Prologue

King Kalvran, the kahaizan king of Ra’Koza, raced up the stairs to his corridors. His dark eyes were filled with desperation as his long brown tail propelled his swift, agile steps. Ra’Koza was being invaded by the dragons of Kaldor, the seventh planet within the Zùn realm. His wife, the queen, cried out for him as the mutated monsters thrashed and snarled against the great walls of the palace causing them to shake and tremble under the weight.

“Guards,” Kalvran ordered in his native tongue, “get my wife and our unborn son to safety, and do it quickly for the monsters will soon break through these stone walls and all of the underworld will break loose with their thunderous cries.”

The guards bowed in respect as they spread out their wings and flew down to the throne room where the queen lay. One guard, a young naïve child of only fifteen, remained.

“What about you you’re majesty,” the guard bowed his head with grace with his eyes towards the ground to show the uttermost respect. King Kalvran snarled as he pulled the boy up by his collar and thrust him towards the stairwell.

“Do not worry about me. I will meet you all by the great Léska portal. My wife and our legacy are what should be your priority, now go. I have something of value to retrieve.” he retreated back up to his corridors, his purple cape flowing like rivers of water behind him.

He knocked down the door of his corridors and searched in desperation for the small golden box that contained the most powerful weapon known to the Zún realm.

“Where could it possibly be? It was right here! I…” a small golden object glistened in the distance. He slithered toward its hiding place and snatched the golden box up in his hands and opened it to the contents contained within. A simple golden amulet with a glowing red jewel shimmered at the bottom. Kalvran could feel great power radiating off the amulet. The power to create or destroy vast realms by the flick of the hand. Sure enough this would drive the beasts away, and they could reclaim their homeland once again. If it meant his death then so be it. He would rather die than have those monsters destroy his culture, traditions and his most beautiful wife. It was worth the sacrifice.

He frantically put the amulet around his neck as he ran down the steps and out into the back garden. He unfolded his slender wings and took off towards the great Léska portal.

“Kalvran, where have you been, my love?” his wife exclaimed as she ran into his arms.

“I love you so very much, my dearest,” he said as he gestured her to follow the others into the portal. “, but, you must go with the others. I will be with you soon, my love,” he kissed his wife passionately on the lips before sending her on her way. “Be strong, you are our only hope,” he whispered to his wife’s swollen belly. “Be safe and stay with the others, I love you,”

The guards pulled the queen away and carried her through the portal.

“Kalvran,” her voice echoed across the great waters of the lake below.

“Die, you devilish scum,” Kalvran snarled. The amulet glowed with intensity, and within seconds it was all over. Kalvran gasped upon realizing that he was still alive, and at the sight of his home. The amulet had done its job. It had rid his home of those retched beasts. His people will be overjoyed with the news. His son will grow up on his home planet just as his for fathers had.

“I must hurry,” Kalvran said “my people await for my arrival.” Kalvran, with the amulet tight in his grasp, jumped into the portal that lead to the ninth planet within the Zún realm. The sister planet of his very own to which the natives had given the name; Earth.

“Kala,” Kalvran called out for his queen, but she did not answer his pleading cry, but within seconds Kalvran knew why. His people had landed in an ancient city constructed of marble, gold and various precious gems. The natives shared their slender bodies, and dark skin. Thin clothes covered their lower bodies. Dark make-up lined their oval shaped eyes. They varied in all shapes and sizes just as his own, but they had no tails or wings to give them flight, but their eyes were the ones that caught his attention. Their pupils formed into a small sphere, unlike the familiar slit of his own eye. They were dark and lifeless. Kalvran could see deep into the depths of their alien souls, if they had souls.

One of the aliens approached him. It spoke their native tongue. It was similar to his own, but he could tell that the language was still young and developing. He assumed that this creature was their ruler since he wore a strange pin crown with a golden serpent wrapped around its base over his round skull. Their ruler grinned his flat crooked teeth at the sight of the radiant amulet around his neck. It reached out a dark crooked hand towards the red jewel. Kalvran narrowed his eyes and stuffed the amulet into his silk robes. The ruler growled and pointed a finger at him.

“(Sieze it!)”captive since five others came from behind and tied his hands behind his back. Kalvran spread out his wings and barred his fangs at them.

“Let go of me, you simple minded creatures,” he hissed, but the aliens didn’t appear to understand. Instead their ruler waved its and the guard to his left thrust a wooden stick across his head.

Kalvran awoke a few hours later to find himself among his people with his wife by his side. She had a cold cloth pressed against his throbbing forehead.

“Kala,” he croaked. She slapped his hand away and ordered him to keep quiet. Her clothes were torn and her face was covered in dirt. She cradled her other hand against her swollen belly. “What happened? Where am I? Did those creatures hurt you? How is the baby?” his voice was weak and filled with fear as he worried for his family and his people. Where had those aliens taken them?

“The baby is fine, but unfortunately our stay shall be longer than we expected.” Her voice quivered as she pressed her shivering hands against her weeping face.

“Kala,” Kalvran pushed himself upright and brushed his hand across Kala’s gentle face. “What do you mean? I destroyed the Koldorians. We can go back home. Our son can live to his potential. We will be alright. Malan has saved our people. The amulet didn’t destroy Kátzu.” Kalvran continued to ramble on as he reached into his silk robes for the amulet, but to his dismay the amulet was gone. Those filthy creatures had taken it while he was still unconscious. They have no idea what kind of power that amulet holds.

“We can’t leave, Kalvran,” she whimpered, “We are bound to their will. We are their slaves. I could not do anything. I did not want them to hurt the baby,” she rested a hand on her swollen stomach as she continued to weep. “Our son will never now of his culture or traditionals or his royal lineage. He will grow up a slave to simple-minded humans!”

