good if they were about to stand in the same space.

Josh approached her after Scott had walked away to the canteen.

“Have you done?” She smiled, relieved. “It was fast.”

He looked peeved. “I’m just going to ask this; did your head just get hit by a truck?”

“Excuse me?” She shook her head correspondingly.  
“Is this about Scott?”

“I think you’re too stupid to see it.”

She rose from the bench to confront him. “Everyone has a good side.”

“Yeah, except that he almost killed every student last sophomore, with a firecracker addition.”

“Don’t worry, he’s not as bad as you think.”

“You’re too naïve and stupid,” he was being harsh now. “I’m worried every time he saw you like a wild animal. Maybe he’ll hunt you later.”

“He isn’t that dangerous, and he’s having life just like we are as human beings,” Cathy sighed, walking away to the corridor, and he followed to grab her shoulder quickly.

“Are you defending him?” He bewildered. “Oh, does he tell you that he hunts an innocent girl under eighteen?”

“Oh, shut up, give it a rest,” she didn’t want to hear his further opinion to frustrate her peaceful mind, but then she stopped for a second, observing his gloomy expression. “By the way, my mom will make a lemonade

salad this afternoon. I told you, just in case if you'd want to stop by at my house."

Nevertheless, after the hold and cold situation, they returned home separately with each other's vehicle.



At twelve o'clock, Cathy opened the entrance door for Josh. She noticed that he didn't feel peeved anymore.

They went to the kitchen to see Haile making a salad and pudding. Soon, Haile encouraged them to play somewhere else rather than sitting frozenly at the dining table.

As Cathy asked him to wait in the family room, he wondered, "Where's your relative?"

"I supposed she's in the room upstairs. Do you want me to call her?"

"Yeah, getting to know each other," he sounded excited. "How long she'll be staying here?"

Cathy shook her head. "I'm not sure—"

Before she was about to walk upstairs, Elle appeared in the staircase, looking beautiful in her turquoise lace cardigan.

“Hello there,” he waved at her.

“What’s the sudden business?” Her voice sounded delicate, but somehow distinct.

Cathy was just about to greet that white hair girl too, but her mom suddenly called her for help.

Once they were alone, he stared carefully at Elle. She was skimming her fingers through the wooden bookshelf, and she took a leather-bounded book, flipping the pages randomly.

Josh pretended to cough before he started the conversation, “So, you’re Cathy’s distant relative who likes reading old fiction?”

She chuckled without taking away her eyes from that shabby book. “Unlike someone, he stays up late in the field of game every day.”

“Hey, how do you know that?!” He astounded, although his mind unconsciously felt proud, and now he guffawed. “Am I that popular?”

“I thought the girls adore you, including that French girl,” she closed the book and stared directly at him. “Am I right?”



“Stella the red hair?” He baffled, wondering of how she knew it. “Did Cathy tell you that?”

“Did she need to tell me?” She reversed his question lightly.

He flickered. “Let me guess, you’re clairvoyant.”

She ignored him for a moment while she returned the book to its previous position in the bookshelf.

Once they sat face to face on the Native American red rug, he started asking her for confirmation again, “So, is it right?”

Elle stared expressionlessly at his bright face.

“Since you’re having a talent in *psychic* world, have you ever seen a ghost?” He asked, quoting the word.

“In infinite time, they’re everywhere,” she giggled. “If you called them a *ghost*.”

“Then, can you see future?” He asked beyond his own curiosity.

“Future is the life concept that already *written* before you even born. Some visions can always change, depends on someone’s choices. For example, you plant sunflowers, there are two choices left for you, either to watering or abandoning it. You know the result of either choice,” she

explained clearly and formidably through the gardening analogy.

“That’s mean there are only two choices for one result?”

“Like there are yes and no, good and bad, happy and sad, heaven and hell,” she smiled. “You couldn’t really become in between, everything in its proportion.”

At the time Haile called them for having lunch, as usual, Elle avoided eating food together. She needed to go somewhere, and acted mysteriously.

Whenever Cathy asked for the reason, her mom ignored her deliberately. It was just a matter of time to understand about Elle’s inscrutable existence.

After the lunch time had finished, Josh still stayed until at four in the afternoon. They sat on the stone bench in the front yard, as they started discussing about that mysterious white hair girl.

In this placid place, Cathy still hesitated to tell him that someone looked like Elle appeared in her recurring dreams, although she always thought hardly about it.

“She’s really a nice person, and kind of psychic,” he revealed.

“What do you mean—psychic?” She didn’t understand.

He chuckled. “You’re so naïve. She didn’t tell you?”

“She behaves weirdly, rarely talk, and she has spent a lot of time with my mom’s bookshelf,” Cathy tried to swallow her own saliva after she said it all. “She could be innocent, and the next second, she turned like a fierce eagle. There’s just something not human about her.”

“So, we already know two odd people in town—your relative and the Portland detective.”

The winds kept swirling in the sky that just turned cloudy. The time felt stagnant, as they were silent. And yet, Cathy couldn’t fathom the mystery or even to decode it, since it was a hard thing to do.

“We need to wait at the right time for the mystery,” he shouted.

Cathy smiled. “Perhaps, the things might turn in trice.”

# 6

## ENDLESS BEACH

THE SUNLIGHT FROM BEHIND the window got her eyes blinded. Her consciousness had not awakened yet as she rose from the sofa, struggling to close the curtain.

The lamp turned off already. The portable air conditioner was rustling behind her.

Cathy just remembered that she fell asleep in the living room, and she still carried a little book in her hand. She was still in her pajama, and her hair looked really messed up.

A glimpse of flashback from her dream came into her mind suddenly. It was the same recurring visions about the princess named Kathleen, without the addition of that mysterious white hair girl anymore. Unfortunately, she still didn't have any clue how to understand this thing that happened to her.

She got a terrible headache now, followed by a thirsty feeling.

“Hi...hi...” Elle greeted cheerfully. “I thought you may need water.”

“Oh, good morning,” she murmured, still holding her dizzy forehead.

She squinted surprisingly at her, who bothered preparing a glass of water as if that strange girl would know what happened. However, she took it immediately, and drank it in a single gulp.

“Your mother bought me this. What do you think?” She spun dancing like a butterfly in her new glittery turquoise silk dress, showing off her flawless white skin.

“It looks beautiful on you,” Cathy smiled as she felt the comfortable sensation to talk with her. It was kind of reminded her with the tranquility time she had with Josh’s grandmother.

Elle sat beside her. They were staring at the same wooden bookshelf in front of them.

Once Cathy regained her consciousness, she asked her, “I know the storage room is unlocked, but why did you take the books to my bedroom?”

Elle didn't flinch at all against her sudden question. "I saw you sneaking out just to read those books before, which looked like the funny part, I supposed."

"And so?" Cathy demanded her real answer.

"I've helped you out from that suffer," she said as tempted to laugh. "So, do you read classic books?"

"I've read many fairy tales, involving a king, queen, princess, prince, and some stories of the children of the moon and children of the night," Cathy sounded excited, but the next second, she shrugged sadly. "But all the stories are just too good to be true."

"What about a folklore story?" Elle suggested.

At the time, Cathy stared bewilderingly to hear the voice that possibly sounded familiar with the girl in her recurring dreams.

"I'm sure you haven't read a book that called—*Emperor of Souls*," Elle said as she rose from the sofa, leaning backward over the bookshelf. "It's a book that almost forgotten, but pretty popular among the Austrian folks in its time."

"Where can I find it?" She was instantly interested to know more. "An old library might have it though."

“Not really, you can’t even find it on the internet. The copies have just slowly disappeared from many libraries and bookstores,” Elle informed. “It was written in early 50’s.”

“Kind of old,” she murmured. “Who can lend me?”

“The author himself,” Elle suggested an option.

At first, she thought Elle was joking, but as she looked at her corroborated sharp eyes, an argument was unnecessary. Cathy inhaled slowly, letting any compromising idea struck on her mind while she put the glass on the table beside the sofa.

“If it’s among the Austrian folks, does he live in there?” She was curious. “What a coincidence! My mom is planning to visit the country.”

“Nothing is coincidental. Everything is connected in the web of this universe.”

Cathy flickered surprisingly that Elle showed wisdom like no other girl at her age would do.

They gazed at the same view of the sunny sky behind the window. Elle started humming in a halcyon way, like a songbird.

“Do you know what the occasion for today?” Elle asked before Cathy left the room.

She flickered. “It’s weekend.”

“It’s the beach time!” Elle shouted, and started humming again.

Cathy guffawed while observing her happiness that looked engaging. Nevertheless, she remembered the first thing in the morning as the clock ticked at six, it was the vacation.

“Oh, your mom will not come with us. She’s gone before you woke up,” Elle informed her.

“What’s wrong?”

Elle was leaning at the partition wall, and said, “She has a sudden business with her friend—*out-of-town*.”

“What friend?” She never knew that her mom would keep a secret even more, and it was uncompromising. “Why she didn’t tell me?”

“She seemed in a hurry that it must have been very important. You and I will go, while your dad is still asleep, right?” Elle said before she left, walking in a strange movement like a happy kid.



Cathy was aware that her dad was still sleeping in his room, but her mind was more concerned with her mom who seemed really busied. She didn't even pick up her cellphone, which left already with million missed calls. The least thing she wanted to do was to take a shower.



The nearest beach around Bisbee was located in Willow Beach. It took seven hours by car.

The two of them went with her *Ford Edge* silver car, which practically counted as SUV. They also had enough food supply for one-day trip, except to think that the girl who sat next to her wouldn't touch the food after all.

Cathy had been driving uneasily since Elle was sitting like a statue beside her. Elle kept staring straightly on the road, which gave her the creeps sometimes. Until they finally arrived, Cathy parked her car near to the seashore.

Elle stepped outside the car, and ran immediately, throwing her sandals recklessly to go barefoot on the sand, while Cathy went afterward, and preferred to keep her sandals attached tightly on her feet since she thought it was a better idea.

The smell of the fresh water had made her imagining the ocean scent. Cathy wanted to learn something new, started from this second week of July. This would be a great Saturday.

The sun was exactly at the top of their head now. She thought that they must be a bit late to arrive at noon. She got sweaty, walking toward the big rock against the hills view, overshadowing the beach.

Cathy sat alone on the rock, taking a deep breath, and then she took out a book she borrowed from her mom's bookshelf. It was the classic one, unpopular. Just at the time she was about to flip random pages, Cathy saw a strange view in front of her.

From afar, Elle was seen dancing like a butterfly set free in the air, looking happy. She stood still across the seashore, in between the sand and water. Slowly, she outstretched her arms like an angel.

Cathy narrowed her eyes at the view, witnessing what her so-called relative was doing there. Besides, no one was here but both of them.

Elle looked like as if she was praying. She stood under the bright sky, and the rustling winds came filling

the silence. At that second, she turned around, staring back tenderly at Cathy in a mysterious way. A pure affection was defined when she gave her a slight smile.

Cathy astonished at the view, and she could not understand the real thing about her; Elle looked inscrutable in every way.

Elle approached her while Cathy was still feeling speechless.

“Feeling the beach?” Cathy shouted first.

“Do you find it strange of what I just did?” She asked with a tender voice.

Cathy flinched and she closed the book, post-haste. This would be the moment when she couldn’t say either good or bad. She sighed and stared up at her. “You’re doing fine.”

Her facial expression looked different now, it wasn’t fierce anymore, but amorous.

“Do you want to see what I see?” She asked promptly, thrusting her hand to her, but Cathy felt hesitant. “Perhaps, if you wanted to see the *stupendous* scenery, we’d have to go higher than on this surface.”

They walked together in the seashore, feeling the fresh smell of the air and water. Elle led her to walk across to the hills. Cathy didn't understand why she would agree to go after her, and walked struggling throughout these rocks and stones. She felt exhausted, and fell on her knees.

"Look," Elle beckoned her eyes at the hills view that surrounded the beach.

"Okay, can we just sit here for a while?" She was still suffering from a drain throat and exhaustion.

Elle stared down at her and gave her a chance to soothe for her mortal condition. After they stared gawkily to each other, she rephrased again, "Do you want to see what I see?"

Cathy couldn't decode her mystery, but this could be one way to find out. Although the hesitation had gnawed her heart, there seemed no negativity with Elle's odd behavior.

It took her a second to rise from the ground, and then she held back that warm hand. Suddenly, an electric sensation was pricking beneath her skin. Elle grasped her

hand more tightly before she could pull off, as if she was like a little kid who almost jumped down into the water.

A glimpse of vision suddenly emerged. Cathy saw it vividly when they showed up from nowhere. There were hundreds of them, of black-hooded figures, standing across the hills like statues of gods and goddesses. They were outstretching their arms, just like what Elle did before.

At the time, without pulling off Cathy's hand, Elle followed outstretching her arms, and stared up mercifully at the sky. It was as if the universe was in an eternal tranquility, and the feeling of yearning and sadness compounded into oneness.

"We're connecting with God and the universe, we're praying every day, every time," Elle said, with eyes closed.

Elle took a deep breath before she opened her eyes to stare at her. They gazed silently as the winds swirled strongly, blowing their hair.

The black-hooded figures still stood at their same spot. The view was so vivid that making Cathy astounded and bewildered. They were something that she had never

known ever existed in her entire life. It was the part of *the universe mystery*.

She pulled off her hand harshly from Elle, and so the figures were gone from her vision concurrently. Everything turned normal again in this place filled with random pebbles.

“What have I just seen?” Cathy shook her head confusedly, muttering the craziness. “Did you do magic or fatal hallucination? Well, I mean—”

Cathy was trembling to confront her sharp eyes. It was frightening.

“How questionable—” Elle bulged out, as she didn’t accept with the way this little human reacted, having such conclusion. “You human need to learn some things,” but the next second, her expression changed cheerful again “—and then, it will be fun.”

Elle ran and danced cheerfully throughout the rocky hill, walking down the seashore again.

On the other side, Cathy still stood frozenly at the same spot. She tried to regain her senses, finding the stability of her wellbeing. She could almost get a heart

attack from seeing what just happened, but she was already speechless to ask about that strange phenomenon.

During six hour of the car trip, the radio couldn't help to calm her mind while driving home. The girl she suspected as a total strange girl was sitting next to her like a statue again.

They finally arrived home at nine p.m., without waking up anyone in house from their sleep. Thereafter, Cathy wanted to take a painkiller for herself, so she could get a comfortable sleep.



On Sunday, she spent a wonderful morning, drinking tea in Martha's personal lounge room. Her mom was there too, sitting oppositely from the landlord. It seemed that her mom didn't want her to listen to their conversation this time.

After her mom encouraged her to see Josh, she still stood hiding behind the wall corridor near the staircase. She was listening, but their voice sounded vague when they talked about something important.

"You know she's destined," Martha said.

“No, I won’t accept that, she’s my daughter!” Haile’s voice was shudder.

“She’s chosen to live that way, you can’t determine what’s right and wrong by giving her a cage against the world.”

“I won’t *sacrifice* my daughter for that family, even—”

She almost jumped out astonishingly when Josh was tapping her back. Martha and her mom were still talking in private when she went upstairs to his bedroom.

“C’mon, she’s alright. Your mom just went out-of-town with a healthy looking face rather than yours,” he knocked up the words at her pale face. “So, what happened yesterday?”

“Inscrutable to tell,” she said and sighed as he went to sit beside her on the bed. She started recalling the memory at the beach. “I’ve made Elle peeved.”

“You just barely knew her a week ago, and you already made her peeved?” He wondered. “Is that why she ran from your home this morning?”

“Elle needs a little time, that’s what my mom said. I don’t get it, why she won’t answer my question about that weird girl.”



“What’s the truth about yesterday?” He asked again.

“I’ve kind of—*noticed* her personality; she could be an eagle, and the next second became naïve. It scares me,” she said, staring back at him who was beginning to understand the circumstance. “When we went to the beach, she offered me to hold her hand, and as I did, you’d have no idea what I saw. A strange vision of black-hooded men, you couldn’t even count on how many were there, they stood in the hills and stared up at the sky. She said that they prayed and connected to God, or whatever that meant.”

Josh gawked at her as if it was a fantastic story, although it was real for her. “You’re serious?”

“Do I look like I’m making up the story?” She annoyed. “And then, I said something stupid that got her peeved, and today she’s gone.”

He would be giggling to hear the contradiction, instead he asked, “What kind of stupid words?”

“I don’t really remember. It was stupid enough than a kid say,” she shrugged her shoulders, “but I know what I saw was true. They were stood there, and acted oddly. I wasn’t sure why would she do that too.”

“Maybe she has a remote viewing ability, and then she transferred the vision to you yesterday, to see the hidden world,” he was giggling for real and couldn’t help to think of it as a fictional story. “Wouldn’t it sound like out-of-human-brain?”

Cathy ignored him when he started guffawing annoyingly.

She felt determined with her observation about Elle, and she wanted to find more of the puzzles that had been haunting her dreams and flashbacks, although it never really occurred again since Elle arrived at her house. Therefore, she assumed that everything might be related with that girl.

“There’s something not click in her human nature,” she muttered.

Josh rose from the bed to turn off his computer on the desk, where he paused from playing the soccer game, and he said, “She seems really nice, you just need to know her better, be a little social.”

“What if she isn’t my relative?” She showed her hesitation.

“Okay, you might be anti-social to everyone in school, but this girl—she is part of your family,” Josh squinted at her, and then he added quickly “—well, the part she’s being your relative, that’s the confession according to your mom, huh?”

“Don’t you realize how it felt when she made us shiver, the first time we met her?” Cathy remembered. “Terrified.”

“Excellent,” he shouted. “I’d suspect her for having an odd behavior because of her psychic ability, which your mom wouldn’t agree with this statement.”

“These odd things between that girl and my mom, I want to deal with them.”

Haile suddenly knocked at the door. They stared anxiously at her, wondering if she had listened to their conversation.

“Hi, guys,” she smiled, standing at the doorsill. “Martha wants us to have lunch together, come on.”

0 0 0

They spent two hours at the neighbor’s house, but Haile had to return home as soon as possible since Manson kept giving her a phone miss call, as well as an excuse to

leave the house since she didn't want to confront Martha with her personal issue for now. She thought that the matter had turned complicated, and anyone wasn't supposed to involve though.

Cathy didn't want to return home yet, even her mom had to force her. Thus, she had a curfew until evening. However, Haile hoped that Martha could keep the secret away from her daughter.

At three p.m., Josh busied playing his computer game again, while Cathy went downstairs, accompanying Martha in the lounge room. They sat oppositely, with two cups of coffee served on the table.

"My dear, you look tired," Martha was observing her sleepy eyes. "You should listen to your mom, go home."

"My mom told you something that she hides from me, right?" She focused to ask.

Martha was quiet for a moment, as she stared down at the cup of coffee, and then a pair of those gray eyes gazed conscientiously at Cathy, who kept demanding to know the answer.

“I’m going to tell you once, so listen carefully,” Martha didn’t sound like the idea of what she would tell her.

Cathy flinched against this sudden anxious moment between them, and the silence filled the air with tension.

“She came alone to Sierra Vista, visiting her old friend, and she had begged him to create *sacred weapons*,” Martha gulped on her own nerve as she told her “—your mom is protecting you from a danger.”

“What—”

“The Aloise, your aunt, and all of them could have just easily stayed safe for a while, but you and Haile are the highest priority for them,” Martha spoke distinctly. “They have been chasing your family since a very long time ago.”

“Who are they, please tell me?” Her heart started beating faster. “What danger? What’s with sacred weapons?”

“Cathy,” she sounded worried. “I already knew about that white hair girl. She’s the only one you can trust in this journey.”

“Why are they chasing us?” She asked again.

“Because your blood is too important and valuable,” Martha had her eyes glossed as she suppressed her tears from falling.

“Why don’t you tell me—*what are they?*” Cathy sounded strangled on her own words.

“Can I make it sounds easier for you?” She argued. “Do you remember about your haunting dreams?”

She reminded Cathy of those sleepless nights again.

“Yes?”

“She was literally there, warning you. She was trying to make you ready for what will be happening—of the malevolent danger.”

“I don’t understand,” she stressed out. “You mean, my relative was there—*Sylvia Elle.*”

Martha sighed and shook her head softly, she seemed hesitated to speak further, but the words needed to come out. “Don’t let your guard down, even after you arrive in Austria later.”

“Do *whoever-they-are* want to kill my family? What about my dad?” She demanded again. “At least, tell me in what circumstance?”

“Your mom have locked your memories, so you can’t remember anything that had happened back then—”

“What do you mean?” Cathy won’t wait for any of ambiguous reason. She just wanted the truth, and now she knew that everything was blocked from her mind that she couldn’t retrieve anything, except for those odd dreams and flashbacks, and she didn’t know how her mom had done it to her.

Martha held her warm hands tenderly, and they stared at each other in this infinite moment. “You’ll find out soon, my dear.”

# 7

## THE SHIVERED NIGHT

ON MONDAY, THE SECOND WEEKEND of July, she drove her car to school like usual. The sun was sunny in the morning as she arrived in time.

The students ran to their each class immediately once the bell rang. In the classroom, Josh already sat at her table, taking the spot near the window.

“Does the anxiousness bite you?” He teased her when she just arrived to drag a chair. “How’s your relative doing?”

She threw her satchel bag on the table, and said, “Remains mystery.”

“That doesn’t sound good, right?” He squinted wonderingly.

“I mean, my mom isn’t even bothered to look after her, and my dad is always busied with his never-ending



work,” she peeved “—as if no one realize that girl even exists.”

Mr. Stalensky wrote a new task on the board, while everyone during English class seemed lazy. The last eight minutes in class, the teacher asked Josh to read a classic poem in front of everyone. He surely felt embarrassed when some students made a joke over his performance.



Cathy and Josh didn't return home after school, they went downtown to have a cup of western coffee. They sat down along on the wooden chairs. It was a small and desolate place. The furniture made from cedar wood, and the walls painted brown.

For a second, Cathy tried to adjust their restless thought regarding her mysterious family.

“Yesterday, my mom had already bought three tickets to Austria,” she informed.

He stared bafflingly at her as he put his cup of coffee on the table. “What about your dad?”

“He won't come along. He said it's alright to have a late vacation,” she grimaced. “He has no idea that this will

not be like any trip about a little kid who wants to go to Disneyland,” she rolled her eyes peevishly. “It’s no more than aggravation.”

“I’ve heard from Martha; *you should be careful once you arrive there*,” he squinted carefully at her. “I don’t think Austria is that scary, but you made my grandmother went delirious in her sleep, she dreamt about your safety.”

“She didn’t tell you anything?” Cathy wondered.

“Nope,” and he thought about something for a moment “—it seems your mom’s making her upset. She’s been moody now.”

Cathy knew what it was about, that Martha shouldn’t tell her the other day about the truth, even for a little information.

“I guess we should return home,” Josh said after having his last drop of coffee. “I’m worry about my grandma. Sorry, Cathy.”

He was being serious and he didn’t even go mumbling like usual.

Cathy felt guilty to make him unease, and she thought it was her own fault to demand his grandma to tell her

the secret of what her mom had been thinking. Although she didn't get the actual detail, after all, Martha still had nothing to do with this matter.



At six p.m., Cathy already returned home. She went to the family room, looking for a book to accompany her before going to sleep.

A cricket started making a noisy sound outside. She ignored it and walked ahead to the staircase, but then she heard another noise came from the next room.

As she still kept the book in her arm, she walked toward the dining room, and found her mom sat at the dining table alone. Her dad had not returned home yet.

“Mom, are you alright?” Cathy wondered what happened in this uncomfortable silence. “What’s wrong?”

Haile was leaning her forehead down upon her hand with eyes shut closed, as if she got an awful headache. When she opened her eyes slowly, she gazed at her daughter in silent.

“Cathy, just go to your room, right now,” Haile said, wearily.

“Mom—”

Haile was anxious, she shouted out of rage, “Please go to your room!”

Cathy was speechless, and her head already filled up with distressful thoughts, moreover, she astonished with her mom sudden behavior that went insane, throwing a cellphone roughly to the table. She noticed that her mom was feeling a terrible tension. She could not leave her mom in peace, and thus she hid behind the partition wall that connected it to the family room where the light dimmed. Carefully, she peeped on her mom, who was looking sad and seemed strained.

On the other side, Haile had just received an important message from her old friend this morning. It was the idea that she couldn't keep forcing him to accept her request of creating weapons, which wouldn't be something ordinary. She was willing to pay, even if the cost would be expensive. And yet, she had not tell Manson that she went to Sierra Vista the other day. She wanted to keep this as a secret from her husband and her daughter.

She recalled the memory on Saturday, when Elle distracted her daughter to go together to the beach. On that day, she had the hardest conversation with a man whom she had known since they went in the same elementary school in Austria. She knew him so well. He was a blacksmith now—*Max Brigham*.

In his place, she came begging for it. By now, she tried to contemplate their conversation again, making sense of everything;

*“You have to help me to find this stone. It’s the key,” Haile tried to persuade him. “I swear I’ll pay you a lot of money.”*

*“Whatever is it that you’ll pay, it doesn’t matter,” he grimaced, rejecting her request for million times “—the last time, I almost died because of that thing.”*

*“This is for my daughter’s salvation,” her eyes turned glossy like a reflection on the river. “I would do anything for her, I would die for her.”*

*Max couldn’t deny her words, although it was hard to prepare the things that she had asked. It might be too dangerous, even for himself to do it.*

The air in the room turned so cold as the evening came. She squinted at the dark sky that was seen behind the kitchen's window.

Her mind felt quiet for a moment, but then a sudden memory popped up on the back of her mind, of the flashbacks that appeared back and forth. There was one memory she remembered clearly, of the time she used to live in New Rochelle, New York. It was the first time she met Manson when she turned 25-year-old. They fell in love, got married, had a baby, and it was like any other normal life.

She gave the same middle name for her daughter as hers—*Haile*. It was like signature, and protection charm. Since she won't use her full name publicly because of her personal matter with her Austrian family. *Natalie Haile Ann von Aloise* was long gone. After the marriage, she used her husband's surname as a camouflage, hiding herself from those who had been chasing her life. It was now just Haile Charlotte.

Another memory she embraced, the one when she played with her daughter in the park. It was a place full of beautiful sunflowers, located near to their house in New

Rochelle, and as the place changed her mind about everything.

Little Cathy was still one-year-old when she was able to see strange creatures. One classified as *faerie*. At the time, little fairies flee along on top of sunflowers, but they appeared indistinctly among the blue butterflies. Surely, Haile didn't assure of what she saw, but it was the first time that she thought hardly of how to introduce such a hidden world to her little daughter. It might be hard for Cathy in the future, and it really did.

After they moved to Bisbee for good, Cathy was enrolled in the local elementary school. It marked the time when Cathy started to see weird things from the hidden world, which sometimes might look scary for a little girl. Haile made her final decision as she used her psychic ability to blind her daughter's third eyes from seeing the unseen. It was the best thing a mom could do to protect her daughter.

Day by day, everything turned wrong instead of normal. Cathy was smart, although it felt flimsy, she could feel it—of the truth that her mom kept as a secret.

Everything fell apart by time, when Haile couldn't explain about the supernatural world to her daughter. Therefore, she buried her own belief system, turning herself into a hypocrite.

During Haile's childhood, she lived in a place looked like a castle in Austria, along with her mom and sister. She was just like Cathy, believing the superstitions, but now, that feeling had to disappear.

Until she came to conclusion, that Bisbee wasn't the safest place to stay either. She didn't even listen when Martha encouraged her to tell Cathy about the truth of her family. Haile was hesitating.

While she sat shivering alone from the cold, she kept waiting for further respond of agreement with the blacksmith.

This sleepless night was not her first nightmare. After all the things she had done to protect her daughter, everything began to lose in vain, immensely.



# 8

## HORRIFIC AND TERRIFIC

ON TUESDAY MORNING, Cathy cooked a breakfast for herself since her dad had gone to the office earlier, and her mom had not come out yet from bedroom.

At the time she put another canned food on the hissing microwave, the telephone rang constantly in the family room. She ran hurriedly to pick it up, and a hoarse voice of a man was on the phone.

He talked really fast, breathless. *“Hello, if you’re up to retribution—”*

“Hello?”

“Cathy?”

“Who is this?”

Just like that, he hung up suddenly. She wondered who the caller was.

Concurrently, Haile walked out from her bedroom that was located in front of the family room. She stared wonderingly at her daughter, and asked, “Who is that?”

“I don’t know,” Cathy shrugged.

Haile squinted, shifting her gaze at that white telephone, and back to her daughter again. “By the way, have you eaten anything?”

“Don’t worry, I have red beans for my breakfast,” she smiled awkwardly.

Haile sighed, feeling sorry for waking up late today. She was distressful to abandon her daughter, even it was just for a minute. She followed her to the kitchen, and realized that nothing was done perfectly in there, since Cathy didn’t have a good skill to make a homemade cooking.

“Hey, I’ll be cooking salmon steak for tonight, don’t be sad,” Haile cheered her.

“Oh, mom, I’m not, trust me,” she giggled while taking out the hot red beans from the microwave.

“Aren’t you supposed to go to school now?” Haile asked, glancing at the clock on the wall. It was almost seven o’clock.

“Oh, God!” Cathy was panicked, and she only took a few mouthfuls of her red beans. “Okay, see you home soon!”



It was just in time when she arrived to Bisbee High School. Some students still gathered in the parking lot as she parked her car.

Cathy headed to Constitution class, with a very straggly wavy hair of hers, and she wore a black shirt covered in denim jacket, black skinny jeans, and brown boots.

A frisson of panic happened to her when Mrs. Greene had stood in front of the teacher desk. She was the last student who entered the room. Seemingly, the teacher didn't look mad when she noticed Cathy's tardiness, since she still busied writing something on the blackboard.

Cathy's sleepy eyes caught a hand waved at her. It was Josh, calling her from the back of the class. Soon, she approached him while her shoulders felt shuddering from running.

“This is so not you... *tardiness*,” Josh muttered as she sat beside him. “Having a bad dream again?”

“No,” she exhaled gladly.

For a while, she noticed that Scott was watching her from across two tables behind them.

“And then, what?” Josh wanted to be up-to-date.

She sighed, as she wanted to avoid any questions. “Let’s just focus on the course.”

“It’s not even started yet,” he shrugged annoyed. “You’ve been acting depressed, and you’ve stopped sharing what you feel.”

“Josh, you don’t understand—”

He cut her off, and said, “Other than that, you’ve dismissed my warm company.”

Her incapability to tell him about the real matter had made her felt guilty, that it was rather complex. He moped alone and won’t even look at her in the eye.

Mrs. Garcia hadn’t done yet with her writing about warmonger’s humanity, while all of the students kept on chattering noisily as usual.

Josh had his eyes so straight on the blackboard, and at the time, Cathy finally decided to give him a practical assumption, and said, “If I told you so, it would give you a burden thought.”

Josh narrowed his eyes suspiciously at her. “Not that I know what you assume of.”

Cathy rolled her eyes in annoyance, and explained, “My mom has decided to visit Austria this weekend, and that’s the fortitude for me.”

“Because it’s not a leisure time, is it?” He understood.

She smiled, although she wanted so badly to hide what she really felt from him. These restless thoughts on her mind were collided into turbulence. As she wished for it to be gone away, it just kept circling in the end.

“I don’t like the way he stares at you,” Josh muttered suddenly, the topic had changed.

She peeped back advisedly at the man he referred. So quickly, Josh dragged her neck closer to him. Cathy astonished and breathed the air nearly to his face.

“Is he stalking you?” He worried. “Scott seems to see you as a blender food.”

“Oh, save the foodie,” she pushed him out of her sight. “He won’t do anything bad to me.”

“You don’t know him,” he shouted.

“Neither do you.”

The exasperation in the air made a gap between them. Josh chuckled sarcastically, as he felt an inevitable annoyance.

“Well, excuse me... everybody knows who the bad guy is,” he added.

“Can you stop judging people?” The inexplicable heat between them was somewhat had stimulated this argumentation. “No one really wants to hear your comment all the time.”

“Perfect,” he muttered, infuriatedly. “I am sure that a gigantic dump truck had hit your head bones, until you couldn’t differentiate between *good and evil*—”

At that second he mentioned his own metaphor of good and evil, she was struck by a familiar sensation of the recurring dreams and flashbacks from the past. It was strange.

Josh snapped his fingers, dismissing her reverie. “Are you even listening?”

“Give it a rest,” she exclaimed.

He gave her a look of infuriation. Cathy could tell how mad he was. She avoided his contradiction at all cost and just preferred to stare up straightly at the blackboard,

and she read on, “Stupidity has consulted the nepotism, and history noted the best humanity of saint—”

She breathed deeply and astonished with what Mrs. Garcia wrote.

Josh followed her eyes and bewildered. “What is it?”

“The captivated quotation—your grandmother told me that, only it’s in the occultism version.”

“She isn’t a fan of occultism,” he denied, and sounded mocking.

The topic was not their mutual interest. Cathy squinted in disbelief against his evasion.

“In your house’s lounge room, the orphic books are being displayed inside the bookshelf, aren’t those books described everything?” Cathy confronted.

This was just like their first debate about bringing up the cryptic conversation. Therefore, he muttered, “Alright, whatever.”



The class ended with a lesson and pop quiz about humanity in wartime, but the important thing for

everyone was the break time. The students hollered cheerfully as soon as the bell rang.

Josh was still moping alone when they were heading to the canteen, and Cathy drowned in her own disturbance feeling about something that her mom hid from her, moreover, Martha only talked so little about it.

Throughout a long corridor, they walked along with random students, and there was Scott, staring at her back. Surely, Cathy noticed his presence very well and the way he stared oddly at her, since nobody ever tried observing her in that kind of manner. She didn't want to assume him as a stalker, especially when he had not fought with anyone ever since they had a little talk.

After Josh went ahead to the canteen, Scott suddenly approached her—well predicted.

“Hey, Cathy.”

“What's up?” She responded.

He seemed baffling of how to start the conversation. He behaved oddly somehow.

“I noticed the inside of your notebook back then,” he struggled to say it, as Cathy narrowed her eyes in bewilderment against him. “I mean, your notebook is like



a labyrinth that contains with historical archives, rather than poems.”

“You’ve read the last page?” She annoyed at him.

It was the part where she wrote the conclusion of her dreams and flashbacks, also as a conundrum.

“Scott, you’ve read the whole paper,” she said, firmly.

“I saw your marginal note,” Scott added.

They stared for a while. The exasperation feeling filled the air again. Cathy had to decide; to either confront him or walk away, and she chose the latter.

Scott ran to her, shouting out, “That’s reminded me of the unsolved list that my mom has been hunting down.”

She finally turned back. “Which part?”

“*Sapphire stone*—it seems more than just a doodle.”

It was hard to tell whether she should trust him or not. “Mind your own business.”

She was brave enough to gaze resentfully at him for five seconds, until then, she thought that her anger felt like a waste of time. Eventually, he forced himself to smile at her, and he nodded redundantly, understanding that he had crossed the line.

They walked separately. Cathy stopped at the canteen, and she saw him walked away to the exit door, walking resentfully. She winced at him, wondering what his problem was.



The canteen was in a hectic state. People made annoying noise everywhere. It went worse when Cathy got pushed harshly into the food queue, because Liliana and Stella came suddenly, adhering to Josh for his attention.

“Stop it ladies!” He couldn’t defend himself properly, since he would appear as if he was doing a fist fight like a girl.

“What food will you have?” Liliana asked, clinging to his neck, while Stella held his arm. “Don’t say it is a hamburger again?”

Once these girls guffawed exaggeratingly, everyone stared at their bad behavior.

Cathy shook her head in annoyance to see the view. She didn’t want to bother as she took a plate of smoked beef sandwich on her tray.

The girls kept following him to sit along with Cathy in the back of the room, of their usual spot near to the windowsill. Besides, the other members of the cliques didn't come along today.

"Where are you guys going next weekend?" Liliana asked, while she sat oppositely from Cathy.

Josh noticed that Cathy was avoiding an eye contact with anyone in here, since he knew she would have a hard and uneasy overseas trip soon. Thus, he tried to break the ice. "Are you guys going to a blind date or something?"

"Anyway, Cathy," Liliana glanced at her, changing the topic suddenly. "I saw you talked with Scott on Friday—"

Everyone was quiet when a fork fell from his grip. Josh stared in disbelief at Cathy.

However, Liliana kept adding the heat between them, "In the school's park, you sat together in front of the fountain."

"It was just a small talk," she responded calmly, while eating her food.

Josh lost his appetite suddenly, as he remembered it.

“It’s fine since you need to go mingle and making friends with someone else besides Josh,” as Liliana mumbled unstopably, Stella nudged her elbow, reminding her to stop her ill manner, but still, she wouldn’t want to stop. “Not to mention that you are *overrated*. Everyone knows you as an introvert girl, but starts with Scott... it will take a huge courage... I’m impressed.”

“Who’d dare saying *overrated* to my girl?”

All of them stared up at the beautiful girl with a firm voice. She stood in a collar blouse of early 30’s style, and she had a vanilla hair. The strangest thing, no one in the room seemed aware of her sudden presence, as if this girl didn’t exist.

Liliana rose tremblingly from her chair. “I...I did.”

As they stood against each other, the girl looked way taller than Liliana, even without heels.

Liliana felt scared as if her legs went paralyzed when the girl whispered firmly, “Say it again if you dare.”

Cathy astonished with what she saw just then. Soon she rose from her chair too, and shouted, “Elle, come on. It’s not even worth it.”

Everyone at the table felt the same frightening atmosphere when Elle was still gazing at Liliana, who looked really small beside her.

Suddenly, Elle smiled. "Well, fine."

Thereafter, Cathy and Josh followed her walking to the parking lot. They wondered what was wrong with her act. At the time, that strange girl leaned on Cathy's silver car, and stared back at them.

Josh wondered with her strangeness. "What... do you possess a telekinetic power now?"

"What happened in the canteen?" Cathy confronted.

"Wondrous," she grimaced. "I couldn't get a levitation power to show your faces for the rage."

Cathy squinted, baffling with her attitude. "What are you?"

Elle was expressionless as she gazed at both of them.

However, Josh didn't want this situation changed for the worse, especially when Cathy started suppressing Elle with a bunch of questions. Thus, he snapped, "Hey, I don't think your mom will let this conversation running the show."

"This isn't a show," Cathy disagreed, and then she glanced at Elle. "When did you come home?"

“Just today.”

“Why did you disappear?”

“It seems you’ve worried about me, little girl,” Elle said mischievously.

“Our age isn’t that different,” she protested.

Elle smiled, inscrutably. “You have no idea.”

Josh couldn’t stand the tension between them, and so he shouted out, “Come on, girls!”

“Please, drive the car,” Elle encouraged them, as she opened the car door easily.

Cathy assured herself that she didn’t forget to lock the car, and now she certainly confused of how that girl could open it without the key.



At six p.m., they returned home. Cathy walked to the dining room to find her mom apologizing that she forgot to check out for the food supply. There were only a few lemonades and milks left inside the refrigerator.

“Are you serious?” Cathy frustrated with the idea to go during the dark. She stared peevishly at her mom who

already dressed neatly in a white blouse and skinny jeans.  
“The salmon steak is cancelled, right?”

“Let’s get to the grocery store first,” Haile said while washing the cups in the dishwasher.

While sitting at the dining table, Cathy wondered.  
“Does Elle will come with us?”

“No, she stays home,” her mom answered firmly.

Possibly, Haile could feel her daughter’s observant eyes on her back, demanding the real reason.

“We’ll just buy salmon meats, and some stuff, maybe,” Haile said, resting her hands on her waist, and didn’t want to talk further about Elle who currently stayed upstairs in the bedroom guest. “She can wait for us.”

Soon after, Haile went to wear her flat shoes that she displayed on the shoes rack near to the entrance door. And Cathy was ready to jump into the cold night, she covered herself with a black leather jacket, and her favorite pair of brown boots.

After her mom locked the entrance door, Cathy drove the car out of the green garage.

A lullaby song played on the radio during their night trip. Cathy never used to come out at night, since she felt uncomfortable of the dark space.

Haile was folding her mid dark hair as a ponytail when Cathy glanced at her.

“Mom, what happened to you recently? I mean, you look so tired, you can talk to me anytime.”

“There’s nothing to talk about, Cathy,” her mom said and sighed, and her eyes were looking at the view behind the car window.

“That’s okay if you don’t want to,” she said hopelessly.

Eventually, Haile should be prepared to talk about it, sooner or later. But this wasn’t the right time, and she knew that her daughter would find out about the secrets someday.

“I have a friend who lives out-of-town. His name’s Max Brigham. We attended the same elementary school in Austria, and we have been good friends, just like you and Josh. He’s a blacksmith now,” her mom said, well prepared. “Yesterday, I asked him something that I knew he would refuse to do it.”



“What did you ask him?” Cathy pretended as if she didn’t know, although she had heard the story from Martha.

“I’m so pathetic that time, for *weapons*,” she said, avoiding an eye contact with her.

“What for?” Cathy asked curiously, and her bewilderment drove her insane. “Is there something going on?”

“It’s hard to explain. I don’t want to involve you, actually,” she sounded resentful.

“Something is definitely going on,” Cathy said firmly. “I saw you were sleepless the other night,” she remembered it very well. “You’ve spent your time alone in front of the fireplace these days. A stressful look is painted clearly on your face, mom.”

“I’ve told you this as a briefing,” she said in a mysterious way “—but if something would really happen to me or your dad, at that time, you can count on to that guy.”

“Max Brigham?”

“He lives in the border of Bisbee city. It is located near to the hills, far from the crowd.”

It was hard to believe that her mom was asking the blacksmith to make weapons for unknown reason. She assumed that her mom's purpose was perhaps for the sake of self-defense against the one who had been chasing her family. Eventually, she just did not understand her mom.



They arrived at the grocery store in fifteen minutes. Seemingly, there were not many people in downtown this evening. She parked her car in front of the store, at the same time the police car just pulled over.

Two cops got out from car, one was an old man, and the other seemed to be in his fifties. They had big muscles behind their police uniform, and the odd was they wore sunglasses when it was so dark outside.

Cathy didn't want them to notice that she had been eyeing them secretly as she followed her mom's footsteps, walking toward the glass door of grocery store.

Two employees were waiting in front of the cashier desk, a girl and a boy, busied playing each gadgets, and being ignorant toward the arrival of new visitors.

Nevertheless, Cathy started looking out for her shopping list as she headed toward the beverage section. There was a housewife with her little kid in the corridor, who looked confused when choosing a milk product to buy.

Meanwhile, Haile went to another section, checking for some nugget products that displayed inside a glass refrigerator. She had not yet opened the refrigerator door as she saw a strange reflection from the glass, an image of a beast with burnt face, and it possessed an old woman.

She trembled while touching the handheld door, and hesitated to look back. Her eyes bulged out in a great astonishment, staring at the beast's reflection on the glass for some seconds. She breathed deeply, trying to calm herself. Once she turned to see the old woman, everything looked just normal.

The old woman dressed in a pink long sleeves cardigan, dark blue skirt, she wore a pearl necklace on her neck, and she had a short curly gray hair, just like how people would picture a grandma's figure.

That old woman moved weakly while picking up some apples and oranges, and then she stared back at

Haile, smiling politely. For a slight second, she seemed odd, as if she was enduring something painful in her body. And that was true, her nice manner was only a distraction, making Haile's jaw fell opened in fear. The old woman roared madly as she suddenly shaped-shifting into a beast.

Haile tried to hide her shudder as she walked away hurriedly to find her daughter. Once she found her in the next corridor, she grabbed her hand and whispered, "Cathy, don't separate from mom. Stay by my side."

Cathy blinked confusedly of what happened to her mom, who looked worried suddenly.

"I'm not a kid anymore, I can walk by myself."

"I said, stay by my side!" Haile persisted, dragging her closer.

The rain started falling heavily outside the store. While in the corridor, Haile ignored a housewife and a kid who stared bafflingly when they saw her walking out in rush. When she reached to another food section, the two cops came forward slowly to them. This time, the cops transformed just like the beastly grandma.

She saw her daughter looked shocked and trembled.

“Mom, don’t you see those weird cops?”

“Cathy, we should run quickly,” she whispered.

They ran from the corridor to reach the entrance door, but those beasts followed them as if this was a marathon session. The beastly cops moved fast, and almost caught them at the edge of the shelves. Subsequently, the cops tripped over the shelves of soda cans, falling deliberately on the floor where the cans fell hard on them.

The housewife held her kid, while screaming out of fear. It seemed that she was able to see the beastly faces of those cops.

The other cop managed to run again, trying to grab Cathy from behind. Luckily, Haile came in time to throw him with a few bottles she could get from the shelf. But he looked very strong that hurting him wouldn’t have any significant effect.

The older cop just stood up, and he roared madly like a monster. He tried to attack Cathy, and they tripped over concurrently, hitting hard on the glass window. He bumped so hard that the glass broke, and the pieces of splinters wounded Cathy’s body.

They fell on the grasses, in the backyard of the grocery store. They were soaking wet outside, with rain and blood. The thunder came in the dark sky to shock them.

He roared again, like a hungry wolf, and the other cop had just come down, echoing along with him.

Cathy sat frozenly against these creepy beasts, and her head felt spinning. She tried breathing hardly while feeling the pain all over her body. They started approaching her like wild animals.

“Oh, no,” she was petrified.

Cathy struggled to run, but her legs felt paralyzed, and so she was trailing back quickly before they could get her. The atmosphere frightened her, but suddenly, something happened that she just didn't understand. A glimpse of a raging thunder came from nowhere, killing the younger cop in an instant. He got an electric shock, burning his beast face nastily.

The older cop fell on his knees suddenly. He looked astonished as he bulged out his eyes to see who actually came in the yard.

“An angel?” He muttered shockingly as he saw a shadow of a tall figure was aiming a finger at his dead friend.

“There must have been something important, if an angel like you is shape-shifting into human form,” he kept murmuring in a tremble voice “—please give me a second chance. I won’t bother her ever again. My boss gave me order to catch these humans. I have nothing to do with this!”

“You deserve it,” the strange figure said firmly.

The rain fell heavier, and when the light of thunder was overshadowing the night, Cathy could see the glimpse of familiarity from that figure.

Afterward, the two employees came to check on the backyard with their flashlights, and the rain stopped raining slowly.

“Hey, are you alright?” The boy shouted, while standing at the edge of the broken glass. “We’ve already called the police!”

It was odd that he would still call for another police after this horrific scene. It seemed that he could not see

the cops in their beastly form, and he might as well assume that they were the fake ones.

When the boy was pointing his flashlight to the shadowy figure, Cathy gawked in astonishment to see who that was. *Sylvia Elle* came here, already dressed up all differently in her dark brown leather jacket with a collar of white feather, black jeans, and brown boot heels. Strangely, her hair and her clothes didn't get wet from the rain after all.

Those employees got to leave them once the housewife started screaming hysterically again inside the store.

After they left, Elle continued to confront the last beast. She didn't give him a second chance to explain what happened further. She just came at him, choking him with an electrical shock that emerged from her pale hands. It was like a silver lightning strike that looked very real in Cathy's eyes.

Once the beast died, Cathy stared fearfully at the girl who supposed to be her relative. Although her instinct was right, that somehow Elle would come to rescue her,



but she still couldn't believe the bitterness taste of this night.

“Why he called you *an angel?*” She asked suspiciously.

“Is it really matter?” She grimaced while helping her to rise from the ground. “That’s who I am then.”

Cathy was gazing up at her emerald eyes. She bewildered with her simple statement, which didn't help to relieve her mind for this uncomfortable situation. Thereafter, she just remembered that her mom disappeared. She panicked. “Wait, where’s my mom?”

Cathy walked inside, and found how destroyed everything inside the grocery store. She could not even use her cellphone that broke when she fell into the glass window. She used other option of running to her car, but found nothing in there. Her mom wasn't seen anywhere.

The car engine didn't even work properly, even after she tried to turn the car key repeatedly. She was frustrated.

Elle stood on the pavement, staring at her. “The wheels were leaked by those beasts.”

“That’s really good,” she murmured, resentfully.

She heard her mom shouted her name, running breathlessly toward the car. Haile leaned down to the car window for a second.

“Mom?!” She astounded by her sudden appearance. “I’ve been looking for you, where have you been?”

“Everywhere is not safe, we need to go soon,” her mom muttered vaguely while panting. “They already found out where we live.”

“Who?” She narrowed her eyes, bewildering. “Those beasts—you can see them now?”

Haile ignored her curiosity while she was still panting hardly and feeling exhausted.

“Wait, is the car get damaged?” Her mom bulged out.

“Utterly, yes,” Cathy said, walking out from the driver seat.

They saw that the two employees still tremendously panicked inside the store.

“So, what should we do?” Cathy asked, looked stressful. “Should we call the police after what happened and what we saw earlier? The cashier boy has called for the police though.”

“It won’t be a good thing,” Haile snapped.

Cathy was angry. “What... you could see what they are and still deny it?”

Haile touched her shoulder gently, and said, “Of what happened just now, don’t you ever tell dad. They were demons in human form, using the police uniform as their tool for manipulation.”

Cathy gawked. “What did you say?”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you straightaway—”

“How am I supposed to believe you?” Cathy strangled to think about it, and then she glanced at Elle who still stood calmly, and she glanced back at her mom. “You always taught me to stay away from all the superstition, and now you turn your back. Is that why she told me—you’re a hypocrite?”

“I don’t want you to get hurt,” her mom murmured. “*The demons* have been chasing us. By visiting Austria, that will be the only option to get us safe.”

“Mom, you’ve been *lying* to me,” her voice trembled.

The thunder came raging again to surprise them. The roaring sound suddenly emerged from behind the trees of the small buildings in downtown.

“What’s that?” Cathy petrified.

“*Demons*—they have their alternation form now,” Elle shouted while she gazed up at the top of the trees “—but they’re out of number.”

“I can handle them then,” Haile said so bravely.

“What do you mean?” Cathy couldn’t accept what she said. “We must go home, and call the priest!”

“Priest?” Elle chuckled.

“I never thought of any priest around here would buy this phenomenon,” Haile added.

“If we couldn’t ask the police or the priest for help, then who should we call?” Cathy muttered.

“Just stay where you are,” her mom said, patting her shoulder assuredly before she left.

“Mom, where are you going?” Cathy followed her, staggeringly.

“We need to erase their trace. It will keep us safe for a few months in Bisbee,” Haile muttered as she was heading out to the trees.

Cathy protested, “They’re demons. How would you do that with empty hands?”

“No,” Haile said, started grasping her own rounded gold pendant necklace on her neck.

Cathy had just noticed the presence of that necklace. She never saw it before.

“Your mom has a shield to protect herself. You shouldn’t be worried,” Elle said, dragging her arm forcedly to stop her, while her mom already ran ahead quickly to the backyard of those buildings.

“She has no gun. This is a very dangerous act!” Cathy said, as pulling Elle’s warm hand away harshly before she chased after her mom.

Once she found her mom, there she saw another five beasts with red eyes hid behind the shadow of trees. They had scary faces of half dog and half monster.

She dragged her mom back. “Mom, are you alright?”

Haile frowned while panting, but then she grabbed her daughter’s tired face closer to her. “Listen to mom... go, just go!”

“No, I won’t leave you!” Her voice shuddered with sadness.

“She knows where to go,” Haile beckoned her chin at Elle who already appeared behind them. “Go—leave.”

She couldn’t fight back when Haile pushed her away to fall into Elle’s arms.

Cathy screamed and cried angrily. “No!”

“I love you,” her mom said before she faced the beasts. They had been roaring creepily in the woods.

“Let me go!” She yelled, trying to pull away from Elle’s strong grasp.

Elle yanked her back roughly, and their faces were three inches closer. She whispered firmly then, “You don’t know what you deal with.”

At the time, Cathy frightened to stare back at her sharp eyes.

“We will go to the border city near the hills. There’s something we need in there,” Elle demanded.

“Max the blacksmith?” She guessed it right.

Elle forced her to walk outside in the road, but again, Cathy tried fighting her ultimatum by yelling aloud at her face. “My mom is still in there!”

As they stood on the pavement, their eyes stared intensely at each other. Cathy was breathless while Elle never seemed to lose it like her. Furthermore, Elle never seemed to shiver like her in the cold, or even to look weak. That girl looked nothing like human.

“You have to help me, if you’re an angel—”

“I thought you understood,” Elle stared sadly at her.

The time kept on running, and so Elle pulled her arm like a little kid, forcing her to walk on the road that surrounded by the city dimmed lamps. No one was around in town, as if this was an empty place. Downtown felt nothing like usual. Something was not right.

And then, Cathy just remembered how guilty she was for her dad, since the car was bought expensively, and now it was extremely damaged.

The payphone was across the road. Cathy ran to it while shivering, and Elle just let her go without any argument. She dialed Josh’s home numbers as soon as she stepped inside that red glass box.

No one answered the phone, but she was persistent to dial the numbers again. After the sixth attempts, she tried to call her dad this time, but the machine was the one who answered her. And then she called Josh again, and still no answer.

“Pick up the damn phone!” She yelled infuriatedly.

When she turned back, Elle was gone from her sight, and nowhere to be found.

At the time she gave up calling anyone, she sat at the bus stop, while shivering and feeling exhausted. Her clothes turned wet, and her hair messed up. Nothing was right anymore.

From afar, a boy with a red umbrella came running to her. It was Josh.

“Cathy, you’re bleeding!” He came abruptly, looking extremely worried.

“You know that I’m here?” She asked in disbelief. “I’ve just called you. Nobody answered the telephone.”

“Martha told me to come,” he flinched, mysteriously. “Well, never mind. What happened, anyway?”

She suspected his weird movement when he avoided answering her simple question.

When he wanted to touch her wound on her face, she leaned backward assertively. “I’m okay, but my mom *is not okay.*”

“What’s wrong?” Josh didn’t like the sound of her fear.

Elle suddenly appeared from nowhere again without alert. They astonished at her.



“Unfortunately, there’s no door to knock in here, but you should tolerate our heartbeat!” Josh muttered in annoyance.

Cathy bewildered with the way she behaved; as if this was a game of hide and seek, but nobody was debating her though. What mattered now was her mom.

“How could I leave her like that?” She asked infuriatedly at Elle, while Josh baffled with her sudden excessive rage.

“She’s fine. Now you need to obey what I’ll say,” Elle spoke calmly. This was the right time to mention it when the public green bus just arrived in front of them “—we’ll ride with this bus.”

As they went together inside the bus, a few passengers stared and murmured secretly at Cathy’s messy appearance. However, she was too tired to think about anything else.

Once the bus started moving, Cathy glanced at the dark view behind the window while remembering the whole thing that just happened. She felt it, that her fate was coming toward her peaceful life. This was the beginning of her extraordinary day.

# 9

## THE BLACKSMITH

**JOSH SHOOK HER SHOULDER** deliberately. “Cathy, we’ve arrived, wake up you cow girl!”

She opened her eyes slowly to stare at the night view behind the bus window. She was confused whether this was a dream or not, but it was too real as she touched her wet clothes. “So, it’s not a dream?”

“No,” Elle shouted as she rose from her seat. “We’ll go home first because you need to change clothes, so you won’t get sick in our journey.”

They returned to the Charlotte’s house. Josh followed them quickly, and when they stopped at the terrace, he asked, “What journey?”

“Just let see. If you can catch up, you’ll find out,” Elle said before she closed the door.

Cathy ran upstairs to lock herself in the bathroom. She sat against the door and started crying alone, hovering into her own miserable thought about the incident.

She knew, crying was a waste of time, so she hurriedly had a warm bath, and soon in her bedroom, she changed her clothes with a thicker coat, and she packed all of her belongings into her satchel bag before she went downstairs.

In the kitchen, Elle had waited while making a cup of hot tea for her. They sat oppositely at the dining table, gazing at the same view of the starry night sky behind the window above the sink.

“What happened out there, everything I saw, was it real?” Cathy asked.

“You’ve seen, means you can,” Elle explained. “Have you heard anything about sixth sense or paranormal activity?”

“I don’t have sixth sense,” she denied as her eyes flinched.

“You’re in the realm of this universe as a human being,” Elle continued to make her understand. “There’s

another *dimension* besides your world, if only human eyes could see what's *hidden*."

Her resentment was covered by her deep curiosity. "Why can't everyone see it? Why should be hidden?"

"Do you really think if all humans could see it, they could endure the burden?" Elle returned her question so painfully. "That world is different, powerful, magnificent, but on the other side, it's empty, there's no real material form."

Cathy didn't say a word, and kept staring intensely at her.

The conversation continued as Elle explained further. "Some of them want to be human. You must have heard about a demonic possession. It's because they want to dominate your world," and she smirked for a while "— human have done many of exorcism. Some works, some don't. It's only challenge *them* even more."

She paused, leaning her chest closer to the table. "What you saw earlier, it was kind of different, because those two cops were ordered by their master. They used to be humans, but earlier they were being possessed. The demons would grant their wish for having a power like entities in the hidden world, if they could success the

mission.” Elle smiled and said, “In this case, they’re haunting your mom and her family... humans are pathetic.”

“Not every human, just some of them, maybe,” Cathy shouted. “So, what do you call that hidden realm?”

“*Caecus*,” she smiled. “Well, only the djinns call it that way. It derived from Latin language means *blind, invisible, unseen*.”

“What’s the angel’s version?” Cathy was curious.

“It’s not necessary for you to know,” she smiled. “Just acknowledge it generally—the unseen realm, or the hidden world.”

“I want to know about *Caecus*,” Cathy flinched to mention it. “Is it literally existed? Have you been there before?”

“Long ago, before you even born, I was there” she answered firmly.

For a second, Cathy blinked confusedly as her consciousness had fully recovered from her hangover mind. “What are we talking about? Why are you telling me this?”

Cathy felt the headache got worse since this conversation had started. “How can you prove anything? Are you even really *an angel?*”

While the air felt quiet, Elle stared observantly at her sleepy brown eyes. “This should be the right time for you to know about everything, especially about your family,” she said, while sitting frozenly like a statue. “Therefore, I exist to help you getting into the right path.”

“Excuse me... is this your real form as an angel?” She bewildered.

“It’s certainly not.”

“What about your name, Sylvia Elle?”

“It’s a nickname given by your mother.”

“We’re absolutely not a relative, aren’t we?” She grimaced. “I knew it.”

“It’s decoded, isn’t it?” Elle sounded relieved.

“Why I have a conversation with an angel? How am I supposed to perceive everything?” Cathy felt stressed out.

In the contrary, Elle shook her head, chuckling in disbelief. “This is why some humans are given *blindsight* in their eyes. If they didn’t, they would go crazy, literally.”

“Alright, tell me if I have blindside?” Cathy demanded.

Elle sighed, and her eyes stared down at the empty table for a moment.

“Actually, your mom made that blindside itself for you, to bury your childhood memories. It has the effect to make your ability to be blinded periodically,” Elle explained, finally.

“Is it to protect me from the one who have been chasing us—*demons*?” Cathy started to understand what kind of circumstance that occurred around her. “That’s must be the reason why my mom never wanted me to attach with any of supernatural topic, because it’s always depressed her,” she sighed and muttered “—but I thought my mom and I have nothing to do with them. Why are the demons chasing us?”

Elle stared back at her, and said, “They want to abduct *the Puissant*, which is your mom and you. The demons are obliged for the mission under *the witch’s demand*, I mean *Devil* by that.”

Cathy shook her head bafflingly. “The abduction for what?”

“The witch is planning to make a new experiment with the royal blood, in order to open the gate to Caecus,” Elle said, while observing her speechless expression. “You’re next... if your mom can’t make it. There isn’t many Puissant that left.”

“I don’t understand. What is Puissant? Who is this witch?” Cathy felt the familiar sensation, as if she had heard all of this somewhere before. “And the gate... do you mean like a portal?”

“Our conversation won’t end just in a night. We have more time in Austria to continue that topic,” Elle said rashly. “I assume we should get hurry to visit the blacksmith. A few demons could almost sense your trace when we got home.”

Before Elle left the dining room, Cathy shouted, “Why it has to be me?”

Elle stared for a second, as if she was looking for something in Cathy’s eyes, and so she told her with faith, “You wouldn’t be given this life, if you were not strong enough to live in.”



She gawked to hear the answer, trying to hold her tears from falling, and then she yelled out, “I’m nothing... I don’t have anything to fight those demons!”

“Don’t say you’re nothing, you just don’t know it yet!” Elle was infuriated with her pessimistic thought. “Your mom wants you to meet someone in Austria, and that will answer your questions clearly.”



Cathy just locked the entrance door when Josh ran to them. He seemed to know the right time to go. “What are you guys going to do at eight p.m. when it’s so dark?”

“Who told you to come here?” Cathy protested.

“Martha... and your relative!” He beckoned his eyes at Elle.

“Martha knew about this too?” She squinted bafflingly at them.

“Yeah, Elle just told my grandmother by phone,” he said breathlessly. “She said you’ll probably need more company to go to Sierra Vista under the night clouds.”

She annoyed that things turned complicated. “Just go to sleep, Josh.”

“Do you think you know where Sierra Vista is?” He chuckled “—*ghost town* for real.”

“That joke doesn’t work on me,” she pushed his shoulder away.

When she opened the fence, Josh shouted again, “What’s so important in there?”

“Weapons,” she answered him straightaway, honesty was easier to say at this time.

“Are you going to hunting a bear or something, seriously?” He was panicked to impede her from walking away.

“Because of *demons*,” she sighed, and stared back peevishly at him. “Please, don’t make this harder than it already is.”

“I know you’re a superstition fanatic, but both of you are girls heading out-of-town, and you might return home midnight, how creepy that is,” he stressed out with them. “Does your dad know you will go out, and how about your damaged car?”

“Enthusiasm, that’s a good friend you’ve got there,” Elle snapped. “We’ll return home at midnight. So, just come along if you want to.”

They headed to the bust stop again. As they stood side by side, Cathy looked at him, feeling bad that she couldn't tell him the whole thing yet, as it was too complicated.

“Sorry, I don't intent to bother you for coming.”

“No,” he shook his head as if nothing was matter.

She shifted her eyes to observe what he wore. “That's a nice black suit.”

He giggled. “It's navy blue, actually.”

But then, Elle shouted alertly, “I think someone's coming.”

They stared to the left side of the pavement road to see a boy headed forward from ten meters away. Thereafter, Cathy recognized that it was the silhouette of Scott Herron. He wore a brown leather jacket that similar like the one Elle wore.

Once he met them face to face, he asked wonderingly, “Where are you guys heading out at this hour?”

“What about you?” Cathy snapped back at his question.

“I just returned from the restaurant in town. Did you guys hear about the grocery store's incident?”

The three of them didn't speak out, as no one wanted to brag the topic again. Scott felt uncomfortable with their silent reaction, but he also wondered. "What's wrong?"

"Anyway, we're going out-of-town," Cathy said, finally.

He smiled. "Mind if I come along?"

She glanced at the others, doubting if that would be a good idea. "I'm sorry Scott, we're in a hurry, there's no time for playing."

"Come on, this will be fun."

Josh already felt infuriated with his presence, and now Scott's persistency made him nauseated, especially when the words *King of Bully* still likely attached to him.

"Don't you hear what she said?" Josh approached him with anger, pushing his chest away, "Back off."

"What are you going to do then?" Scott walked forward to him, bulging out in a sudden adrenaline of rage. "Punch me?"

"Hey guys, a moment please," Cathy tried to separate them. "You can join us if you stay still and won't make anything harder, got it?"

Josh bulged out at what she said. He hurriedly dragged her closer to whisper, “I don’t trust him, and I don’t like him either.”

On the other side, Scott noticed the presence of another girl that had not met before. It was Sylvia Elle. She walked passed him, glaring keenly to make him felt unease. Thus, he wanted to approach her, demanding what her problem was.

“Why it seems you hate me so much?” He asked suddenly. “I don’t think we’ve met before.”

Cathy and Josh surprised to see him making a conversation with her.

“I don’t hate you, never I am,” Elle answered, firmly.

The air felt suffocated, and the agitation filled the atmosphere. It was the reason behind Elle’s complicated act that she knew the principle of energy, which bounded to the boy. She could tell immediately that he descended and bounded to some kind of dark vibe. The genetic never lied. She felt it since he arrived. Although she didn’t hate Scott, but someone other than him.

Soon, a blue bus stopped by. They rode with the bus hurriedly. The bus took the next route from downtown

to the path of hills. Cathy sat, leaning to the bus window, while Scott sat next to her, followed by Josh and Elle who sat behind them.

“It’s rare to meet you outside the school,” She murmured to Scott in a low tone, preventing Josh from worried over this small talk.

“I often hangout around downtown in weekend,” he said and smiled. “I got hungry earlier, so I went to seek the nearest restaurant around my house.”

She smiled back at him, and her eyes stared away at the road view.

“Did your mom’s black hair is natural?” Cathy wondered suddenly.

“Yes,” he chuckled. “It’s weird that I don’t get the similarity with her.”

She didn’t know whether to feel guilty or not after asking him about that. He didn’t seem sad like the first time they had this sort of conversation. Meanwhile, Josh was anxious that he couldn’t peep on their small talk since they sounded vague.

“Where are you guys going from this route?” Scott asked, raising his voice aloud now. “I mean, this bus will take us to the border city.”

“Exactly,” Cathy shouted.

He baffled. “You want to go picnic around the hills at night?”

“No, we want to visit a blacksmith,” she corrected him, awkwardly.

He squinted at her, baffling with her statement. “If you could find a blacksmith in downtown, why should go so far away?”

“He’s my mom’s best friend... something just came up,” Cathy looked a little frustrated to tell him.

“Was it bad?” He worried, and then he recalled the incident that just happened earlier. “Oh, you know the incident that got on the television news, the grocery store in downtown, someone broke their glass window. I watched it while I was in the restaurant.”

Cathy had her hands trembled above her thighs. She remembered in that precise moment of how painful everything was. She was aware that Elle could sense her feeling.

“That’s very awful. Police uniforms were found without the bodies,” he added.

“I was really busied that I hadn’t watched television all day long, Scott,” she said wearily. “I mean, I have to do a lot of preparation these days.”

“Do you mind to tell me, for what?” He asked politely.

“I’ll be going to Austria with my mom and my relative soon,” she said, beckoning at Elle, and he followed where her eyes moving.

He was breathless, “Alright.”

The bus passed to the San Jose Lodge. A few passengers that dressed like tourists got out from bus to visit that desolate place. The next stop was the city that known as Sierra Vista. It took thirty minutes from Bisbee by bus. The view was a bit greener than in Bisbee. Some said that the city had good food.

They stopped in there and go out from bus. Cathy didn’t know where the blacksmith’s address was, but luckily, Elle seemed to know very well of which road to take. Whenever Elle walked on the pavement, they looked like a group of dazing kids who followed her around.



“Is this really one of the ghost towns?” Josh stared carefully against this desolate environment. Everything seemed so dead here. The city lamps appeared dimly.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Cathy shouted in annoyance at him.

“It’s about eleven kilometers from here, and you’ll find it,” Elle snapped, making him more terrified.

“Is it Fort Huachuca?” Scott shouted for assurance, and Elle nodded.

“This is a mystery and bullshit,” Josh muttered.

“Your mouth should be careful in some kind of place like this,” Elle admonished him.

“Yeah, or else, we might encounter a bad night,” Cathy alluded.

Until then, they found a small space of neighborhood behind the broken wire fence. Most of the houses had plastic roofs that made this area looked creepy, and every house separated by a few lanes from each other.

One of the houses looked older than the rest. It had green roof. A gray Chevrolet Colorado car parked in front of that house. The entrance door displayed with

wooden board to inform the visitor: *The Blacksmith. The Best Favor We Build.*

They walked closer to the terrace, checking out the service hours on another board: *Open from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.*

“I guess it’s closed now,” Scott muttered.

“Just go for it,” Josh knocked abruptly at the door.

The three muscular men were seen giggling from inside the house. As they walked out, Cathy asked them if they were here to buy something, and it turned out that they were here as neighbors. She acted awkwardly after the men were gone, but Elle calm her, hugging her shoulders as they went inside the house.

The lamps in the house mixed with the color of brown and red lights. The room had a high humid level that made them felt unease to breathe the air. There were random materials of metal, iron, and many more, everything located neatly in the shelves.

Josh coughed from breathing the heavy dusts in the air, and he muttered, “Oh, this place is worse.”

In the center of the room, they saw a tall and muscular white man. He was hammering the iron at the black table, looking patiently as he worked hard.

Cathy approached him slowly. He didn't seem to be bothered by the arrival of new visitors. She cleared her throat on purpose, he finally stared back at them, and then he squinted at her directly, giving her a baffling look.

"We're closed," he said with a familiar hoarse voice that Cathy had heard before.

"Hey, are you Max?" She asked. "I'm Haile's daughter... Cathy Charlotte."

He kept staring intensely at her before he got surprised.

"My friends are here too; Josh, Scott, and Elle," she introduced them, beckoning one by one.

"Max?" Josh giggled, making everyone baffled. "Sounds like my neighborhood's dog."

The embarrassment engraved on his face immediately once Cathy glared madly at him.

"Don't mind him. He always says *what he likes*," Cathy said, before she glared again at him for his stupid

joke. Josh just realized that it was childish to say that. Scott giggled at the view.

Subsequently, she returned for the serious topic. “I heard about you from my mom, and actually, this place is not that far from downtown.”

Max stopped hammering after she mentioned it. He turned to observe their faces one by one, and when he stopped at Josh, he looked offended then. “Kid just a kid, huh?”

The silent filled the air afterward, but Cathy tried to get his attention. “Max, can you help us?”

“How much are you willing to pay?” He confronted.

Cathy bewildered, since she thought that there wasn’t anything special to offer him. As the awkward moment began again, Max suddenly giggled, staring pathetically at her.

Josh and Scott stared bewilderingly at his odd behavior.

He walked to the wall to switch on the lamps into a bright fluorescent. Everyone could see a clear image of his figure now. He could be one of the hottest blacksmith in town. He was truly muscular, he had a thin gray beard,

he dressed in a blue shirt, and he was as tall as Josh, although Scott was still the tallest in the room.

“Your mom was my good friend,” he continued.

“Wait, you just said was—” Cathy flinched. “Are you not being friends with my mom anymore?”

He nodded and smiled.

As he recalled some of his childhood memories, he knew that he couldn’t forget his very first love with Haile. For all of the happiness and sadness they had embraced together, especially when she left him without saying anything to move to Bisbee, and with a new family that she had found. Not everything had ever forgotten from his mind.

“Well done, we’re here for the weapons,” Elle came to cut off their small talk, fiercely.

He glanced bafflingly at the white hair girl, a ton of wondering questions came on his mind, and he just realized the familiar sense of this encounter. “So, you’re the messenger, who will finish the last step of my artwork, aren’t you?”

Elle looked calm, but she spoke rashly. “Just bring the weapons here.”

So on, he told everyone to wait here, while he would be taking the items from his cabin that located behind this small house.

Cathy baffled with their previous talk. She assumed that Max and Elle had met for the first time, but since it was hard to think about, so she dismissed it, instead she asked another thing, “What does he mean that you will finish his artwork?”

“You’ll see,” as usual, Elle stayed mysterious.

Five minutes less, he returned to his workplace, bringing two broken-white rectangular bags that seemed heavy. He put down the bags on the black table and opened them quickly. The bags contained with several sharp swords and black guns.

When everyone got surprised and fascinated at the view, Elle was the only one who looked stayed still. Josh and Scott gawked while scanning those weapons with their fingers.

“Seriously, what these swords and guns have anything to do with all of you?” Scott baffled.

Cathy felt the same too. “Did my mom really ask for this stuff?”

“Well, yeah,” Max nodded, and sighed for a second.

“What... are we going back to a historical wartime?” Josh blurted out his stupidity again.

“Enough for the show time,” Elle blocked their way to gaze out at the weapons.

She beckoned a certain gesture at Max, who understood her immediately, and then he led the others to walk upstairs. Cathy and Josh nodded, following him, while Scott preferred to seek for fresh air outside.

On the second floor, the room had an impression like a private office. It would be better if cobwebs and dusts were not everywhere. It seemed that he had no time to clean up the house.

A few photos hung on the wall, of his family and his wife. Cathy observed the photos for a little while. “Do you have a kid?”

“No, we’ve been married for over 21 years without a baby,” he answered while looking up for random files inside the drawer of his desk.

Cathy regretted to ask that, she apologized quickly.

“There’s no need,” he said, while still searching for something in the drawer, and then he took out a wide

paper that looked like a huge map. “I want to show you this map.”

She approached him, and asked perplexingly, “For what?”

His finger pointed at some names of certain boroughs. “This is the path to the hidden treasure.”

She wasn’t assured. “Did my mom want me to know about this?”

“I don’t think so,” he chuckled. “I just couldn’t imagine how stressful she was to hide it from you—*the stone*.”

“What stone?” She narrowed her eyebrows. “Is this related with the weapons?”

“You can’t get the stone without using the weapons... or armor,” he smiled, mischievously.

She was tremendously curious. “I wish to understand what’s happening.”

“Don’t get too stressful—*the retribution* would come better in time, at least.”

“The retribution—” She repeated as remembering that familiar word. “Did you call our house this morning?”



He shuddered. “Yes, it was you, right?”

“Why did you hang up?”

“Your mom didn’t answer her phone, so I called the house,” he flinched. “Presumably, I couldn’t talk to you about it.”

Her instinct told her something, and she shouted it out, “Wait, you love my mom.”

Max stared speechlessly before he opened his mouth, and said, “It was a long time ago. Everything’s over now,” his voice trembled.

He seemed to think hardly about something, “Last year, I sent your mom a pendant necklace for her forty-year-old birthday gift. The necklace could be used to blur out the energy around, so the demons won’t be able to track down her presence for the time being. It just didn’t work properly these days—”

“Are you saying that you’ve just made a huge mistake?” She was infuriated. “So, the pendant was a gift from you and—”

He shouted quickly, “What I meant, she have mixed the energy around her with the pendant. The analogy is like you’re wearing someone else’s clothes.”

“Whose clothes those beasts smelled then?” She said and tapped the desk roughly, making him astonished. “They want you instead of my mom!”

He baffled at her conclusion, but then he understood the circumstance. “They have already found her, then. They will find you next time.”

She wanted to think clearly, but she shook her head as feeling nauseated to talk with him. “The demons want to kill me?”

“Please understand that the pendant is a friendship gift. I didn’t know they would decode it easily. I supposed your mom knew that they want to catch you too, and that was the reason she made a distraction by using the pendant.”

“What?” She gawked in disbelief.

“Your mom is trying to protect you. Haile told me herself, you’ll be the next victim if they can’t get her,” he said worriedly.

“I don’t want to hear it,” she covered her ears tightly with her white hands.

“I know the principle of energy, how it works, and Haile had been doing this for a distraction.”

She was tired with this conversation. “I just don’t get it, everything.”

“Cathy, I treat you like my own daughter, I don’t want you to get hurt,” he said assuredly. “Haile loves you so much.”

“Why does my mom do this to me?” Cathy said, while enduring her tears from falling. “She pretends like everything normal while it’s not.”

She bit her lips discomposedly while he was silent.

“My mom said she never believes in superstition. She’s even telling me, if I feel certain about supernatural thing, then I’m crazy, and it’s necessary to be checked in a mental hospital,” she wanted to smack the trees outside the house, but she kept talking pathetically “—but she could see the beasts earlier, was she lying or holding back?”

“Used to, she hated lying,” he said as he sat on the wooden chair at his desk. “There was something that has changed her.”

For a moment, a flash of memory reminded her of what Martha had told her before.

“Something had happened in New Rochelle,” Max said, sounded depressed. “She was chased by someone, and they want your blood now.”

“Who are they?” She asked, terrified.

“Beyond our world, behind human faces, I think you understand,” he said, and he was bewildered against her innocent face at this point. “Didn’t she tell you, even a little bit about the stories of fairy tale, folklore, or any similarity to that?”

“I told you, my mom is skeptical.”

“What are you believe in your childhood time?” He wondered.

“I spent my days in the library, reading many fiction stories. When I grew up, I started to look up other stories on the internet. That’s it.”

“Does your mom know that you have been reading those stories?”

She narrowed her eyes, recalling the gap in the past. “Yes, she’s never prohibited me, how odd.”

“Don’t you feel strange that she’s never prohibited you?” He puckered his eyes. “In other words, Haile

wanted you to find it by yourself rather than hearing it directly from her. That's the point."

Cathy astonished as she tried to understand everything, although Max had enlightened her obscure mind. She felt depressed because of her mom, thinking as if logical thinking mattered over the metaphysical.

But then she realized why it had happened that way. "Who have been chasing my mom, exactly?"

Max was unsure about this; whether this was the right time to tell, or whether he was the right person to give out the information.

"*The witch*," the firm voice answered her. It was Elle, standing at the edge of staircase. "She wants you and *the stone*. The beasts you saw... were under her evil command."

They were listening quietly, but Cathy was getting more curious, and she won't satisfy until she could understand the circumstance. "What's stone that she wants? Is it related with me, anyway?"

"Like a gemstone, only it's sacred," Elle said, approaching her.

"Why does she want it?"

“Good question,” Max shouted as he pointed his forefinger at the map, showing her the sign.

“That’s why we need to go to Austria,” Elle added.

“Here, check this out,” he showed them the location where he found it. He pointed his finger at the very small letters that they could barely read it. They came closer to see that huge map. “You can find the answer from this place.”

“My mom said, I need to see my distant relative—an uncle,” Cathy murmured.

“He lives in the state of Lower Austria, near to Danube River, which is the place between the Vienna Woods,” he explained, tapping his fingers at the location’s name, “The Wachau Valley.”

Cathy bewildered in disbelief. “Does it mean he lives near the forest?”

“He doesn’t like the crowd. He upholds the tranquility, listening to the rustling leaves within the winds,” Elle said, emphatically.

Josh had been listening to their conversation while he stayed at the small library that adjacent near the

bathroom. He came out from behind the wall, and asked, “Do you know where to go in Austria?”

He hid his sadness behind that handsome smile. He knew he would soon separate from her. He didn’t know the certain way to help her, but Cathy was well aware of his feeling as she felt the same way.

“No need to worry, just follow me,” Elle demanded.

They went downstairs again to his workplace, and Scott had just returned too.

There were two medium-sized of transparent jerry cans that full of water, already placed on the black table. They waited for Elle to announce the news.

“You see this jerry can,” she picked up one of the jerry cans, and then she glanced at Max as if they did telepathy. He pretended coughing, and moved to stand beside her.

“This is holy water,” Elle informed as she opened the jerry can lid, pouring the water into a bag full of swords.

They bewildered with what she did.

“If you’re familiar with the term *exorcism*, you probably see a priest or monk has holy water,” Max said.

“A priest only use holy water for exorcism ritual among those who are possessed,” Scott shouted.

“By the Devil?” Cathy asked. “Do we use that sword to fight a demon?”

“You don’t know with whom you will face out there,” Elle answered her while sprinkling the water into the bags.

“How are you sure if that’s really holy water?” Josh asked.

Elle stopped from what she was doing, and glanced at him in disbelief.

Max breathed deeply, he smiled with sympathy to explain it, “It has been blessed by someone who has authority and power. You don’t need to worry.”

“Is he the priest from the church near this district?” Scott tried to guess it.

Cathy was just clicked with this one as she knew who gave the blessing for the water. She glanced at Elle, and suddenly, the atmosphere turned frightening. The eerie feeling touched her skin. At that time, Elle smiled prettily at her.

“You know, demons cannot be killed easily like a bleeding human,” Elle explained. “When someone does



the exorcism, are you sure if the demon is gone? They will fly in the air, not dead.”

“Are they just gone for a while?” Josh wondered.

“That’s why some of them who got possessed on another day, would easily get possessed again,” Scott said as soon as he understood.

“A weak human who once get possessed, there will be a million chances for it to happen again,” Elle explained further “—when one layer of their aura is seen like an open wound, it will invite any demon to be the host inside the body. If nobody heals it, soon, the demon will be the parasite that becomes dominant, eating the main host, until they will lose their consciousness and die.”

“Do you mean they will never be the same person again?” Cathy asked. “How do you seal someone else’s aura?”

“There are two possibilities: *first*, it may seem like a stroke disease physically, or *second*, they may inherit a wicked personality that’s influenced by the parasite,” Elle explained and started crossing her arms. “Someone’s aura could only be sealed by those who could do it.