Humans. That’s what those creatures called themselves.

“Do not fear, we will break free of this bands. Our son will see his homeland, I…” Kalvran paused. The words, *I promise*, caught in his throat. Somehow even he couldn’t make a promise like that. He knew that one day they would break free, but deep down he knew that there would be a cost for their freedom. One that would weave its way through all the generations here after. A curse that’s name would weave its name through history, as one’s mistake. He feared that his mistake would not be his own, but the one who he loved with all his heart who had yet to come into this world.

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Soon upon enslavement Kalvran’s wife gave birth to the next King of Ra’Koza whom they name Ra. In his native tongue the name translated to *one of royal* He knew that the humans would not let them celebrate such a glorious birth so in private he gathered his people and ventured below the city and celebrated the birth of a prince. The future of king of Ra’Koza, that’s if they ever made it back to Kátzu and to their homeland. He missed Ra’Koza and the sight of his people laughing and dancing. He only wished they could go back, but they had to be patient. All things whether they are good or bad come with patience.

Ra grew in strength and size. At the age of sixteen, Ra had become a rather determined and ruthless child. He like his father wanted to bring freedom back to his people. Within the span of a year Ra gathered followers and overthrew the man the human’s called Pharaoh and took his place on his mighty throne. Not only had Ra taken back their freedom he had taken back their most sacred possession; the amulet.

The humans and the kahaizans lived in harmony for the next two hundred years for generations, but the humans with their short lived lives and simple minds, couldn’t comprehend why Ra, after all these years was not only still alive but looked just as he had all those years ago. Kahaizans could live up to five or six hundred years at best. It wasn’t unusual to them, but the humans feared that the kahaizans may not have been one of the Gods they had worshiped, but a demon spawn sent by the God, Osiris himself to torture their people.

Many of the humans, in fear sent magicians from across the land who claimed to be skilled in the art of sorcerer to curse Ra, but all of them proved to be impostures. Ra had grown tired of the magicians and the human’s cunning tricks. To keep the magicians away he sent out a decree to ban all magical practices across the land and if one is caught they are to be executed immediately. Most of the magicians were whipped out due to the effects of this new law expect for one. The legendary sorcerer of Egypt; Akmen.

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Ra sat on his throne with his son Zeniff on his left and his wife, the queen, who was pregnant with their unborn child, sat on his right. Human servants fanned them and fed them various fruits and exquisite meats. Long white robes and blue and gold drapes flowed over his dark skin. Various gold jewels rested on his neck with the amulet of Ra at the center; his most finest possession. His blood red cat like eyes scanned the room large marble and gold room around him. A small scraggly human walked into the throne room and bowed down on his knee’s to Ra. Ra smiled and gestured for the man to rise and speak.

“Pharaoh, a human sorcerer by the name of Akmen wishes to speak with you,” the servant said.

Ra gestured for the servant to let Akmen in. The servant bowed and scurried down the hall to the great doors. A few minutes passed and a tall dark skinned human in fine white robes walked into the throne room and knelt down in front of Ra and bowed in respect. A golden staff with a large glowing red orb was held rightly in his dark slender hands.

Ra gestured for Akmen to rise and their eyes met. Akmen’s eyes were hauntingly powerful. You could see the magic flowing through his dark obsidian eyes.

Ra rose from his throne and stepped down and stood before Akmen. His wife tried to pull him back but he reassured her with the flick of his tail that there was nothing for her to fear, but he had never been so wrong in his life.

“Good evening, Pharaoh Ra, son of the mighty kahaizan king, Kalvran,” Akmen bowed his head in respect as Ra stepped closer to him. His long black tail twitched back in forth. He was uneasy and afraid of Akmen. He had never been afraid of a human, but this one was different. He wasn’t like the others, but he kept his head high and did his best to hide his true feeling which wasn’t hard for him. He had was born with the power to control darkness and death and darkness conceals everything in its view from the bright light surrounding.

“I will ask you questions and while I ask you, you will remain silent and answer when I am finished, do you understand?” Ra ordered. Akmen nodded and rested his hands behind his back and waited for Ra to ask his questions.

“Why are you here? Were you sent to denounce my throne? If that is true did they pay, and how much?” Ra demanded.

“I am here to speak to you Pharaoh Ra of dreams I have been having about the fate of your people, and no I was not paid, but I was sent but I will not give you there name.” Akmen replied.

“How would a human sorcerer be given revelation pertaining to the future of my people?” Ra snarled. “You’re lying!”

“I speak only of the truth, oh great Pharaoh. I would not lie to you.” Akmen said.

Ra looked from left to right then back at his wife and son who were talking calmly amongst the servants.

“All of you take my wife and son to my corridors.” Ra ordered. The servants gently pulled his wife and son up from their chairs and lead them away. He could see the pain in his wife’s eyes. She was just as terrified as he was, but he wouldn’t let it show. Ra diverted his attention back to Akmen and narrowed his eyes. “Now, tell me, this dream, what exactly did you see in this dream pertaining to my people?” Ra asked.

“A curse was set upon you and your people. The youngest child of the family as well as twins would die if they shared similar powers to the ones that came before them. The same went for the other Kings, Timlan and Kabeshan. Many died and were buried in the desert sands including your son, Zeniff.” Akmen paused as he could see the horror in Ra’s eyes.

“You’re lying!” Ra cried. He tried to hold back the tears, but it was too much. He couldn’t lose Zeniff, not his little boy. “Tell me you’re lying and that this is nothing more than your silly human magic playing tricks on me!” Ra demanded.