Sometimes, people have the ability to open the aura, but doesn't have the ability to seal it back. That's perilous."

"I don't understand about the part of stroke disease?" Josh demanded her explanation.

"A stroke may result in their brain nerve for the one who has a weak physical body. A few symptoms are like eating food in a very absurd portion as if they never have enough, and still won't make them fat, and they usually don't socialize much, or vice versa, become a social manic with bad personality," Max helped explaining.

"The most important sign to notice... is in their eyes," Elle said. "You can tell the different from normal human."

This conversation reminded Scott about his biological mother. He always knew that there was something in the way of her mother's eyes would look, but he couldn't tell if it was caused by a demon.

"I wonder, if you're a blacksmith and not a priest or monk, how could you into all this superstition?" Josh doubted him somehow.

"Good question," Max praised his suspicion. "Before I was a blacksmith, I've always interested in this field,

especially into spiritualism. Haile had taught me a lot about it.”

He glanced at Cathy as he felt sorry to mention her mom. She didn't mind it though.

Subsequently, Elle opened the last jerry can to pour the water into the bag full of guns. They watched her carefully, as if this night was marked as doomsday.

“What will happen if these swords and guns are being used to fight a demon?” Cathy asked.

Elle smirked at her question while she threw away the jerry cans on the floor. “They will be vanished into ashes forever, and will be sent straight to hell.”

Everyone in the room felt shudder concurrently.

Josh pretended coughing, as he kept his stupid joke from coming out of his mouth. He just remembered that Cathy would kick him first, before he could even say anything.

# IO

## THE AIRPORT

CATHY HADN'T FULLY REGAINED her consciousness when someone knocked her bedroom door. She was staggering to walk before she could open the door. It was her mom that already dressed nicely in her long black coat and jeans, making her surprised.

“What you’re up to?” She asked. “There’s still an hour left before I can go to school.”

“No, I already sent your absent letter to school,” her mom sounded rushing. “Now, prepare your suitcase, we’ll be going at nine a.m. to the airport.”

“What?” She rubbed her eyes.

“Oh, our time isn’t enough,” Haile sighed and barged into her bedroom, and started taking her suitcase above the wooden wardrobe.

“Wait, it’s definitely not today,” she confused to watch her mom taking out random clothes of some thick sweaters and jackets into the suitcase.

“At least, we need to visit *Dalton* by tomorrow, before the demons hunt us down.”

“Dalton—is he our distant relative?” She flickered. “Shouldn’t you take a good rest since you fought the beasts, last night?”

As if it sounded like a joke, Haile squinted in annoyance at her. “They were like nightmares. Luckily, I’ve survived, huh?”

Cathy stood there, foreshortening her mom’s adroit manner.

“After this, I should talk to Manson, I feel sorry for him.”

“You haven’t told dad yet?” She astounded. “We won’t be allowed to go out suddenly. He needs the real explanation.”

Haile stopped and stared directly at her. “You think he would listen about the miserable incident that we just got yesterday?”

“Mom—”

“No one knows that we got into the incident. We aren’t getting any news channel to expose us, or it’ll be easier for the demons to find our family,” she stared resentfully. “Do you get it?”

“I get it.”

Haile was suddenly breathing hardly, her lungs felt suffocated. It was exceedingly painful for her to endure.

Cathy panicked, while caressing her mom’s shoulders. “Mom, what’s wrong?!”

Haile felt a tremendous pain like a sharp knife that was stabbing her chest. The ceiling was the last view she saw as she closed her eyes unconsciously.



They had to bring her to the hospital. The lamps in the corridor almost killed her eyeballs once Cathy sat on the bench at the waiting room. At the same time, she noticed how her dad looked extremely stressful. Manson was walking back and forth in front of the emergency room.

She rose from the bench to hug him. “Dad, will mom be okay?”

He nodded assuredly, although his nerve weakened.

The examination was undergone pretty long before a doctor walked out from the door and accompanied by two nurses to see them. The doctor known as the most wanted cardiologist in Bisbee. People could recognize him straightaway from his appearance as a 45-year-old blonde man, with gray eyes, white skin, slender body, and he was a bit taller than Manson.

However, this was their first encounter with the doctor. His name was Clay Breckenwood.

“How’s my wife?” Manson asked.

The doctor smiled politely to greet them. “Your wife has a serious injury in her chest—it’s *cardiac sarcoma*.”

“What do you mean?” He snapped in rage, letting his worriment clouded his mind. “She’s always been healthy.”

Cathy didn’t dare to tell him the truth about yesterday night, since she wouldn’t know how to make him believe of what really happened.

“It seems that she just got this injury,” Doctor Clay said empathically. “We’ll try our best by giving her a routine treatment that will get her better.”

“Doesn’t she need a surgery?” He exaggerated his panic.

“May we talk privately in my office?” Doctor Clay asked him, and glanced slightly at her.

One of the nurses followed them to his private office, while the younger nurse went forward to confront Cathy. “Are you her daughter?”

“Yes,” she said instantly.

“Don’t let her fall into a glass window again,” the nurse admonished her. “She had a temporary coma, and then she’s able to recover so suddenly. This is the first time I saw someone in that kind of state of consciousness.”

The first nurse just realized that the intern nurse was mumbling ahead. She returned to scold her, and whispered, “Don’t say too much. You’re a nurse, not a doctor.”

They left her wondering alone in the corridor as they went to the nurses’ station.

While Cathy was waiting alone, she started contemplating what the nurse had said earlier, but then she saw from afar that Elle and Josh had just arrived.

He stopped by at the nurses’ station to talk with a nurse. Concurrently, there was a fragile grandma dressed



in a green cardigan, and sat on the wheelchair, she kept staring up at Elle. From a meter away as Cathy walked forward to them, she could hear them talking vaguely.

“I know, you’re *an angel*,” the grandma said tremblingly. “The kind-hearted creature—”

The grandma hadn’t finished her words when a nurse led her to move away. Elle waved affectionately as she smiled at the old woman. Josh noticed what just happened too before they went to see Cathy.

“Hey, the nurse said something weird to me,” Cathy frowned at them. “I thought I was the one who fell from the glass window in that grocery store, but what happened exactly to my mom?”

“She didn’t fall, but her chest got injured by the attack of those beasts,” Elle explained.

Cathy bulged out at her statement, and so she ran hurriedly to see her mom.

In the patient room, her mom was asleep on the bed, while looking exceedingly pale. She dragged a chair to sit next to bed, and she started caressing her mom’s palm hand gently.

The nurse told them to wait outside once they were all in the room, but Cathy didn't want to leave her mom alone. Manson came in time before the nurse forced them to leave.

Cathy wondered whether her dad supposed to tell her something after he talked privately with the doctor. "What did the doctor say about mom?"

He sighed. "Cathy, you need to go home, let me take care of her."

"No, I need to be here too," she insisted.

"We're sorry, sir, but—" The nurse stopped talking when Haile wailed, and opening her eyes slowly. Everyone looked relieved.

Cathy hovered to her quickly. "Mom, how do you feel?"

"Not pretty good, I guess," her voice sounded hoarse and weak.

"Nurse, please give them a little family reunion," Josh admonished her, and soon, she nodded understandingly and left the room.

Haile could survive from the illness, her eyes started exploring the room, and she noticed that Elle stood

frozenly next to Josh, which reminded her of the overseas trip.

“How’s the preparation?” She reprimanded.

Elle squinted at Manson. “I told him, earlier.”

He didn’t seem to like the topic, his eyes rolled in annoyance. “No one will be going anywhere in this particular time.”

Her dad didn’t like to be repressed, but her mom always had her way to handle the problem.

As Haile winked, Elle understood her in an instant. Thereafter, Elle told Josh to wait outside since they would like to have a private conversation. He understood and walked away.

“There are some important things in Austria, which Cathy needs to know,” Haile said firmly to him.

Manson shook his head, refusing her idea. “We can talk about this later. All of you can go on the weekend.”

“I bought the flight tickets already,” Haile said.

“Well, it’s over. It’s ten a.m. now,” he argued.

Haile shook her head exasperatedly. “Is it?”

“Mom, we don’t need to force this, things won’t go in vein—”

“You don’t get it,” she snapped before Cathy could finish her words. “This is about life and death.”

“What’s wrong with you?” Manson asked agitatedly. “If the things are enormously important, you can tell her in here.”

“There will be the time when she has the right to know, and you start to waste it,” Elle snapped, her keen eyes were frightening, and the atmosphere turned eerie. “You’ve heard from Haile about the Aloise.”

Manson sighed. “I don’t know. I just can’t let go of my wife and my daughter at this kind of moment.”

“I won’t go. I’m too weak in this condition,” Haile said. “Cathy will go with Elle instead of with me.”

“Wait, today?” Cathy protested and panicked. “I have no preparation, I can’t speak of their language, and my suitcase—”

“It’s already well prepared. The suitcase is in the car,” Elle calmed her “—and Josh has repaired your car.”

Cathy gawked, as she had no reason to refuse. Otherwise, Haile felt relaxed to know that everything had been taken care perfectly.

But Manson was disquieted with what the girls would encounter later, and so he asked, “You two are adolescences, with no guard, with no ID, except Elle that she’s twenty, right?”

Cathy glanced bafflingly at the girl who apparently was not what she seemed to be. It was still hard to believe that Elle wasn’t human, even to assume if she owned an identity card or not.

“Dad, I know this is hard to accept,” Cathy had to say it again. A sorrow crafted on her eyes. “I’m seventeen, and mom knows what the best for me. I don’t want to leave her too, but you need to give us permission.”

“I understand her wish,” his eyes glossed as he glanced at Haile. “Anyway, you two will need money for the new flight tickets.”

Although Haile felt guilty to do this to him, but eventually, the consideration granted, and he gave the girls enough budgets for the overseas trip.

Haile frustrated that she missed this chance. She didn’t know that the incident would lead her to stuck in the hospital. One thing she kept was a promise of the angel that would guide her daughter to the right path.

Cathy gave her parents a warm farewell, even with a heavy heart.

Once his phone rang, he answered it and walked out hurriedly from the room. Concurrently, Elle gazed at them, waiting to watch their last goodbye.

“I want you to be honest before I go,” Cathy reprimanded. “Is this girl beside me... is she literally an *angel*?”

She stared frozenly at her, and didn’t blink at all, but there was no hesitation in her eyes. “Yes, my love.”

“Is that really easy to say?” Cathy baffled. “Why would I want to believe if she really is an angel sent from heaven?”

“No one asks you to believe, I supposed you have an intuition to use,” Elle said, sarcastically.

Cathy stared back at that white hair girl. Although she looked calm, but every word she said, felt like a razor.

“When you’re faced with the reality, it must’ve been hard to contemplate the situation,” Haile murmured. “Have you thrown away all the fairy tales from your heart?”

Cathy stared at her mom again, and felt condemned. “After all this time, I’m not crazy, right?”

She was silent, feeling the remorse. “That’s forever my fault, I didn’t tell you earlier. I didn’t know that the time would come sooner than I expected.”

Cathy clenched her jaw. “Good to hear.”

“The whole things about superstition are real, if you want to believe in it,” Elle shouted, standing next to her. “The journey we’ll have might be beyond your amazement.”

Cathy narrowed her eyes, baffling. “What?”

“She’s right. That place is miraculous,” Haile added, smiling warmly. “Just... don’t be fearful, my love.”



The car looked better after it was repaired, and she relieved that her dad didn’t know about the details of what happened in the incident.

In the parking lot of Bisbee Hospital, Josh already leaned down on the car while he waited for the girls.

“I’m sorry that you have to skip school today,” Cathy said, as she felt bad for him.

“Not at all, I was rather shocked to hear about your mom’s condition. Martha worries like hell,” he muttered.

She grimaced. “The situation is just unpredictable.”

Soon, they surprised to see Scott was running to them like a marathon boy.

“Why are you coming here?” She wondered if he knew too about her mom.

Josh stared at him resentfully, since he was still annoyed at his presence around Cathy.

“I heard from Max, you’ll be leaving today,” he said, looking sad.

“Max knew about my mom?” She baffled.

“He knew your mom got injured. He’s on the way to the hospital now,” Scott talked breathlessly.

“Who told him?” Cathy bewildered, but then she realized the only one who paid him a visit as fast as lightning, possibly was Elle. “Well, never mind.”

“Are you skipping school too?” Josh asked curiously.

Scott nodded. “I got oversleep.”

He smirked then, and mumbled, “The teacher won’t mind someone like you—”



“Josh, stop it—” she warned agitatedly before he could start a war in here. “I need to go to the airport now.”

Scott squinted at her, baffling. “Why do you have to go?”

“Is it really your concern?” Josh confronted.

He shook his head, trying to deal him calmly. “Dude, I just want to ask her. It’s so sudden, especially when her mom just got into hospital.”

Josh was still in rage, but Cathy pushed his chest, trying to calm him. “Hey, I won’t go if there’s nothing important. Can we just go to buy my flight ticket?”

Soon after, they rode with her car. Josh insisted to be the driver, while she sat by his side. He had practiced a few times with his neighbor’s car. Surely, Cathy amazed that he was a quick learner. She could always count on him, that he was her life saver.



Bisbee Municipal Airport was located eight miles away from downtown that it took about less than fifteen minutes, and they arrived exactly at eleven.

Cathy felt less unease about this trip when she wore a charm bracelet that Josh gave her. Whenever she would feel homesick, she would look at it. Cathy had not felt ready to leave, especially when she didn't know that it was today, and she wore nothing fancy; of a black leather jacket and white shirt, skinny jeans, and boots.

However, Cathy shouldn't even have to concern about her clothes since Elle looked worse. That girl had not changed her clothes since the night of incident, which was the same brown leather jacket with a collar that had a white feather. And now, she wondered where Elle got that special jacket.

Nevertheless, Elle was the only one who moved adroitly than the others, and appeared as if she was Cathy's personal assistant. She bought flight tickets and went to the money changer, all by herself, while the others sat quietly on the bench in the waiting room.

The airplane delayed about twenty minutes. It made Cathy stressed out, and so she wanted to seek a fresh air. Until then, she found a heavenly place of a small bookstore among the food stalls. Scott accompanied her to go there, as she would want to buy a book to

accompany her during the trip. He observed her secretly, and he started noticing what stuff she liked—it was the web of supernatural.

Gladly that Josh didn't see them together since he was still in the restroom. Once he returned to the waiting room, Elle suddenly gave him one of the weapons' bags, which already mixed with random swords and guns.

He perplexed. "Why would—"

"Use it wisely, just in case if something came up. I trust you with this one."

"How do I know when to use it?" He asked and conflicted if there would be real demons around him. "I have nothing to do with the weapons."

"I tell you later," Elle snapped. "I know that you know who I am. You can see things too," she spoke, convincing him. "You hide it all, because Haile won't allow Cathy to know anything about supernatural. You never talk about it, even with Martha."

"I don't mean to deny it," he sighed. "I just don't want Cathy to get hurt."

"Lies cannot run forever. And I'm sure you want to stop saying the term of *out-of-human-brain* again," she

said, quoting the words with her fingers. “That’s kind of offensive.”

He surprised at her words. “You aren’t serious.”

“Am I look like joking now?” She asked firmly.

It wasn’t the right time for him to feel overwhelmed by this conversation, since none of this was ever made sense. He still confused why she gave the bag to him.

*This is insane, as if the world might collapse sooner,* he thought.

“Nothing will ever collapse, if you do what I’ll say later,” she made him ever more confused.

Josh bulged out his eyes at her, astonished with what he just heard. “You’re good. Are you a mind reader now?”

Subsequently, Cathy and Scott had returned from the bookstore to remind them about the flight schedule.

Before she dragged her suitcase, Scott grabbed her arm, and shouted, “I’ve heard a little talk between you and Max before we went home last night... about finding the stone.”

“Yeah, Max said that it’s sacred and hard to find,” Cathy said.

“Just in case if you need help, my mom is a gemstone collector,” he offered.

“I just know that you’re such a punk—or a peeping tom,” Josh shouted from behind, and then he grabbed her arm to walk away from him. “Cathy, if Martha was in here, she would tell you a million of secret legends, included about that stone!”

He squeezed her arm so hard that she felt pain. And so she snarled, “What do you know about legends? They’re just stories!”

“The legend is not just a story,” Elle snapped firmly. “Remember the old proverb—you *will never find it, if you don’t believe in it.*”

They stared at Elle, at the same time when the speaker finally announced the airplane arrival. Soon, they had to stop this argument, and said goodbye instead.

Cathy hugged Josh yearningly, that she almost couldn’t let go, but Scott only gazed at them jealously. He knew he didn’t have a strong bonding with her that he could do that.

Elle stood waiting, and she could tolerate their humanity time.

Until then, they had to get through the security check first. Cathy's heart pounded nervously since she worried about the weapons' bags. Elle just stepped forward, throwing the bag calmly to the rolling machine, and then nothing really happened, no beep sound, no alarm, as if they saved by a miracle.

The worriment thought of being interrogated by the police finally vanished from her mind. Cathy wondered how it could possible, but Elle chuckled lightly, and said, "Calmness is the key."

Inside the airplane, Cathy sat next to the window, seeing the beautiful view of blue sky and thick clouds, and she felt the roller coaster feeling in her stomach once the airplane took off slowly.

After the situation was stable, Cathy said, "So, you brought the economy class."

"Is there something wrong with that?" Elle baffled.

"No," she said and shook her head, "my dad used to have the executive class for our vacation. It's good to see a different view now."

Elle smiled back at her, leaning on her seat calmly while Cathy started reading the book she just bought.

Nevertheless, something bothered her in the way, whether her mind was playing a trick or not, there was a creepy figure of black robe, sat along with an old man dressed in formal suit who he had been coughing a lot.

The stewardess disturbed her observation to offer snack and beverages. Cathy took the snack, and stole a glance again at the strange figure, while hiding her face with a book. The figure's head almost touching the roof, although he was sitting there like a statue.



The airplane landed in Vienna International Airport that located in Schwechat, Austria. They spent twelve and a half hour of flight trip. Cathy had hoped to arrive in the morning, and her wish literally granted although the sky was still dark at one a.m.

They walked to the luggage retrieval, where the passengers waited to take their own belongings in the queue line. Elle noticed what Cathy had been looking since they were in the airplane. She kept stealing a glance at the strange figure that following an old man, although she couldn't see the face behind that dark robe.

“Trust me, you don’t want to see it,” Elle said, while taking the suitcase from the baggage carousel.

Cathy didn’t move, still staring at them. Soon, the figure suddenly stared back at her, showing off his skeleton face. She almost jumped backward after seeing his scary look. Hurriedly, Elle dragged her arm, while the other hand busied bringing their suitcase and bag so easily.

“If you want to see more, I can show you sometime,” Elle teased her.

“You could see him too?” She astounded.

“Why not?” She giggled over her absurd question.

Cathy just remembered that the girl beside her was an angel. Nevertheless, she could only assume that it was a grim reaper, waiting to take that sick old man with him.



The old building in brown-red brick walls was their first stop. It was the small inn, the cheapest than the others. Elle took care of everything; she paid the taxi, and found a bedroom for Cathy.



There was a comfortable double bed, television, mini kitchen, and bathroom. This place no longer needed an air conditioner since the weather felt really cold, and surrounded by lily aroma.

Cathy opened the red curtain to see a desolate street view, where only a few cars that passed by. She also noticed there was a public transportation near this building.

Afterward, she didn't want to take a shower since the air was really cold, but she wanted to sleep. She took off her boots, and jumped up at the bed that had a white sheet.

Elle giggled while observing her innocence look, and said, "Sleep nicely."

# II

## THE EYES OF A DEVIL'S CHILD

CATHY HAD CHANGED HER SHIRT, but the part where it was weird; Elle still wore the same clothes every day. They had checked out from the inn before they had a trip with bus.

The view behind the bus window was beyond amazing, the buildings around Vienna looked pretentious. The moment felt awesome for Cathy that she had forgotten the very monotonous days at school that always turned her mood into pieces of exasperation.

As a few passengers came out at the bus stop, the driver told her something about a peaceful valley,

although it could be her uncle's place, but she forgot what he called it.

They got out at the next stop, and Elle was bringing the belongings again without her consideration, as if without a burden. They stopped across the huge land filled with grasses and a sheepfold. At the edge of the area, she saw a mini market. Cathy wanted to buy something for her breakfast ever since her stomach felt crunchy during the ride with bus.

At eight a.m., she entered that mini market. Elle followed her from behind, looking just like a normal human again. They walked along to the snack section, and to her surprise, Elle suddenly grabbed one of the snacks in black wrapper that had a yellow fish logo. "Fish n Chip, please."

Cathy narrowed her eyes in disbelief. "You never eat."

"This looks good," Elle smiled convincingly.

"Really?"

They stared insistently to one another, until Elle demanded, "You're not going to buy it for me?"

"Alright, but stop that puppy dog face," Cathy giggled over this strange incredulity, and soon, she went to the

cashier after picking up some snacks and a cold ice milk. It seemed that they were the only visitors here.

Elle was skimming her fingers through the snack section again, but when the atmosphere felt changeable, she sensed something was odd suddenly.

Across the glass refrigerators in the beverage section, she saw a good-looking businessman walked oppositely from her. He looked like a superficial young man, dressed in a blue pinstripe suit, he had a slick ebony hair that looked wet, and he had a tan skin.

As he smiled creepily, she shot him warily with a sharp stare.

“What a little surprise for me to meet a *little angel* here,” he murmured, dramatically.

Elle stood emotionless as she noticed the sudden presence of that seemingly young man.

In a blink of an eye, he revealed his true form, forcibly. He couldn't hide his true form, and he couldn't endure the pain and heat to stand so close to an angel. The severe pain was emerging back and forth. His transformation was undone, but when he did, he turned

into a beast with burnt skin, thick beard, and with a little horn in his head.

“*The Obayifo* must have been feeling contented to welcome you, they’re still asleep in their cave,” he had a sly smile while enduring his true transformation like a drunkard.

Elle was silent and showed him no interest after all. However, she remembered perfectly of what *Obayifo* meant; the mythological creature, described as an animal of bat. They had chocolate skin, some appeared in grey skin, and some burnt. Most of them looked fat with their distended stomach, and some were slender. Their faces looked the same, and it might hard to tell the difference. Their form could be changeable. If there was a demonic activity, they would transform into a pack of normal bats. They usually stayed inside a humid cave, and in the darkness.

From the frightening story, she became a legend for every demon in the nowadays.

She raised her small hand, skimming the shelf full of snacks with her lethal electrical shock without destroying them. It was a warning he gave him.

His eyes turned all blackish, it wasn't brown like the first time. He looked nothing like human, even though he was in a handsome form now.

“Oh, I hate those little hands of yours,” he said, devilishly.

Once Cathy was done with her groceries, she returned to Elle, but another presence in the room had surprised her. It was because the devilish eyes of that young man stared at her, and as if like an elastic rubber effect, his face transformed into a beast, and he lost control.

“What... this young lady can see my true form?” He definitely shocked. “She's human.”

Elle ignored him for sure, as she felt enormously nauseated with this encounter. “She did.”

That angel left ahead after she answered him, but Cathy was still gawking in a terrible shock. She wasn't accustomed to see something as obvious as that, except for what she saw in her childhood time. The beast was staring in disbelief too. However, Elle returned to drag her along hurriedly.

They walked side by side on the pavement, and then Cathy asked rashly, “What was that? What were you two talking about?”

“He is the demons’ leader. Let’s say, he’s the leader in this land of Austria,” Elle answered without looking at her, and walking ahead straightly. “He talked nothing important, really.”

Soon, they walked through the uphill road. The tranquility felt alive around here as they returned to see a sheepfold around the huge green land.

“So, where are we going?” Cathy breathed deeply, thinking about no clue from her mom, and thus, she kept asking worriedly. “Do you even know his address?”

Sometimes she got frightened of her calmness in this kind of circumstance, as if nothing scared that white hair angel.

“Just follow the path,” Elle said.

There were grasses anywhere from left to right, with the addition of beautiful red and yellow flowers that could invigorate anyone who walked through here.

As they walked throughout the brown walking trail, Cathy kept wondering if Elle really knew which road to

take from this area, even though she knew now that the person beside her was an angel disguised in a human form, her mind was still hard to accept the fact.

There was a possibility that Cathy couldn't trust her, and so she kept seeking for the answer by herself. She dragged her suitcase, and murmured, "I hope there's someone to ask."

"You couldn't really expect anyone to ask from here," Elle shouted, while bringing the bag of weapons.

Cathy stared peevishly at her, but it was true, no one seen here except the animals. She didn't give up and kept looking.

From afar, she saw a view of town that looked like countryside, but they would need a transportation to go there. However, she relieved to see the vapping air emerged from one of the residential houses. It was a sign that people lived around.

As they walked further, Cathy finally relieved to see a few people were having a picnic under the big maple tree in the left side of the land. Once she walked closer to them, there was a little girl sat on the swing that hung in



the tree, while two women were having a serious conversation.

Cathy approached the little girl on the swing, and her heart jolted by astonishment to see that the girl was not a kid after all. She walked backward carefully, but the girl's eyes stared weirdly and creepily at her, as if wanted to swallow anything around.

The black hair woman, the one that wore a black cardigan and a long brown skirt, she talked in a language that Cathy didn't understand at all. While the other woman was African, she dressed in a babysitter uniform.

"I'm sorry ma'am, I can't speak *German*," Cathy said.

The two women surprised to see a tourist around here, while Cathy stole a glance at the girl on the swing who seemingly about her age. The creepy girl had a small body, and always looked as if she was possessed by something.

"Oh, are you with that girl?" The woman in black cardigan beckoned her eyes at Elle.

"Yes," Cathy nodded, and then focused and pointed her finger at the faraway town in the north side. "By the way, is that the only residential around here?"

“Not really, that’s the towns of Krem and Melk, the most crowded place and central. There are some Inns too, if you want to stay,” she said friendly. “You can go for sightseeing in Wachau Valley. It’s quieter than the towns.”

“That’s what I need, Wachau Valley,” she sounded excited. “Where can I go from here?”

“Oh dear, there are a few houses near the river, only five kilometers from here, turn left to that downhill,” that woman smiled while explaining to her. “Well, of course it’s a sequestered place. The tourists usually visit the town rather than the valley.”

“I’m currently looking for my uncle in that valley, so it’s okay,” she smiled back.

Cathy just realized that there was a downhill, covered behind the gigantic trees. A river could be peered up from there, and she noted it was the second longest river around Europe after Volga, people called it *Danube River*.

She thanked the woman to tell her the direction, but then she couldn’t ignore that creepy girl dressed in floral blue-white dress. “Is she your daughter?”

The woman nodded, hugging her arms worriedly. There was something unspoken which Cathy could tell from this changeable atmosphere.

The creepy girl suddenly stood on the swing, and looked very small like a gnome. Everyone looked shocked, and the babysitter approached the girl hurriedly, guarding her from falling.

Cathy noticed that the girl's blue eyes changed blackish all of a sudden. The girl showed sharp teeth as she yanked her neck, choking her pretty hard. The black hair woman screamed out and muttered in her own language. While the babysitter tried to relinquish the girl's hand from Cathy's neck.

"I won't let you go, little girl!" She talked with a hoarse and deep voice, it sounded inhuman, especially when she laughed creepily. "You just need to die!"

Elle took over the situation as she pulled Cathy away from that girl, and she demanded the women to step aside, making a room for her. With just one hand, she grabbed the girl's neck harshly. The girl bulged out, showing her cat's pupils. Elle stared more sarcastically with her eagle eyes to the girl.

“Will you dare to do that again?” Elle could determine whose soul she confronted. “You’re the devil’s child.”

The girl grinned and laughed hard in a creepy way. So on, Elle grabbed her face strongly with two hands.

“You’re so reckless, huh?” Elle said impudently. “I think your ancestors never told you about our legend. I can send you straight to hell, child.”

The girl giggled, and mocked her warning, “Try me.”

“Are you sure?” Elle asked daringly. “Because I’m giving you a chance to leave this innocent human body,” she waited for a few seconds, but the girl just kept pushing her hands away while giggling insanely, and then, although pretending to be brave, the girl suddenly looked worried.

“Please do anything to make it go away!” The black hair woman said, panicked. It turned out that she was the girl’s mother.

Cathy frightened to see that girl gone mad and showed abnormal behavior. While beside her, the babysitter only gawked and prayed alone.

“Time’s up!” Elle threw the girl to the ground.

She sat above the girl, preventing her from moving. Soon, she raised her right thumb, and murmuring a strange language that Cathy couldn't hear, but somehow it sounded like ancient Latin. She placed her thumb to the girl's forehead, and suddenly, a smoke emerged.

Everyone gawked in disbelief at this tension, especially when the girl writhed in a tremendous pain.

The mother stressed out, and yelled out, "What have you done?!"

Once the burning smoke evaporated in the air, the girl stopped crying. Elle rose from the ground immediately to clean the dusts in her hands, and she didn't look exhausted after all.

"Your hands," Cathy murmured.

"It's okay," Elle smiled, and she turned to see the women. "She's dead into ashes—*the demon*."

The girl fainted, and the mother hugged her immediately while crying. She was afraid to lose her, especially with the idea of possession.

"How often this had happened?" Cathy asked.

"A lot of time," the babysitter finally talked. "We did any ritual, but all failed, useless."

“I don’t promise this would last, but for a very long time, this won’t happen,” Elle shouted.

“Why is it?” Cathy asked.

“Her aura was opened widely, that would invite any evil entity to possess her,” Elle said, and gave the mother a sharp stare. “You did this to your own daughter.”

The babysitter surprised to notice that Elle didn’t look ordinary.

“Dark art always has a price to pay, right?” Elle said rhetorically, while cleaning the leftover dusts in her palm hands. “Well, at least you deserve to live like that.”

“Elle!” Cathy warned her cynical manner.

“They need to know what they did was wrong,” Elle said harshly. “Why do you think we should come across with these people while there’s an elder on the right side of that road?”

Cathy felt blinded from seeing an old man across the road, who almost got a heart attack to witness this situation. Nevertheless, the atmosphere slowly turned normal again.

“I regret that decision in the past, we need money, and my brain has stopped thinking clearly,” the mother mumbled. “Now, I’m grateful with your help.”

“Thank you,” the babysitter added.

It was the last time they ever met them, and now they had to continue their journey. This time, Elle brought the suitcase and the bag of weapons.

While walking down the hill, Cathy had random questions on her mind that she couldn’t just ignore. “What exactly they did wrong?”

“They took an agreement with a demon in order to be rich instantly, now they have to pay for the price they can’t afford, hence, her daughter’s soul almost being eaten.”

“Even so, you save her life, I’m relieved.”

“I didn’t,” Elle smirked. “Because that demon almost killed you back then, I had no option instead to send her back to hell.”

“You didn’t intent to help them?” She baffled.

Elle stared back at her, smirking sarcastically. “Why would I help someone who works with devil?”

“And so, why did she want to kill me?” She wondered.

“It is part of their wicked hobby, you should have known it better,” Elle chuckled.

“What do you mean?”

“That demon perhaps wanted to be a parasite to your soul too, but it wouldn’t happen,” Elle said, gave her the creeps.

This topic had reminded her with the conversation they had, back then; about the demon domination, who wanted to live in the human world as well, taking human consciousness to fall into the dark. She understood the idea; if there was a bad human, it probably wasn’t their true nature, but it could be that their mind was controlled by a parasite of demon.

The whole thing stressed her out. Even though Elle had already explained it, she still felt breathless with her own confusion.



The rustling winds invigorated everything around, and the weather was summer solstice. They went downhill, and stopped to read the large wooden board; *Wachau*



*Valley to the east, the towns of Krem and Melk to the north.*

“What is this place?” Cathy wondered.

“This is a little part of Wachau Valley... only it’s *hidden*,” Elle informed.

The pathways became smaller the more they walked down on the road. There were houses separated a few miles from each other, and no one seen outside. Elle focused to check on the white house that located not far from the edge of the river. The house had a small yard of wild grasses, and the house terrace had stairs, just like her house in Bisbee.

“Are you sure this is the right house?” Cathy hesitated to step further.

Elle was confidence. “Just follow me.”

Cathy pressed the bell button. They waited a few seconds for someone to open the door, and it was an old man, who wore a brown flat cap to cover his gray hair. He stood at the doorsill, looking defensive against their arrival.

“Good morning, we’re looking for—” Cathy just forgot the name of her uncle, since her mom only mentioned him once.

Elle added though, “Carl Dalton.”

“I’m Cathy Charlotte, and this is my friend, Sylvia Elle. We’re from Arizona,” she introduced, while feeling awkward to face him, and she still wasn’t sure if this was the right house. “Natalie Haile is my mom. She sends me to meet him. Does he live here?”

He seemed trembling, while holding the door, and gazed carefully at them. It took him for a while to be surprised with the presence of the white hair girl. He knew something.

*“Natalie Haile Ann von Aloise?”* He murmured.

Cathy nodded politely.

“I’m Carl Dalton, please be my guest,” he finally welcomed them to come in.

The house looked huge from inside than what it appeared from outside. The ambience was village alike, with the lavender aroma smelled around the room, but it mixed with the sandbar smell that came from the

fireplace. The first floor had a kitchen, dining room, and living room. All the furniture had the simplicity design.

Elle threw all the belongings on the sofa, in front of the television. This living room had a mini terrace adjacent with the glass wall that displayed a few plants in the pots and a small fountain.

Cathy followed to see the view in there, and she loved the atmosphere in this house. “Beautiful, this is so relaxing.”

“The replacement of meditation,” he said.

From closer, Carl Dalton looked so small and fragile. Cathy was taller than he was.

“You do speak English,” she bewildered. “Not German?”

“I’m not always speaking of my mother tongue with a tourist,” he said and giggled.

As soon as they sat together on the sofa, the serious conversation started. Elle watched them as she leaned on the glass wall.

“My mom said that you would tell me something about the family,” Cathy said.

“I want to correct one thing,” his brown eyes focused and stared at her. “We’re not related by blood in anyhow, your family is just so good to me. We used to have an excellent time together, but since the circumstance is hard for them—”

She wanted the confirmation, whether this was the truth or not, “The Aloise family?”

“Literally, he doesn’t have any cognation with you,” Elle shouted, impeccably.

It was hard to believe, she had arrived here just to hear this shocking news.

“Yes, my dear,” he smiled. “I don’t know which story to start—”

“Just tell her from the beginning,” Elle snarled.

Cathy glanced in annoyance at her, for having such a cynical manner with the elder. As she returned to stare softly at him, she muttered, “Sorry, she’s kind of something. Please never mind.”

He was expressionless when he giggled. However, he already prepared the words for this encounter. “A long time ago, I wrote a book called *Emperor of Souls*.”

“Wait, I’ve heard that,” Cathy glanced at Elle as she remembered. “You’re the writer?”

He nodded. “It was popular among the people in here, now it’s almost forgotten. At least you can still find it in the particular library—the old one.”

“What does my mom has anything to do with your book?” She wondered.

“The book has treasured a secret legend that once believed by the ancient people. In the old time, people were forbidden to talk about it.

She was confused somehow. “You made it published anyway, is it non-fiction?”

“It’s fiction, for your surprise,” he said solemnly.

For a moment, they were silent before he continued explaining.

“Back in 1947, I was 17-year-old. I worked in the Aloise’s chapel as a servant boy. Every morning, a woman came to spin a yarn. I was intrigued to write it into a book since I thought it was a fantastic story, but apparently, the legend was *true*,” he said, recalling his nostalgia. “But the people nowadays believe it as a fairy tale.”

“Will you tell me about the legend?” Cathy asked.

“It’s a classic story about one empire that destroyed by a woman who envied a queen’s daughter beauty. The woman was a powerful witch. She had a perishable life, until she decided to collide with the devil’s promises to make her immortal, and with that strong power, she ruined the empire,” he told her.

Cathy listened to him carefully as he continued, “Although all of her effort was to fulfill the devil’s wish to get *Sapphire stone*, the one that sacred and believed by many to be the key to open the portal inside the castle, the place of another dimension.”

He informed her further, “The royals were never alone to face her, but in that one war, *the three important figures* weren’t there for them... well, the death of *Princess Kathleen* was misfortune.”

“Kathleen?” The sparkle came, as if there was butterfly on her stomach. She glanced slightly at Elle, and said, “I’m familiar with the name.”

He bewildered at her reaction.

“There’s no happy ending?” Cathy wondered. “What are the three figures and the Sapphire?” She shook her

head and muttered, "I still don't get it, of how this story could relate to my mom."

"I can give you the copy of my book," he offered kindly. "However, everything is connected, your mom is a descendant of the Aloise. The destroyed empire was the early generation of the Aloise family. Thus, Princess Kathleen was real, she existed."

"No way," she shook her head in disbelief. "Does it mean you want to tell me that my mom is really part of the royal family?"

"Yes, my dear. Haven't she told you about it?" He bewildered and glanced at Elle. "And the key is that *Sapphire stone*."

Once he mentioned it, Elle gave him a warning stare. He just realized that seemingly, it wasn't the right time for that.

"I don't understand," she frustrated. "If it's about the stone, is this why the demons are still chasing after my mom?"

"Exactly," Elle shouted.

"Why my mom didn't tell me by herself?" She asked, infuriatedly. "Why everything should be hidden?"

“This way the legend could only exist by hiding. Imagine if the world would notice, people might be dying to hunt the Sapphire, and it would be the reason to lead the world into doomsday,” Elle explained.

Cathy tried to contemplate what happened in the past, but her own confusion didn’t help her to understand everything at once.

He cleared his throat suddenly. It was the time to introduce himself in a proper manner.

“My real name’s Doyle Carl Dalton, and I only have one daughter named Elliana, but she passed away five years ago, and my granddaughter is the closest family that I have,” and he sighed, “Unfortunately, she doesn’t live here anymore.”

“Where is she?” Cathy sympathized. “Are you living alone now?”

“Alone is my everyday life,” he exhaled deeply. “She’s married and lives with her husband in America. They’re running a restaurant business, if I wasn’t mistaken to hear her, it’s in Bisbee, I don’t even know where that is,” he looked sad to tell her about it. “She changed her



surname as Jones. I mean, her mom married to the Jones family. We are not even Native American.”

Cathy thought for a second, this circumstance was like a perfect synchronicity. “Perhaps, she’s Wendy Jones, your granddaughter?”

“How do you know that?” He astonished, and he rose from the sofa to show her a photo that placed above the television. “Is this her?”

“Yes!” Cathy bulged out surprisingly that it was true. “She’s a good person. We have talked a few times before. How small this world!”

Subsequently, he observed her tired face. “Please make yourself feel at home, there’s a bedroom upstairs. You need to take a rest.”

“Thank you so much,” Cathy nodded.

Elle followed her to walk upstairs while bringing her belongings. There was the aroma of teak wooden when they went to the second floor. This corridor had two sides of rooms. One was similar to the living room downstairs, but it looked more like personal space.

Cathy walked forward to the arched door, and found there was a medium-sized fireplace with the built in desk,

where a mini horse statue displayed in there, and an old painting hung above it. The Native American red sofa was facing the fireplace, and the bookshelves adjacent to the wall, next to the window covered with creamy curtain. Nevertheless, Elle forced her to check out the bedroom first.

After they opened the room, they felt homey. There was a king-sized bed in the bedroom, where Elle threw all the belongings there. Soon, Cathy went to the bathroom to take a shower, although she didn't perspire yet.

During that time, Elle went downstairs to have a conversation with him. In the dining room, a cup of hot tea was served at the table, where he sat oppositely from her.

"I know who had been accompanying you at those times," Elle said, inscrutably. "So it's true then, she chose you because of her own affection."

"I know you're not human at all," he recognized her vibe since the very beginning.

"What am I then, old man?" Elle asked him rhetorically.

He just couldn't say it right away, he was afraid with this particular emotion of encountering someone like her, and of that mysterious impression.

Elle spoke again, "People talk behind you, that you've been possessed by an evil spirit to write about that legend story."

Carl Dalton was speechless and trembled, while she chuckled, that it was right of what happened.

"It was all wrong," Elle said, convincing him. "You weren't possessed after all, but she told you directly since she became the messenger. She is always like that. I know her."

"Yes, just like you," he added.