“I’m afraid that all I have said so far is true, Pharaoh, but I have only just begun,” Akmen said. Ra backed away and watched as Akmen continued to speak of his dream in horror. “This will take place when the sunsets over the desert hills this very day, and the curse will be unleashed by that very amulet that rests around your neck.” Akmen gestured to the amulet around Ra’s neck. Ra gasped and held the amulet tightly in his grasp. His father had given this to him. He would never wish such treachery to fall upon his only son. “The amulet’s power will consume the kahaizan people and you will be cursed and flee back to your homeland on Kàtzu. You and your wife will have another child whom your wife will name Telatakanai. The Twins of Darkness will descend from him, and all will die at their hand.” Akmen laughed.

Ra snarled and fire burned in his blood red eyes. He didn’t want to believe a word this filthy human had to say no matter what power he held. He would never let that happen to his son or any of the people of Ra’Koza, and he wouldn’t believe that the amulet that his father had given him could hold such dark power. He loved his family and this amulet and he wasn’t going to give them up because some filthy human had a dream.

Ra barred his fangs and unfolded his wings. Ra’s eyes glowed a blood red color and black smoke swirled around him. He felt powerful. He had never felt so powerful in his life. Not only was he confident in taking down Akmen but he could take over the whole Earth and many others if he desired.

Ra laughed and grinned, but to his surprise Akmen grinned back. He didn’t look the least bit scared at Ra’s new found power.

Akmen hated kahaizans just as much as Ra hated humans. He had never intended to help Kalvran. That old king had just given him the opportunity that he had been waiting for. It was true that Akmen had seen a dream, but the amulet was not the one who was to curse the kahaizan people, he was.

Akmen stomped his golden staff into the ground. A wave of magic radiated from it knocking Ra off his feet, but he quickly jumped back on his feet and hurled himself at Akmen. Akmen raised his hand and set Ra flying backwards against the wall just above his throne. The loud bang echoed through the palace walls. Ra’s eyes rolled up in his head and he turned back to normal as he slid into his throne slowly regaining consciousness.

“What did we ever do to you?” Ra whimpered on his throne.

“That amulet belonged to my family and I will take back what was rightfully mine. I will destroy your entire race if so be it!” Akmen snarled. “I am the one who destined by my great grand-father to harness the amulet’s great power and bring peace to all within the Zùn realm. I will tear down this realm and rebuild a new one in its stead that is greater and grander than you filthy kahaizans could ever imagine. I will be your king!” Akmen slammed his staff into the ground and the amulet’s power was released.

Ra cried out in agony as the amulet’s power consumed him and all that Akmen had foretold. There wasn’t a single kahaizan family that night that hadn’t lost someone whom they loved.

And so was the nature of the curse upon the kahaizan people from that time forth until the day the Twins of Darkness were born into the world with the power of the amulet bestowed upon them.

Akmen snatched the amulet and awed at its beauty and power. It was soon apparent to him that he was not the one who was destined to create this new world, but in his agony and greed he kept the amulet safe from harm’s way in a small golden box until the day he handed it over to his son along with a papyrus scroll with the ancient prophecy foretold by his great grand-father in hope that one of his decedents the amulet would find its chosen heir and become the king that Akmen and his great- grand father had desired.

*The ancient power shall be born into the Twins of Darkness in the light of day*

*Light shall fall and return at the seventh hour, masked by the ones who have fallen away*

*The foretold King shall unite his armies and siege the ancient power*

*He shall rule with an iron first in his glorious hour*

*Time will tick on the stroke of midnight*

*Light shall break through the veil and return at the final hour*

*The Eldest will decided the fate of us all*

*Whether it be in light or in ruins*

Katlyn

I’ve decided it’s time I keep a journal to keep track of my daily adventures. I don’t even know where to start. My life right now is everything I’ve ever wanted. It’s perfect. I have a loving family, good friends, and I attend an awesome school, but I suppose I should start from the beginning, before Cindy, before Milo, and before Jessica. All those years I wish I could erase along with…never mind. It’s hard to explain my life before things settled down, so I guess I’ll give it to you how it is. First let’s start with my dream.

Lately I’ve been having these dreams. They’re the kind of dreams that you can’t quite explain, but although you feel as though you have some tie to the dream as if it had once been a part of your reality, you can’t seem to draw out where or why, and then it’s gone.

I usually forgot most of my dream by the time I wake up, but there is always this one scene that I can remember, because it’s just so hauntingly vivid. Every second of the scene feels so real and tangible as if I could reach out and grasp it tightly in my hands. I’ve had this dream for so long that I have memorized each sequence, like gamer playing his favorite video game for the one thousandth time. No matter how much I wanted it to change and see something new it always ends the same; a flash of electric green light and me jolting out of bed screaming. I *always* scream.

It starts off with me running through a dark forest. A boy wearing a long black hooded cloak is holding my hand. I don’t remember ever seeing the boy’s face in my dream just a pair of blood red eyes. In the background I hear the shrilling cry of a young girl. I never been able to make out what the girl is saying. She spoke in a different language; an ancient language.

The boy calmly speaks to me in his native tongue and the girl’s distance cries die down. Sometimes I have wonder if the girl’s cries are my own shrieking pleas for help, but yet they feel so unfamiliar and far from me. In all honestly I never know if what I am seeing is a distant memory of my past or just one messed up dream. I could only hope for the latter option as I would never wish such a nightmarish dream upon anyone.

Eventually I would find myself in a meadow. I always remembered the meadow scene, because it looks like scene taken directly out of horror movie. Instead of flush green grass surrounded by cottonwood trees, and beams of light from the warm sun above, the grass was a puck green and yellow, and in certain areas there were glimpses of blood and lifeless bodies of strange creatures.

The boy would let go of my hand and points a finger at me gesturing me stay put, and then would walk away towards a woman also wearing a black hooded cloak not too far off. He always gave the woman a hug and the woman would kiss him gently on the forehead and gestures to a patch of trees off in the distance. Their exchange is always brief before the boy vanishes into the depths of the dark forest.

The women shift’s her attention to my generally direction and walks over to me and kneels down by my side and smiles; the kind of smile I had only seen a mother give her child. I always remembered how beautiful and how strange this women or creature, for that matter, was. Her dark mahogany colored skin, long locks of tight milk chocolate curls, full lips, and most of all her eyes. Her eyes, specifically the irises, as I recall, were blood red, and the pupils were slit like that of a cat.

Off settling screams in the distance would send the women into full alert. Her irises would contract as she frantically grabbed hold of me and cradles me in her arms. If my dream wasn’t strange enough as it was, a pair of massive dark brown wings unfolded underneath the women’s cloak. The only word I can use to describe them aside from their incredibly length, is powerful. The woman would flap her wings and take off into the dark abyss above with me cradled tightly in her arms. I always remember this moment as rather peaceful, but I always know what’s going to happen next. No matter how many times I have witnessed this scene I am never prepared for the end.

Something rams into the woman and the rest of the dream happens so fast. It lingerers in the back of my mind day in and day out. I’ll never forget the fear as I fell from the women’s arms into the dark abyss below, and the women’s face as I fell. Her wide tearful eyes as she reaches for me but to no avail. The women would open her mouth to speak, but everything would go black and her last words would be consumed by the darkness.

Now I know what you’re thinking. That was it Katlyn? Do you take drugs? Do you see a therapist, and what about that green light you told us about earlier? The answer to those questions is no, definitely not, no and there is more. Out of all the scenes I can remember the ending has to be what haunts me the most. It never leaves me. The flash of green light rushing towards me and the sense of nothingness that entirely envelopes me.

The darkness fades and I find myself laying on a beach looking up at the dark storm filled sky. That’s when the monsters come. There are always two of them. One was much taller than the other, and they both had human bodies with gruesome faces and strange weapons shaped like staffs in their hands.

The taller one kneels down by my side aiming a blue sphere at my face. He mumbles something under his breath, but I could never quite catch it. Then I see a flash of electric green light and find myself drenched in sweat screaming.

I’ve had this dream for…wait for it… seven years, and seven years ago I arrived at an elderly women’s doorstep, and was soon after put into foster care. The scary thing though is that I can’t remember *anything* of my life before the foster care program. Foster care is all I’ve ever known. I wish that I could explain how I found herself on that elderly women’s doorstep in a rugged blue dress that late July in the year two-thousand and eight, but I can’t. Honestly I can’t explain much of anything really.

I’ve been told by many doctors and psychologists when I was younger, that many things could have led to temporary loss of memory, and as long as I was put into a safe and caring home I would be back to normal. That was seven years ago and since then I’ve been transferred from so many different homes that I had lost count. The longest time I ever spent with a family, before my adoption, was two weeks. I used to leave marks by my bed to see how long I would last before I saw the paperwork to send me away in their bags. I never knew why they sent me away or what I could have done. All I knew was each time I was sent back I would get to overhear my foster family’s words as they explained to the foster program why they could no longer keep me around. Most of them were the same: *She’s a troubled child. She needs medical help. She needs to see a psychiatrist. She’s got something in her hands and when she gets scared or angry she throws it. She almost killed my daughter. Who is this child…no what is this child? She’s scaring my children.*

I hated hearing their complaints. I once asked the head of the program if they could be put into a medical facility. I just wanted someone to love me. I was tired of being abandoned time and time again, but that all changed when I was sent to live with Cindy Caldwell. I honestly thought she would send me away and I waited for the day I would be taken home to the foster program, but she was different. She loved me. She was patient with me and wanted to be a motherly figure to me. I cried the day she picked me up from school and told me that she was going to adopt me and give me an official name; Katlyn Marie Caldwell. I’ll will never forget the joy I felt when I was given a name. Until I was adopted by Cindy I was called Jane, short for Jane Doe as no one knew my real name. My orgin was a mystery to the foster care just as everything else in my life.

Now to the present. It has been three years since I was adopted into the Caldwell family, and life is great. I’m fourteen years old and half way done with my freshman year of high school. I’m happy with all my friends and family. It’s perfect. It’s all I ever wanted, and nothing can ever change that.

Katlyn

So…I crashed a bus today

I gasped jolting out of bed drenched in sweat as blotches of green light flashed in the corner of my eyes. I rubbed my eyes and shoved the covers off nearly falling off my bed in the process. I yawned and groggily walked over to my bedroom door and turned on the light. I quickly got dressed in my usual, rugged blue shirt, worn down blue jean shorts, mismatched socks and holy converse shoes.

I collapsed onto my bed and looked over at my clock; exactly seven o’clock. I always woke up at seven o’clock, even on the weekends.

I flinched as something sharp poked me in the chest. I pushed myself up and pulled my necklace out from under my shirt; a simple silver chain with a broken shard of crystal shaped like a lightning bolt. It wasn’t much, but it was the only object, aside from my clothing, on me when that elderly women found me all those years ago. I never took it off. I feared that if I took it off I might lose it. It was the only thing I had left of my life before the Caldwell’s and foster care.

I rested my back against my bed frame and wrapped my favorite fuzzy green blanket around me and pulled out my old sketchbook and number two pencil. I sighed, putting my sketchbook down and pulled my long wavy light blonde hair into an enormously messy bun. I grabbed the nearest hair tie and tried to get it over the massive tumor of hair on my head.

*Snap!*

I grumbled as I pulled open my dresser drawer and pulled one of the few intact hair ties’ and prayed that this one would hold. I sighed with relief as I ruffled my fingers through my choppy bangs. I set my sketchbook aside and pulled out my phone and opened the front view camera. My pale skin looked even paler than unusual in the sunlight, and my sapphire blue eyes were worn down from yet another sleepless night.