And she changed the topic, "How's the stone after all this agonizing century?"

"I keep it safe in my bedroom. Perhaps, you've come to take it as well?" He wondered.

Elle smiled mysteriously, and said, "The preparation should be settled. We might keep our sharp sight for a moment."

The placid atmosphere filled the room subsequently. At the time, he contemplated their conversation. He

agreed of what she said, since everything was true. Elle knew the whole truth, even the things about him. He already noticed ever since she stepped in his house terrace, and that was the reason he kept gazing suspiciously at her oddness.

Without any hesitation that ever crossed on his mind, from his peripheral vision he could tell that the girl was something else, of a beautiful creature that people said coming from heaven, visiting human world—*an angel*.

# I2

## SOME LEGENDS REMAINED TRUE

CATHY FELT REFRESHED AFTER she had finished with the shower at ten a.m., still in the same day. Afterward, she wanted to be alone for a moment as she went to the lounge room, sitting on the sofa by the fireplace.

Her dad just called her on the phone, and she spoke then, “Please ask the school’s permission for me, I’ll probably return on Tuesday.”

“*Have you met him?*” His voice was trembled. She noticed that he tried not to cry. “*What are you all talking about?*”

“Dad, don’t worry, he told me a lot,” she tried to comfort him. “I love you—and please tell mom that I miss her. Is she still in the hospital?”

“Yes, she is,” he sighed, sounded worried. “*The doctor said that she needs a surgery, but it’s not necessary if in a couple of days there’s nothing happen, then she will be allowed to come home.*”

“I feel uneasy about mom. I hope my hunch is wrong... just promise me, you’ll always be there for her.”

Her dad promised her so, and their conversation ended with worriment feeling. She couldn’t stand the thought of leaving her mom, it was a guilty feeling, but she didn’t want to drown in this dilemma for too long, and so, her eyes explored something else around the room.

There was a bookshelf next to the fireplace, where Carl Dalton treasured random ancient books. It was the spot to find his literature collection. Most books were about spiritual and poetry. Until one book got her attention. A leather-bounded brown book displayed at the corner of shelf. The front book covered with flower patterns.

She checked on the table of contents before scanning the whole pages. Seemingly, it was about the study of ancient symbols. Her fingers flipped the first chapter

entitled Celtic Symbol. As she read further, most folks called one legend as Triple Spiral, or mostly known as *Triskele* or *Triskelion*.

She carried the book and sat on the sofa, before continued reading.

The symbol had a various forms, described as a motif consisting of three interlocked spirals, some showed up as three bent human legs. It derived from Celtic belief, mostly found around Megalithic and Neolithic age, and the interesting part was when the archeologists found it at the entrance stone inside *Newgrange Passage Tomb*, it was a Megalithic tomb in Ireland. The terms of a passage tomb referred to the graves from that generation. Unfortunately, the symbol meant unknown until now, and the archeologists couldn't decode it yet from the pagans who built it. As the time passed by, the folks created a new meaning for that symbol as trinities: Land-Sea-Sky. *Triskele* was a prominent symbol in Celtic belief, and often known as three realms of triple goddesses.

Cathy had not able to process the knowledge at first, but something felt familiar. The part of three prominent

figures reminded her of what Carl Dalton had said before. Something might be related between this symbol and the legend story that he wrote. It wasn't easy for her to make a conclusion of how everything could connect. Besides, he said that some folks here still believed in the legend in his book.

She went downstairs to see Elle, who was reading a newspaper in the dining room. "I didn't know that you understand German language."

"Just checking," Elle said, sounded friendly.

Then she saw Carl Dalton looked busied in the kitchen. His hands were trembling while cracking the egg into the frying pan.

"Is there anything I can help?" She asked.

Just in time when she mentioned it, the egg fell from his grip, stained the floor. She took a white napkin above the counter, moving adroitly.

"Forgive me, dear," he sighed, pitying his weak body. "Honestly, I don't want to burden you."

She smiled. "It's okay. I usually helped my mom in the kitchen too. There's no word for burden."



The kitchen looked odd at glance. She noticed the food supply was running out when he opened the refrigerator, there were only a few white milks. “Do you want me to go to the grocery store?”

“That’s very kind,” he sounded relieved. “My body isn’t strong enough to walk in town recently.”

“I can help. Just let me do the work,” and she noticed that was the last egg, so she had to look at Elle for permission. She could tell a disagreed look on her face. “Please, I want to see downtown in here too.”

Elle rose from the chair, while considering it. “Hmm, alright.”

He was very glad that they could help him, although he usually had a young postman who would deliver food supply every two weeks for him, besides a newspaper.

He gave her extra money for having fun, and he even told her which town to visit, since some stores were pretty expensive in Krem town, so he told her to visit Melk town instead. Her happiness couldn’t feel more enormous today.

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The only vehicle that the landlord could offer, it was the bike that had a large wooden basket. Elle rode the bike throughout the valley, and Cathy sat behind her quietly, enjoying the invigorating view. The huge trees all grown along the pathway.

They got through Krem town, where the stunning view seemed so alive, mostly were old buildings in white and cream walls, there were many stores they could visit. People walked on the pavement. The town view looked clearly under the bright blue sky, and the place had reminded Cathy with Italy that she only saw on the internet.

Until then, they arrived to Melk town, where the view looked similar. They went on the road across the side of Danube River, where there was a view in the hills, of one gold building that looked like a luxurious castle. As Cathy was fond with it, Elle told her that the building was Melk Abbey, the most famous monastic among the world.

“We’re already in Melk, right?” Cathy asked for assurance.

“Yes,” Elle confirmed.

They stopped by at a district that had a bazar arena; there were random stalls on the alley. Seemingly, Elle always knew where to go without asking anyone for direction.

Before Cathy could be amazed with the atmosphere here, she noticed there was no padlock for the bike. She felt restless about the bike's safety, since this place looked really crowded, although there were some bikes parked along on the road as well.

"We need to walk from here," Elle suggested. "We can't ride the bike here when there are so many people in the street."

"Even better," she felt restless though. "Where's the grocery store, exactly?"

"It's in the center of this area," Elle said, and started to lead the way.

A few blocks away they walked through the pavement, Cathy felt a strange magnet toward a place that looked larger than the other buildings. "What's that place?"

The black glass window of the building looked too dense that she couldn't tell what was inside, but the

adornment of green canopy was the sign that it was a foodie place. People came and gone every minute.

“This is a bar, actually,” Elle informed.

Cathy just understood what the place was, after she read the European menu on the blackboard that placed in front of the door.

“I want to see,” she said, and went ahead without listening to her comrade’s warning.

Surely, Elle annoyed with her stubborn behavior.

The foyer was pretty huge, and the very upbeat music was played so loudly on the background. As she walked across the room, the atmosphere changed, and there was a classical song. Random superficial people visited this side of place that had expensive design and furniture. She noticed the difference.

As she turned back, she panicked to realize that Elle wasn’t behind her. It was at the same time there was a small and thin old woman who accidentally bumped into her arm, followed by the two young boys that deliberately burst into them, passing at the arched door.

Cathy observed the sorrow expression that engraved on this Hispanic woman, but she sensed it wasn't about those boys.

The old woman wore a black veil to cover her gray hair, and dressed in a dowdy floral dress, and she had that kind of psychic gray eyes.

There was an eerie feeling when that old woman stared friendly at her. "Are you alright, child?"

Cathy flinched. "Yes, aren't you speaking German?"

"I'm from Brazil, my name's Bubaa Margaretha—a nomad gypsy," her eyes stared enthusiastically. "Where are you from?"

"Arizona, it's in America," she answered, and felt pretty horrified to see her creepy pale face from closer, since this was the first time she saw a gypsy, and the frightening one. However, she didn't want to be conflicted with her own judgment. "Have you taste the cuisine in here?"

Bubaa smiled. "Indeed. The food taste of heaven, you should try it."

She wanted to move away, but the ambience forced her to stay since there was something unspoken from this

gypsy. However, this scene wouldn't last forever once Elle came to drag Cathy harshly to stay behind her back.

Elle confronted, "Is there any problem?"

That woman was agape in astonishment, her yellow teeth showed. She stared up at this beautiful porcelain face, but somehow she couldn't see through her so easily, only that she was aware of this kind of vibe, of what the girl supposed to be.

"Meet me in the alley," Elle demanded her. And as if for million times, Cathy bulged out at her cynical manner. "Go, now."

After she was gone, the atmosphere between them turned aggravated. The gypsy stared warily, and failed to read what this girl would do next. On the contrary, Elle understood precisely everything about gypsy.

"Your business is yours. We have something more valuable to do, rather than playing a mind trick with human like you," Elle warned her. "So, don't bother."

"I want to help the girl," the gypsy said tremblingly.

A long time ago, she received a precognition about the destiny of Cathy Charlotte. It was strange for her since she didn't know the girl in person, but once they

met, she remembered it, of the formidable precognition she got after she tried to put a curse on a witch that had exasperated her soul.

Before the gypsy could reach for her hand, Elle swayed her right away. “Don’t touch me with your hands, gypsy.”

At the same time, a creepy black gigantic figure with curly horns on his head, suddenly appeared next to that old woman. It was the creature that made Cathy frightened, she saw it slightly before Elle came.

“You collides with a demon, how could I trust you?” Elle didn’t hesitate to say it, since she could read everything that ever happened in this gypsy’s life with a blink of an eye. “I know you’ve been losing your ancestor’s necklace, but it’s none of my concern.”

Bubaa breathed deeply in sadness when this angel knew about her miserable life. She lost her ancestor’s necklace from a woman who possessed a great power, of the witch that Elle knew had something related with this journey.

However, the gypsy won’t bother with everything that had happened since she had been travelling around

to make money, and this restaurant was the example, the owner of this place was her client, asking for her help to get rich instantly. Her arrival today was to demand him with a dark price for the born of this pathetically popular place.

On the other side, Cathy waited in the alley behind the restaurant. When she walked out from the exit door, there was a young woman of 168 cm tall, leaning on the brick wall while crossing her arms.

“Are you sure if she’s your *guardian angel?*” The young woman suddenly asked.

She turned back to see her, bewilderingly. “Pardon?”

“I mean, that white hair girl, is she your guardian angel?” As she kept talking, Cathy observe her from closer that the young woman had freckles on her tan cheeks, and had a curly black hair, red chili lips, and it seemed she was Hispanic descent, just like the old woman she came across before, and she looked a bit older than her. “I can see people if you know what I mean.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Cathy said, defensively.



“I know you can see too,” she was persistent to have this conversation. “Is she your real guardian angel, or are you sure if she will stay by your side forever?”

Cathy walked backward subconsciously when she approached her a little closer.

“Anyway, I don’t know you.”

“I’m the daughter of the old woman you’ve met inside that place. My name’s Lionelle Margaretha. We’re gypsy, travel a lot,” after she introduced herself properly, Cathy just understood why she literally wore that kind of fashion style, of white dress with thin belts, and she also wore a lot of bangle bracelets on her wrists.

“So, how often you visit this bar, Lionelle?”

“Yeah, my mom has been helping the owner for running his *dirty* business,” she winked her eyes mischievously. Cathy understood what she meant; it was like working with demons.

The silent filled the air for a moment. They stared, observing each other’s presence, and Lionelle asked again, “Have you heard about *Triskelion* legend?”

Cathy raised her eyebrows widely, and surprised if this was a synchronicity or something, since she just

found out a book that talked about it this morning. Now, she believed this wasn't just some kind of coincidence.

“I suspect that she's involved with it, which I say, she's the forbidden legend—from one of the three prominent characters, she's one of the leader's minions,” Lionelle informed.

“What do you mean?” Cathy baffled. “Are you judging her, now?”

“There were three figures who became the real legend in this country—one leader and two minions. All demons knew better, their children are afraid to believe about Triskele.”

“Why they should feel afraid?”

“They have been giving a deadly curse for the demons here, to live miserably because of their ancestor's karma,” she flickered while telling her. “They're holding the deepest old secret that every entity always wonders about. Their existence frightened everyone in the past.”

Cathy listened well, but she still confused. “What do they look like?”

“They're wearing navy blue robe that sometimes look black. There are golden rectangular adornments on

their robe's sleeves. They have porcelain skin as white as winter, and sharp eyes, but you couldn't really see their true faces beneath their robe," Lionelle paused for a second to breathe deeply before she continued describing them.

"The leader is known as *Seraph*, which is the tallest and quietest figure among them, and some says she has dark hair. The others are her minion, which known as the messenger and the destroyer. For the messenger, no one has really discussed about her existence, and the destroyer meant as the protector or some kind of warrior, like a special guardian to face any malevolent danger," she explained ingeniously.

"All of them are archangels. Their story was just a legend for human, no one has really seen them, and no one can prove their existence either, except if anyone wants to relate the terrible incident from the past history that may reveal the truth about them, perhaps."

"They're all the archangels in woman figures?" Cathy wondered. "What was the incident?"

"Shouldn't that white hair girl tell you anything?" She baffled against her innocent face. "I sense her as *the*

*destroyer*, the mission accomplisher who had thrown the immortal curse at the demons who fought the Aloise empire, you know, that incident was like a general secret but forbidden to tell. Well, looking back what she looks like now, disguising herself as a human, huh?”

“How ridiculous!” Cathy annoyed why a stranger would explain so many things, while she had always expected it to be told by her mother.

“Come on, the royals have been rumoring that one—you’re that *destined child*,” she smirked, concurrently dumbfounded to meet her in person. “We’re gypsy can be omniscient.”

“How do you know about the Aloise? Have you met them?” Cathy was curious.

“Nope,” she shook her head assuredly. “My mom got a precognition about you when the witch came, for hunting you down, but eventually, our family became the victim of the devil’s anger, and she couldn’t even find the Sapphire stone—what a pathetic woman.”

“And what, do you want to mention *Caecus* too?” Cathy was precisely nauseated at herself that she knew

nothing at all, and by now, this stranger was totally something else.

“You knew about that one, rather than about your family?” She chuckled in disbelief. “Oh, God’s sake, I’m sure that hidden world isn’t necessary noticeable for you now. Your destiny is so close, the time is almost come.”

“Should I pay you for the next information, which I won’t know how accurate all the things you would say?” Cathy protested. “And *destiny*, seriously?”

“Impeccable, I’ve said for no fun,” she stared at her with no interest now. “You think I’ve told you many things just to waste my saliva?”

Cathy sighed. “What do you want?”

“Nothing,” Lionelle shook her head firmly. “My mouth is talking instinctively, maybe because I’m impressed to meet the person from our precognition. It must have been true then.”

Cathy confused whether she could trust this gypsy who told her a lot of information so freely. It was a huge relieve when Elle finally came to the alley.

“Have we met before?” Elle asked the gypsy.

Lionelle gazed frozenly at her real presence, and to see that Elle stood way taller even she wore heel boots, but surely it wasn't about physical appearance that got her astonishment.

It took her a second to respond, in a rudely way, "I don't think so."

Elle approached her more closely until they stood only five inches away. "If you touch this girl, you will face me later."

Her sarcastic warning made Lionelle agitated. Behind them, Cathy watched bafflingly with this strange encounter. They stood for a pretty long time, eventually it was because Elle stared at the necklace with Triskele pendant on that gypsy's neck.

Quickly, Lionelle grasped her necklace, hiding it from their sight before she left without manner. As they saw her leaving this small alley, the atmosphere was free from tension.

The pendant reminded Cathy of the story that Scott once told her, about his mother who stole a gemstone necklace from a poor gypsy. Although she couldn't assume of any idea, even to relate his story with the

reality she just encountered. She wouldn't want to be too judgmental since there was no evidence.

“Just my advice; never trust any gypsies, even they sound convincing,” Elle said, making Cathy surprised “—most of them collide with demons. If they want to help you suddenly, there must be a hidden reason behind their motive.”

She stayed bewildered for a few seconds before they walked out from the alley, and Elle hugged her shoulders, full of affection.

At eleven a.m., the street still crowded by the walkers. Soon, they entered the nearest grocery store that was a couple block away from the restaurant bar.

Ever since she was accustomed to go shopping, she could do the chore quickly. It had been her usual life in Bisbee, as she often went grocery shopping whenever her mom couldn't go. As for today, Cathy bought the items according to Carl Dalton's grocery list. But she left in a hurry that she forgot to take her money change, and gladly, Elle came to take it on her behalf.

After spending half an hour inside the grocery store, she finally wanted to go for sightseeing around the town.

Random merchandise stalls along the street caught her attention, food stalls were mostly junk foods, and some stalls sold women accessories and clothes. This was a huge bazar arena.

She took a few paces to check on them before she encountered a familiar face that got her surprised.

The woman's appearance was noticeable and looked wise, wearing a white blouse, gold trouser, black stiletto, and gold necklace of Cleopatra alike. She accompanied by two corpulent men in black suits, sunglasses, and they brought black briefcase, so businesslike.

As their eyes met each other, the woman recognized her at first glance. She seemed to ask the two corpulent men to wait for her before she approached Cathy, looking very charismatic and charming.

They walked closer to each other, and the woman gave her a beautiful wide smile. Cathy surely recognized her. It was the woman with high prestige—*Chantel Herron*.

She addressed her hesitantly, afraid if she mistaken her name. "Catherine Charlotte, right?"



“Yes,” Cathy nodded “—and you’re Mrs. Herron. I remember.”

“What a pleasant surprise to see you here,” she grinned. “You know, it’s a great honor to be able to work with your dad.”

“Thank you,” Cathy nodded awkwardly. “Oh, you look so beautiful today.”

The wind blew mildly as she smiled at her compliment.

“What are you doing here?” Chantel asked. “Are you not supposed to go to school in Bisbee?”

“I have a sudden family business,” she answered, trying to keep it short.

“You have a family who lives here?” Chantel wondered. “Why are you walking alone then?”

Cathy just realized that Elle wasn’t with her, making her confused. However, her hunch told her not to share further information with this woman. “I was with my friend, she seems somewhere at the store. Oh, do you come with Scott?”

“No, he’s at home,” Chantel giggled, since she thought that her son wouldn’t go anywhere outside Arizona, but

then her face turned emphatically. “I’ve heard your mom got into hospital, what happened?”

“She was attacked by—*an animal*,” Cathy needed to lie at this point, she felt guilty, but it was way easier compared if she had to explain a supernatural element involved with her mom’s accident.

Chantel was quiet for a second, as if her blood stopped pumping, but something looked secretive by the look on her face. Cathy noticed that too, before she gave her a pity expression.

“I feel sorry,” she patted her shoulder, gently.

Afterward, one of the corpulent men called her from afar. Cathy had just noticed that they had a creepy impression, as if something wasn’t human about them.

“Excuse me, looks like I have business to catch up,” Chantel said, caressing her shoulder sympathetically before she went away with those men. “See you next time, Miss Charlotte.”

Seemingly, Chantel looked back at her after a few footsteps away, and astonished by the sudden presence of the white hair angel.

Cathy surprised that Elle already appeared beside her, looking tensed while staring back fiercely at that detective. This time, she didn't know there was a heat in the air between them.



The trip felt short, and they returned safely to Wachau Valley at twelve o'clock.

Carl Dalton thanked them enormously, he started cooking in the kitchen, and Cathy helped him cleaning up the dining table.

Meanwhile, Elle was upstairs alone in the lounge room. She peeped cautiously behind the curtain. It was about the odd view she caught, the yard looked fine before a young postman arrived, who walked staggeringly toward the mailbox as if he was about to fall.

She was observing his strange behavior; he stared blankly at the house a few times, acting like a stumblebum. In no second, her eyes popped out after seeing a slight precognition that Carl Dalton would notice his arrival soon. She sensed a precise danger. In a blink of an eye, she already moved like lightning to the

foyer. Although the postman had not knock at the door yet, she would still like to have precautionary measure.

In the kitchen, Cathy terribly astonished to see her tangible ability of teleporting, while Carl Dalton looked like he almost had a heart attack.

“What are you, really?” She snarled, still feeling disbelief if that girl was really an angel.

“Hold Carl Dalton, don’t let him come out,” Elle said before walking out from the front door.

“What are you doing?” Cathy annoyed that she ignored her. “Hey!”

Elle already went to the yard, at the same time the door was closed roughly. At first, she walked like a normal girl would do, and gave him a warm smile. “Hello, greeting!”

The young postman stared sharply at her, he grinned and groaned instead. She forced him to have a handshake with her, and then the jolt from her hand had shocked him. The electric shock was throbbing into his palm hand painfully, making him infuriated. Seemingly, her power was pellucid.

“Jolt is my best weapon so far,” she chuckled.

The drastic effect of her jolt effect had turned him into a half beast. He kept grinning, even though he didn't dare to challenge her in return. He groaned slightly, and his eyes started turning from black to gray.

Elle grabbed his neck, she was careful not to hurt the human body since she just wanted to talk with the demon that possessed him. She added the jolt volume. It wouldn't hurt his human body, but on the contrary, for the demon to scream out the pain from the inside.

“Leave the boy alone, and leave us,” she muttered, sarcastically.

She faced him a little closer. He felt her heat energy was stabbing his whole body. Whenever a demon met an angel, a demon wouldn't be able to endure the heat that got him ignited like the burning fire in hell.

“Someone demands you to spy on us,” she could read his mind like a shallow river. “Are you trying to insult an angel?”

His groaning was faded slowly when she gave him the ultimatum, but the boy was still in a trance condition since the demon didn't want to go away yet.

Elle bulged out again at him. “Get a life before I’ll make it for you into hell.”

Finally, the demon left his body, and she pulled his hand away gently. He woke up, looking perplexed as if he just returned from sleepwalking. She patted his shoulder and told him to get a good rest at home. He just nodded obediently since he still felt confused.

Thereafter, Elle returned to the house for checking on the humans, and explained everything in their lunch time. Carl Dalton managed to stay calm after hearing of what happened, while Cathy seemed restless.

Once their eyes met each other, Elle showed her a gesture sign, telling her that everything was okay. “We’re safe.”



*Chantel McIntyre Herron* came here with a distinct reason. She was not the type who liked to waste time. She was someone who capable to achieve anything that she wanted. Unfortunately, *welfare* was one thing that hard for her to reach. She had planned everything smoothly, like how she arrived in Austria at this moment to meet

some of her old friends. There wasn't any professional business here, nothing related about office work either, and she had no detective badge to show off in public, since she came all the way here for personal purpose. She hadn't even started any real work in Bisbee, and yet, she decided to take a few days of furlough.

The first step, she had arranged a rare appointment with two men who knew the pathway around Austria, altogether to lead her to meet their boss. Apparently, they weren't the right person to accompany her throughout this short trip. Those corpulent men were twins in black suit, sunglasses, and bringing black briefcases. They appeared more like secret agents to her. Hence, they could only tell her to meet the real deal, which was their boss, the new guy in this circumstance that they would discuss together.

Before Chantel walked here, at ten a.m. she remembered came across to the gypsies whom the heart broken by her harshness from a long time ago, precisely it was in the cold winter. She still remembered clearly of their names—Bubaa and Lionelle, they were the poor gypsy family. Because of that unexpected encounter, she

got to recall the bitter memory where Bubaa announced the curse according to her own distinct precognition. That gypsy had no idea that Chantel shivered to hear all that, but she could only endure her exasperation alone.

*“There is one girl in the future, she will come across to you, repaid all your mistakes again to destroy you.”*

At that time, Chantel was holding her little son’s hand, which was Scott. She bulged out at the gypsy. She warned her in return, *“You’re lucky I bring my son today, because if he wasn’t here, this should be your last breath.”*

After that frontal encounter they had, Chantel left her speechless to kneel down alone on the winter ground, exactly in front of the gypsy’s shack.

The corpulent twins had led her to enter the VIP room in the five stars hotel. Finally, she met the man who was known in this country as the leader of demons. He was the devil’s minion, and he was the one who came to her bedroom in the cold midnight, in his truer form.

At this time, they introduced each other in formality. This was her first time to see him in a human form. During their conversation, she couldn’t stand the thought of telling him about the gypsy who could read her future.



“If I were you, then I believe so,” he chuckled. “The gypsy always has a true precognition when they lose their temper.”

“What kind of girl who would destroy me, Richard?”

He cringed when she called him by his fake name.

“Well, just assume that it is the girl you would never expect before.”

She sighed, and paused to drink a cup of bitter coffee. Sometimes, she glanced at the twins who were guarding the door, in case if someone would disturb this encounter.

“You know, our race will always lose in the end, why are you kept trying?” He smirked, devilishly.

“I will never give up to get what I want—*persistence*.”

“Of course, and there’s always something to repay for the dark.”

For a second, he stopped acting so almighty once he realized the real soul in front of him. Her eyesight was different now, as if she was in a trance, of a powerful form more than this man who appeared with slick hair and nice gray suit.

“But in this case, you shall be free, my *Queen*,” he took a bow and stared in fear at the real Devil, who had been hiding behind this beautiful human “—your experiment, soon will be done based on the sake of your generosity to open the portal for our kind.”

She chuckled, creepily. “If you wish for it to happen, bring me that royal’s child.”

“We’ll do our best, my *Queen*.”

He already met the angel who guarded the child she had referred. He knew how everything would be difficult at this point.

He already sensed the first painful encounter at the mini market, against that angel and the child. As if he was naked when that beautiful angel could stab him with the heat, which had the effect to turn him forcibly into his scary true form. In fact, he would rather worship his handsome young face in a human form, but as a demon, he felt a pathetic fallacy. Thus, he thought; if only he could catch the child without suffering along the way, it might have been marvelous.

# I3

## THE LIBRARY

CATHY LEANED HER HEAD on the window, gazing out at the green yard view. There was a *beep-beep sound* came from her cellphone, disturbing her tranquility. She could guess whose name on the screen before she checked it out. It was bingo—she received a message from her very close comrade.

From: Josh Kingsley

*Don't you need to come home earlier? Your mom's condition is unstable. She's asleep in a deep coma again. We miss you, Martha and me.*

Received: 11/11/2011, 07:30 a.m.

She replied him; that she would go home as soon as possible. Besides, she did feel homesick, but this

circumstance didn't stand a chance to give her a consolation. She was insecure, like bees that were circling around their honeycomb. Her eye-bags appeared again since she didn't have a comfortable sleep last night, and now she kept on yawning.

“Hey.”

She startled, and turned her back to see Elle's enigmatic expression. “What is it?”

“Carl Dalton invites you to visit a library.”

“Why?”

Elle narrowed her eyes, bewildered. “Don't you want to learn more about your family?”

“The Aloise?” She flinched, surprised. “What's with the library then?”

“You'll see,” she smiled inscrutably.

She ran downstairs quickly to meet him in the living room. Cathy started demanding for the thing they would deal on this Friday morning.

“Consider it as your little holiday. I want to take you to a new journey,” he said.

“If this is about a book, why won't you tell me by yourself?” She protested. “It's more efficient.”

He shook his head.

“Okay, then is it in Melk Abbey?” She guessed.

“No, it’s the library in Vienna,” he giggled. “You may find that monastic with beautiful golden architectures and some of old manuscripts, but the things we’d like to find out are encrypted in *the Austrian National Library*, one of our beloved huge libraries.”

Elle added, “Besides the library, they have four museums that are displaying many of old collections.”

Cathy smiled at his enthusiasm. “Are we going to ride with bus?”

He giggled as he went out to the terrace. Cathy and Elle followed him from behind to see that there was a strange orthodox navy blue car parked in the yard.

“Oh, *Triumph Herald*, my favorite car!” He had a wild spirit while approaching that small car.

“Why couldn’t you lend us the car to go shopping yesterday?” Cathy baffled.

“Forgive me, this is a classic-rare piece, I couldn’t allow anyone but myself to drive it.”

Cathy frowned. “There’s no garage, where did you park the car?”

“In the neighbor next door, she’s a good housewife.”

They glanced at the place he referred; the white house next door that had double door garage, the house was a few blocks away from here.

Elle knocked her foot on the ground, reminding them about the main plain. Therefore, Carl Dalton invited them quickly as his special passengers in that car. Cathy went upstairs to take her satchel bag that contained with her wallet and cellphone. However, as the journey would begin, the girls still wore the same clothes that they wore yesterday.



There were random old buildings around this *city of dream* that looked spectacular. Every corner of the road could show a history, magnificent culture, and euphoria for the seeker of happiness. The country had plagued its splendor to all tourists and their own dwellers. This was one of the good places in Europe.

They breathed the fresh air through the open window of the car. The trip took about one hour to arrive at the destination place.

The largest library in Austria, known as the Austrian National Library, with more than seven million items treasured there. The building was wide as wings from north to south in white-gray color, which looked tremendously beautiful.

There were two equestrian statues; one shaped in a green man statue, who wore a hat while riding a horse, which placed in front of the entrance door, and the other was a few meters juxtaposed toward the first statue. Both of those equestrian statues had a name; the one that faced the terrace was *Statue of Prince Eugene of Savoy*, and the other was *Statue of Archduke Charles of Austria*.

As soon as he turned off the car engine, parking against the building, all of them walked outside. Cathy was excited to take some pictures with her cellphone, she loved the view, and she wanted to take a picture together with Carl Dalton.

At the time, she wondered why there were just a few people in the yard. “Why there aren’t many visitors?”

He smiled awkwardly. “I forgot to tell you about the open hours. It should be around nine o’clock.”

“There still a half hour left,” she said with no surprise  
“—let’s enjoy this place, then.”

As the time passed by, Elle walked side by side with her in the yard. “Do you know if this place was a palace?”

“I bet yes from the whole perspective. It’s represented royalty.”

“Correct,” Elle was testing her basic knowledge of sensing the nobleness around. “It’s known as the Imperial Library, because it takes place in Hofburg Palace.”

“This place is so historical and... elegant,” she struggled to find the perfect word.

Once the clock turned at nine, Carl Dalton called them to enter the lobby.

A few visitors were waiting in queue at the front desk, but he had a shortcut way to get the tickets since he was befriended with the old woman with dark bob hair, who was in charge as an administrator employee. He filled up the guest book for the girls, and he thanked that woman for her help.

Cathy stood side by side with Elle, waiting at the edge of the entrance door. She glanced at the poster wall that



posted the information; for young visitor under nineteen was free from admission.

“He once worked at this place as a librarian,” Elle murmured.

Cathy wondered, “That’s why he doesn’t make a queue with the others?”

“Frankly, describable,” she nodded.

Five minutes less, he returned to lead them walking through the long corridor. They walked slowly to enjoy every corner of the frescoes ceiling. The view became a great indulgence for any pair of eyes.

They reached at the edge of the corridor, where he opened the double door for them. As they walked closer to the State Hall, the air felt colder, probably about 15 Celsius degree. The historical atmosphere was perceivable inside this State Hall. The exquisite scenery could flatter anyone, although this place got a mystical sensation too, which was undeniable to feel. The European building had two chamber wings of north and south. Most of the visitors couldn’t see what beneath the surface from those huge passages.

“Do you see that painting above, between the two pillars?” Carl Dalton asked while pointing his index finger at the artistic painting that was contented with agony and deathful vision.

Cathy flickered against the view, while she stood between him and Elle. “What is it?”

“It’s called *War Wing*,” he explained. “Every painting told its own story. This one is a warrior who saved the world into harmony, then it became this library’s theme—*Study of Earthly Things*.”

Her eyes was exploring in amazement against the painting in the center of the State Hall. Cathy gawked for a moment, and asked, “There’s another different painting on the ceiling. It looks miraculous too, with the angel stand out in the center. Do you know what that is?”

“*The Frescos in the Cupola*—it’s the name of that wide painting. It shows a strength and wisdom, and the angel is the figure of eternal glory while holding a pyramid as the symbol of honor for the emperor. The painter is Daniel Gran, he’s a very artistic man.”

“You could memorize all these things?” She was amazed. “You’ve learnt a lot.”

“Don’t waste your time for anything but worth knowledge,” he spoke of the wisdom. “One day you might miss a chance of an apocalypse and enlightenment that perhaps is willing to come for you, instead it will be gone just because you have ignored it.”

“How come it is willing to come for us, aren’t we the one who supposed to seek for the knowledge?” She argued.

“It won’t happen, unless the knowledge is the right thing for you to learn. Some knowledge just has their own seal when they face with a particular soul, hence, they lock themselves when they meet the wrong one,” Elle shouted while still staring up at the fresco ceiling.

Cathy amazed. “I just figure out that one divine concept is exist. You make me think that every knowledge have a soul, and searching for their host.”

“Indeed,” Elle stared back at her. “There are someone out there who learn hardly about one or two things, but it’s useless, because they don’t comprehend the essence of each knowledge that they choose to learn.”

Carl Dalton smiled at them. “Oh, the painting on the opposite rear is called as Peace Wings. I remember the

dawn in that painting meant to drive away the demons of the night. The library had made a theme with that—*Study of Heavenly Things*, or the other name is *Eye of Divine Wisdom Which Sees Everything*.”

He giggled for a moment since he said of very long words. Cathy also had the same enthusiasm, but she giggled obscurely.

“This Hall consists of two opposite sides—war and peace. Just in case if you want to know,” he added.

“It’s sort of like balance, right?” Cathy wanted to assure her assumption. “For having both different perception of war and peace, it sounds like the concept of good and evil.”

She didn’t realize that Elle smiled amazed at her. That white hair angel respected her spiritual knowledge. If Cathy was fathomed with human age, she would be considered to fit in a category of ameliorate. There weren’t many human at her age who would practically understand either about spiritual or superstition, especially had the intention for learning.

The more closer Cathy walked to the center of this spacious room, her skin felt the coldness. There weren’t

many visitors yet. However, her eyes captivated by the scenery of random leather-bounded books on the second floor, she could see through those wooden bookshelves while the sunshine penetrated behind the huge vertical windows in there. On the first floor, where she stepped her boots assertively on this circular ground, there was a white man statue stood tall in his very wise pose. The statue was placed exactly in the center of the State Hall, and as it stated on the sculpture tombstone, that was *Statue of Emperor Charles VI*.

Her eyes bedazzled when the sunshine struck through the huge window across the statue, because the glaring sun overshadowed by the two strange figures on the second floor, watching them from above. The figures were like shadow, haunting. Cathy sensed the changeable atmosphere at that second.

“Marissa,” Elle murmured.

Cathy glanced curiously at her, and altogether, Carl Dalton gulped out his anxiousness. The angel beside her knew something beyond those silhouettes, but something wasn't perceivable about the name she just called out.

The two figures walked downstairs, concurrently. As if there was a magical inner charm that would attract human eyes toward them. The uncovering shadows revealed that they were man and woman. Cathy and Carl Dalton were dumbfounded to see their appearance.

Both of them were tall and slender, but the salient one was that beautiful woman, dressed in V-neck black maxi dress, she had a long curly flaming red hair. Somehow, her look was more like a secret agent who attended a formal party. Cathy baffled to think how odd a visitor dressed like that inside a library.

The other one was a handsome young man with angelic green eyes. He was 179 cm tall. He wore a vanilla-cream suit, brown tie, and honey brown hair with oblique bangs. He looked way younger than the woman who seemed in her early thirty, and he looked like another fashion icon of the big city billboard. Cathy thought that he was like the reminiscent of Josh Kingsley, even though their fashion style was way different.

These two beautiful figures had sleepy eyes, unlike Elle who looked intimidating and keen.

Cathy took a quick glance at the visitors around this room; no one seemed to notice with their sudden presence since everyone was busy sightseeing at the bookshelves.

If these two figures walked out in the middle of the crowd, they would definitely become the center of attention since their beauty was odd as humans. Therefore, she tingled to ask a question. "Can humans see them?"

"Sometimes no," Elle chuckled without staring back at her.

Absurdly, she just noticed them from a closer look that their physical appearance was identical with Elle, as if they were the same figure in a different style. They shared the similar tone of milky white skin, emerald green eyes, except for the shape of their hair, but their body movement was alike, of how they walked and stared.

Cathy observed them very well, to assume that they derived from the same family, ethnic, and source. Whatever they would be, everything about them seemed questionable as human beings.

As they stood closer, the red hair woman looked five centimeters shorter than Elle. She smiled, showing her pale pink lipstick, "Hello sister."

Her eyes turned friendlier at Carl Dalton, "Hello, Mr. Dalton."

"You look as young as the first time we met," he said, and looking shocked to encounter her who didn't seem aging "—never change."

"Thank you, it's been a while I haven't seen you," her voice sounded wise and gentle, afterward, she glanced again at Elle with relieved expression, "Especially for my beloved sister, who want to take a visit today, we didn't expect you to come here very sooner."

"Me neither," Elle muttered.

They were very welcomed with the arrival of these visitors, and the next second, she smiled hesitantly, her eyes were wondering at Cathy's presence. "And, who is this young girl that you bring?"

"Catherine Charlotte, one of the Aloise's children," Elle said.

"Oh, I see," the red hair woman was quite shocked. Concurrently, they seemed to do telepathy at each other,



their eyes shared the same comprehension. “So, what’s your business to visit the library this morning?”

“I want you to give a brief explanation to this little girl, regarding to the story you’ve told this old man,” Elle said in a very discourteous manner now. “Please, spark your spin a yarn time.”

Cathy shot her with warning eyes, but Elle herself didn’t seem to bother with the way she talked with anyone.

Nevertheless, Marissa showed a dispassionate heart. She kept smiling friendly. “In here, there are a few copies that left. Let me ask—is it the book in German or English version?”

Again, she squinted at Cathy. “I guess you don’t speak German.”

“I only speak English, thanks.”

“Stefan, would you help our guests a favor to show the book?” She asked her handsome companion, who stood only two inches beside her, despite the fact she talked like the host of this huge library.

“Please be my guest, come—” he spoke in a gentle voice, somehow sounded like a monk. Stefan led them to follow him through the other passage at the war wing.

“Sister, I need to talk with you,” Marissa whispered as she hurriedly grabbed Elle’s arm.

“Wait,” she pulled off her warm hand to approach Cathy that just started walking with the others. “Exchange jacket with me, now.”

Cathy astonished when Elle pulled her black leather jacket without her consideration. “Why?”

“You will thank me after we leave the library.”

Even though she didn’t like the idea and it sounded odd, she took off her jacket anyway, and she left by wearing Elle’s collar feather brown jacket.

“She’s just a kid,” Marissa sounded worried.

“Look closer from the inside. She’s not what you think she is.”

Marissa stood still like a mannequin, her eyes stared blankly. She tried to focus on something which she needed deliberately to understand. For a moment, she bit her lips before asking a question. “Is she *Puissant*?”

“Certainly, she’s the one,” Elle answered her while staring up at the bookshelves on the second floor.

“But, she’s not ready, sister,” Marissa said, confuted.

“We’ll make her ready,” she always had a certain faith about it.

The momentary silence came between them. Thereafter, Marissa wanted the assurance, “I’ve seen it. It’s written. She couldn’t hold what she would face in the future.”

“There’s always a hope, since she’s the only *Puissant* besides her mother, who’s currently lying sick in the hospital’s bed,” Elle reassured, presumably. “The future is subjective, it can always change depends on the individual’s choices towards the life they live in.”

“The *Puissant* among the royals is not only one or two, there are many of them, living quietly, they separate from each other,” Marissa said deliberately. “It seems you forgot that their existence is hard to find by demons these days. Those royal’s children don’t even know themselves, or pretend to remain unknown. Most of them have blue bloods in their veins without born as *Puissant*. It’s pretty rare.”

“It must be the reason for your recede from human’s business in the past few years, right?” Elle compromised. “Oh, and—it’s good to see you with that newcomer.”

Marissa strode to the passage as she spoke, “Just calm down and watch.”

Their argument didn’t last forever, when they needed to take care of the complication in this human’s world. The tension had vanished in the air.



The windows were on every corner of the walls that were all painted white. The visitors could be amazed with the view of the ancient books on wooden shelves, and also the square-shaped of lacunar ceiling. The room was desolate. This was the historical reading room of the Department of Incunabula, where every old, rare, and precious book and even some of journals and documents were being treasured here.

There were only two visitors in the back of the room. Oppositely, Cathy and Carl Dalton sat together near the door. Every desk had stand-alone yellow lamp.

They waited five minutes less for Stefan to return. He approached them, always looking emotionless. He sat oppositely from them as he thrust the book and the journal.

Cathy felt slightly as if Josh was here, ever since that man shared the same fragrance aroma with him, although he precisely stayed in Bisbee. She looked frustrated to stare at his angelic green eyes. On the other side, Carl Dalton took the book as he wanted to check it out first.

Cathy felt the electrical shock, throbbled tingling on her chest when Stefan noticed that he was being stared oddly by her.

“You’re a foreigner, am I right?” He asked.

His gentle voice astonished her as Cathy flickered awkwardly, “Yes, I’m from America.”

“Why do you come here?”

“My mom wants me to meet Mr. Dalton, and I want to meet the Aloise family in person too.”

“That’s why, I bring you here to read a brief history about them, besides I want to show you how beautiful this place is,” Carl Dalton said, as he returned the book to her.

“Thanks,” she was already happy just by sitting on this bench.

The book and the journal felt dusty on her palm hands, no one had ever opened it for a very long time. The book was an ordinary paperback, while the journal covered in leather-bounded and engraved with flower patterns, which reminded her of the ancient symbols book that she had once read in Carl Dalton’s lounge room.

She skimmed the pages quickly to read the title of each chapters, and when she was about to open the journal, Marissa and Elle came from the door.

Stefan rose from the bench to make the space for them. Marissa smiled for his politeness, and subsequently she squinted at Cathy, “Have you read it?”

“Just take a look. I need about three days to finish these books, maybe.”

“Contemplate these books—very well,” she said, as concurrently touched the book and the journal.

“Am I in a history class?” Cathy shrugged her shoulders. “It’s a legend fairytale that was written by my

good relative, Mr. Dalton. *Enjoy* seems like a suitable word, I think.”

“I don’t think you have noticed yet,” Carl Dalton muttered.

Marissa welcomed them, smiling had always been her attitude. “Before you start to read it, do you want to listen to our blue blood’s story?”

Everyone had their attention at this red hair woman.

Cathy followed to nod at her, so Marissa began speaking in a wise voice, “You see in common stories, the princess didn’t really make friends with her folks, instead playing alone peacefully inside the castle—there’s a simple reason why.”

It felt like an eternal tranquility to hear her voice, especially at the juncture of her words, intimidating everyone.

“Mostly, a royal’s mind is working oppositely from average person. If they turn to the right, then the folk turn to the left, which will be hard to have a *click* conversation between them. It’s not discrimination of where they live or about their prominent status. They are just not meant for each other,” she stared observantly at

them, and continued, “Therefore, in the deepest relationship inside an empire, royals had been living with *the unseen*, some kind of guardians who kept them safe from harm, even though they already had loyal servants and warrior. Thus, royals never lived alone in the castle, since they were accompanied with their guardians.”

Cathy and Carl Dalton were the one who dumbfounded against her story telling, while Elle and Stefan had understood proficiently since they seemed to hear about it for million times.

She continued speaking, “Every royal has extra guardian besides the main one—*guardian angel*. They can be like your very own family, brother, sister, all at once as your protector. In every good or bad time of your life, they will always be there, no matter what happen, except if the death will separate them.”

“Who is this guardian you have referred?” Cathy asked confusedly. “I never heard any royal story of your version.”

“Of course, it has almost never been spoken among people nowadays, because it’s a secret legend,” she answered, nicely.



“So, are you saying that every single of royal out there—has at least one extra guardian angel rather than average human?” Cathy narrowed her eyes as she trapped in her own confusion again. “Does the extra guardian still exist among royals in this modern era? Even so, can they communicate with each other?”

“Good question,” Marissa respected her curiosity. “Royals nowadays are being accompanied with their own ancestor’s guardian, since it’s hereditary. Speaking of communication, it depends on each individual, whether they can be sensitive toward their environment or not.”

“It’s like asking whether someone who born with sixth sense could communicate with the hidden world or not—they needs to hone their ability,” Carl Dalton added.

“In other word, royal is born with psychic ability,” Cathy said, even she still baffled.

“Everyone is born with sixth sense, some of them can learn and understand it,” Elle said. “The thing that makes royals different from the others, it’s because they have inherited the origin of psychic ability, while on the scale of average human who born without a gift, they would probably buy their way with the dark art, having a

particular ritual or meditation, anything that related to worship the devil in the end. Of course they will get what they wish for, to be accompanied with *the opposite entities.*”

“You meant from the opposite side from what God has originally assigned to human?” Cathy began to study the precise knowledge.

“Demons. Evil entities,” Stefan spoke eventually.

Cathy felt the eerie. “Isn’t that creepy?”

“Not really if the human could be accustomed with it. Just remember, there’s nothing free in the demons world, they will ask for the dark price,” Elle informed.

“How expensive is that?” Cathy was curious.

“Your life,” Elle chuckled. “They want you to accompany them back in hell—into an eternal torment.”

The room went quiet for a second.

Cathy started discussing the topic as a newbie again, “Before we arrived at Mr. Dalton’s house, you mentioned the dark price to the Austrian woman and her daughter who got possessed. I remember that we brought weapons that were blessed with holy water, you’ve said we would use it if any demons would attack us—”

Elle sighed as everyone started staring at her in bewilderment, and she needed to explain further, “I hate that topic, but for your information, holy water that bless by human isn’t strong enough to kill a demon, it will only scratch their outer membrane. Otherwise, the one that bless by an angel is enormously strong to send them straight to hell.”

“An angel?” Carl Dalton asked, baffled. “Does it mean the baptism of holy water by most monks isn’t true?”

“The monk could be true, since most of them are guarded by a higher divine being. It could count as a manifestation of their divine energy,” Marissa answered. “Exception for a bogus monk.”

The conversation paused for a moment. Subsequently, Marissa glanced at Cathy to smile, “You are a royal descendant.”

Cathy went speechless, and the next second, she had a feeble argument, “Even though Mr. Dalton has told me too, I’m still an ordinary high school student. My parent lives just like the average folks. Well, maybe my mom is a royal, but the blood has disengaged from me after a long generation, and my dad isn’t born as a noble son either.”

Marissa bulged out at her naïve statement. At that second, everyone saw how her shock emotion could be frightening compared to Elle's sharp eyes. "Royal blood will never be disengaged. It will always be flowing inside you. Blood is thicker than anything."

"Especially if it's *Puissant*," Stefan shouted after, making Marissa and Elle bulged out warningly at him.

"What does he mean?" She asked while observing their worried faces.

"There are two types of royal blood: *Puissant* and *Non-Puissant*," Marissa seemed to explain it hesitantly. "It's the term to address a royal who has the most powerful ability against the unseen. It's hard to determine which royal members who born as the *Puissant*. Just like a metaphor of an indigo child that has a gift, and this one is a royal version."

"Usually, when clairvoyance met one of them, they just could tell at their first sight of recognition. They could be a reincarnation of one legendary blue blood from the past lives," Elle added.

“Okay, that’s a clear explanation, but what I don’t understand is why all of you seem uncomfortable to talk about it?” She felt offended. “Does it mean I’m Puissant?”

“Catherine—”

The correction wouldn’t be easy to do, since Marissa had always called her that way, “I prefer Cathy.”

“Well, Cathy, it will never be easy for us to tell you about that one,” she still looked hesitant. “I think you’re not ready to hear it further.”

“I’m here, I’m cool, just say it,” she waited, but no one was convinced by her affirmation.

The silence ambience was gone when Cathy tapped the desk out of anger, because she was tired with this conversation. The two visitors in the back of the room glanced surprisingly at her.

“Are you going to say that my parents are king and queen? Well, regrettably they aren’t,” she didn’t stop muttering yet “—and presumably, I’m not a reincarnation of anybody!”

Every pair of eyes stared numbly at her, surprised.

However, Elle was the only one who stared sharply at her, although she wanted to assure another thing while

speaking calmly, “Do you remember *the Sapphire stone* we’ve mentioned?”

For a second, Cathy recalled her memory when she met the gypsy’s daughter named Lionelle, who told her about Triskele legend. Even though, she didn’t know anything about the stone, she nodded at her to confirm.

“Take it out from your right pocket,” Elle beckoned a nod at that collar feather jacket that was actually belonged to her.

“You mean, your jacket—”

Surely, she felt something was protruded from inside the jacket as she touched it. When she took it out, the Sapphire stone was attracting every pair of eyes like a magnet.

“Why do you bring it here?” Marissa muttered infuriatedly at that white hair angel.

“There was a demon’s minion who spied on us outside his house. It’s better to have everything under control,” Elle explained.

Stefan locked his eyes on that splendorous stone, since he also astonished to see it directly.

And so, Elle said further, “This isn’t ordinary. You won’t find it in any jewelry stores. This stone can be the key to open one gate inside the castle, where it’s not a human place,” and then she glanced back at Cathy. “The demons are looking forward for this, despite they have been chasing the Puissant who also the master key to open the realm.”

“What do you mean—the master key?” Cathy baffled.

“The stone won’t work without Puissant. When this stone and the gate are being touched all at once by Puissant, they will deliver a particular energy,” Marissa helped explaining. “Despite anything, the gate keeper himself could have welcomed a visitor without Puissant. Unfortunately, he rarely appears now.”

“How weird that the gate keeper’s existence could be questionable,” Carl Dalton muttered.

“He’s kind of different from our kind. No wonder that he’s such a parsimonious,” Stefan added, sounded peeved.

Cathy glanced wonderingly at him, and she still had the confliction thought about how to acknowledge him, whether as a superior human or an angel just like Elle.

“Stefan, that’s enough,” Marissa said, warning him. He sensed her frontal worryment. Subsequently, she stared at Cathy again, “The precise answer of your question is yes, Catherine,” as she was still talking, Elle looked relieved, “You and your mom are *Puissant*. You should prepare yourself.”

“Prepare for what?” Cathy confronted, obviously, “Everything is new to me. I couldn’t be this way. My mom has never mentioned anything about being part of the royalty. I didn’t even know before, that the Aloise family is blue blood.”

“Have you acknowledged any Aloise, besides your mom’s younger sister?” Elle asked, narrowing her eyes at her.

Cathy gazed blankly at that angel as she realized that was true. All she ever knew was her aunt, *Sarah Ann von Aloise*. Her aunt lived in New Rochelle, New York City. They rarely communicated or even met each other. Somehow, she felt like a perfect stranger with her aunt.

“How come would you know about that?” Cathy confronted that angel who seemed to know everything about her family. “Anyway, this isn’t true. Whatsoever



that you told me, I can't just agree," she exchanged a glance from Elle to Carl Dalton, and murmuring, "you've told me according to your book about what happened with Aloise ancestors, I still don't understand. Please say all the things I need to know, Mr. Dalton?"

Carl Dalton sighed to notice the truth that fired up on her eyes. Eventually, he felt that he didn't have the right to tell her the real things. "Everything they told you were true, my dear."

Cathy knew that he was referring the people in front of her, and she even assumed that Marissa and Stefan were also angels.

Suddenly, Marissa rose from the chair and stared down at her. "So, you want to know the truth?"

She looked pretty tall that Cathy gawked to stare back at her.

There was a juncture where Marissa glanced quickly at Elle. It was like telepathy that they only took three seconds to nod at each other. Thereafter, she asked everyone to follow her lead, walking out from this room.

When Carl Dalton and Stefan walked concurrently, Elle grabbed her wrist hurriedly that she wanted her jacket back.

“Now, I tell you why we should do this,” she whispered. “I’ve detected a demon has been walking around here. We needed to obscure our energy, just in case if the demon might attack you.”

Cathy rolled her eyes in annoyance, and resumed the circumstance, “I got it. You have the angelic energy, so they would feel the burning if they got closer to you.”

Elle smiled relieved to notice that she had learnt faster about the metaphysical world than anyone at her age.

Soon, they headed to the center of the State Hall, where the tall statue was still looked outstanding to be seen from any angle. Marissa and Stefan stood next to that white statue, and then she blinked cautiously at Elle.

“Hold my hand,” Elle whispered and grasped her hand forcibly. Cathy was surprised.

The atmosphere changed uneasy in a mysterious way. The sunlight had vanished from behind the window, and replaced by the uninvited coldness.

Suddenly, the upstairs was surrounded by many of peculiar figures. A few of them wore white robe, and the rest was in black robe. They projected the existence of the dwellers from another dimension—the mysterious entities. At the moment, they were aware of being watched by the two humans.

They had reminded Cathy with the same figure that she once saw at the beach. She almost got a heart attack when they stared back at her. Even though their faces were obscured to be seen, but their eyes looked identical with the sharpness eyes of Elle.

“What’s the meaning of this?” She muttered, baffling.

“Marissa wants to show you, whether your senses can be channeling with their frequency or not. It’s the basic part of becoming Puissant,” Elle explained, “If you don’t have the ability, the psychic part won’t work, even I force you to see the unseen.”

“Does it mean I get my sight back?” Cathy asked.

Elle stared back at her. “Your mom had blinded your third eyes for several years. She was afraid if a demon could track down your presence.”

The conversation was taken over by Marissa, and yet, no visitors had ever noticed her. “We are able to communicate with human through their psychic power—the channeling.”

“The one who deny will struggle along the way,” Stefan added.

“The world you believe you live in, it’s never what it seems,” Marissa said wisely, her voice was gentle.

“So, what does it seems?” Cathy rephrased the topic. “The real truth?”

Marissa smiled as she answered her immediately, otherwise, Elle would feel oblique to explain. “You’ll find it behind the gate inside the Aloise’s castle, which is like a secret corridor between these two dimensions. Just like in human places, there are light and dark.”

Elle led her to walk closer to them, and then Marissa got to welcome her conflation against the truth. At that moment, the three of them were revealing the same huge white wings, and followed by the dwellers that still stood upstairs. Every last of them had various shape of wings, either tiny or gigantic.

Cathy gawked in disbelief at the sudden view. She stared up dumbfounded against their beautiful wings that had mesmerizing feathers. It was still odd that nobody here was well aware about their existence.

“You won’t be able to understand without seeing it by yourself,” Elle said.

“Why can’t anyone see them?” Cathy muttered. “It’s bizarrely beautiful.”

“They choose who can see them, despite anyone who doesn’t have psychic ability,” Marissa answered her curiosity “—it’s taking a huge amount of energy just for this moment.”

“Can any humans who come across with them accidentally, can see them without being chosen?”

“Yes, if the parallel door is crashing concurrently with human’s presence,” Elle said antipathy. “Actually, you’re not really ready to see this.”

“Why do you want me to see them if it’s take a lot of energy?” She argued.

Elle stared intensely at her, and said, “The time has almost come, ready or not, you should know.”

“You meant like demons, Sapphire, and Puissant?” Cathy guessed.

Elle looked well-wary. “There’s another. After we return to his house, I’ll show you.”

“So it’s true, you want to show her the gate? Have you gone insane?” Marissa shouted madly. “Most humans won’t return after they get inside. That’s what we’re restless about.”

“The door wasn’t destroyed by fire?” Carl Dalton asked, astonished.

Cathy baffled at the difference of the term used in mentioning the gate between them.

“No, it’s perfectly safe, but that *parsimonious man* has gone after so many decades since the fire incident,” Stefan explained, with hatred in his tone.

“Stefan, would you give them the aloud thoughts of yours?” Marissa bulged out warningly at him again. “You shouldn’t call him that way.”

He sighed, but managed to keep smiling.

Meanwhile, Cathy had a lot of questions to ask them, everything on her mind went inexplicable whenever she tried to decode the mystery by herself. “You’ve said, most

humans won't return, did you mean they might die inside?"

"Indubitable, once human have seen what's inside the gate, they want to stay there forever, because the beautiful sceneries are everywhere like the blending of heaven and hell," Marissa explained this time "—but their physical body can't endure the atmosphere of the dimension, where there's not enough oxygen. In a few days, their death body will be found like a death fish on the surface."

"There are beautiful places just like in the human world, which way, human never want to live in their own land ever again," Elle added.

"Well, it's the reason why people keep it as a secret legend," Carl Dalton said, as if he felt homesick for the place.

So suddenly, the whole atmosphere in the room had changed suffocating, like the tension was everywhere. Something went wrong when a new visitor entered the door.

Cathy noticed the dilemma on the faces of these angels. She remembered precisely about the man with a

very neat wet hair, and he wore a blue pinstripe suit. He just walked fervidly toward the State Hall.

Seemingly, his arrival had disturbed the entities in robe. The anger feeling was felt in the air. The dwellers didn't want his presence here.

Marisa and Stefan were ready to welcome him, although their expression looked uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Elle became overprotective to guard these fragile humans behind her as she stood like a mother who protected her children from an animal attack.

“Your presence will always be unwanted here. This isn't your place. I assume you already knew that,” Stefan said firmly.

“Of course I have the knowledge of that, my dearest little brother,” he sounded dramatic, along with his creepy chortle. “I have important business with that man,” his eyes beckoned at the potbellied man who wore a flat cap, walking in the corridor of war wing.

“It seems you can endure your identity more careful,” Elle sounded disgusted against him.



“What... this girl again,” he glanced at Cathy. “Oh, with her guardian angel, how fascinating that protective pose.”

Cathy just noticed that he didn't transform into his beast face like the first time they met. He laughed dramatically, he sounded abnormal.

“This girl is with us, just finish your work quickly,” Marissa snapped. “We will be watching you.”

That demon left them to approach the potbellied man, who seemed acting nervous since the first time arrived here with eyes rolling confusedly around the passage. When their eyes met, the man got panicked. He seemed to grasp the air hardly like he had asthma.

“What he have done?” Cathy astonished as she observed them from far away. “What's wrong with that guy?”

“He's trying to take his soul, sucking the energy,” Elle murmured. “They're still negotiating about the deal.”

“What?” She was enormously baffled. “Why are you angels do nothing?”

“We have no rule to consider human in evil side, we have no charity to help them even they're stepping in our

place, like now,” Marissa said. “That fat guy knew the fact that library is the heavenly place of angels. He thought it would be a safer place, he was wrong.”

“Richard comes to remind him about their business deal of the dark price,” as Stefan mentioned the fake name of that demon, Cathy wondered about it. “He wouldn’t dare to do any of worse things here, only the talking. It’s the rule.”

“I feel pity. I pray for the enlightenment to come for him soon,” Carl Dalton murmured.

“That will do if someone from our kind may volunteer for him, guiding him into the light. I pray so,” Elle snapped.

The potbellied man seemed suffering during the small talk with the demon who disguised in a handsome human. Unfortunately, it was his very first mistake to jump into the darkness. There would always be a price to pay.

# I4

## INSIDE THE DARKNESS

THE VIEW OF A FEW CRUMPLED PAPERS at the edge of the dark fireplace had stunned her. As Cathy looked closer, she found some of the handwritten poems.

“My oblique to the happiness,” Carl Dalton startled her, as he appeared behind her. “It bored me now.”

She amazed at his beautiful writing skill, but the papers just turned obsolete. “You also wrote a poem?”

He nodded and stood next to the bookshelves. The room filled with a hallow atmosphere, it was peaceful.

Cathy started demanding for what she came here, “I’m sure, there’s a lot that you haven’t told me yet.”

“Yes, my dear,” he agreed. “You may read the book by yourself for the comprehensibility.”

“*Emperor of Souls?*” Cathy guessed it right.

He revealed random documents as he pulled out the drawer shelf beside those bookshelves. “Which format would you prefer... the manuscript or paperback book?”

“The paperback, please,” She felt more convenient with it, especially when she recalled the books that they supposed to borrow from the library was left on the administration desk. She totally forgot it all after a demon arrived. “What about the one from the library?”

“Ah, you can’t bring those books to America according to the library’s regulation,” he chuckled.

“I know that, I mean, I can’t just read it in a day. The journal is almost eight hundred pages alone, addition with the book. They’re so thick,” she protested.

“I suppose, you’re right,” he wanted to calm her though. “You know I’m not coming from the circle of your family, I couldn’t know more than what was written in the book. So, I’ll tell you briefly.”

She received the book from his hand, and then he moved weakly toward to sofa where Elle also sat there. He sighed, and he glanced at the bright morning sky through the window.

This was Saturday, the third days that Cathy stayed in Austria. She should leave before Monday, since her school in Bisbee won't give her another extension for absent.

Now, they stared intensely to one another. He started talking, "I give you that book. Please keep it."

"Thank you, Mr. Dalton," she was grateful. "I've read the first chapter yesterday. It's amazing."

"There weren't any easy days in the writing process," he muttered, chuckling by himself.

She baffled with his confession, but then her curiosity became alive and it was unstoppable, "What's with the writing?"

"It's not purely fictional, beyond the non-fiction incident," Elle shouted, while her arms were leaning leisurely on the sofa. "Marissa told him the story. He became a medium for folks out there."

"Because she isn't human?" Cathy asked. "And that's why you seemed shocked to meet her again, yesterday?"

Carl Dalton breathed deeply before he answered her, "It would seem impossible to retrieve the whole enigmas, because the story couldn't hide continuously. And yes,

she is a good messenger, a good angel. I already told you about how I met her for the first time.”

Cathy glanced back and forth between them before she wondered again. “The fire you’ve mentioned at the library, was it the incident that destroyed the empire?”

“Indeed,” he assured.

“Did you write about the secret portal too?”

“No, it’s part of secrecy. Marissa told me not to mention it,” he said alerted.

“Even the servants never knew about it, except for one loyal servant named *Miranda*. She wasn’t just a helper in the empire, but because of her huge love for the princess,” Elle said, as if she was narrating a story “—it was just among the royals, warriors, and those annoying demons.”

“Okay, so, who is the parsimonious man that Stefan mentioned about?” Cathy asked, finally.

Elle guffawed at her disposition thought, and then she sighed uninterestedly. “You believe what he said?”

It wasn’t such a response that Cathy would understand immediately, thus she got baffled. The exact explanation would probably make her mind to venture

better. Altogether, Carl Dalton squinted gloriously at that angel.

“Alright, since both of you are deathly curious—” she still chuckled in disbelief. “Actually, he was a good man.”

“So, how about now?” Cathy asked.

“He becomes—*dark*,” she said hesitantly. “I don’t know if that’s the right word to describe how he appears now, because he has changed after the fire incident. Everyone changed as well though,” it wasn’t her notion, but the truth through the perspective of angel’s eyes. “He was missing for several decades, and then he returned as a half hell creature. He’s known by the entities as the frightening red eyes in whitey figure.”

“What do you mean as a half hell?” Carl Dalton asked upon his own bewilderment.

“Originally, he wasn’t one of our kind. He exists between the good and evil,” her eyes stared keenly at the fireplace. “He could be evil, and at the same time being kind-hearted. It’s always hard to explain... if you see him directly, perhaps the description will become fully clear.”

“Is he really *the gate keeper*?” Cathy asked.

“Indeed,” Elle nodded. “When he was gone, no one could either get in or out from the gate. The only way is to use *the Sapphire stone* and its master key—*Puissant*.”

“So, could a royal open the gate even if he stood behind it?” Cathy asked again since she fell deeply into her own curiosity. “What if he doesn’t give the authority to any visitor to open it?”

“For *Puissant*, there’s no need to ask for his permission,” but then she shifted her gaze solemnly to Cathy. “The main reason why demons have been chasing after your mom—is because they would do anything foolish to come inside *Caecus*.”

“I thought you’ve said that demons want to live in the human world... the domination, remember?” She recalled their superstition talk in the dining room, back in Bisbee, of the night when her mom got the incident.

“That’s also true,” Elle substantiated. “They seduce humans to do evil business, and later when humans fall into their trap, humans will be forced to accompany them as a loyal friend in hell.”

They were listening quietly as Elle kept explaining, “Demons know about their own legend, that their kind



will never touch heaven's light till the end since their ancestor made a commitment with God in the first place. Obviously, they love to bother any fragile humans for fun, but that dimension behind the gate is totally different. They also want to get *welfare* before plunging themselves into hell," Elle chuckled sarcastically before she continued telling them. "The conclusion is like an obscure threat for all of us to accept evil kind in there, because almost every secret about the real fairy tale exist inside *Caecus*."

"Would it mean they already knew the truth about many legends?" He muttered.

"They're trying so hard to steal the truth for humans, even just a little, which to make the deal easier. It's like a story of a demon tried to steal the angel's conversation in the sky about the written future," Elle said firmly. "It's a huge effort to make human have faith in them, really miserable."

"What will happen if demons live behind the gate?" Cathy asked.

"A collision will happen between demons and other entities, and not only angels, there are also the good and

evil Djinn as well. It may seem like two mountains get collided—tantrum.”

“You’ve been calling the term as the gate. Does it literally mean the secret portal?” She was confused. “Can you describe about that dimension?”

Elle still stared silently at her, so Cathy had to repeat, “It sounds more like a huge portal.”

“It’s a *code*, alright,” Elle emphasized her words while crossing arms. “Word in a code—the term of portal is too conspicuous. So, we’ve been calling it as the gate. It’s safer and it still has the same meaning as the entrance.”

Cathy narrowed her eyes, baffled. “I just thought that it doesn’t sound fit.”

“The demons from nowadays generation wouldn’t understand if we mentioned it that way, and they wouldn’t bother to peep hardly in our conversation,” at the time she said that, her eyes were keen, “Humans are out of number against demon’s children. They would almost have a long live, far from sickness, unlike humans.”

Carl Dalton still hoped. His eyes got glimmered. “I wish I could see the place.”

“Don’t. Just don’t. Once you see it, you don’t want to live in your own land,” she said firmly.

“It sounds like heaven, the place of every affection and affliction,” Cathy murmured, as remembering that Marissa had once described it that way somehow.

“Who said that place is like heaven?” Elle exclaimed. “I’d perfectly say—far beyond and not even close, but just like a magnet for any pair of eyes. It’s hard to describe.”

Cathy couldn’t imagine comparing any of splendor places against Caecus, and yet, she wanted to know something else, “Doesn’t he have a name?”

For a while, Elle shot her with sharp eyes. It was like a warning, the same one she gave at Stefan. The atmosphere felt different every time the topic was about the gatekeeper. The two humans had their muscles weaken, as if they went paralyzed.

“I don’t feel to talk about him too much, despite you know why,” she stared at them. “Because we shouldn’t.”

“What’s wrong with him?” Cathy baffled at this white hair angel. “Have he done something?”

“I told you, he’s unlike our kind. We’re two different creatures. I always suspect him to have something to do

with demons after the fire incident,” she sighed for a while. “His name is—*Lazuerre*.”

“Lazuerre?” Cathy repeated, she felt absurd about the name.

“Sssttt!” Elle bulged out when her heart seemed to get a heart attack. “Don’t call his name out loud!”

“Seriously what’s with him?” Cathy raised her voice now, she was extensively stubborn. “Either you or Marissa have been keeping a mysterious secret about him.”

“Do you know one of the good things about any entities?” Elle asked them mysteriously. “They would know if you called their name, it’s like inviting their energy to come.”

This topic reminded Cathy about random storytellers, the one who told horror tales, and so often, they mentioned the creature’s name and everything related with evil kind. Thereafter, both of them felt the sudden eerie about the fact.



At twelve in the afternoon, Cathy returned to her own bedroom, with Elle following her from behind.

Cathy sat crossing her legs on the bed while reading the book—*Emperor of Souls*. At the time, Elle stared observantly at her stillness.

Cathy realized she was being watched by an angel. “You must have known the whole story in this book, right?” She was tingled to ask further, “Tell me the ending, is it sad or happy?”

Elle narrowed her eyes precisely that it sounded unfair. “That would be cheating. You’ve promised to read it by yourself.”

“I’d like to know, but that’s okay if you don’t want to tell me.”

There was a minute of hesitation on this angel’s mind. Elle started smiling in a mysterious feeling again as they sat oppositely, facing each other’s eyes.

“There’s the thing that I want you to know instead about the ending.”

She annoyed. “Can you stop acting like everything is mysterious?”

“Ah, really?” She asked in return. “Anything involving mystery is fun. You should give it a try. Never underestimate anything if you’re not seeing things *objectively*.”

“Objective or subjective, it is depend on the topic,” Cathy said.

“You’re not one of the people in close-minded category, right?” Elle giggled assuredly. “Therefore, objective is more proper as a good perspective.”

“Subjective seems like seeing a canvas through a tiny glass vase. Of course, sorry,” she shook her head as she realized how wrong to think that way without having the right perspective.

The sound of the ticking clock was in the air while they still sat oppositely on the bed.

Suddenly, Elle thrust her hand to her as she asked for her braveness, “Are you ready to see the truth behind the gate?”

Cathy baffled. “What?”

“You’ll never forget it,” Elle assured her.

Once they held each other's hands, the view of this room dissolved, it felt like they were being absorbed into another surrounding, which was white, pure, and strange.

Cathy felt dizzy, as if her soul floated into a huge corridor, until she felt the cold sensation of the air was swirling on her cheeks. Once she opened her eyes, the winter ground already seen there among the trees in the forest, and then the view dissolved again, into the dark now.

Cathy was enduring the flying dusts that got into her eyes, she remembered this sensation resembled the time when she saw the princess's past life on her mind.

The vision went blurry sometimes. The whole space was dark, there was a few of huge pillars, which was all looked magnificent as if she was travelling to the oldest place in the world.

For a second, her soul's barrier went flimsy when she reached to the midst of this long corridor. She got stopped in front of the strange double door, or it could be the gate that the angel had told her before. Random flower patterns engraved on each side of the gate, which felt rough when it was touched.

Cathy was about to hold the rounded knob, but she noticed that the Sapphire stone was already hung inside the knob that had a special template to put the stone as the key to enter the gate.

When the gate opened slowly, the bright light emerged from behind, striking into her eyes. Soon after, she was dumbfounded by the sublime scenery, where the winter ground was literally seen there with the falling snowflakes, and the trees from afar were part of the wild forest. The ambience had captured the eternal tranquility. Strangely, there was no sign of life, neither human nor animal.

Her vision vanished as soon as Elle pulled off her grip, and they exchanged stare. Afterward, Cathy felt her stomach got the tingling sensation that she couldn't bear not to giggle. It might be the effect of feeling floating into a strange dimension.

"That's how you will feel if you see the place," Elle said.

Cathy flickered to know the sensation, that it was Caecus realm. "I think I understand why anyone won't



forget the scenery. It's tingling in your throat and down to your lungs, obsessive compulsion."

Elle snapped her fingers lightly to resuscitate her from falling into a deep reverie, and thus, Cathy breathed deeply, and giggling. "Sorry, I feel like I'm getting absorbed into it."

"Actually, the unseen world isn't that different from human. You see."

"I don't know but, it feels like I've been there before," Cathy murmured, recalling her memory hardly.

"Like a flashback?" Elle asked.

"Probably in a few months of... well, I don't know," the words stopped as soon as she realized what she was about to say. She wanted to mention about her haunting dreams, the certainty of absurdities to prevail what was beneath her mind, especially when the strange same figure that stood in the ravine stone had appeared in front of her eyes. She almost believed this angel was the same person as the one in her dreams.

She thought sentimentally, *Why wouldn't she say anything if she was the one who came in my dreams?*

“Dubiousness is buried under a pristine illusion, if only you could survive such a mindless havoc of your own thought, enlightenment would come easier to find you,” Elle spoke her wisdom.

Cathy was quiet, baffling alone whether what she said was just an assumption or an answer to her unspoken thought.

A knock on the door had disturbed them. It was Carl Dalton, informing that two guests had waited for Cathy in the terrace. She was surely baffled since there shouldn't be anyone who would know her in this house. It was odd.

Her heart pounded faster as she walked downstairs.

Carl Dalton was stroking her shoulder to calm her before he opened the door, and said, “They don't seem like the police. Don't worry, dear.”

As soon as she walked out the door, it didn't take so long to recognize who the guests were. The two boys stood waiting for her—Josh Kingsley and Scott Herron.

“Cathy, don't you have any idea how worried am I?” Josh asked with his glimmering eyes almost in tears.

Her eyes were wide-opened surprisingly as he hugged her excitedly. "Please, I can't breathe!" She yelled out. "How did you guys knew I'm here?"

"Elle told us by phone yesterday," Scott said. He looked worried just like him, but he didn't dare to hug her like that.

"How did you make it to come here?" She crossed arms while asking, and her tone sounded harsh toward them. "Don't tell me that you two are skipping school just to visit me here, because tonight I'll be going home, so this is useless."

"Cathy, you should be grateful that your friends are worried about you so much," Carl Dalton admonished her, since he knew the grief feeling and living alone without anyone had ever worried for him.

Altogether, she sighed and stared down at his wrinkled forehead. At that second, she pitied him. She patted his shoulder gently, apologizing, "I'm sorry, I just—"

He stared back at her eyes while the boys still stood waiting in front of them.

Cathy lost in words, because she didn't know how to describe her feeling properly. "I don't want anyone to suffer because of me," she blinked repeatedly, and glanced at the boys. "Haven't my dad told you that I'll go to school like usual tomorrow, on Monday?"

"Your dad didn't say anything when we met him in the hospital. He looked, well, pissed off," Josh was being honest.

"Maybe because your mom's condition has been unstable since the day you left Bisbee. She's in coma now," Scott added.

Carl Dalton seemed to know nothing in the first place, he baffled alone, "What happened to Haile?"

Thus, Cathy stared hesitantly at him before explaining. "She went coma because of demons, some kind of animal attack."

"May God deliver angels around her," he murmured. "I'm shock of this sudden information, why haven't you told me?"

"I was about to tell you," she sighed "—but it would be complicated, and you haven't told me about further story

of the Aloise family, and how's the journal can be concluded then?"

"My dear, it's the family matters that I don't have the right to tell you by myself, but it's also not a good time if you wanted to visit them, even though their place isn't that far from here."

She gawked. "Are you just telling me that their castle is in Lower Austria?"

"Not a castle, but *an old chapel*," he half smiled. "The place was used to become the Francesca's castle, she was Princess Kathleen's younger sister. But now, it's only a shelter for the rest of the descendants."

Cathy felt as if her heart was gnawed bitterly by this complicated moment. Her eyes wandered at the boys again. "Are you two came here just to drag me home?"

Just at the right time, Elle walked out steadily from the house, and shouted. "I called them to do something important."

"For what?" Cathy was bewildered after she was truly assured that Elle was really the one who called the boys to come here.

Elle always appeared inscrutably, just like in this moment, “You’ll see later.”



At the finest superb penthouse in Vienna, a huge living room was built with a very comfortable sofa, where two gentlemen were sitting down side by side with insecurity. They stared up at the woman in black suit, who had been walking back and forth in front of the glass window. Her black heels were making a noisy sound on the brown carpet.

“If I say find her, you will *find her* for me!” Chantel yelled at their faces, she felt a tremendous rage.

She bulged out at the handsome young man, who wore a navy blue pinstripe suit, and beside him was a corpulent man dressed all black and had a bowler hat.

The handsome one rose from the sofa immediately. He approached her a little closer as he wanted to speak up, but his voice got trembling, “You don’t understand, that little girl is being guarded under the angel’s protection.”

The other man added “—or an archangel that one. She’s different from any angels we met before.”

His hazelnut eyes bulged out warningly at him, as a code to stay silent. Afterward, he faced his honorable queen again. “It’s almost impossible for our kind to survive this. One angel could kill hundred or perhaps thousands of demon at a time.”

Chantel had been crossing arms for the past half hour, and now she stared blankly at the wide window where the perfect view of cotton candy clouds seen hanging in the blue sky.

The two gentlemen still waited boringly behind her. They waited for her further demand.

“You don’t know one thing,” she finally spoke “—make her tired, so that will make her lose so much energy.”

When both of them noticed that she was smirking devilishly, they finally had enough courage to chuckle along with her. The handsome one—Richard admired her idea, “You’re brilliant.”

# 15

## WITHIN THE RAVENS

THE SKY HAD TURNED INTO the mixture of deep blue and violet, the colors commingled perfectly at four in the afternoon. The crowded ravens flew in panic at the top of the tallest trees in this neighborhood. The view had drawn the attention of this angel, Sylvia Elle whose eyes stared keenly at one strange black bird.

On the other side, Cathy just got a short call from her dad, telling her that her mom had a severe coma, and worse than yesterday. She muttered on the phone pathetically, “All that I want is just to go home now.”

Elle didn't take her eyes off from the ravens as she was still observing them. Those black birds started making a noisy sound, echoing in hysterical scream like a little girl. Cathy stared up instantly, and bewildered at the view.



“There’s one *stalker* within those ravens,” Elle murmured.

“What are you saying?” Cathy astonished after she hung up the phone. “They are animals, not humans.”

Elle glanced at her. “A demon can disguise as a raven, to have surveillance on us.”

“Incredibly insane, what for?” She wondered.

“For gathering any information for their boss, and perhaps, they are ready to kidnap you and want to get rid of me.”

Cathy flinched at her idea, she knew the day hadn’t turned yet, and this was still Saturday where she needed to buy the flight tickets for the boys and herself to go home. However, the boys just wanted to make sure that the same girl they liked could return safely.

Josh just walked out from the door and he wondered what happened with them outside the terrace. The girls were still gazing silently at the wide sky.

Cathy didn’t aware that he was calling her name since she was so preoccupied with this angel, who ran adroitly to Carl Dalton’s yard, picking up something from the rectangular iron box that adjacent to the house.

Seemingly, she knew what to take and what to do. Her eyes explored the box where there was a lot of dusty old stuff. Cathy followed her from behind, and at that second, her eyes bulged out astonishingly at the tools that she picked up.

“What are you doing?!” Cathy asked, breathlessly.

“This is a bow and arrows,” Elle said, while taking out the stuff from the box. “I need to kill them before everything get worse.”

The ravens made the blaring noise again to make a few neighbors peered up behind their window curtains, until the birds started circling around the tallest tree.

Elle was well-prepared to do the archery. When she took one arrow, the ravens seemed to gather closer, flying away from the tree and moved separately into the cloudy sky.

“How weird,” Cathy muttered. “It’s like they knew that you will shoot them with arrow.”

“That’s what I’m saying, because one of them isn’t an animal after all.”

“Hey!” Josh called out again, but their ignorance was susceptible to offend him. “Please, ladies, the landlord is asking whether you would accept the dinner later?”

Cathy was astonished when Elle ran toward the pavement, which was across the house, and then went away behind the trees. There was no alert to make her understand why that angel would chase the raven.

Before she ran along, Josh dragged her shoulder forcibly to confront her, “Where are you going?”

“After I finish checking on her, we’ll go to the airport,” Cathy said quickly, she was breathless. “Just wait here, it’ll only take a minute.”

The wooden board written clearly, that the area was restricted. Her shadow had gone among the trees, walking passed to the wire fence.

Meanwhile, Josh was depressed with this uneasy situation, and he had a gut of feeling. Although he knew that she wouldn’t hear him, the words still came out, “At least tell me what’s going on?!”

Cathy already left, and soon she noticed where she was; this border of the forest marked with the wire fence, which located behind the residential houses. The

surrounding was so quiet because nobody was there. She tried to find Elle's boot heels footsteps on these muddy grasses.

She had left the boys to stay with the elder inside the house, although she had promised Josh that this would take a minute, and now her feeling was gone to think this wouldn't be a short time.

The winds swooshed mildly behind her back, she felt as if someone was watching every step she took. Eventually, her fear was gone when her eyes found Elle, who was standing well-wary between the trees, and whenever that angel was stood still, she looked like an unmovable replica of a goddess statue.

"Why are you following me?" Elle asked, infuriatedly.

"You didn't say anything!" She yelled back. "Well, okay if you don't want me to follow you, I'm going back—"

Before she walked away, Elle dragged her arm until she fell into her chest. Cathy was astonished at her manner.

"Don't go, it's useless," Elle said while her eager eyes were scanning around. "They are watching us here."

“Why would you have to kill the bird?” She asked, feeling annoyed with the way this angel was grabbing her arm so tightly.

“This is part of my job,” Elle glanced at her. “I told you, it’s not just a bird but a real demon that shape-shifting into a raven form.”

“Alright, I got it, but I don’t see anything that much,” Cathy was tremendously annoyed with this situation. “I can’t see any demons here.”

“Are you that stubborn, child? Elle muttered sharply.

It wasn’t like their first staring competition, especially with the cold atmosphere that bolstered this uneasy situation. They stared at each other in anger. The winds swirled on their skin, hitting their bones, and Cathy started shivering alone.

It was her first instinct to hug Elle hurriedly, having the warmth. “Why it feels like we’re in the winter?”

“It’s one of a strong indication to identify paranormal activity around us.”

“Do you see them?” She wondered while her teeth were chattering.