“Well I look like the unholy offspring of death.” I shuddered and put my phone away and picked up my sketchbook once again.

I pressed my pencil down on the paper as I drew yet another picture from my dream. I’m not very good at drawing, but the act of drawing helped get the haunting images out of my head and onto paper. This time it was one of the monsters, the smaller one to be exact. Although it looked more like a stick figure with a funky mask on, but close enough.

I gasped at the sound of a loud knock on my door. I rolled my eyes as I clasped my sketchbook tightly in my hands.

“Jessica, is that you?” I asked. “You scared the crap out of me you know that,” I said. “You know if you really want to come in, you could at least not be such an obnoxious buffoon while doing it…” my door flung open and to my surprise in walked my best friend.

“MILO!” I shrieked.

“That’s my name, don’t wear it out,” Milo snickered.

“It’s seven in the morning, and if you have forgotten, you don’t even live here! How did you get into the house?” I asked.

“I’m a magician*—*Cindy let me in. What do you think, Katlyn?” Milo said in a sarcastic tone.

Milo’s glossy pale green eyes starred off into the distance as a crooked grin formed at the corner of his round lips. Milo’s blind, but don’t be fooled he is the most sarcastic, independent, back talking blind sixteen year old boy you will ever meet.

Milo’s usually seen wearing a pale green shirt with a faded number seven on the front, dirty blue jeans, and worn-down converse shoes. He has tight black curls and milk chocolate skin. He’s a whole foot taller than me. I feel like a midget next to him sometimes, but then again, I’m only five feet tall.

Milo and I have been friends for about three years now. I met him in middle school, here in Sequim, Washington. Since then we’ve become best friends. Milo was the first friend that I’ve ever had aside from my sister, Jessica, but to be honest I don’t really know a lot about him. I know his favorite movies. What food he likes. The fact that he always eats the leftovers in our fridge when he comes over. Or the fact that he eats my not so secret stash of candy bars when I’m not paying attention, but his past is a complete mystery. I’ve never met his parents and I’ve never even seen his house. Milo doesn’t even like to mention the subject and if we do he does everything to change the topic. Sometimes I think he might be homeless, so I stuff food in his bag when he’s not looking. I’ve even mentioned the idea to my mom once, but she said that he does have a family, but they don’t allow him to have friends over, and they prefer to keep to themselves. I know Cindy is probably right, but to be honest I don’t really care to know. It’s not like I could tell him about my family, where I came from or even my birth name for that matter.

“School doesn’t start till eight-thirty.” I said. “We still have like…” I quickly glanced over at the clock. “We still have an hour before the bus arrives.”

“I always come over before school. We ride the same bus,” Milo scoffed.

“Not an hour and a half before though,” I stated.

“I’m hungry,” Milo grumbled, “and I didn’t have any food. I was going to grab something from home before my dad dropped me off. Besides I like your mom’s food. Have you smelled the kitchen? It smells like heaven down there.” Milo gestured down the hallway.

“I know,” I smiled at the thought of Cindy.

“Can I come in by the way?” Milo asked.

“Sure,” I shrugged my shoulders. I smiled and reached for my sketchbook as Milo slowly made his way in. He’s had problem’s entering rooms ever since — “Oh my gosh, Milo, don’t step there!” It was too late. Milo caught his foot on a loose piece of paper, and slammed head first into my wooden chair. I winced at the sound of his head colliding with the wood.

I had not intended not to laugh, but the expression on his face was priceless. I snorted and laughed hysterically as Milo struggled to get up on to the chair.

“My face…my…why…” Milo whimpered as he sat down on the chair. “Why are you laughing?” Milo exclaimed “I could have died, and all you can do is laugh? What kind of a friend are you?” he snapped.

“Shut up, Miles. Jessica, and the little girls are is still sleeping.” I hushed him and let out a small giggle from under my breath. “If you had just listened to me, maybe you wouldn’t have fallen.” I snorted still flabbergasted about what just happened.

“You said look out the moment my foot slipped, and besides I don’t need your help. I can handle things on my own. I’m not a child, Katlyn, and for the record I totally knew that paper was there. I just lost my footing, that’s all.” Milo replied. I really tried to stop laughing, but the more irritated he got the more he looked like a grumpy old troll with an afro. A large dark red spot had formed into a welt just above his brow.

“Sure thing, Miles,” I rolled her eyes and snickered. “Whatever makes you feel better.”

“If you’re done making fun of me could you grab me an ice pack or something like that?” Milo said as he grazed his hand across his face for the bulging welt just above his left eyebrow. Milo pressed his hand down on his new-found welt and yelped out in pain.

“Don’t touch it!” I said as I hoped off my bed and walked towards the door. “Wait right here. I’m going to grab a cold wet cloth, okay,” I opened the door and walked into the bathroom a few doors down.

I grabbed a plain white wash cloth folded up with the other towels on top of the small shelf above the toilet, and walked back to the sink and turned it on, putting the small wash cloth underneath the streaming water. I turned off the water and walked back to where Milo sat with his hand cradling his injured forehead, mumbling a variety of *colorful words* under his breath as he moaned in agony.

I slapped him across the knee as I rolled my eyes in exaggeration.

“Stop crying, you big baby,” I snickered as I pressed the cold wash cloth against his bulging welt. Milo winced, but quickly relaxed as I dabbed the cold cloth across his forehead. “You’re such an idiot sometimes, you know that?” I sighed as I continued to dab the cloth across the massive welt.

“I just woke up and Milo is already here and he already hurt himself? Nice,” Jessica my sister and Cindy’s eldest daughter stood by the door. Jessica’s is a freshman in high school just like me. She has long black hair, and dark brown eyes. She and I are good friends both in and out of school. She’s a fun and outgoing person. Ever since I was adopted by Cindy, Jessica has always stood by my side helping me through the process. I couldn’t be more grateful to have her for a sister.

“Morning, Jess,” I waved. “Milo, why don’t you head down stairs. I know you know where the kitchen is. I’ll meet you down there.” Milo groaned and nodded in agreement. I pulled him out of his chair and ushered him to the door. I smiled as I watched Milo walk sluggishly down the stairs almost tripping on his shoelaces. “Please don’t kill yourself, Miles.” I scoffed. Milo groaned as he waddled into the kitchen.

“MILO!” Cindy gasped from below. “What did you do now?”

Jessica and I looked at each and burst into laughter.

“Why are you friends with him again?” Jessica asked. I punched Jessica in the arm. “You’re so mean.” I said. “Hey, Jess,”

“Yeah,” Jessica replied.

“What time is it?” I asked. Jessica checked her watch and looked back at me with a bored expression.

“Seven fifteen,” Jessica replied. Jessica and I gasped and stared at each other with wide eyes as we said in unison; “The twin’s bus gets here in half an hour!” Jessica and I rapidly got the twins, Maryann and Sammy, up and ready.

I pulled off their pajamas and grabbed two yellow dresses and had them put it on. I then proceeded to rapidly braid their hair and tie each end with a large white bow, and told them to go downstairs and get some breakfast.

“Oh crap I need to get dressed,” Jess said out of breath as she frantically ran back to her bedroom and slammed the door behind her. She emerged a few moments later in slimmed Soccer sweats and a bright pink t-shirt. The two of us looked at each other and smiled before hurrying down stairs for breakfast.

I sighed with relief as I sat down at the table next to Milo and little Sammy as Cindy put eggs, bacon and potatoes onto my plate.

Cindy’s a sweet lady with black hair and chocolate brown eyes, and a smile that could brighten up anyone’s day. She was the kind of person that would put others before herself especially her children. I’m just lucky enough to call her mom.

We finished breakfast, and Milo, Jessica, and I boarded the bus to Sequim High School, the one and only high school in Sequim, Washington. Sequim is a small, quiet town. Everybody knows everybody, but I like it that way. It was easy to become one with the crowd in a small town. Everyone’s the same, so it’s easy to follow along; easy to blend in, and the best part was no one thought I was a monster. Here I am just Katlyn Marie Caldwell, and that’s exactly what I want it to be.

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School was just as it had always been; fun at the beginning, but by the end I was ready to go home and enjoy my long wholesome spring break like any other student at Sequim High, but especially since me and a few others like Milo, and Jessica had one the privilege to go down to Disney World with our government class over break. We were scheduled to leave the day after tomorrow. I haven’t even packed yet, but I can’t wait.

Milo, Jessica, and I boarded the bus and waited for our stop. We were the last stop on the bus route, and if it was a good day we could get home in less than twenty minutes. Jessica sat across from Milo and I, and Travis, one of the schools bullies, sat behind us as usual. He and his grubby friends often cracked jokes at us, and pointed their crooked fingers in our face. I can’t wait until I can drive to school, so I can get Milo, Jessica and I out of this devil’s trap.

Milo had his cheek pressed against the window as drool slipped through corner of his mouth and onto his green t-shirt. He has a lecture class his last period and is exhausted afterwards, so he usually sleeps on the bus. He said it’s the best way to zone out Travis and his annoying friends. I preferred music and pretending that I couldn’t speak English. They usually bought it and left us alone, plus, Jessica puts them in their place when they step out of line.

I put my headphones in and pressed play on my music player and listened to my favorites playlist and turned it up to high volume to zone out all the noise around me. A beautiful cello cover came on. I sighed with relief and closed my eyes.

Milo fidgeted and elbowed me in the side. I rolled my eyes and got ready to pinch him, but just as I looked over at Milo, I saw Travis and his snotty nosed friend come from behind hovering over Milo’s head. Travis’s brown eyes darkened as a mischievous grin curved at the edge of his thin lips. His spikey hair was still messy and untamed. I swear that boy just throw’s on the same nasty clothes every day. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him brush his hair or his teeth for that matter.

Travis snickered as he gestured to his friend. I watched in disbelief as his friend pulled out a bottle of Elmer’s glue and a small jar of pink glitter. I tore out my ear buds and reached out my hand to stop them.

“Leave him alone,” I snapped, but it was too late. The boy with the glue poured the sticky goo across Milo’s hair, face and clothes. The boy’s laughed as the one holding the jar of glitter splashed the pink glitter on top of the sticky white paste.

Milo snorted and his eyes flashed open. He waved the boys away and put his hand up to his face. The glue stuck to his fingers as he pulled his hand away from his face. He looked horrified and disgusted as he wiggled the gooey paste around in his fingers.

“What is this stuff?” Milo exclaimed as he examined the rest of his body for the glittery glue.

“Hey, guys, look, no eyes drizzled glue on his face!” Travis pointed a long-crooked finger in Milo’s direction. All the kids on the bus bust out into an anonymous laughter as Milo, in distress, attempted to pull the glue out his curly black hair. Milo grumbled something under his breath as he attempted to remove the gooey paste from his body, but the more he struggled the more the glue spread.

“Hey, what’s going?” Jessica turned off her music and turned towards us. When she caught sight of Milo desperately trying to get the glue off him, she narrowed her eyes and turned her attention to Travis.

“Travis, you pig!” Jessica snapped. “I know your mother. Our mother is good friends with her. Do you want me to tell her what you did, you little brat?”

“It’s not like she’d do anything anyway, and plus it was Sam’s idea not mine, so just stay out of this, Jessica, you’re not my mother!” Travis replied in a vulgar tone.