“Definitely, I’ve seen them since the very beginning,” Elle smirked. Her eyes gazed at the wild trees in the north side. “I knew that species, they still survive after many centuries.”

“What kind of demon?”

“*Obayifo*,” she whispered, somehow the name itself had sounded haunting.

“I couldn’t see. Where are they?” Cathy peevd with her psychic ability that didn’t always work all the time.

“I guess some of them have evolved. The new one is skinny, tall, have small horns, and without their usual distended stomach,” Elle informed.

“Good to know,” Cathy was glad to know about the description of their figure. “By the way, can we move on?”

They walked further to the east side of the forest, until they stopped a few meters from a ravine stone that was surrounded with millions of pine trees and rocks. Precisely, the trees around were called the *Douglas Fir*, some kind of *Oregon Pine*. The view looked invigorating.

“Wait here, don’t go anywhere,” Elle said, and left her as she walked toward the ravine.

Cathy got speechless to stand on the ground alone, since she didn't know what would happen if she stood here without a guardian angel. Therefore, she stared pathetically at the sky, praying for God's help to wash away her fear.

The clouds weren't seen when the afternoon sky turned overcast, and the evening was almost came. At the time, Elle had reached at the edge of that rock cliff.

She stood there deliberately while preparing her bow and arrow. Those birds went panicked again when she started focusing, even though it was only at one strange black bird. In the count of three, she released her arrow to the sky. The ravens were chirruping in astonishment as they eye-witnessed the death of their fake friend that fell hard on the ground.

Elle had killed the stalker successfully without making a mistake. Her emerald green eyes glanced checking emotionlessly at that fragile girl, who stood alone across the rock. That stare made Cathy felt as if she was shot by the lightning thunder, and this moment also was a reminiscent of her haunting dreams. Elle even had the same pose like the girl in her dreams, and when her

white hair got swooshed by the winds, it made her more assured of what she saw, which couldn't be denied.

Cathy gawked alone, forgot how to breathe, her body started paralyzing, and her knees fell on the ground. She finally knew the little truth; that *Sylvia Elle* was the same person as in her dreams.

Her eyes blinked astonishingly when Elle appeared in front of her suddenly. It was like an instant teleportation.

Elle gazed out at the shrubs behind them like there was something stood there. Cautiously, she released another shot of an arrow into the foggy shadow, and they heard the bizarre screaming just like the death raven before.

Cathy murmured, "I thought there's only one demon."

"Previously yes, now they're gathering the others," Elle informed her. "The Obayifo don't have enough courage to face me alone."

"That raven was Obayifo?" She was confused.

"No, it was a different type."



“So, there are two different kinds of demon?” After she understood, she realized about the time. “Oh, we should come back, it’s almost dark.”

After they took a few paces together, Cathy stopped trembling as she saw the sudden view in front of her. “Please say something Elle, are they demons that you’ve mentioned?”

Four Obayifo tried to avoid their way to return home. They stood a few meters behind the green shrubs, posing like the tough fighters, and appeared in their newest form that looked skinnier rather than their original form.

*Forces of darkness*, Elle knew it incisively of what appeared against her. She was extremely protective as she dragged that innocent girl to hide behind her back.

Cathy peered behind her shoulder to observe the painful reaction of those demons. In fact, she saw this angel was emerging a vivid electrical shock through her palm hand, which was jolting like the television’s cable that got poured by water.

Elle shouted rashly, “Keep your distance from me!”

She backed away a few meters from her, and hid behind the trees. Her mouth still gawked to witness the scene, where Elle had a better way to get rid of them without using the bow and arrow. Elle was just stood still on the same spot, meanwhile, those demons watched her well-wary as they were ready to pounce her. When Elle started to stare keenly, their reaction went fatal. The demons kept screaming as they drowned into their worst pain.

The view wasn't a hallucination for Cathy to see.

That angel's ability was mesmerizing to have the burning effect for those demons' skin. Their screaming was echoed throughout the forest. In no minute, they were gone into ashes for sure.

Elle beckoned a silent gesture at her to move forward. Cathy approached her with a shocking dilemma, "How did you do that?"

"It's a package inside of me. My best ability to shoot the evil ones," she chuckled.

Cathy narrowed her eyes, baffled. "You didn't. You just stared at them without moving your legs."

Seemingly, Elle ignored her curiosity. Soon, Cathy tried making a phone call to her best friend, who probably still waited for her in the terrace. Unfortunately, there was no answer, she couldn't tell him about her tardiness, "Oh c'mon, there's no signal!"

"Don't you know that we're in the middle of the forest?" Elle said. "It's not even close to the border."

"Of course," she sighed. "We should hurry to return, they must have been worried about us."

"Cathy—"

As she turned to see her expressionless face—that pair of green eyes gazed out carefully at the trees and shrubs around. The cricket noise became louder and tinkled in the forest.

"What?"

"*The castle*," she murmured. "It's only a few meters from here."

Cathy gave a bewildering look at her. That angel stepped forward on the empty ground as she pulled out the Sapphire stone from her pocket jacket.

"We need to go back. You know we should go to the airport soon, right?" Cathy was impatience.

Elle put the stone gently on the dark soil ground, and then she pulled it up and down with one hand.

As Cathy annoyed to be ignored by this angel, she shouted, “It’s almost late. We don’t have a flashlight,” she kept muttering when there was still no response from her, “Oh, except you can make the time stop.”

Surprisingly, the Sapphire stone emitted a blue light that linked vertically to the sky and then to the far away tree in the north side, as if it was a projector to emit a night skyline.

“The light will show us the way to the castle,” Elle said.

“You are not this crazy, seriously?” Cathy sighed. “It’s dangerous to walk out there. If any demons could see this mesmerizing light—”

The angel shouted back, “We are not going to die today. Just follow my lead.”

Cathy shook her head against this unbelievable situation. Everything crushed on her mind uneasily whether this would be a good or bad thing. She was peeved by the idea of her compulsion for the beginning of their journey in this dark forest.

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The path finally showed them to the location of the abandoned castle, which looked wholly scorched. The black bricks walls covered with something hidden, along with the tranquility around here. Anyone would see it as a ghost place, and somewhat haunting and disclosed by nature. No one had ever found the trace to this huge castle.

Cathy startled to see this agonizing view, but she managed to murmur, “Magnificent, haunting—”

The castle was left abandoned for many decades after the fire incident in the past that had destroyed every innocent soul who lived inside. Nobody ever touched this place since then, because the folks didn’t dare to compromise the forbidden legend that made them frightened forever.

Cathy didn’t adapt to walk through this vicinity environment that covered in the dark and eternal solitude. She walked forward carefully.

“No one wants to eat you. Come now,” Elle thrust her hand to her.

As they held hand together, Cathy felt relieved. They walked observantly toward the huge door in the terrace. Elle made a crack sound as she opened the door. The smells of dusty and charcoal were commingled strongly as they walked further to the main lobby.

The walls from inside looked better than what it looked from outside, which got muddy and a few sides got smeared with charcoal color because of the past incident. Moreover, the frescoes of angel were painted on the ceiling alongside the grand chandelier in the midst of the room, where the wooden staircases were divided into two wings in the east and west sides.

“This castle is so huge that I don’t know how many floors there are,” Cathy muttered while gawking at the ceiling.

“This was where the Aloise family once lived throughout the 14’s era. Since the incident had happened, the rest of their descendant stayed at Francesca’s little chapel,” Elle informed her.

“Wait, the Francesca’s chapel?” Cathy was baffled. “I’d rather visit that place where all of my mother’s relatives are staying. Please, we should go then—”

“How do you feel about this place?” Elle ignored her.

She got annoyed when Elle forced her to stay, which could be complex. “I feel—familiar,” she chuckled, baffling. “How strange, right?”

“It’s not,” Elle said. “You’ve come here. Remember about the vision, the flashback?”

Cathy glanced at her in a tremendous astonishment, “How could you tell that?”

“I am the one who has led you through it all, have you forgotten?”

Her statement sounded mysterious that Cathy realized something was left behind, and she knew this would be real that Sylvia Elle was the one who appeared in her dreams. “The girl at the ravine stone, was it you?”

That angel smiled slightly, and nodded for sure.

“I wasn’t imagining things?” Cathy was popeyed at her. “You’ve appeared to tell me the truth beyond the fact about my family, about everything that my mom won’t tell me by herself?”

“It is worth knowing. At least you’ll find the procedure of nature that the universe is never really hiding anything from human’s eyes. Everything is

concluded because of—” Elle walked closer to her, and said, “*The Seraph* has demanded me to come.”

“What?” Cathy confused.

“My leader—” she raised her voice, distracting to change the topic then, “well, do you want to ask whether the secret portal is real or not?”

Cathy was baffling, but her curiosity was tremendous, so she nodded naively.

After they headed to the east corridor, there were intersections that separated with huge pillars. Everything was dark, making her heart pounded as if a wild tiger was standing in front of her. The angel was still looked emotionless as always, she acted unnaturally as human.

When they got into another dark corridor, Elle stopped walking to ask, “See this pattern?”

Cathy got baffled since her eyes blinded from this darkness. “You know I can’t see anything.”

“Sorry,” she pitied. “Human eyes are so limited.”

Elle grasped her hand abruptly to lead her touching the coldness from the stonewall. Cathy yelled out in fear as she was surprised. “Oh gosh, do you want to kill me?”



Cathy cursed her, but the angel was surely being ignorant.

“It’s hidden, but you can still feel these protrude patterns,” Elle informed.

The brown stonewall was rough and covered with thick dusts. It engraved with various floral patterns, becoming the splendid composition.

Suddenly, Elle’s hand emitted a bright orb as a replacement of flashlight. It was magical that Cathy was dumbfounded at the view. The orb in her hand emitted a bright cyan color like a fractal nebula.

“These flower patterns are the symbol of happiness and loyalty,” Elle continued explaining.

“What flowers these are?” Cathy asked while scanning it with her tiny fingers.

“*Carnations* and *Easter Lilies*,” Elle said gently.

Cathy had studied about the meaning of these flowers before, “I read once on the internet, this is the conclusion of nobility and majesty symbolism.”

“That can be counted, since some of the Irish flowers are center-shaped throughout this rectangular pattern, it derived from a history of Ancient Greece about the

Goddess Iris as the personification of the rainbow as a link between heaven and earth. For your information, Iris is a Greek word for rainbow,” Elle explained.

“It could be this door has the analogy meaning for the rainbow—linking this human world to the hidden world, right?” She guessed.

“You can say so.”

The flowers engraved circularly around the double door, which looked exactly like in her vision about the magical gate. However, the darkness got her fear grew enormously even though the bright orb in the angel’s hand hadn’t dimmed yet. The cracking noise appeared again, followed with the strange groaning that echoed hauntingly in the corridor.

“I don’t think that’s an animal sound,” Cathy muttered assuredly.

Elle didn’t say a single word as she stared distantly against this long corridor, while Cathy held her breath, “Please, I don’t want anything controversial, let’s just go—”

For a second, she realized that Elle wasn't listening to her demand, that angel's eyes stared up sharply at the dark ceiling, "Demons."

"There are only the two of us—"

"*Wrezire*—that demon's leader is in here too," she snapped.

The noise emerged louder behind the rotten pillars, while Cathy was still confused of whom she had referred.

Like magic, the fire flared up suddenly from each torch that hung on the wall.

The next second, Cathy got hit on her head by someone, until she fell hardly on the floor. Her eyes bulged out while feeling an extreme dizzy to see a small creature of Obayifo in front of her. He grinned creepily at her, and she also noticed the army of Obayifo had already gathered, surrounding Elle who stood across the floor. Elle was out of number by about thirty monsters that ready to attack her.

She failed to run away when someone dragged her body to stand steadily.

"You shall know what's beneath the portal," a woman whispered in her ear, but she recognized that kind of

hoarse voice pretty well, and as she glanced back, their eyes locked at each other.

She was shocked to find out. “Mrs. Herron?”

That tall woman appeared in all black suit, medium-sized skirt, and heels. Her hands were grabbing Cathy’s shoulders with a hard grasp, and muttered, “A valuable child of noble bloodlines. If that’s all that we need to pursue for the experiment, you have a hidden treasure inside your blood, ah—”

For a second, her blue eyes glanced at the gate, and then at Cathy. The situation turned chaos when the demons started confronting one angel, and the torches radiated brighter at the view.

Cathy flickered. “What are you?”

“I don’t intent to scare you, but the truth is always wrapped with the terrible feeling of agony,” she responded to the consequence of her question.

The man who stood handsomely behind them was Richard. He spoke, “Should we tell her about the plan, my *Queen?*”

Cathy just recalled what he really was. “You are *Wrezire?*”

“Oh, keep it company, the origin of my name sounds like a sinner in your tongue,” he muttered in annoyance.

Chantel chuckled unwillingly. “Well, is this the girl we’ve been talking about?”

“Indeed, my *Queen*.”

“Oh, look at this beautiful face, just exactly like that *princess*,” She said while grabbing Cathy’s jaw roughly, “Is she the reincarnation or what?”

Cathy got flickered again while her body was trembling in fear, and she noticed with the oddity of why that demon would call Chantel Herron as his queen. This was her turn to confront them, “Why are you doing this?”

Chantel dragged her away from the demon to talk face to face, “I thought you knew, even a little when the first time we met,” they stared deeply at each other, the atmosphere became heater. “I’m not the person you think I am,” she was being indisputable about her unspoken identity.

“She has claimed the darkness as the descendant of—” He stopped shouting when Chantel glared at him.

“Is it important even if you know what I am?” She asked in a low tone.

Cathy could only pity her, “I’m more concern of what your son would have thought about this—Scott.”

She glared madly as if her eyeballs almost torn off, and said, “He is not your concern, child.”

Chantel grabbed her oval jaw again, so harshly that she was groaning in pain.

“Do you see your little friend in there?” She asked intentionally. “We just get tired with this game. I’ll tell you sooner that the experiment will be resulted in welfare for us. In order to do that, your sacrifice is important.”

“It is to sacrifice your *blood*,” he added and grinned creepily.

“But first, you will open this door for us,” Chantel whispered in her ear.

“Why would I do that for you?” Cathy confronted.

“Haile has been strangling in coma,” Wrezire provoked their conversation. “It’s unnecessary expectation in return, if you prefer the death.”

Cathy almost jumped down surprisingly to hear that they knew about her mom.

“Don’t you pity your own mother?” Chantel smirked. “Just open it, or you will see your mom’s last breath tonight.”

“Please don’t!” She barked helplessly. “You need to rethink about this circumstance, and your son wouldn’t happy to know because he loves you so much—”

She kneaded strongly on her jaw as she warned her, “I told you, my son isn’t your concern. You don’t know him so well, child.”

“Whatever his mom will do, Scott will be worried for you, and this is wrong,” Cathy coaxed her hardly. “Especially, you’re a detective. Don’t you have shame with your badge to do this?”

“How funny, a kid like you would talk about badge and position, you know nothing about the real world, and yet you wonder whether I’ll let you go or not. Now, I tell you what this is all about,” she smirked prettily and at once looked frightening “—you are my new experiment.”

“Tell me first, why are you so desperate to get inside the gate?” Cathy still confronted her to get the answer.

Wrezire laughed at the second she said that, while Chantel could answer her calmly, “It’s a home for any entity. We want welfare.”

“Oh child, the chance is so rare for us to be able to open it, since we haven’t met again with Lazuerre—our beloved gate keeper,” he said.

Cathy wasn’t confused anymore with either the term of the door or gate, because Elle had already explained everything, but she was more concerned with what in front of her. “What experiment that will you do to me?”

His eyes turned wholly black that made him looked frighteningly inhuman, and then he stared at his queen, “Should we tell her?”

Chantel was only stared boldly, warning him to stick to the plan.

“We’ve gathered a huge effort for finding the purest blood in order to trade them with a secret treasure. The experiment idea to make our own key of the portal by chasing *Puissant* and *Sapphire* has come to a big conclusion,” he said enthusiastically, “So damn lucky, we have *the powerful witch* who has the same ambition like



all of us. Now, I don't need crying over heels to persuade Lazuerre ever again."

"Witch?" Cathy pushed away that cold hand on her shoulders as she was astonished with this enigma. Their eyes locked intensely to each other. "It's you?"

"Just open it now," Chantel demanded.

Cathy frowned at them, and said, "You can't open it without Sapphire."

"Oh, stop playing a game with this little girl," Wrezire groaned peevishly.

The witch seemed to know what thing to be done. She looked afar at the corridor, and glanced back at Wrezire, demanding him to take the stone since she had sensed it clearly.

At the same time, the rest of the demons had fell down one by one since Elle took care of them by herself. She could fight them easily in a short time. Although the unfortunate event finally came, the Sapphire fell off from her pocket jacket when a demon pushed her from behind. It was the dark work of the witch that some of Obayifo could rise from the dead, even after Elle had slashed them all.

The distortion in front of her eyes looked inexplicable. Cathy gawked at the view of this whole misfortune. She felt guilty with this circumstance, and she was actually unwilling to open the gate for the evil people.

Across the corridor, Wrezire grinned happily to take the stone on that cold floor, but he was failed as Elle went attacking him. Her capability to run was as fast as the light speed.

The Sapphire fell down on the floor again. No one could reach for it this time.

The demons were surrounding the angel again, while Chantel was impatience at the view, she got infuriated. Thereafter, the tension in the air felt worse when Cathy preceded the witch to take the Sapphire as she wanted to protect it.

“Open the door now, or you shall know what happen to your mother,” Chantel threatened her.

The atmosphere felt frightening, especially when Chantel took a few steps to her. Cathy was in a huge dilemma, thus she barked at them without thinking further, “Alright, I’ll do it!”

As her trembled hand was pushing the stone into the template on the doorknob, the tension emerged abruptly for everyone in here. Their nervousness seemed growling in eternity, as if the gravity got stopped for a while. They had waited for so long just to stand still for someone to reach that sacred door.

The demons lost their patience, despite having a brutal desire. Beside them, Wrezire was still better at hiding his true emotion.

Through the perspective of Elle's eyes, the demons were burning from the inside. Nonetheless, she ran to stop Cathy from opening the portal, but it was too late. Everyone stared astonishingly when it cracked to open widely.

The white winter ground showed. The falling snowflakes reflected on her deep brown eyes, leaving the pressure of agony. It triggered her memory to remember about her old flashbacks and dreams that had haunted her mind. Everything became clearer.

The whitey man stood tall as a gentleman, his physical body was surely inhuman. Everything about him was white, starting from his skin color, his straight long

hair, and he stood abnormally with four legs that made him look as strong as a horse. His scary eyes were bloody red with tiny cat pupils alike that looked sharp when he gazed mysteriously.

“Is this how all of you making a welcome ceremony?” He asked, giggled.

Cathy was almost fainted to see his real appearance since she didn't expect to see him look so frightening. His legs were half human half horse, and his tail was approximately about one-ninety-centimeters.

Furthermore, his red-blooded eyes were foreshortening at all of them. At that moment, Wrezire giggled back as he walked closer to the midst of the portal while applauding for his sudden arrival. “My brother, Lazuerre, we're so glad to see you again,” he sighed and squinted behind him dramatically. “I'm sorry with this little mess.”

“Welcome back,” Chantel shouted as she walked to stand closer with Wrezire.

He seemed wondering against the presence of that woman, who greeted him warmly as if they were like an old comrade. It took him a few seconds to recall the past,

“You are—one of those witches. I know exactly what you want.”

Cathy gazed bewilderingly at her that she could finally believe the truth about the witch part.

Afterward, Lazuerre glanced observantly at Cathy, who stood breathlessly. That gate keeper had a turbulence heart as he noticed her presence. His red eyes were showing the mixed up mood between wonderment, astonishment, and amazement.

“Who is this young human?” His voice sounded wise.

“You know this girl,” Elle shouted after she stood next to her suddenly. “She’s under my guard.”

“Oh, our precious sister has returned too,” he seemed relieved for her presence. “I’ve been missing all of your kind. Back in the past, we were such a glorious family.”

“Never equate yourself with our kind,” Elle said firmly.

“Oh, ho, I’d like to introduce myself properly to our new—” he had a hard decision to pick the right word as he stared politely at Cathy. “A young friend.”

“What a lovely thing to do, brother,” Wrezire complained, “but we’re coming with effort. Won’t you mind to serve us first?”

Lazuerre giggled as he felt a disgusting stigma at those demons that came rushing. After he had welcomed everyone in the corridor, he walked back inside the portal to leave them speechless. Eventually, it was a distortion as he really did welcome them. A magnetic hole started absorbing everyone, dragging them inside like a raging tornado.

After everyone was thrown away into the cold ground, the gate was closed by itself immediately. They were no longer in the human world. This was welfare.

# 16

## THE GARDEN OF FAITH

**AFTERTHOUGHT, SHE HAD NOT DIED YET.**

Cathy shivered, lying down weakly on the frozen ground. The desolate environment was a bit foggy. No one was with her except that whitey man named Lazuerre.

“How was it to feel lost?” He asked, stood tall above her. “How was it to be born again?” He asked intensely. “I could just shove all of them stranding to another part of this place, if you mind.”

He offered something that she couldn't possibly understand.

Cathy didn't move as she kept staring up at him, wondering if this was only her hallucination, but it came real when he grabbed her waist roughly, helping her to stand steady.

“Do you want me to kill them instead?” He asked infuriatedly.

She couldn't even try to talk, her lips was trembling. As a matter of fact, he appeared differently now. His four legs weren't seen but for two now. He looked way better, charismatic, and just like human, only his impression that frightened her.

“What?” He grabbed her jacket while asking. “Didn't you want to pursue a revenge on your mother's death?”

Cathy raised her eyebrows. “My mom is not dead.”

“Oh, ho, did I hit your head so badly to cause you amnesia?” He narrowed his thick black eyebrows. “Or is it because you haven't awoken yet?”

He yanked her closer into his cold flat chest. He grabbed her chin forcibly to make her eyes focus at his white pale face. Cathy sighed heavily, and he started yelling at her face, “Wake up, *Kathleen!*”

She kept trying to break free from his strong grasp, but it was useless as he hugged her closer to him. Therefore, she needed to explain while feeling breathless, “You must have been mistaken me as someone else. My name is Catherine, not Kathleen.”



“Don’t you remember me, my lady? He asked in a tremendous rage. She could feel his cold breath was swirling on her red nose. “Don’t tell me that you’re being trapped in this little girl’s body?”

She tried to have enough strength to pull off his tight arms from her fragile skin. When she failed to do that, he became wilder to hug her until she was dying to breathe. They gazed at each other again.

At that second, Cathy was scared from her own thought of how she would die. There was a million chance that the man in front of her would probably eat her alive. When he brushed her lips with his cold finger, she got startled instantly. Cathy struggled to run away as she had courage to punch his porcelain face very hard. He bulged out shockingly to accept a slight of pain.

“I know you’re the gate keeper of the portal, but I don’t think we officially know each other,” she said firmly.

“What is this—a rebellion?” He laughed like how Wrezire usually did. “I always captured your face in my head, how could I forget such an imperial beauty?”

“I don’t understand,” she murmured at the same time her body stood well-wary.

“Are you going to deny everything?” He walked one step. “Didn’t you remember my deepest confession?”

“What confession?!” She barked, annoyed.

“Affection, my lady!” He yelled. His red eyes were bulging out. “The love momentum from any desperation that once I had presented the grouse to you.”

She flinched in confusion whether he spoke about a metaphor or not. “Please, don’t force me into this. I’m *not* her.”

“How could you are not her?” He paced slowly at her who stood trembling. “You have the same exact face and figure, and count to that guardian angel that follows you—even now.”

She bewildered at the latter of his words, thus she followed where his eyes were staring far away behind her back. Precisely, he talked about Sylvia Elle. That angel walked like a tough army, and in the count of three, she already stood beside Cathy.

“Lazuerre, you should concern anything else to be easier,” Elle said.

“Make me,” he dared, and then he gazed coldly at Cathy.

“I told you, I’m not her,” she insisted. “I don’t live in a castle or even have a queen’s throne.”

“If your affection is tremendous for her, then we should concern the demons to leave this land immediately,” Elle suggested the idea while Cathy gawked surprisingly at her statement.

“Ah, just let them go,” he still felt disgusted with their presence. “I have no business with those scoundrels.”

“Haven’t you found out something?” Elle raised her tone at him. “They’re going to kill this little girl for the sake of their amulet ceremonial, after that, they will be able to come in and out so freely to the portal without you.”

He shot Cathy with his sharp red eyes, and then back to bulge out at the angel. “First thing, I’m asking you with honor, sister. Who is this innocent girl under your guard?” He tilted his head at her. “Is she our reborn princess?”

“You can say so. She’s the reincarnation of Princess Kathleen.”

Cathy felt breathless. “What?”

“I knew it!” He shrieked. “At the first time I saw her deep eyes, it’s so precise.”

“I don’t want to involve with their matter anyway. If they put a spell on my mom—” she was peeved, “I just want to finish this smoothly.”

“Such a long repetitive history. Spell isn’t new for them to play,” he taunted.

“Well, that’s my analogy, *spell* is for dying in the hospital, my mom is coma,” Cathy corrected.

“Don’t you know, child?” He asked to make her wonder. “I said it also, literally mean spell.”

“They are trying to buy a shortcut, in that case, the witch would defy putting a spell on your mom,” Elle explained. “Only in one condition—if they couldn’t fetch on your royal blood.”

Cathy felt quivered, as the moment went quiet.

“The demons—their barbarous stigma would end in our system when they broke the rule of being here,” he said. “I can’t guarantee anything, sister.”

“Your job as a guard should be conductible. That’s why you are here,” Elle admonished him.

“So, would you show our little lady for a tour?” He wondered.

Elle squinted at Cathy who was too quiet. “I’d like to,” she said, and stared at him again. “Oh, where have you been over the past centuries?”

“My absence is none of your concern,” his tone was disrespectful.

Before both of them left, Elle stared warmly at him as if that tall man would need a single drop of compassion. The angel knew everything beneath the lies. His existence was important in this realm, and there was no one to supersede his position.

Lazuerre did stare back expressionlessly. Elle just won’t bother him with a huge question, since the situation wasn’t perfect for a reunion. “Now, excuse us.”

0 0 0

The foggy air subsided when the two visitors had arrived. They came to another part of a placid place. Ceasus treasured the bottom heart of angels. The mercy made every corner of this land felt warm. The soil ground was at the edge of the river like a spring breeze, in fact, the winter ground was the only cold spot across the portal.

The bluish clouds hung a sentimental atmosphere above them. The trees grew fibrous with random roots. Slightly, this place was like a secret garden in front of the cottages in a forest. There was no sound. Their eyes searched for the dwellers. Elle raised her head at some people who stood concurrently against the trees, where the winter ground traversed behind. Seemingly, the spring land was just like a welcome carpet against that shallow river.

“Catherine, you’re coming,” one of the women who stood in the midst of a few figures had relieved to say it. “Welcome to *the Garden of Faith*.”

That woman didn’t seem like human. Her head covered with crown flowers and long floral scarf of Indian ethnic alike. The four women beside her had the same appearance too, minus the crown.

Cathy squinted oddly at Elle. Her unspoken curiosity got that angel tingled to explain, “They are *celestial beings*. The good one like angel.” she informed. “The Garden of Faith is part of Caecus, where entities with the precognition ability are assembling together. It is one of the places for guardians, like Lazuerre to come and stay

in peace. The analogy for human's place; this seems like an institute, only it controls by the higher entities. They are neither djinn nor angel."

"They aren't alien, right?" Cathy whispered.

Elle gave a half smile and shook her head. They walked ahead to approach the celestials. That woman was as tall as Elle, and her skin was between light and tan. Cathy got shuddered when the woman welcomed her with a warm smile.

"We execute the divine work in Caecus, alongside the system, we play a role in a different division as a guardian, messenger, future reader, and etcetera," she had a wise voice.

"All of you are clairvoyance?" Cathy wondered.

She smiled of no rejection. "Accordant with divine missions that are notable for us to live, that's implant a good deed, a work of art."

"What are you?"

"*Chiromancer.*"

She surprised with the term, in the human world it meant as a fortune teller who read a palmistry line in someone's hand. It wasn't a common term.

“May I introduce my friends?” The chiromancer asked. “They’re also a chiromancer and messenger. Furthermore, I am their leader.”

“What job that all of you do specifically?”

“Mostly, some of us have double works at once as a chiromancer and messenger, which way to bring a divine message to the dwellers in Caecus. We delivered a prodigious prophecy,” she explained solemnly. “For human’s world, we dedicate some of precognitions in its right place. The angels come and go to see a rigidity of written future. They’re also a good reader than any of us. We are just a helper for entities around Caecus.”

Cathy amazed with her knowledgeable explanation.

“Perhaps, you want to see around?”

“Can I?”

“You are more than welcome here,” the woman spoke beneath her pink lips. The celestials welcomed her for anything. It seemed as if everyone had been waiting for her arrival.

For a second, her eyes were skimming through the scenery of various floral. Cathy became more nervous when Elle watched her from behind. She walked ahead



for sightseeing. The shrubs protruded some of the glowing flowers. She caught something odd in between. Her legs stood five inches against it, and her hand tried to reach the leaf. She was perplexing at the flower that emitted a glowing blue light. It felt like a jelly when she touched it. The smell and its form were just as normal as another floral, but she couldn't possibly think how the blue color could emit.

"It's a small *mortura*," the chiromancer said. "The artistic flower can entertain our eyes. It will only blossom in a cold environment. Do you like it?"

"Yes, I do," Cathy smiled, and her momentary shudder began to fade away. "It's peculiar."

She realized that the four celestials still stayed in their first spot, and Elle still stood a few meters from them.

The weather was about twenty degrees Celsius, and she already got her leather black jacket to cover her pale skin. Cathy looked around again to wonder what thing to observe without being awkward, despite feeling odd with a quick body movement of this celestial as if she was a strange creature, and even her honey eyes had a reflex motion.

The silence came after they ended the conversation. The chiromancer stared intensely at Cathy whose eyes flashed at the bigger flower in the midst of this winter ground. “Oh, it’s another mortura?” She gauged it vividly that the flower size was as huge as a diameter of three basketballs. “It’s the same blue as this one.”

“Yes, a larger mortura. It is used as an instrument for seeing a future by a chiromancer like me.”

Sometimes, Cathy felt scared to see the woman’s face that moved too flexible.

“You want me to read your future?”

Cathy gawked at her offer. Elle approached them immediately to stand in between. “She will not read her future,” although her warning sounded rhetoric as it was referred to the chiromancer.

“Oh,” the woman sparked at her approach. “I’m honor to meet an angel by myself.”

Elle stared keenly at her who was always smiling and being gentle. The chiromancer walked toward the four dwellers that stood like statues. Cathy squinted at them and felt anxious as she didn’t feel familiar with everything around. She needed to know more than just a

floral view. Her legs walked well-wary, while Elle stayed behind her back as a guardian.

“There is no human as lucky as you are to see this land,” the chiromancer said, “and a few didn’t really survive.”

There was no partition in the air that they were all stared so deep. The chiromancer began to confront Cathy. She gently touched her shoulder. “You have seen the places, now is our turn for asking your truth of being here?”

Cathy gawked numbly at her gentle stare. “I don’t know anything.”

A thin fog emerged from the air while they fought each other’s eyes. Elle immediately made a slash partition with her body to stop their contention, she stood between them again.

“This won’t do,” the chiromancer muttered.

“A brief letter of abomination wouldn’t hurt anyone if you would make it shorter to be read,” Elle alerted. “Please.”

The chiromancer glanced keenly at her. The conservative atmosphere was changed uneasy. At the time, Cathy had no idea about the current topic.

“You have come along the way just to ask for the written history?” She seemed to hold her anger.

“A resistance of uncertainty must be told perceivably. For this case, I want you to show the vision very clear to the girl.”

“Do you realize—” she pursed her lips, “our energy usage is a real matter for such a simple request?” The chiromancer glanced in motion at Cathy.

“I am not in the same hierarchy as you are, little creature,” Elle raised her tone. “If you wish not to conclude, maybe I could ask for *the Seraph*.”

“Seraph?” There was a slight of fear in her eyes. “Please be my guest.”

Elle gave a win smile against the celestials. The four companions left their leader to walk toward a tall headstone. The celestials were represented the enigma that Cathy wanted to ask for everything, but she was still curious of what the angel just mentioned about, “What is Seraph?”

“Isn’t there any religion teacher in your school, at least?” Her sarcasm came again. “They never taught you about the particular term?”

“Elle, this is all new for me,” Cathy said pathetically. “I’ve only found out about the celestial, chiromancer, and mortura.”

“You only know so little,” Elle muttered. “Seraph is the angel’s leader as the highest hierarchy, and count as an archangel.”

She sighed. “Good to know.”

“Well-educated. Now, may I?” The chiromancer thrust her warm hand at Cathy, several golden bracelets were seen on her wrist.

Cathy squinted bewilderingly at Elle who nodded as a code that was okay. The chiromancer escorted her to walk to the opposite direction from the headstone. It was another big blue mortura. Cathy dumbfounded to see it from closer.

The chiromancer began to scan her hand at the sparkling petals. Her eyeballs moved rapidly from beneath her closed eyes. After ten seconds of waiting, Cathy bulged out when the fluorescent shadow was

reflected on her white face. There was a vision that emitted from the pistil like a projector screen.

“In fourteenth century, a wretchedness event occurred to one empire. It was misfortune that the good one was lost in a tragic battle,” the chiromancer narrated that flashback vision. “The Aloise died from the wicked witch and her devil.”

Cathy was breathless when the vision appeared more specific than what she always saw alone on her mind.

“But, no one really knew that the only descendant was alive after the incident, she was *Francesca de Moriz von Aloise*.”

“Why she had both of the titles, the Moriz?”

“Ah, she was named after a sacred place in Austria—the Morizza Chapel. She lived hideout from folks,” the chiromancer said, she was touched by the tragedy. “After a few centuries had passed, all the grandchildren were born from that place, but some preferred to separate. Until now, the demons are still hunting them down.”

“Do the demons know about the Morriza Chapel?”

“Even they know, there’s nothing they can do, because the angels are guarding that place,” the chiromancer smiled. “By that, I mean inside and outside.”

“Then, it supposed to be dangerous to leave the place for the descendants?”

“Indeed, but the decision isn’t for the angels to concern,” her voice was distinct. “Some Austrian must be familiar with the forbidden legend, especially when it comes to—”

“Triskele.”

The chiromancer glanced at her for a moment. “I was about to say the Devil who possessed the witch, even though Triskele is included as you seem already know.”

“What about the Devil?”

“Under the name of Kyra, the Devil disguised as human,” as she kept narrating, the screen showed a long curly red hair in black robe, that strange woman had a wicked almond-shaped of blue eyes. “If anyone in the world wanted to find someone to blame for the incident, she was the one,” the vision turned instantly into the overwhelming fire, attacking the massive castle. Cathy

knew it became the abandoned castle now, since she recognized some part of the walls.

“Kyra?” Her memory got tingled to remember the name. As she recalled, it was Scott who mentioned the name to her. “I’ve heard before.”

The chiromancer smiled.

“Was it written in Dalton’s book?” She murmured.

“That infamous human?” The chiromancer noticed. “Yes, in order for humans to receive the message. *Emperor of Souls* sounds a bit generic, don’t you think?”

“As a preference of generic, it is bothersome to discuss,” Elle shouted behind them. “Not that I think it has any matter to you, sister.”

“Forgive my rudeness,” the chiromancer bow her head, and seemed to be more careful to talk since Elle had mentioned about the Seraph.

She glanced at Cathy. “For a further story, it is better that you read the book by yourself.”

A convenient atmosphere had returned again. The chiromancer stared at her in affection as she held her hands. “You are *the destined child*.”

“What?”



“Because you’re the only hope to save both of dimensions from destruction,” it was like she gave out a benediction. “You can survive the whole generation from extinction.”

Cathy patronized into every single of her words. There was only a perplexing idea that she could get. The chiromancer left her as she walked toward Elle.

“You see that child?” She whispered. “So fragile, you need to return her to home.”

Elle shot her keen eyes at Cathy, and then she approached her, “Wait,” she grabbed her arm suddenly while gazing at the clouds. “We need to go from here.”

“What’s wrong?” Cathy showed a horrendous feeling.

“The demons will be at the edge of the portal. Wrezire has demanded them to stop us,” Elle had never joked about any hazard events, Cathy got scared now “—and, the witch’s presence will make them even more powerful.”

“May God bless both of you,” the chiromancer prayed. Her warm smile could help Cathy to feel calmer.

As the fog began to cover the whole land, Elle forced her to walk out quickly from the Garden of Faith.

They stepped over the soil ground in front of the shallow river. Cathy could see her reflection so clearly when they crossed to a little bridge. Just a few meters ahead, Lazuerre had waited for them.

“I’ll escort you to the forest, would you mind?”

Elle felt hesitated, and her eyes tried to read his vibe. Apparently, he had a pure intention this time, “Thank you, brother.”

Cathy got baffled with the concept of how they would escort someone. The experience was unusual, especially when the gate keeper gave both of them an odd stare of farewell.

The strong winds blew around them. The clouds turned darker. The snowflakes subsided at the border of the ground between this warm and cold spot. Cathy gawked in disbelief against the peculiar phenomenon of nature. She had no clue to predict what would happen, but to pray.

From far away, Lazuerre guffawed for nothing.

The view was blurred, the realm felt dreamy. Her sight went into blankness. For three seconds, there was no sound but the rain that came rough on her cheeks. She

got shivered since the coldness felt undeniable. She couldn't open her eyes until Elle shook her shoulders. Cathy just realized where she was. The forest was overshadowed by a dark penumbra between the trees, and the rain had stopped after she coughed hardly.

"They got the Sapphire, those demons," Elle muttered. "Lazuerre will make a way from here. We need to search for the nearest portal."

Cathy flinched. "We're still in Caecus?"

"Wait," Elle had her eyes well-wary. "Stay here."

She saw her walked out to the grasses. Everything went silent.

"Groarrrr!" A demon jumped down from the tree suddenly. "Grab her tightly!"

Four small demons appeared from behind the shrubs. They moved fast like the flying bees that went yanking on her body. She had no option to escape from their brutal act. Elle pulled off their strong grasp forcibly from her arms and legs, which looked like a bunch of demon babies. Two demons clung on her shoulders, and the others were on her thighs. They were all clinging like glue.

Another demon stared at Cathy while his saliva was dripping disgustingly. Fortunately, Elle could handle the fuss in an instant, and she fought them with one hit.

The trees had been enduring the unseen rage. As the winds swooshed strongly, both of them held hands together. There was a transparent hole in the air that sucked up anything near it.

Cathy kept clinging on Elle's arm while listening to her whisper. "That's the portal."

"What will happen?" Cathy almost cried.

In fact, the angel stared deeply at the human. "Just hold me tight."

# I7

## CATASTROPHE

**THE WATER SPRUNG FROM THE GATE** like a loop of flood. The dark corridor flashed by the luminescence light, where the winter kissed a good farewell. Every each of them got ashore forcibly by the end of that sacred portal. Half of the Obayifo died into ashes when they got crashed with the splinter of lights. At the edge of the gate, Lazuerre stood in a half horse form, he grinned for his amusement that the demons were dismissed in no time from the dimension.

Cathy tried to breathe the air while her body got flung away to the corridor. The coldness felt sharpened on her skin, and her trembled legs lost its grip to feel the wet floor. Every part of her got soaked. She embraced her courage to look around, and chinned up to notice the blue Sapphire laid down not far from her. As she

wondered where the stone had emerged, the woman in black suit tried to crawl for it. She recognized her precisely, it was Chantel the Witch.

Cathy crawled hastily, somehow her body could be stronger than she expected, her hands and legs went abruptly fast to take the stone. Chantel screamed out of rage when her failure was a misfortune by 17-year-old girl.

They had the same courage to fight each other. Cathy panted to reach out for the precious little stone. She had a hard time to rise up from the flood. Her legs went weary as she fell back and forth. Chantel almost caught her ankle, but she could get away hurriedly.

She ran from the corridor to get to the lobby. Her eyes found a miracle from the morning light that showed her the way to the exit door.

As she reached outside, the green yard looked overgrown by many of wild plants, and the farthest trees had no shadow anymore. Her mind baffled about the cycle time, since she arrived in the abandoned castle in the evening, and so she had probably spent about an hour

in Caecus. She more assured after she checked her watch; it was eight in the morning.

The roaring sound startled her from behind that huge door. It echoed creepily. She noticed that was a demon. Her head was spinning dizzily as she was being careful to create a runway plan, and she had to be brave in order to protect the Sapphire, although she had no idea where to go. Her eyes could only gaze up hopelessly at the bright sky when Elle wasn't there beside her.

“Cathy!”

All of a sudden, Elle dragged her arm, and they ran quickly from the yard to reach the forest. Now she could tell the difference between breathing in Caecus and in the human world; in here, she didn't feel suffocate to move. The oxygen felt less in there, and in some part, there was no air to make her stay alive.

She got strangled. Her knees fell on the wild grasses, which wasn't really far from the castle's gate. She kept on panting as she paused to get rest under the tree. Her legs felt numb and heavy.

“We don't have time to picnic under the tree!” Elle yelled.

She sighed. "Please, just a second."

Braveness was the only thing she had to pursue for now. Her heart won't be hesitant to continue the journey. Her eyes gazed blurrily at the cotton clouds within the blue sky. The winds changed direction, flowing to some of big pine trees.

Just when the sunshine struck across her brown eye, she recalled the words;

*The world you believe you live in, it's never what it seems.*

She remembered the perfect peculiar quote from Marissa the Angel. It echoed loudly on her head. Everything was vivid as she contemplated the definition of the oddity. She sighed to know the fact.

"I never done anything like this in my life," Cathy sobbed. "What am I supposed to do?"

"Hey," Elle bent down to touch her cheeks. "They can't read your mind, only your energy will be readable, they can sense your fear—be fearless."

The footsteps behind them had distracted her focus. When they glanced back, Wrezire already greeted them with his creepy smile. He wasn't alone, a big creature



stood behind him, it was a real ogre. The addiction might come on anyone's eyes to attach at that handsome demon just like a magnet. It seemed that it didn't work to either Elle or Cathy.

"Well, well, angel," he said. "Can this be a wonderful show for us to meet?"

The forest remained desolate as the ogre groaned.

"Now I see a package of fortune in this little girl; the blood and Sapphire."

He spoke like an omniscient young man, although he only knew a few things about the royal history. He was born in the nowadays generation. He had lived for several periods. A few years ago, he was a nomad from London, and then he chose to stay in Austria to replace his great grandfather who died while hunting for the Sapphire. He had been here as the new leader of demons, as well as being the informant.

"Wrezire," Elle mentioned his real name. "Your elders died for what they consumed. Now, you have the courage for this."

"It such a long time nobody call me that, I prefer Richard as in my human form."

She chuckled for his preference. “Don’t you dare touch her.”

“Since when an angel can demand a demon by mouth talking?” He guffawed. “How bizarre the words you left me.”

“I warn you just one time,” she said sarcastically.

“Don’t worry, I won’t touch her by myself. What’s the use of having a troop?”

The ogre groaned again. There were two sharp little horns in his head. He showed off his athletic muscles. This demon species looked a bit different than the rest of his kind since he dressed in armor-chain costume that worn out pretty badly. His eyes were like a cat, but looked haunting and creepy.

“Please, make me proud of you,” he demanded that ogre. “Take her without leaving a scratch.”

The ogre roared crazily.

Elle whispered quickly at her, “Just don’t look back, I will find you later,” she smiled. “Run, now!”

The roaring sound echoed throughout this wild forest. The ogre started his own abomination to hunt the girl.

As he stepped forward, Cathy ran quickly. She had nowhere to go, and got strangling to follow the path among the pine woods that grew everywhere. She forced her legs to keep on running throughout the land. She didn't care with a bunch of shrubs that scratched her skin pretty badly, her sight only focused at the right path.

She hugged her arms while shivering, since her jacket got soaked. She won't stop pacing through the wild forest. There was no sound until the groaning voice came again. Surprisingly, the ogre could run as fast as a cheetah, but Cathy didn't look back since she followed the angel's advice.

A few meters ahead, she couldn't tell whether the ground was ended as a cliff or not, but the view above was a clear blue sky. She couldn't think. At that second, she got knocked down from the medium-sized rock on the grass.

She just got a bad luck, that ogre dragged her up to his chest.

"You ogre, monster!" She barked bravely.

He growled and roared insanely without knowing the fact how terrified the girl was, because Cathy only barked

at him to hide her own fear. He threw her on the ground while showing his face that wanted to eat her alive. Every corner of the leafy trees watched them silently, while the quiet ambience had worriment against his wicked roar.

Cathy felt the sharp pain on her legs, however, she yelled again, "Ogre!"

He roared again and again, his ambition was to kill her this time. As a matter of fact, a demon had never regretted anything they did. He stepped forward to lift up her body and then throwing her away at the shrubs near the steep cliff.

She wheezed in agony while trying to rise steady. He came again, dragging her collar jacket, and he was ready to smash her into the tree.

Her head was bleeding. In a count of three, her vision went blurred. She didn't have much strength to move. It was a sincere revenge to call him as ogre. He became mad and wild to throw her at the shrubs. Whether he was aware or not, she fell off into the steep cliff.

The ogre astonished. He just realized that his anger was another catastrophe for himself.

Cathy was falling from the highest cliff which led her to dowse into a rushing waterfall that was part of the Danube River. She stranded and her head got hit accidentally by a huge rock. It caused her to collapse. Her body got trailing behind the rough rocks, and she drowned deeper into the bottom of the river.

She didn't breathe as the time felt like stopped for her. The bitter taste of the water swept away on her pale skin. Her bright brown eyes were still wide-opened, unconsciously. Cathy was dead like a floating mannequin that drowned under the river. Her body floated in slow motion. Her blank eyes gazed out into the farthest view of the darkness.

The dark shadow dissolved into light as a bright luminescence. Her reckless soul started to see a vision that emitted above the river, although she couldn't tell whether it was an image of a strange corridor or not, since the light blinded her sight. There was a blurry shadow of a woman in a long black cloak. The voice was familiar, it was soft and comfortable. She tried to reach the shadow and that voice. Everything felt peaceful and

far from harm. There was no fuss but waiting for something greater.

*Child, you're not ready. This isn't your place, not yet. You shall return to where your soul belong.*

The woman whispered on her mind. The vision appeared clearer. The glimmering green eyes shot her a warm affection. The figure seemed like a reminiscent of her mom. They shared the same beam of eyes, except for that mesmerizing green color, since Haile had brown eyes.

The vision dismissed into smoke. Her soul returned elastically in an instant to shock her human eyes. Her dead body began moving as she tried to grasp the oxygen, but it was useless since she was drowned in the water. She panicked while her hands were trying so hard to reach the surface. She didn't know how to swim.

Dying wasn't her choice, it was unpredictable. The universe was a concrete witness to see her bitter agony in a peaceful way. The cold water didn't touch her heart to wake up, and her soul went wreckage. The universe did a practical surveillance to shout for her soul not to demise, leaving her mortal body. The realm she lived with was an

outer membrane of this human's dimension. The previous white luminescence had swayed out from her eyesight. It was like the glory of farewell.

There was a weird feeling when she felt a beautiful curved hand was reaching out to take her. The hands clenched above and ready to help. Cathy coughed hardly after she was lifted up to the surface. She laid down weakly beneath random little rocks. She breathed deeply, inhaling enough oxygen. Her body felt so fragile.

The next second, she was glad to notice that Elle was beside her, but no word could come out from her mouth, she could only gaze up at the bright sky. Her eyes slowly closed to feel the blankness.



She saw a white ceiling once her eyes wide opened again. The air conditioner swirled lightly next to the television. The heart monitor machine beeped next to her bed. She was surprised to find herself dressed in a white patient gown—the hospital.

“How did I get here?”

“We’re in Bisbee,” Elle said emotionlessly while sitting on the chair next to her bed. She already dressed differently with a white blouse covered in cream coat. “Your dad went to Austria by himself to take all of you, and he handled the case from the location.”

“So, we’re home,” her eyes flinched. “And you say—the case?”

“The abandoned castle became a presumable inquiry. The intervention of your best friend as a witness had perplexed the police.”

“Josh?” She worried. “What did he say? What is really happened?”

“I can’t quite agree to make your stress level increase.”

Cathy annoyed that angel didn’t focus to look into her eyes. She followed where those emerald eyes stared out, she surprised with another presence from outside this patient bedroom’s window. A stranger stood gawkily in the corridor—a girl, perhaps shared the same age and as tall as Cathy. The girl wore a black beanie, covering her long black hair, she wore a jacket and skinny jeans, all black from head to toe which contrasted with her white



skin. It seemed that the girl looked scared of something when her pair of honey brown eyes squinted at the white hair angel.

“What’s wrong with her?” Cathy murmured.

The girl ran awkwardly from their sight. Elle kept her eyes as sharp as an eagle, and said, “She knows what I am.”

“As in what?”

Elle paused, glancing in disbelief at her.

“An angel, I supposed?” Cathy guessed.

The environment went silent, only the heart monitor machine that beeped loudly.

Cathy had no idea about that girl, she never saw her.

The distraction broke her peaceful moment, the pain on her head and legs were real. She just realized that her forehead also got bandaged.

At the time, she remembered about her mom immediately. “My mom still in here, isn’t she?”

“You have been asleep in coma for three days, and your mom went worst.”

“What do you mean?” She snarled in annoyance. “I need to see her.”

Elle rose from the chair and pushed her back to lean down. The angel showed no mercy.

Cathy narrowed her eyes, at once questioning the chronology of how she really ended up here. As she recalled, the waterfall was the last place she fell that she lost her consciousness. Therefore, she just remembered that she was in the same hospital as her mom. Her curiosity toward her mom's condition was gorgonized.

“Take your time to rest first.”

She grimaced. “I have enough of sleep. Will you just let me do what I want?”

“Of your freedom to knock out, or a mere curiosity?”

They stared at each other. “Can you just don't rag on me?” Cathy sighed heavily. “Some people would tolerate with your sarcasm, but some don't.”

Elle shot sharp eyes so deeply at her. Cathy somehow felt frightened. The current atmosphere won't make a total fuss over their argument.

“Well, if you want to enjoy your confusion alone—”

Elle paced away from the room, walking out infuriatedly after Cathy left her with a few distinct words. There was a sentimental condemnation on her

own thought that she felt wrong to admonish an angel, as in fact, she was only a little human.

The turbulence sound from the air conditioner in front of her bed was buzzing in her ears.

Her eyes locked on the ceiling, she felt the room went solitude for about fifteen minutes. Unaccompanied. Until someone had burst from the door, her eyes turned to notice her best friend was exhausted from running.

“Josh?” Her eyes wide opened, and she rose to sit on the bed. “What happened?”

“I am terribly worried about you,” he said, panting. “As soon as Elle phoned me, I rode my bike to the hospital.”

“Gosh, please sit down, and drink my water,” she let him to have a comfortable time, and he gulped it without leaving a single drop.

“But first, what’s wrong with her sarcastic welcome at my face?”

She noticed that he referred it to Sylvia Elle. “Just—we have a different comprehension.”

“Really?” He doubted. “She isn’t usually doing a sarcasm to just anyone.”

“How can you tell?”

“Uh, she was nice when helping your dad to handle a few questions from Austrian government about, well,” he looked pale to tell her. “The conviction over *the lost castle*.”

“What do you mean it’s lost?”

“I told them I knew what I saw, but the thing became quite complicated,” he was breathless. “Okay, the abandoned castle had existed before the police arrived to check around the location since Carl Dalton had reported a missing person to them. When I found you near that place, you were already unconscious, but I literally saw that massive castle alright!”

“How come?”

“The police thought how unhinged I am about my persistency,” he peeved. “There was no evidence, but Scott saw his mother came out from that castle with a business man. So unfortunate that the police arrived late. Scott didn’t say anything to them.”

“That’s right, Chantel Herron was with me.”

“What?”

“She’s the witch who has something to do with my mom’s family,” Cathy said. “She almost killed me for her vicious sake—the portal.”

“Was she hurting you?”

“Almost, along with her demons,” she recalled the pain. “Oh, about the witch part, have you read Mr. Dalton’s book?”

“Oh, yes, peeking actually, and he talked about it,” he recalled. “The Devil named Kyra who gave power to one of the gypsy descendants.”

“Do you believe it?”

He paused to stare at her, “I don’t know.”

“If you were there with me, if you could only see,” she sighed. “The portal is real, Elle has told the real thing.”

“Alright, I just don’t want to sound hypocrite, but it’s still hard to believe,” he murmured. “I saw the demons. Elle was right about the weapons.”

Her eyes tensed. “Did Scott—”

“No, he was peeping his mother who got escaped. It was only me.”

“Josh—I am sorry, I should have come back sooner.”

“It was horrified to meet such creatures. I thought I had a bad dream. Luckily, I knew how to use a gun, then, I found you fainted near the waterfall, with Elle held your body so tight,” he sounded frustrated. “The two of you were gone for two days. It caused the three of us went hysteric. Mr. Dalton called your dad first, until he arrived and looked depressed. But our first finding wasn’t succeed in the forest,” he sighed. “So, he called the police later.”

“What’s the status case?”

“Closed.”

A few nurses were walking through the corridor as they stared at each other silently.

“Did the police track the location address?”

“Yes, they found nothing. There has never been any castle, they said,” he informed. “By the way, what were you two doing in that restricted area?”

“The demons almost got us, Elle tried to vanish them, and the things just started happening when I followed her,” she murmured. “Have you come to think, why the place is restricted?”

He shrugged. The silence remained.

“That’s why, the truth locked inside,” she said, staring solemnly at him. “I went inside the portal.”

“Okay, it’s insane, I know you need some rest—”

“You’re not listening!” She snarled. “How could you deny it when you already saw the demons?”

“I’m not trying to deny, but to make sense—”

She was infuriated. “Do you think superstition need a sense of logic?”

“Cathy, please, I read books too, alright,” he said. “But—I still get used to with your mom’s rule about avoiding any paranormal talk.”

“My mom?” She narrowed her eyes. “You mean, you are not skeptical?”

“No, it’s just your mom. She knew that Martha told me enough fairy tales. Becoming superstitious is how I grew up, although not as much as you do.”

“Why did you lie?”

“I know how hard your mom lives through it, Martha just told me yesterday. There’s must be a reason for everything,” he felt remorse.

“I know the reason.”

He stared at her with compassion. It felt like he knew what kind of journey she had been through in the forest, with a profound mark that she had showed a sorrow and rage.

Josh dragged the chair closer to her bed. His avowal had led the situation to feel awkward, so he changed the topic, “Do you know Scott has skipped school for some days to search for his mother?”

Cathy shook her head.

“Yeah, that Portland detective just announced her furlough by yesterday. Everyone in the Bisbee Police Department, including your dad has wondered against her act.”

“Mrs. Herron just went away?”

“A retreat in German for about three months,” he smirked. “She had just worked for a few days, how come such a professional would do that?”

“No one caught her presence in Austria, except Scott and you?”

“It was a gigantic fortune, huh?” He chattered. “I mean, she could be arrested for her violent act toward you—”



Her thought hovered into something else while he was blurting alone. Her eyes attached on the ceiling. As she recalled the last days in Austria, it was counted as the overweening event. She could be more restless for thinking exaggeratedly about the truth. At least, she could breathe the air easier in this small room.



The winds had witnessed the morning catastrophe.

His black eyeballs followed the flowing river from below this steep cliff. He won't blame himself for what he did, despite his outcome thought over the punishment. The moment had come since he knew that everything would be over. It was faster than what he expected.

The footstep sounded behind him, slow and careful. His boss arrived to check on his job.

“Where is she?” His boss demanded.

That big ogre didn't answer. Wrezire noticed his nervousness.

It only took five seconds to make his boss disappointed in resolute anger. Wrezire stood against

him, dressed in pinstripe suit. He was grinning as his willingness had emerged to suffocate the ogre.

“If she dies, every effort we have done will be useless,” he talked wisely while observing the trembling ogre. “You know that it’s hard for all of us to find such a great blood in this huge world.”

He approached his face closer. “If she dies, we can’t open that door,” he chuckled, “and you no longer serve us good.”

The ogre could feel a real anger around his atmosphere. Therefore, Wrezire threw him hardly behind the tree. The ogre had his long life ended, he wouldn’t return to this human’s world since he would stay in hell—forever.

# 18

## FEAR AND TREPIDATION

THE NEXT MORNING SHE AWOKE, her thought oscillated to Haile.

She paced slowly while everyone looked busied in the corridor. Her mom's bedroom only a few blocks from where she was. She pushed the door carefully. The environment was quiet. The air conditioner wasn't as noisy as in her room. There—her eyes stopped at the pale woman who still asleep.

She held her mom's hand. "I might've wondered a lot, why haven't you waked up?"

The clock kept ticking above them, breaking the silence. This was eight a.m. in the hospital. She had been

waiting for a miracle to come, and yet, there was no sign when she prayed.

It wasn't a falsity hope—Haile finally opened her eyes in astonishment. “Cathy, my dear?”

“Mom, how are you?” She almost got torn off.

“So it's true,” Haile murmured as her eyes bulged out at the clothes that her daughter wore. “When did you return home?”

“Just a few days ago, my coma had caused dad to get us by himself.”

“Your dad had told me yesterday night, but—us, who?” She wondered. “I mean, besides Sylvia Elle.”

“You have awoken early?” She was more than blissful. “There were many things that occurred, included about the abandoned castle became a closed case, and besides Elle, there were Josh and Scott.”

“Your friends truly love you, Cathy,” Haile smiled. “For the closed case, don't bother to think further, Manson will cover the rest to hide you from any brutal media and reporters who won't get exhausted from finding about the rumor.”

“The Austrian government already handled it, right?”

“Of course, just in case if it would explode internationally.”

The silence was breakthrough. Cathy got something to question again, “Did Mr. Herron visit you?”

Haile glanced at her brown eyes. “No, I’m not so sure, but—”

“What?” Cathy wondered.

“When I woke up, I got a premonition that you were being murdered in Austria. I mean, the idea of Chantel would do that has been frustrating me.”

“I’m good, I’m alive,” Cathy comforted her. “Even though what happened was brutal, especially inside the portal, she won’t be able to do such thing because God and Elle stayed there for me—”

“Cathy, you are more than lucky. No one has a chance like you—to see the truth,” Haile murmured weakly. “I never see the place by myself, except to read about it from some books, and what the elders had told me.”

Somehow, she felt peeved. “Besides the truth that you hid, now you show a premonition?”

Haile showed her disappointment as they stared at each other. “My love, it’s never a simplicity to tell you. Won’t you forgive me?”

A knock on the door had startled them. The doctor in a blonde hair and pale skin walked alone to the room. He smiled gently. Cathy still remembered he was Clay Breckenwood, the cardiologist who took care of her mom’s illness.

“How are you, mam?”

“I guess, just fine,” Haile answered, her voice sounded languid.

The doctor stood in front of her bed while opening a medical record file in his hand. “You seem to make a progress. It is a good sign.”

“Does it mean my mom can go home by now?” Cathy asked.

He stared down at her, welcoming her presence. “Ah, your daughter, right?” He looked at Haile who nodded. “Aren’t you supposed to be in your room?”

“The nurse said, I can return by tomorrow morning,” she informed.

“Well, that’s great, my daughter just about the same age as Miss Charlotte, maybe you two can get along,” he smiled friendly. “*Petunia* is having a hard time to walk alone in Bisbee.”

“You have a daughter?” Haile sounded disbelief.

Doctor Clay flinched like he wanted to hide some parts about it. Everyone in town only knew that he always lived independently. “Yes, from my divorced-wife.”

Haile seemed to read his worried expression. “My daughter can accompany *Petunia* for good,” she squinted at her while squeezing her palm. “Cathy seems to heal quickly than I am.”

Cathy could read her mom’s unspoken code about the matter. “Yeah, of course, I’d like to.”

“That’s very nice of you,” he relieved. “She’s in the waiting room, just in case if you—”

Cathy rose from her chair. “I’ll see her.”

The doctor thanked her enormously. He didn’t seem to have enough time for his daughter. Clay blamed himself as he couldn’t be a good father yet.

The corridor had a different aroma from lemon to rosemary. Cathy wondered what it was. Her eyes were still roaming around to find the girl, according to what the Doctor had described that Petunia would be the only adolescence in this hospital besides her. The aroma struck her nose more sharply, which was coming from the waiting room. She paused at the corner of the small room to observe the only girl who sat on the bench. Her heart felt like stopped to pump, and her eyes surprised to realize that Petunia was the same girl as the one who peeped behind her patient bedroom's window. That girl still wore the same clothes of all black.

Briefly, Cathy could somehow feel the pain that the girl had endured. She saw the bitterness on her face.

Petunia was too quiet, she drowned herself into an endless reverie, her mind tangled through a sickness boundary.

The fluorescence on the ceiling glimpsed a sharp light at her bright brown eyes. A few people walked across in the corridor. She won't turn to look at any of them. Petunia kept her eyes focused at her thighs. A moment was last as her impractical sadness. She prayed for her



mother who was undergoing a hard examination, it had been three days with no progression yet.

It seemed she didn't notice that Cathy already approached her. "So, you're Mr. Breckenwood's daughter?"

Petunia headed up and startled. "Ye-yes?"

"I'm Cathy Charlotte," she offered to shake hands while Petunia seemed to hesitate, and they did it anyway. "My mother is being taken care under your dad's treatment," Cathy sat down beside her and tried not to act like a thief while that girl seemed to tremble a lot. "How come I never see you before?"

"I lives in New York," her eyes blinked too fast. "I've come here to escort my mother for her treatment."

"What's her illness?"

*"Ischemic stroke."*

Cathy could see the agony on her face when Petunia mentioned it. Ischemic stroke considered as a blood clot that blocked the brain from receiving a blood vessel, and people called it as a brain attack. Therefore, she didn't dare to intrude into questioning a further matter, it might consider rude.

The silence wasn't last forever when Petunia returned to ask her, "Where is your friend?"

Cathy peered unsure at her. "You mean, Elle?"

"The white hair girl."

"Oh, she's not around now," Cathy smiled. "May I know—what was making you stopped at my bedroom's window?"

Petunia seemed to fidget about it, her fingers won't stop lingered restlessly on each other. In no second, she turned her face at Cathy. "I just want to tell you that, you're not making friend with human," she talked so fast. "Oh, dang it, I did it again," she murmured in disappointment.

Cathy didn't understand with her odd behavior.

"Please don't tell my father—I told you that," she fidgeted. "He might take me to the asylum again."

Cathy perplexed for a second. "What do you mean *the asylum*?"

"Believe me, you won't stay in that hell place for even a minute. I saw countless bad things in there," she said pathetically. "The doctors let me returned home because I

pretended to heal from my nightmares—people only want to hear what they want to hear, right?”

“You stayed in one of the New York’s asylum?”

Petunia nodded, her regret face only looked down at the white floor.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell him,” Cathy assuaged that girl who had a restless heart. “You’re not the only one who can see *things*,” her avowal made Petunia bulged out. “Because you’re right—Elle isn’t human.”

“Do you—” Petunia flinched nervously while her words were hard to speak out. “You’re no ordinary,” she suspected. “I supposed that your friend have a clausal charade on her green eyes whenever she accompanied your night sleep.”

“What’s your guess?”

Petunia smiled a little. “I never met an entity whose vibe as strong as her, despite a little knowledge that I have, she’s probably a celestial?”

“Wait—you know what is a celestial?” Cathy shrank her amazement. “People at our age won’t bother to know, right?”

“I think you’re older than me,” she observed. “I’m fifteen.”

“Two years difference still consider as one generation,” Cathy argued.

Petunia shrugged. “Well, at least we’re attending high school. Will you have a graduation this year?”

She took a heavy breath, and nodded impassively.

“School is hard, isn’t it?” Petunia knew the feeling. “Especially when supernatural is becoming the main food for my eyes.”

Cathy squinted at her. “What was your nightmare that got you into the asylum?”

“Scary things. Monsters. Stigmata enemies. Like everything you’ve heard in a legend story. I’ve seen it every day.”

Cathy noticed how sleepy those pair of honey brown eyes that looked almost similar like her own, and the depth imprinted the keenness. Petunia was a sweet and shy girl, although her appearance looked unnoticeable and almost always talked without staring at her interlocutor.

“I guess you can’t be here for too long, a nurse will be mad at you,” she giggled.

“Ah, right,” Cathy realized, she rose from the bench. “I’ll return home by tomorrow, can we meet again?”

She stared up at her. “Why?”

Cathy almost got guffawed. “If you ever need a superstitious people, I’ll be the one,” she smiled. “I can be your tour guide too.”

Petunia was silent to feel her heart got drummed. Cathy noticed the happiness on her face.

“I’ll be glad, but can we just visit one place for the sightseeing?”

“Patagonia Lake?” She recommended instantly. “It’s the best scenery—no dry place, very green.”

“I’ll wait for you in the hospital’s lobby.”

Cathy waved her a goodbye hand and left her alone. The air was easier to breathe when they finally found a mutual interest at each other for becoming superstitious.

0 0 0

The next morning, Manson helped to carry her suitcase. Cathy was grateful that her dad took a day off—the family became his main priority now.

As they walked out to the lobby, a smell of rosemary was getting closer. Cathy knew it would be Petunia whose perfume was identical. She hailed her head to welcome them politely.

“Oh, Mr. Breckenwood’s daughter?” He noticed. “How’s your mom’s condition?”

Manson made a good friendship with the doctor during Haile’s treatment. They were more than just acquaintance. He knew some parts of Breckenwood’s matter now—as a detective.

“My mom has been doing training to move her legs’ numbness. There’s still not enough progress to show,” she chinned down to hide her glossy eyes.

Manson realized how guilty he was to ask a very sentimental thing. “Well, your mom is a tough woman,” he punched her shoulder lightly.

“Yeah,” Cathy nodded.

Petunia squinted at her. “You can go first to Patagonia Lake, I’ll be there soon.”

“What’s wrong?” Cathy bewildered. “Do you know how to get there?”

She squeezed her black satchel bag. “My dad gave me a map, I hope I can read the signs,” she was breathless. “I need to help my mother for her breakfast, so—”

“Okay,” Cathy agreed. “Let’s meet there by ten a.m.”

They smiled in farewell, and continued to approach the parking lot. Manson opened the front door for his daughter after he threw the suitcase on the back seat.

“Alright, today is Friday, where your school absence is my concern to take care of,” he sighed while turning on the car engine. “The principal was looking for you.”

“I didn’t go to school for almost a week,” Cathy won’t bother her thought to remember the monotonous days of being a student, but the circumstance already returned to the everyday routine. “I’m sorry, dad.”

“Please don’t,” he giggled. “You just need to go rest during this weekend.”

Cathy relieved that her dad would be a life saver. School seemed boring since she couldn’t enjoy the fresh air while meeting with bunch of the crowds.

Nevertheless, a car trip to the neighborhood only took fifteen minutes. Cathy missed her home already. There was nothing really changed though. The yard was

smelled so flourish like usual, she wondered if her dad would go into the gardening stuff.

“Did you water all the flowers?”

Manson stopped at the terrace as soon as he opened the entrance door. “No, but Josh’s grandmother did.”

“Martha?” She murmured.

The car horned loudly outside the wooden fence. They squinted at the same time. Cathy noticed the car was hers—a *silver Ford Edge 2011*. The wheels were repaired like brand new since she left to Austria. Josh was the driver, and he came out to greet the landlord.

“Morning, Mr. Charlotte,” he smiled, and he turned to Cathy. “Your car is shiny again. It has become the perfect contribution for the Bisbee’s repair shop. I mean they glad that someone would come into the shop.”

“Good, big thanks,” Cathy giggled thankfully. “Do you want a treat of a *punch toss*?”

“You owe me,” he snarled when she referred it as an energy drink.

“Kids, be good at each other,” Manson said while lifting the suitcase at the edge of the door. “Oh, don’t



forget about Miss Breckenwood—you have an appointment.”

As her dad entered to the house, Josh wanted to snap a question. “Is she the doctor’s daughter?”

“Didn’t you meet her in the hospital?” She baffled when Josh shrugged for sure. “It’s Petunia Breckenwood. I guess she’s not into a calamity crowd.”

Josh guffawed. “It sounds like you, back in the old days, and even now,” he couldn’t stop blurting. “Look at my little baby—you’ve made a new friend!” He relieved at some point

“Yeah, all in the introvert category,” she commented and chuckled at once.

He swiped for the main topic after Cathy sighed, “What’s with the appointment?”

“We’ve planned to take a walk in Patagonia Lake, do you want to come?”

“Sure,” he agreed. “Oh, and I miss you like hell, those days seemed hard you know.”

They stared out and grinned back like something was funny to think about what happened in their journey, despite the fact, Cathy became a healthy adolescent again.

“Well, let’s go after I pack out my stuff.”



An hour later, Cathy drove her shiny car while Josh was navigating their way to the lake. She felt like slightly amnesia of what road to take around Bisbee, and she got enough jetlag to confront with.

The car just came across with a huge sign board that told them to go straight from the river. Cathy began to remember that the last time was when Josh rode her with a bike to this path. There were trees on both sides of the long road. It was tremendously quiet, only a few cars were parked in front of a small traditional restaurant on the north area.

“At least this district never as asleep as Sierra Vista, isn’t it?”

Cathy braked the clutch to stop across the restaurant. “Do you have to mention it?”

“Hey, the river is a mile away from here!” Josh barked. “Okay, sorry about that ghost town.”

Cathy eyed him an exasperation look. “You make me recall the nightmare I saw on those evil faces.”

“Excuse me?” He surprised. “Around the abandoned castle?”

“The castle is also the important relict of my mom’s ancestor.”

“Mr. Dalton told me—your mom is a royal descendant of the Aloise,” he murmured while looking at her popeyed eyes, he knew what was that, “don’t worry, Scott didn’t listen to his story as much as I did.”

“Hey—”

“Because his mom is a witch, huh?” Josh blurted. “Those evil faces were demons—I know it.”

“Honestly, I feel a bit uneasy about him,” Cathy sighed.

“He didn’t even take a visit to the hospital for you, he just went away after we got home together.”

“Scott must have been worried for his mother, he knew the truth, right?”

“Maybe he resent her, hate her, and I know he is so full of himself—”

Cathy started the engine again while Josh kept on blurting of his own huge annoyance.

Soon after, they arrived at the park. She stopped her car at the edge of the entrance gate. A few meters from the car, they saw a girl with black beanie stood alone against the shallow river.

“Is that Breckenwood’s daughter?” Josh popeyed. “I think I saw her before.”

“You should have been, she’s Petunia Breckenwood,” Cathy said while pulling off her seat belt.

“Is she always dress up all black?” Josh wondered.

Cathy smiled a little as it was a matter of preference. “C’mon, just let’s go,” she slammed the car door.

They walked out together at the foreshore. Josh whispered, continuing their small talk, “I mean the clothes, it’s kind of show someone’s personality, is she going dark, mystery, or some kind of alien maniac?”

“In a manner of speaking, will you going to ask her like that?” Cathy narrowed her eyes at him.

“Is it okay?” He giggled. “She doesn’t even realize we’ve arrived.”

Cathy stared at the girl whose face still stared down toward the river. Until she called out her name, Petunia

finally headed up at them with a morose look that was always painted on her pale face.

“Hey, sorry we’re late.”

“No, I just got here earlier.”

The winds blew delicately on their cheeks. For a while, she locked her eyes at Josh.

“This is Josh Kingsley, my very close friend,” Cathy introduced him. “We’re attending the same high school in Bisbee.”

“Nice to meet you, Miss Breckenwood,” Josh greeted.

“I am younger than both of you, please just call me Petunia,” she didn’t even smile at them.

The time went a bit awkward when they spent to walk together at the foreshore. Petunia seemed to find it hard, being such an open person than Cathy did. She was the one who made the atmosphere to feel gawky since she stayed silent.

Josh still tried to find any idea to break the ice, while Cathy seemed to enjoy the fresh air around.

“So, the earlier story, you are from New York?” Josh repeated the previous topic.

“Yes.”

“Did you enjoy your sophomore high school?”

“Not really.”

Josh sighed because there wasn't enough space in his head to ask the same question since she would answer it too shortly. “Okay, I mean, will you go to their finest university later?”

“I never plan to continue anyway.”

“Why don't you stay with your dad rather than going back and forth like this?” Cathy asked in the middle of their small talk.

This time, Petunia stopped and gazed at her. “My parents are divorced. There's no way I can leave my mother alone in New York, all over her body is numb.”

“Don't you have anyone in there?”

She stood frozenly. “Yes, but I won't leave her—you don't know how many times you can spend with the one you love most, I feel like it's—”

Cathy heard her trembled voice, and her fingers fidgeted.

“Day by day, it's getting worse,” her eyes almost got torn off. “It has been a very long time my mother lives with ischemic stroke,” Petunia couldn't hide her sadness

when she talked. “Especially with the problematic life I have.”

Cathy remembered the last part was the asylum she lived in. Their stillness seemed to make the universe to overhear that conversation in silent. Josh was staring pitifully at her.

“Your nightmares—”

Petunia snapped her words immediately, “Yes, it’s still happening to me. Bad dreams.”

“That sort of nightmare like monster?” Josh asked.

She nodded without looking back at him.

Cathy had an idea suddenly, and she didn’t even know if it would be a good thing. “Probably, you need to meet Sylvia Elle, she knows everything about *metaphysic*.”

“Seriously, what’s anything to do with that theme?” Josh snapped.

“Nightmare may happen for a specific reason, and she got it constantly, right?” Cathy stared at her. She might be in a right or wrong decision to bring her to an angel. “It’s something unseen.”

“Really? Does she need to meet Elle for that?” Josh argued. “You just need to Google it for a solution, or take one or two pills for good.”

Cathy sighed in disbelief at him. “Don’t blurring, and stop denying what you know.”

“I’ve got full of stupidity,” Josh gave up and walked ahead from them.

Although knowing random things they encountered in Austria was real in front of their human eyes, it seemed like a momentary prejudice to think about it as a logical matter.

“Who is Sylvia Elle?”

Cathy returned to look back at Petunia with an inscrutable smile. “The white hair girl you’ve seen before.”

“Oh, I don’t know, it’s not a good idea.”

Petunia walked away from the foreshore immediately. Cathy followed from behind, and she tried to make her pace balance with that girl who was shorter.

“Why are you afraid? She won’t bite you!”

“Just no!”



Cathy grabbed her shoulder and stopped her for a moment. “It’s okay, she’s a really nice person.”

“She’s not even human!” Petunia barked. “I can feel it!”

“You shouldn’t be afraid of *the light*, right?” Cathy decoded it quickly. “What’s wrong with celestial being?”

“Forget it.”

Petunia ran toward the black sedan, precisely it was her father’s personal car. The atmosphere that she left had remained awkward, and worst. Everything seemed to feel uncomfortable when Petunia drove the car, getting out from Patagonia Lake.

Josh was behind her to ask what just happened, even though he already caught her expression as a certain answer without need to explain it.

“It’s a dismay.”

“She has rejected your offer, I see.”

“My central question would be—why she’s afraid of the light when she haunts by the dark?”

“Your question isn’t a metaphor,” Josh popeyed sublimely. “You’re literally saying it, the light means Elle as an angel, and—”

“The dark as her nightmare,” she continued.

“Agreeable,” he chuckled. “You know, the second I saw her, there’s just something not in the place, that’s why I don’t want to discuss the thing with you earlier.”

Her mind was vague to believe his brief reason.

“Is it some kind of your incognito or hypocrite?” She suppressed.

“Forgive me, my lady,” he hailed kiddingly. “My instinct said not to bother Miss Breckenwood with that sort of topic, and it got me right.”

“You’re jerk,” she annoyed.

He quickly tickled her waist to make her mood raised up again. They guffawed together as a really great best friend. Cathy surely needed a moment to feel happy after what she had been through. Soon, they continued to have a breakfast in a previous small restaurant across this place. The atmosphere went great for a day.

# 19

## A FORGOTTEN PROSE

ON SATURDAY EVENING, the dark sky was above the hospital building.

Petunia sat alone on the bench with eyes flickered against the deathly luminescent light at the ceiling. She waited alone in a different side of area—the backyard. All that she saw was green grasses, one obsolete red old car, and wire fence.

The environment stayed desolate, until she stared back shyly to find Cathy walked through the open corridor of the the terrace. She dressed in a brown coat and thick boots.

“Oh, Petunia, you’re still here?”

She only nodded.

“I just look out for an available bathroom, I guess they have quite a few.”

Cathy kept on smiling while Petunia didn't enjoy her little humor with that pale cheeks showed no felicity.

Just a while, Cathy noticed a piece of paper in her hand. There was something she wanted to know and understand about this quiet girl, although Petunia didn't seem to welcome her approach. It turned awkward for a moment.

“What is that?”

Petunia clenched the paper. “A poem.”

“You wrote a poem?”

She rose from the bench to lean on the wall. Cathy followed her to stand oppositely.

“No, my mom wrote this before her stroke got worse.”

“May I see it?”

Petunia walked forward to show her the poem. In a glimpse of this dark evening, she started observing the beautiful italicized handwriting on that flimsy paper, written with black ink.

*The lies beneath a mountain,  
sought high as the perceivable butterfly,  
as she's go up, up, like fireflies.  
—a forgotten prose*

“Why it called a prose, you said it’s a poem?”

Petunia stared at her for a second. “A prose is originally a Latin word, means *straightforward*,” she took back the paper quickly. “My mom wrote it without gave it a second thought, and then I read it like a poem.”

“What does the poem mean?”

“It’s to let me know how dying is supposed to feel like.”

“*The lies*—what is it?” Cathy wondered.

She seemed to contemplate it. “Something that my mom felt as the lies that is hiding in a gigantic form, everything can spark free to fly, and let loose,” Petunia felt the grief. “She wants to loose from her sickness.”

“It’s an analogy that she made,” an impeccable idea was being treasured on her mind that it felt strange. “It’s beautiful. She must be a good writer.”

“My mom was a lawyer—actually,” Petunia corrected. “She stopped being a lawyer when I was ten—the first time she got a stroke,” her eyes turned glossy, “and as the first painful period of my life to feel a nightmare of the asylum.”

“Why it happened concurrently with your mom disease?”

Petunia sighed. “I don’t think the doctors were right that I was haunted by a hallucination,” she protested. “They’re real, even now. The monsters.”

“Some kind like demon?” Cathy guessed. “The thing is—you can never tell that to just anyone.”

“Cathy, I see how absurd the world is,” she walked a little closer to face her. “Can you see a scary stuff like I do?”

She narrowed her eyes in disbelief. “That’s not a challenge you’ve referred,” Cathy reassured. “Some stuff just need to stay in the place, when some don’t, there must be something to be fixed.”

“Are you saying that I’m a broken doll, because I went to the asylum?”

Cathy gazed solemnly at her, reading her tension. “No. I said something need to be fixed.”

Petunia chuckled. “You’re just like them to think how freak I am.”

“You keep thinking negative,” she grimaced. “That’s why you need to meet Syl—”

A distinct voice surprised them afterward, “Who need a comrade for a piggybank explanation?”

They turned their eyes at the terrace to see a beautiful white hair girl had stood awaited before she approached them to speak aboveboard.

“Sylvia Elle!” Cathy excited to see her again. “Pretty palpably.”

Elle wore the same long coat like yesterday when she accompanied Cathy in the hospital, although no one would question her everyday clothes that looked rarely changeable.

They all stood in the edge of the terrace’s backyard. Petunia seemed to step back slowly from this encounter. Cathy noticed that girl was feeling a bad tension, and looked frightened.

“Don’t go,” Cathy said.

Petunia stared loathingly at her. “Why can’t I?”

“Was this the little girl that peeking in your window?” Elle knew it for sure. “Nice to meet you there.”

They stood two meters away from each other. Petunia truly had a defensive space within herself.

“She’s my good friend, she knows how to help you about the nightmare,” Cathy explained.

“No, you both don’t.”

“Until you can suppress a despondent heart, it might be easier to help yourself not to fall into straw,” Elle said wisely.

Petunia glanced at that white hair angel with a perplexing mind. Her honey brown eyes got frightened to stare back at those keen eyes.

“Y-you,” she spoke nervously. “Are you even human?!”