“Leave my sister, and her friend alone,” Jessica warned them as she slightly arose from her seat, so the bus driver wouldn’t notice her standing up. “I’m warning you, Travis,”

“Oh, no,” he whimpered with exaggeration. “I’m so scared. What are you going to do, Jessica, chuck your pretty hair brush at me and call your mom? The bus driver won’t believe you either. We all know no eyes here is a loser.”

“You’re the one to talk, you dirty pile of trash. Take a bath.” She snapped.

“Look who’s talking. You’re no different than me! We all know the story, Jessica. Your mommy and daddy threw you out onto the streets of Mexico and you lived on your own until Cindy Caldwell took you in. You’re just a pile of trash that got thrown out.” It was true though. Jessica was orphaned at a young age by her alcoholic parents and lived homeless in the streets of Mexico until she was put into an orphanage, and Cindy and Mr. Caldwell later adopted her when she was eight years old.

Jessica’s eyes widened in disbelief. Her bottom lip quivered as tears formed in her eyes. She sniffled and turned her attention back to me as if to say, *make him pay, Katlyn*.

“What’s your problem?” I snarled.

“My problem,” he gasped. “What’s about your problem? You’re even worse than her! You’re the freak who can’t remember anything. I bet you’ll forgot all about this when you get home just like how you forgot about your parents, but wait there’s more. I know your little secret. My mom is good friends with Cindy Caldwell. I know you were a problem child. Nobody wanted you. You were the number one case on my mom’s file. The Jane Doe who was transferred from like a million different homes within a year. Cindy Caldwell took pity on you so she adopted you. You don’t actually think she loves you, do you?”

“Don’t test me, Travis,” I narrowed my eyes at him. If he opens his mouth one more time I’m going to punch his nose into his skull.I flared my nostrils and dug my nails into the back of my seat.

“You’re so scary, Katlyn. You know, I bet Katlyn isn’t even your real name,” he snickered.

“Yes, it is,” I snapped. I wasn’t going down without a fight, not after what he did to my friends and especially not after what he said to me.

“Give it a rest, Katlyn, you’re a freak with no identity, and no amount of government influence can ever change that.” Travis said. “Do you really believe that a person like you could ever be normal? You’re a freak, Katlyn, just like your friends. The blind kid, the dumb blonde, and the piece of trash, what a great combination. No wonder you hang out all the time.”

“Stop it,” I said through clenched teeth. “You’ve said enough, now just drop it.”

“Just thinking, suppose that she did have a name, what do you think it would be?” Travis asked his friend. His friend chuckled and sucked snot back up his nose.

“It’s probably Barbara Gotnoparents!” the two boys bust into laughter which set off a chain of reaction throughout the entire bus.

Tears formed at the corner of my eyes, but I wasn’t going to let them fall. I wished I could go back home and shut myself in my room, and let the tears fall, but I was on the school bus. What could I do here? If I cry that would only make things worse. I whipped the tears from my eyes and turned my attention back to Travis and his friend. Travis snorted as his friend pointed a gruesome finger at my face.

“What’s the matter, Katlyn, are you going to cry? You better go back home to your mommy. Oh, wait, you don’t have one. You never will. You don’t belong here and you know it. You’re a nobody, Katlyn Caldwell, and so is your glossy eyed freak of a friend.” Travis said.

“Did he just call me a glossy-eyed freak?” Milo asked as he continued to pull pieces of glue out of his curly black hair. Travis grinned at the sound of the crowd cheering him on.

A surge of power flowed through my body. The lights from inside the bus flickered in a rhythmical pattern. The boys eyes widened with fear as they and the other students observed the flickering lights above. Even the bus driver appeared to be in distress, but I didn’t care. Someone needed to teach them how to behave, and I was *more* than willing to show them how.

“Why you little, piece of\_” I reached out my hands for Travis’s throat, but Milo grabbed hold of my legs and held me in place.

“Milo, let go of me!” I snapped. “You’re getting glue all over me!”

“Then we can be stuck together for eternity,” Milo let out a nervous chuckle. I shoved him away and turned my attention back to Travis. The lights on the bus continued to pulse in a rhythmical pattern, but I didn’t care about that. All I wanted to do now was to punch my fist right through Travis’s hideous freckle covered face.

“Katlyn, I’m being completely serious now. You need to calm down,” Milo pleaded as he continued to pull dried pieces of glue out of his curly hair. “I can get this stuff out…whatever it is…and besides, Travis is an idiot. He’s just toying with you, so please just let it go. We don’t need anyone getting hurt.”

What is he saying? These two idiots had harassed him by pouring glue and glitter that could take weeks to get out all over his hair and clothes, and they had made fun of me, and my sister, of all people. What hurt the most though was the fact that everything Travis said about me and about Jessica was true, in a way. I am a monster, and now I’m going to show Travis what kind of a monster I am.

“Katlyn, Milo’s right, just drop it. We can tell mom what happened when we get home. She can get hold of his mom and this whole thing will be over. It’ll be okay, alright?” Jessica tried to reassure me, but I didn’t listen. Right now I wanted nothing then to make Travis pay for what he had said to me, Milo and Jessica. No one talks to my friends like that and no one talks to me like that; no one!

“No,” I exclaimed. “They poured glue and glitter all over you, Milo, and you know how much I hate it when people tease me about things like this, especially him!” I said to Milo pointing a finger at Travis’s ugly face ignoring Jessica entirely. Travis gave me a disgusted look, but continued to laugh along with the others. “And Jessica he called you a piece of trash because of what your parents did to you. I won’t let him talk to you two like that, ever!” I said. “Travis,” I turned my attention back to Travis who chuckled at the sight of me standing. “You know nothing! Cindy Caldwell is my mother, and one day I will find my biological parents again, so don’t you ever talk about them like that again,” I snarled. The lights glowed with great intensity as my voice rose. “Do you understand me?” I asked. “EVER!” Glass shattered and the lights above burned out. Everyone screamed and cried out in pain as glass flew across the chairs and narrow walkway. I screamed and ducked down grabbing hold of Milo’s arm.