Elle kept gazing at her pale face. “Hold what you believe in.”

The tranquility atmosphere was still in the air, but Petunia felt her forehead began sweating.

“She said monsters are everywhere in her vision,” Cathy told empathically. “Elle, you know how to tell people about the knowledge.”

That angel walked closer to observe her face. “Is it?”

Petunia stood trembling.

“Dear, your obsessive compulsive against supernatural is a wrongdoing of your own thought. It



seems you are the one who attracting that kind of energy to be your sleepwalker.”

“The demons are really disturbing her?” Cathy confused.

“Yes and no,” she answered.

“Come on, Elle, how come?” Cathy was the one who got worried. “You need to help her.”

“Only if she agrees to help herself, it doesn’t seem that way, huh?” Elle was crossing arms while talking.

Cathy stared back at Petunia who won’t speak up. “Don’t you feel tired about it?” She almost snarled. “Don’t tell me you want to come back to that asylum—”

“Of course no!” Petunia finally snarled. “But, she won’t hurt me, right?”

“I won’t eat a flesh of a little girl—is that what you want me to say?” Elle annoyed.

“Sorry,” Petunia murmured.

The angel knew when the human would be ready. This was their momentum of silence. The luminescent lamp radiated brightly during their encounter, and the winds rustled mildly at the backyard.

Elle began to step forward, reaching for her cold hand. She closed her eyes for a few seconds, while seemingly doing nothing but holding hands, but her breath had dragged away the paranoia on Petunia's mind.

Slowly she sighed. "Done."

"What is done?" Cathy baffled.

Petunia felt a bit dizzy as they released each other's hands. "Like there's something come out from my chest, it feels relieve."

"Consider this on your mind: don't intrude a monster that's asleep," Elle said to make both of them perplexing. "This isn't purely behold on your thought. *A spell*, I say."

"Someone put a spell on her?" Cathy astonished.

"A spell to make this girl always attracting a bad thing, someone put a magnet into your membrane."

"There's must be a history how you got it," Cathy impulsively worried.

"I don't know, it's confusing," Petunia muttered.

"The same thing has happening with your mother, but as a *great spell*," Elle seemed to read something incredibly hazardous in the past.

“It’s a disease—how can you tell?” Petunia couldn’t know the reason. “We’re rarely making a social contact with anybody.”

“Probably no, but when your mother was still a *lawyer*,” Cathy reminded her.

Elle immediately shot her keen eyes at Petunia. “You better take care of yourself, sleep tight tonight.”

“Oh, I’ll be in an airplane at nine tonight,” Petunia informed. “It’s time for us to go home,” she peeped at her watch. “I need to go now, sorry.”

“Have great days in New York,” Cathy waved goodbye as seeing her walked away.

During the whole short time that they had together, Cathy would miss her after this conversation. The atmosphere they shared was more than just acquaintance.

At the last moment, Petunia waved back at both of them, and then she headed back to the hospital’s corridor.

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It was a mere breakdown of her inability to stand still in front of the door, until one nurse greeted her.

“Aren’t you going to the room?”

Cathy was restless for the last an hour and got lost on her own mind.

“Will you?” The nurse asked twice.

She smiled back at the nurse who carried a bunch of files. “Excuse me, does Mr. Breckenwood allow my mom to return yet?”

“Oh, he did tell me. It’s today,” the nurse touched her shoulder, sympathetically. “That’s why I’m here to help Mrs. Charlotte to pack her belonging.”

She smiled widely. “God, thank you.”

The nurse leaded her to open the door, at the same time, they saw that Haile tried to raise up from the bed. The environment was better, only a small amount of medicine aroma still surrounded in the air.

“Mom, you look healthier!” Cathy hugged her immediately, and realized that her mom already changed into a shirt and jeans.

“I’d be glad to help in here,” the nurse shouted while packing her clothes into a bag, which hung inside a small cabinet.

Haile sparked a smile to welcome them. “It’s been so long I have no fresh air, how’s town these days?”

Cathy sighed. “Not perfect without you.”

Her mom shot glossy eyes at her. “Oh, c’mon, I know how bad you miss me,” she could feel her mom was touching her eyelid softly. “Can you take my black coat in the bathroom?”

“Sure,” Cathy walked quickly to the west side of the room.

When she returned, the nurse seemed to work as fast as the wind that the bag was already placed above the sofa. “Mrs. Charlotte, your check out confirmation has done by your husband, you may return safely now.”

“Thank you, Nurse,” Haile smiled back.

After that slender nurse left them in the room, Cathy gave the coat to her. The air went silent as she wore her black coat.

“Did you befriend with Petunia?”

Cathy was reticent. “Maybe.”

She popeyed her oddly. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Petunia seems to choose herself as *unspoken person*,” Cathy sighed. “At least, Elle knows how to break that matter.”

“She seems like a real quiet girl,” Haile nodded while talking, “I’ve heard she’s from New York, and this isn’t her weekend for a trip.”

“Absolutely, she just have her nonrefundable airplane tickets for tonight, she’ll be going back with her mom.”

“Clay Breckenwood has tough times for his family, for a precise affliction, even though they are divorced.”

Haile hugged her so tightly. They had a great time to feel no abundance of worriment for a while.

“His family’s condition has reminded me of how important you are Cathy.”

Cathy was speechless, her heart melt with words that so vulnerable to be spoken out. The air conditioner actuated the background noise in their atmosphere.

“I’m afraid to lose you,” her mom murmured. “Especially to let you know how *disarray* the family who raised me.”

Cathy narrowed her eyes, thinking that she had misheard her mom. “The Aloise is that bad to you?” She gulped anxiously. “Is that why you left them, and you stay here?”

“How far did Carl Dalton tell you?” Her mom sounded sarcastic.

“How do you think it is?” Her anger emerged like a gas pump, and she slowly grabbed off her mom’s arms in no second.

“He didn’t tell you about *the chapel?*”

She felt slightly familiar with the term. “The Morizza Chapel?”

Haile observed her face, and waited for an answer.

“The rest of the descendants were raised in that chapel, and got separated as they aged. The chiromancer only mentioned it once—”

“It wasn’t from Dalton that you knew?” Haile sounded mad. “The portal has brought you to know a secret, but you need to concern to be much careful of who do you speak with—”

“Mom, it was with a celestial that I talked to, and Elle was there with me,” she tried to calm her in return.

“It should be Carl Dalton at the first place—”

“Because he doesn’t really know about the family—that’s why you chose him to be my informant, so I

couldn't gain too much secrecy," Cathy shackled. "Will you bring the secret into your grave?"

Cathy's eyes couldn't hide her own sadness. They stared silently.

At that second, Manson came into the room when they were still gazing in tension. He noticed that the atmosphere felt uneasy. "What's going on?"

"Nothing, let's just move from here," Haile said as she walked to take her bag.

Cathy was left with a maze thought about the way her mom would consider to keep another secret again. Her dad was skeptic to see her stood numbly.

"Are you two just had a fight?"

"No, just a misconception," she won't look at his eyes.

"Well, please be good, your mom hasn't fully recovered yet," he was worried.

"I'm sorry dad, I need a little time to recharge my mind for now," Cathy walked away from the room immediately without giving him a chance to ask in return.

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The clock ticked at eight p.m. when they returned home safely. Her parents already locked their bedroom, sleeping for sure. Cathy was the only who still awoke, she wandered into the kitchen to take a cold water. She walked upstairs again, and still couldn't have a good sleep, that was why she would wander in the corridor.

Two minutes she stood alone, which lasted as a practical illusion on her peripheral eyes. Cathy hesitated to knock the next door. She waited for nothing. The second floor was pretty quiet. It was a bit stupid that she wanted to acknowledge whether Sylvia Elle would stay in the next room. Therefore, she returned to her bedroom again, lying down on her bed.

In the middle of the night, she woke up uncomfortably. A cricket hummed a song within the rustling winds. She might have misheard of something, but a whisperer voice kept on telling her to go to sleep.

She opened the curtain and stared up.

Far beyond the window, she saw the night sky among the stars, like a blue night that commingled with green aurora borealis. Her head might be playing a trick, even though something felt unsure when a few stars fell down

from the sky, those stars swooshed away in a blink of an eye. Bisbee won't be raining by a strange aurora—that was the idea. Especially for a bunch of comets, those sparkling stars rained down constantly now.

Cathy was dumbfounded by the night view. Her hesitation became definite for this epic scenery. She won't blink until she murmured, "*Fallen stars.*"

# 20

## FAREWELL PARTY

**SEVEN MONTHS LATER.** The first week of June.

The mirror reflected her silent reverie. The blue sapphire stayed warm in her grip. She didn't want to expect something beyond the circumstance. Things changed. The connection she embraced was more than justified from the beginning into her soul. There was something to decode and her heart nodded into it. The dream callused in her outer mind. She remembered what it was.

*Fallen stars. Green aurora.*

Her soul beckoned at the greatest hope that her heart embraced, even her contemplation couldn't be undone. Her brown eyes stared again at her white sweater. Her mind rolled out like messy wools. At the time, she noticed the knowledge between good and evil. It was the

truth. The journey she got through had last for its momentary supreme.

She recalled everything, included of what was written in *Emperor of Souls*. That book was in front of her, laid above her dressing table. At least she noted that it was covered behind a fiction label. The history treasured no word that more than reverberation. All the flashbacks she saw were part of someone memories—*Princess Kathleen*.

A knock had startled her. The white hair angel opened the door to say hello. Cathy stared at her movement who leaned on the wall.

“What, Elle?”

“Your mind is louder than anyone. I can’t be annoyed, though.”

Cathy chuckled in a guilty feeling somehow, and they stared at each other in this quiet room.

Elle had her eyes so sharp now, and she spoke, “My conjugation must have been wrong, but you still can’t believe it, can you?”

It was a sudden question to make Cathy flickered confusedly.

“The dream—it’s bugging your sleepless night,” Elle said again. “Won’t you believe me if I told you that it’s not just a mere analogy?”

“Even if it’s not an analogy—”

“It’s the truth, Catherine,” Elle shouted. “You saw them descended from the sky, *the Chandeliers* has compliance for the family’s sake.”

“Who’s descended?” She bewildered.

“You’ve heard me. *Angels*.”

“And the family must be... the Aloise?” Cathy got agitated with the idea. “How can everything is connected the way it is?”

“It’s a complexion of your belief system. I’d say, human’s basic nostrum is their pure soul,” Elle approached her closer, standing behind her as they gazed through the mirror. “This way, you saw a real thing.”

“My dream about Bisbee that was rained with stars and green skeptical aurora, isn’t everything like horror?” Cathy muttered. “I thought I wasn’t just dreaming.”

“They tried to tell you through a dream.”

“Is there something urgent if they’re coming?” Cathy worried. “I mean like a dangerous event.”

For a moment, Elle stayed silent like a statue. “There’s a mission to protect the royal children,” she smiled. “Yeah, they rarely show up to the human world.”

“My dream was a sign?”

“A message for you to understand.”

Cathy closed her mouth. There was fear, but her heart told her not to tremble, not in here with the angel.

“I have a very boring normal life, until I’ve figured out about what my mom has always hid. Do you think this will continue to haunt me?”

Elle narrowed her eyes, and asked, “The challenge?”

Cathy turned to stare at her directly. “The Aloise is somewhere out there with a bunch of secrets they hold. I feel like my mom is still hiding the secrets from me. Why?”

Elle locked her sharp stare at her. The atmosphere began to dense.

“There are certain things in life you need to understand. It’s just not easy,” Elle murmured. “You’ll know someday.”

Her eyes glossed while her heart pounded restlessly. Just at a time, another knock broke the silence.

Her mom came behind the door. “The dinner’s ready.”

They only answered her with a smile. Haile noticed the difference in atmosphere. “What are you two talking about?”

They didn’t answer.

Haile skimmed her eyes around the room, and paused at the thick book on the dressing table. “Have you done with the book?”

“I read it three times,” Cathy said. “But still, isn’t there something you want to explain by yourself?”

Haile stood silent.

“Mom, why don’t you tell me about the Aloise?” She confronted. “Carl Dalton is not even in the circle of the family.”

“You only need to know that there’s limit. There’s a reason why we should leave Bisbee,” her mom brought the topic again.

“You can’t do that,” Cathy disagreed. “I just adapt with this environment. Is it really not about dad’s nomadic work?”

Haile shook her head. “It’s more than that.”

“The culprit always run before get caught,” Elle shouted. “The witch and her demons are somewhere in a new show.”

Haile glared at the white hair angel for reminding that matter. It was a bit tragic to remember the incident that had caused her to lie down in the hospital’s bed.

“Can we just have a dinner?” She demanded.

The two of them went downstairs except Elle, who would like to stay at a windowsill alone.

Manson already sat in the dining room. His eyes locked at the lemonade salmon. Haile just dragged the chair beside him. It was past seven in the evening when they prayed before having a good dinner together.

“So, have you decided on what major will you take?” Her dad asked while chewing the red salmon.

“I have a dilemma for becoming an illustrator,” Cathy muttered. “I mean, I’ve decided to send my application letter to Arizona University.”

Just a second, they heard a spoon was thrown away by Haile who didn’t look happy. “Why didn’t you send it to New York?”

“Mom—”



“Cathy, we have talked about this,” her dad said. “I’m sorry, because of my job you have to be a nomad as well as I am,” he stopped eating as he talked solemnly. “New York is also a great place to start a college life. I can help you to look up somewhere around Brooklyn.”

“Can we stick to the plan, my love?” Haile looked like she tried to calm herself instead for her daughter.

“We will leave so many precious things in here,” Cathy argued. “We haven’t told Josh and Martha yet—”

“They’ll know soon. We’ll move after your graduation,” Haile said.

“My High School graduation is tomorrow morning,” she reminded them.

“If only the Police Department didn’t transfer me to Brooklyn, I mean, being a detective in that place with a high salary, it’s a new challenge, and New York isn’t as quiet as Bisbee,” Manson felt guilty. “I’m sorry, both of you can choose to stay in here.”

“No, we will go,” Haile insisted. “None of us will be apart. The decision is final.”

Cathy gazed at her mom in annoyance. Even though there was a trembling voice in those distinct words, any argument couldn't be won against her mom.

“Well, you've heard your mom, Cathy,” her dad said. “Let's enjoy our food then.”



The fifth June, 2012. Bisbee High School Graduation.

The gymnasium looked spectacular, and random ribbons placed in every corner of the walls. The parents were waiting in their special seats behind those senior students who already dressed up beautifully in their black toga and cap. Everyone looked happy and sad at once. The parents seemed so proud for this last moment that their children finally grown up and got ready to be an adult.

The graduation went well as Liliana began her long speech to thank every single person in High School for their best moment.

After she finished, everyone stared at the next student who walked on the stage. He could stand against the podium calmly while speaking up his graduation speech.

Martha cried to see her grandson dressed in his black toga. Josh spoke as the representative of the most reliable baseball captain in Bisbee, but it turned out as a comedy. He made people laughed out loud. It was like usual, he made a stupid joke that someone like Scott could also laugh.

In there, Cathy could see a glimpse of happiness on his face since he always looked sad after they returned from Austria. She didn't see his mother coming in this graduation party, the detective h gone away.

After the teachers had given their personal speech on the stage, the headmaster closed the graduation event officially, and everyone clapped together as they rose up from their chairs. Soon, the room filled with the chattering sound of the crowd.

Cathy walked out from the gym to the parking lot. She needed to breathe the air while everyone got reunited in a small environment.

Someone knuckled her arm. "Miss Charlotte."

"Ah, Martha," they hugged each other. "I'll miss you forever."

“Time seems to run quickly, and you have grown up along with my grandson—Josh Kingsley is my only life,” there was a teardrop in her cheek when she mentioned his name. “Haile told me that all of you will leave Bisbee for good.”

Cathy couldn’t say anything. She wanted to cry too. “Do you tell him?”

“Not yet,” she hated the goodbye part. “He’ll be hurt.”

They stood along with nothing to debate more than that. Cathy didn’t know if this confusion about moving forward might be complicated her thought.

“I should go, then,” she tapped her arm lightly.

Cathy saw her parents were coming out from the gym’s door to greet her after Martha went away. In the middle of the crowd, they surprisingly saw someone familiar who walked out from the gym too.

“Isn’t it our famous Fam Burk?” Manson greeted as he tapped his shoulder. “How kind of you to visit my daughter’s graduation party.”

“Let’s celebrate it together,” Mr. Burk said, he smiled at them.

He looked a bit different though. His facial expression didn't say so, it wasn't about visiting a friend's daughter. Wendy Jones was beside him with a face who wanted to show something unspoken.

"We want to visit my husband's son," she helped to explain.

"What?" Manson astonished. "I thought you don't have a child."

"No," he needed to tell the truth in the end. "I have a son with my previous wife."

"His son never like the idea of being known—"

"Honey, it's enough," he did seem to avoid the topic, and his face didn't look pretty happy.

"Mr. and Mrs. Burk, is there anything wrong?" Haile asked, as she felt the oddity.

Just for a second, Fam Burk waved his hand in the air at a boy. "Oh, Scott!"

Every single pair of eyes looked at him astonishingly. No one would ever guess so until this afternoon.

Scott sighed for a while as he looked hesitant to approach them since there was Cathy that stood in between. "Hi, dad and—"

“Wendy Jones,” she said and shook hands warmly with him.

“Yeah, daddy’s new wife,” he smiled. “Both of you look happy together,” he made Fam Burk astonished with that nice and polite reaction.

“You know Cathy Charlotte, right?” His dad asked further.

He stared back at her. “Of course. Who don’t know the most beautiful and shy girl in this school?”

Cathy narrowed her eyes oddly at him. That was his first admiration that went public.

“It’s a good start for us to get to know each other,” Manson giggled. “You look exactly like your father.”

“Ah, how about lunch in my restaurant?” Fam Burk said. “It’s a treat from the owner.”

Before they went together, someone called out her name so loudly; it was Josh. He was panting hardly, and he hugged her forcibly in front of everyone, making Scott deliberately jealous.

“When will you guys move to New York?” Fam Burk asked suddenly.

The two boys astonished and disappointed. Their faces looked as if they got hit by a thunder.

“In late June,” Haile answered. “Unfortunately, we should live in a different city.”

“The two of them will be staying in New Rochelle while I’ll be staying in Brooklyn,” Manson added.

Josh had his jaw fell opened, and then he whispered, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I was just about to,” Cathy felt guilty. “Don’t you remember that my dad is a nomad detective?”

“What a complexity!” He snarled. “At least it’s not tomorrow you will disappear.”

“I’m not like ashes,” she giggled.

“Why it should be in a different city?” Fam Burk continued to ask.

“I just miss my little hometown, and my younger sister,” Haile answered, but her shoulders were shrugging on the contrary.

On the other side, Scott finally had a courage to approach both of them who still had a debate. “I’ll miss you, friend,” he managed to say. “I just want to let you know too that I’ll move to Los Angeles.”

“Your hometown,” Cathy murmured. “Why don’t you stay with your dad?” She suggested. “He looks lonely even though he looks happy from outside.”

“I’m an adult now,” he chuckled. “I have a plan to be a worker in there, maybe a police?”

“I think you’ll be suitable as a detective, *just like your mother*,” Josh was talking without a joke, his jaw clenched. “Where is she after the incident?”

“I don’t know,” he shrugged. “But surely she’s still alive, hiding somewhere just like she would usually do,” they knew how sad he was to say it like that. “And I’m sorry how bad my mom was hurting you—”

Cathy managed to smile, although there was a sorrow that she felt. “Don’t worry,” she said. “I’d wish you to be happy in your new place,” eventually, she offered a warm hug, and he accepted it reluctantly, it became a good moment when Josh could chill out from his own temporary feeling.

“Hey kids, Mr. Burk will treat us a big toast of drink. Come on!” Manson hollered at them with a happy heart while walking away with the others.





It was already twelve in the afternoon in the restaurant, at the same time the space got crowded with some visitors, which some of them were fresh graduated students, along with their parents. There was a discount program, written on a blackboard. Fam Burk had his waiters to prepare everything for their customers.

The restaurant filled with the smell of cinnamon. The environment stayed in tranquility when there was no fifties song played on the background. In order to celebrate their graduation party, the owner gave them the best menu to be served. Wendy had prepared all the cuisine while they had a conversation.

“Frantically, this is amazing, Mr. Burk!” Josh shouted as he tossed a drink with him—*Tarantulla Grapy Juice*.

Cathy stared at his tall glass that contented with a violet delight, and somehow it looked like a bubble gum blender. She grinned for a while as unsure if that would taste okay.

At that second, he stared back. “What... you want some?”

“I doubt that,” Scott muttered.

Josh got annoyed eventually to sit near him. “Hey, who am I talking too?”

“Kids, don’t fight. We should have a great farewell party by now,” Manson shouted as he tossed a drink with his wife.

“Can I ask a question?” Cathy stared back and forth at this father and son reunion. “How come this is your first meeting with your son after moving from California?”

Fam Burk narrowed his eyes at her, surprised. “How do you know that?” He smiled curiously at Scott. “My son must have told you a lot.”

“I’d like to confirm here,” Scott said. “I’m the one who don’t want to meet you just at any time. I need some time to comfort myself,” his eyes glossed. “For what she has done to us.”

All of them gazed astonishingly at his confession. Especially for Wendy, who didn’t want to feel guilty over these men’s sorrow, since she always felt sympathy to anyone with a broken heart.

“I shouldn’t have said any of personal matters in front of you guys,” Fam Burk said pathetically, and he glanced

at his son “—but I can’t help to let you go, just stay, you can help me to run this restaurant business.”

“That’s a good idea,” Manson supported.

“Right, it’s better than living alone in Los Angeles,” Cathy added.

Scott stared at her in confusion while he couldn’t choose any better option for himself.

“Yeah, man,” Josh swooped. “*Make yourself worth at least.* Helping your parents is a great opportunity to stay close.”

His humorist tone sounded like a satire, it made Scott annoyed.

Cathy and Haile stared back and forth to share the same amazement when he became the center of attention now. Josh was too easy going with no shame to mumble his true words. Most of the time, Cathy felt proud when he could say the right thing in the right moment. At least it was the truth. Josh lost his parents from the car accident when he was still a kid. He definitely knew that yearning feeling of a warm company.

“Anyway, who is the woman behind this contradiction?” Manson continued.

Fam Burk chuckled as he glanced at Wendy who tried to hold her breath. “My former wife, huh?” He glanced at his son. “I heard she move to your house, Scott?”

“She’s gone after her retreat to German,” Scott built an alibi for his mother since he acknowledged that a detective was sitting at this table, it would be complicated to tell further despite his mother brutality, he did still care for her safety.

“She is the finest female detective I ever met, knowing the fact that she arrived a few months ago for a job in Bisbee,” Fam Burk murmured.

“Wait, Chantel Herron?” Manson guessed it surprisingly, along with Haile and Wendy who went disbelief over the information.

“Precisely,” Scott shouted.

“What a coincidental, she’s my co-partner that I’ve told you, before my boss introduced her name to me.”

“After she got transferred, she just went retreat?” Wendy wondered. “Is that true?”

“Uh, I’m still not sure,” Manson said. “My boss said that she’ll return in three weeks. Well, that’s the exact time I’ll move to Brooklyn.”

“Don’t hope she’ll return to work again, she always detached to other place,” Fam Burk said and chuckled like he knew it for sure.

The farewell party went well. The old song played in the end of their afternoon hours. People danced for their happiness. It wasn’t a boredom that Cathy felt. She just remembered the thought of leaving Bisbee seemed like a hard decision now. It became harder. At least, the memory she treasured was still there with them.

# 21

## FALLEN STARS

SHE BREATHED THE MORNING AIR in Patagonia Lake State Park. There was no sound but the rustling winds. Her eyes locked at the lake scenery that had reminded her with the longest river in the world—*Danube River*.

The tranquility contained her mind with a perpetual thought, and she caught that complicatedly. This was the last week she could spend each day longing the heat around Arizona.

Cathy chose to stand between the shady trees. There was no one but herself who stared blankly at the shallow river. She drowned into a silent reverie. Her eyes opened slowly to catch the bright blue sky where birds flew high through those cotton clouds.

Someone tickled her waist. Her eyes bulged out surprisingly to see Josh from behind.

“Hey loner!”

“Stop it!” He obeyed her words though, and they giggled for a moment. “Let’s make a farewell.”

“I never like the idea. No it’s not yet,” he muttered and denied. “I’m waiting for random letters from universities in New York, likely near to New Rochelle.”

“What... you have applied more than one?” She looked astonished.

“Come on, who knows my chance to meet you in the future—” he raised his eyebrows while talking mischievously, “is beyond our imagination.”

“Shut up,” she annoyed with his idea as she thought how ridiculous for him to follow her path. “Don’t do this just because of *me*. Think about Martha.”

“How stupid if you thought I would be following you, well, it’s not the only reason,” he still giggled in this serious conversation. “Don’t you know that New York have many great bars to start a band concert?”

“What?” Cathy gawked, surprised. She crossed her arms reflectively to feel defensive. “Have you left the baseball thing?”

“Baseball is my way to get a scholarship,” he admitted. “Mr. Clark proud of our team’s victory a few months ago. I was sad back then that you didn’t come to see the game. I know, you just woke up from coma.”

As the word *coma* was being said, she managed to smile while her head might start to feel dizzy. “Tell me as soon as you receive the letter.”

“Sure.”

They were staring at the same shallow river. The air was still cold. Even though they stood side by side, there was something she couldn’t accept. In this silence, they broke apart to feel unsure.

“Josh, I just don’t want you to make a burden for yourself,” she said to convince him again. “I’m going anyway.”

He sighed. “May I hug you?”

Cathy stared up at his face. They gazed for a moment.



“This is unlike any farewell party, huh?” He muttered. “At least, I want you to know how I’ll be missing you later.”

There was no witness except the view of this morning lake. Cathy flurried to say anything. At the second of her confusion, he grabbed her shoulders closer. They hugged to touch each other’s warm skin behind their tartan clothes. A few seconds felt like forever. He loosened his arms to kiss her cheek, instead accidentally got slipped at the corner of her lips. She surprised and pushed him away, but he grasped her wrist unexpectedly.

“You almost kiss me!” Cathy snarled.

“Okay, let say it’s how I express my yearning,” he said solemnly.

“Thank you.”

“For the accident kiss?”

She shook her head. “For sharing your sorrow feeling.”

The atmosphere went like a blank canvas, it was sedated. He went silent still.

“I’d wish New York is an hour from here, but that’s not the case, you’ll just need to focus with what’s in front of you, I’ll be okay,” he convinced her in return.

“It’s like trying to start a dead engine, you go back and forth for the yearning, and it end up as a sorrow,” Cathy murmured. “It’s never my plan to leave Bisbee. I’m sorry, Josh.”

“Come on,” he opened his both arms to hug her like a long lost old friend. “We don’t want to kill the farewell.”

“I know, you’re my best man after all,” she whispered.

They giggled at this precious moment that wouldn’t be replaced by anything. Their happiness was eternal from the inside. They didn’t want to break apart, even of becoming fragile. It was not a choice to make, but it was beyond a decision.

“Oh, God,” he sighed when his cellphone vibrated. “My grandmother wants me home, I think I’ll see you later,” he kissed her forehead lightly.

They snapped a goodbye wave at each other. It was a short time for a long yearning. Soon after, Josh went toward his blue bicycle that was parked in a lake shore.

She couldn't even count on to his step as he left her alone in here.

A few minutes had last, she astonished when Elle appeared so suddenly behind her. She wore a very neat clothes that apparently formal and classy—an orange velvet blazer. Cathy noticed that it was the first time for this white hair angel appeared with bright clothes.

“Any special occasion?”

Elle glanced at her. “No.”

“It seems like you want to visit a special place,” she kept on guessing.

“Indeed, but later.”

Now she felt odd with this quiet atmosphere. “Is there something you want to tell me?”

“Some things are just not end. It's not on the road,” she spoke of something that Cathy couldn't understand immediately. “As you see, there's nothing to leave behind, you need to be settled and focus.”

“You're telling me about the journey,” she guessed it correctly. “The eternal dimension and demons, both are complicated things I have got through besides the story of blood and stone.”

“The idea of blood and stone in your family is what *fallen stars* are all about,” Elle snapped. “The incident wasn’t crystalized as a chaos—the empire.”

“My family—” Cathy shook her head. “I want to meet them someday,” she stared up at the angel who was way taller than her. “Fallen Stars seems like a catching arrow, the angel army whom you have referred as the Chandelier that actually comes to protect the Sapphire, aren’t they?”

Elle smiled, “The royals as well.”

“My mom still pretends like everything is normal,” Cathy recalled. “Unless she speak of the conviction—the *unseen world* is real.”

“Accordance.”

They glanced concurrently. There was a moment of turbulence within their conversation. Cathy knew about something unspoken as their eyes met as if this was the first time, it was her *recurring dreams* she remembered, where the girl still had the same sharp eyes. Her wonderment from the start was resolved—for only a little part.

She sighed. “I wish to live a peaceful life, can’t I?”

“If you ask so—” Elle said and stared away to pause her eyes at the lake.

Cathy waited for her answer while they were gazing at the same unruffled view.

“You can’t guess it,” Elle murmured. “This is only the beginning.”

# EPITLOGUE

## THE SECRECY

EVERYTHING AROUND WAS an empty shield and nothing was set ablaze but the darkness. Only the sunlight behind the vertical window had stroke across her porcelain face. Sylvia Elle breathed out against it and immensely forgot any tragic moment as she closed her eyes. The darkness contrasted on her velvet blazer while her oblique bangs stayed still with a red clip. She got a blank expression.

The chamber wasn't felt desolate anymore when the sound of heels knocked on the ground. The silence came undone. Elle deliberately ignored someone behind her, even though she instantly knew who that was. The place should be for those who enjoyed the silence, where no ordinary men and women could come in and out without authority. This was the basement of the antique shop, one

of the oldest buildings that established near the longest park in the world, around Manhattan.

Elle swayed her cheeks to peek from her peripheral vision when the old woman greeted, “Breathing the sun like usual.”

She wore a red suit and black scarf coiled in her neck. Precisely this angel had recognized her figure. The old woman never changed the way she up-do her blonde hair as a bouffant—her style had represented a higher prestige.

When she stepped closer, her gold spike earrings moved lightly like sharp needles. “Why don’t you take a visit to our mansion, for a hot tea?”

“I’m not taking a pleasure,” Elle was being keen.

“Oh, of course not,” she giggled. “I’m inviting you to see my granddaughter.”

Elle observed the old woman’s red-blooded lips while she was talking. It moved elegantly since she had a wise charisma.

“I’d like to emphasize to you that I’m not working for human.”

“Of course I never admit you as a worker either,” she corrected. “You are my granddaughter’s guardian angel.”

There was a few seconds of silence between them, while the eeriness feeling radiated from among the royal paintings that were hung against the brick walls.

Elle had her body stagnated still, soon after, she closed her eyes. The vision was clear inside her inner sight, for a few seconds her eyes moved rapidly. She didn’t want to be worried with a motion picture of a grown up girl, now that she remembered it, the girl was the same age with Cathy Charlotte, but her worriment over this human girl was intense and marvelous since she caught a glimpse of destruction vision. But it was still scattered like broken images. It was a momentary future of this old woman’s granddaughter.

Slowly, she opened her eyes. The old woman waited patiently.

“No wonder why she becomes such a brat, since she is being raised by you,” her tone was sarcastic. “She might turn just like you—or even brutal.”

“Why did you choose to go?” The old woman asked instead.



“For the *truth*—I went ahead.”

“I knew where have you been,” she smiled so calm. “The long lost royal has been found—*Catherine Charlotte*. That’ll make a history for the family. Also, the child is looking fragile as a replica of one princess,” she endured her annoyance. “Is that why she become more important rather than staying with us?”

Elle chuckled. “We choose what’s right. Seems likely you couldn’t tolerate a phrase of *don’t judge a book by its cover*,” she stepped closer against her white face. “You never know the possibility.”

“Your disappearance for such a child has making me perplexed, then what is it?” she started crossing arms while kept on talking to her. “Doesn’t Eleanor have any qualification for becoming a Puissant?”

Elle noticed this old woman’s temper had emerged. “That is something natural to be born with. But who knows if she would betray everything in the future—for the runway witch.”

“What?” The old woman astonished. “She still alive?”

“You sound very welcoming rather than worry,” Elle muttered.

Afterward, the old woman showed a cold smile. “No mercy.”

The angel gazed keenly at her bright blue eyes. Like a grandest cold wall that the old woman had held, there was nothing to sense but an odd vehemence.

“I know your ambition,” the Angel spoke. “It smell like a charcoal.”

The old woman chuckled sarcastically. “If you could leave that obnoxious child, along with her vulnerable family, you could sense a crystal inside that charcoal.”

“Never underestimate someone you don’t know,” Elle shot a fierce stare at her wrinkled eyes. “I am way older than your age to give such a simple admonishment, you old woman.”

“Ah, sarcasm—the unchangeable attitude. I see,” she could manage to smile since she had a composure demeanor. “Anyway, welcome to New York City.”



Inside the old manor house that was like a reminiscent of a fairytale they so called *Red Riding Hood*. The atmosphere felt strong around the living room that filled

with wooden furniture, which made the environment became adapt with a forest smell. In front of the flaming fireplace, there was a rectangular red rug with circular shape of golden motif.

The beautiful old woman and her granddaughter sat together against the flaming fireplace while snowflakes were falling outside the window. The old one dressed in her warm red suit with panther patterns scarf, while the younger one dressed in her comfortable brown fur.

Her grandmother had a good look on her granddaughter's figure, Eleanor Heisler. She realized how nearly twin her figure with Sylvia Elle the Angel. They shared the same flawless light skin that was kind of pale, and long hair in the shade of vanilla near to platinum. The only thing that made them physically looked different was because Eleanor always styled her wavy hair in half pinned up half down, and also, she had a fierce look on her face.

As a matter of fact, the old woman was the most honorable lady of all her time. She wished for her throne to be descended with the one she could trust, although

there was still doubt in her heart about her only beloved granddaughter.

Nevertheless, they sat together, so classic like when the elders usually told fairytale and legend stories, retelling everything to their grandchildren.

“There are two things you need in order to get through the gate,” she murmured. “The blood and stone.”

“What blood?” Eleanor was curious.

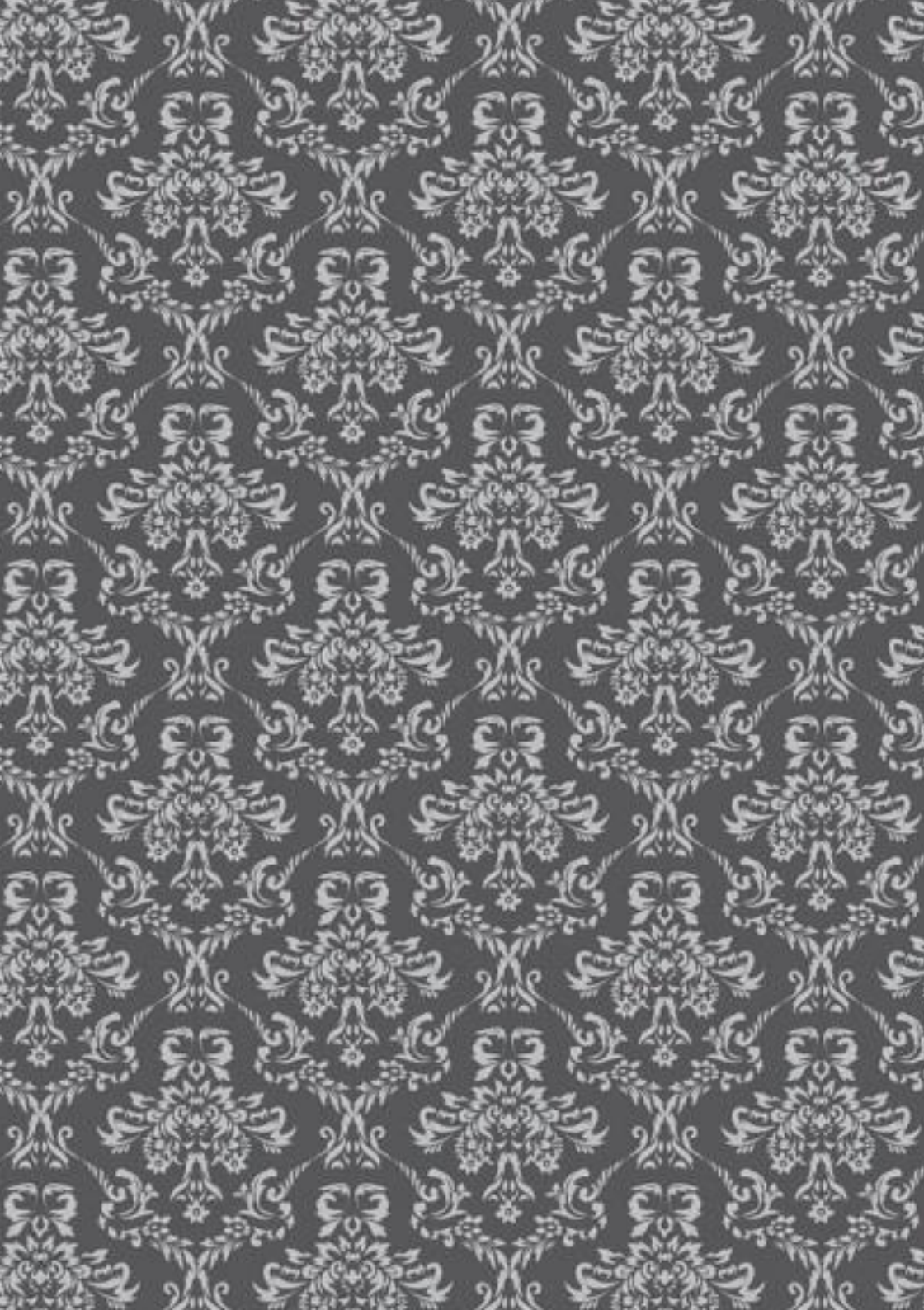
Her grandmother smiled inexplicably, she looked mysterious. “The blood inside your veins.”

The lady made her granddaughter bewildered for a questionable tangle. Every now and then, her secrecy would be a silent secrecy until the time had come. For that let them spoke of the truth, either with forcedness or calmness. This was the beginning.

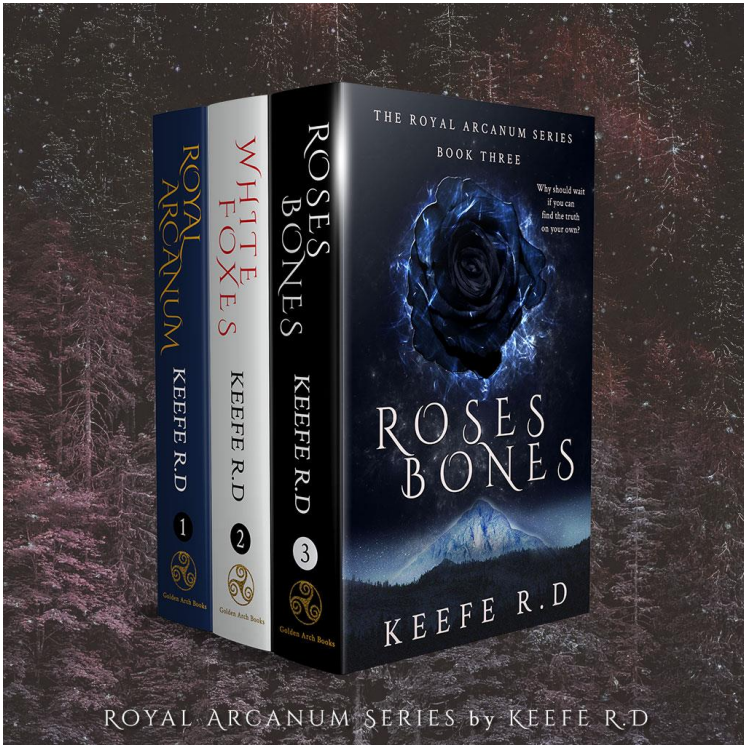


**The End of Book One**





THE JOURNEY TO BE CONTINUED...



The Alternate Stories of  
The Arcanum Revelation Series:

1. Royal Arcanum
2. White Foxes
3. Roses Bones

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