I don’t understand what just happened. I may have been angry, but anger is an emotion it can only cause damage if the beholder intended it to, but I never moved. I never touched those lights and how could I. They all shattered at once. I didn’t do anything wrong, at least I don’t believe I had. As I sat curled up next to Milo, one of my previous foster mothers comments came to mind; *she’s got something in her hands and when she gets scared or angry she throws it.* I shakily looked down at my quivering hands in fear. No, what am I thinking? I didn’t do anything. It’s not my fault. IT’S NOT MY FAULT!

The bus driver slammed on the breaks, and all the kids on the bus screamed ramming head first into the cushioned seat in front of them.

“Now what in the world is going on back there…” he stopped mid-sentence at the sight of the horrified children and the shattered glass. With shaky hands he grabbed his cellphone and dialed 9-1-1.

Katlyn

Milo’s Father Calls In

The police and fire department came shortly thereafter and had everyone evacuated off in a neat and orderly fashion. The children were told to line up by the fire truck as parents were called and the wounded were tended to. Within two minutes Cindy and other parents arrived at the scene.

“What happened?” Cindy demanded as she slammed the door to the van. She ran over to our side and pulled Milo, Jessica and I in close and brushed her fingers through Jessica’s hair while she tried to pull out the glue in Milo’s dark curls, clothes and face. “Milo, what in the world, seriously child.” A slight smile formed at the edge of her lips, but by the look in her eyes she was more worried and aggravated than amused by the scene.

“The lights on the bus shattered. Glass was spread all across the area. The only question left is how it happened.” A police officer with a thin mustache and dark sunglasses said. “No one was killed, but a few children were cut by the falling glass, but they appear to be doing fine now.”

“What about him?” Cindy gestured to Milo who peeled off another piece of dried glue off his face.

“Driver said that a couple of kids on the bus, your daughter to be precise, got into a fight,” the police officer said. “With that kid over there,” he gestured to Travis who was currently being comforted by another police officer while he waited for his parents to arrive. Cindy gave me the eye and pulled me back behind her. “I assume that some glue and sparkling pink glitter was involved.” the officer shrugged his shoulders. Cindy nodded and sighed and pushed all of us all towards the van. “Thank you for everything, officer,” Cindy shook the officer’s hand and stepped into the car and drove us home.

“Cindy…I,” I croaked, but Cindy cut me off.

“Cindy, just listen to us. It was all this kid named Travis’s fault. If he hadn’t been such an idiot—” Jessica tried to explain, but Cindy cut her off.

“I don’t want to hear about it. I’m just glad that you’re safe. We’ll discuss the matter when we get home. For now, let’s just take you home. Milo you can come home with us. I’m going to call your parents and notify them of the situation.” The van fell silent and remained so until we got home.

Cindy parked the van in front of the house and took us inside. Cindy led Milo upstairs to peel off the rest of the glue and change his clothes. She let him borrow one of Mr. Caldwell’s old shirts that she had in a box in the attic. They were a size to big, but Milo didn’t seem to mind.

I sighed and took a seat on our old western-styled couch. Milo sat on the recliner with his head turned away from me. I wanted to talk to him to take my mind off everything, but he didn’t appear to be in a talking mood, so I used the next best thing to distract me.

I turned on the T.V in attempt to zone out the world around me. I grabbed a small blue and yellow pillow next to me and cradled it in my arms. For once in my life I actually wanted to forget, but I couldn’t. The whole scene ran through my mind as if someone had accidently pressed repeat on my memories. The sound of the lights shattering echoed through my mind. I couldn’t have done that. It wasn’t my fault. I didn’t do anything wrong, but the more I thought the more I believed I had. *We don’t need anyone getting hurt,* Milo’s words rang through my mind. Maybe I really am a freak…no…a monster. I closed my eyes and pressed my face into my pillow and cried.

“Hey, Katlyn, you okay?” Jessica placed her hand gently on my back. I gasped and looked up at her. I whipped away my tears and leaned back against the couch next to her. “I don’t really know what happened back there, but I want you to know that it’s okay. It wasn’t your fault. I don’t know what happened to the lights, but it wasn’t you.” She paused and leaned in closer. “Yeah.” I chuckled and whipped my nose. I nodded and leaned my head against her shoulder.

“It’s going to be okay, I promise.” Jessica reassured me as she wrapped her arms around me.

“Where’s Cindy?” asked. “I haven’t seen her since she lent Milo, Mr. Caldwell’s old baseball shirt and blue jeans.”

“She’s in the kitchen on the phone with Milo’s parents.” She replied. I looked towards the kitchen to see Cindy pacing back and forth on the phone as she rapidly explained what had happened earlier today. Cindy paused and pressed the phone against her shoulder and stepped out into the living room.

“Milo,” she said. Milo perked his head up and turned his body towards the sound of Cindy’s voice. “I’m on the phone with your father. He wants to talk to you.” Milo nodded in agreement and slowly pushed himself up and quietly walked into the kitchen. Cindy handed him the phone, and left the kitchen.

“Katlyn, Jessica,” Cindy said. “Don’t go waltzing in that kitchen. Give Milo some space. I know he’s your friend, but his parents are very worried about him and I don’t think they’d appreciate one of his friends interrupting their conversation. Do you understand?”

“Yes, mom,” we said in unison. Cindy sighed and walked upstairs into the playroom where the twins were and shut the door behind her.

“I’ve never met Milo’s parents.” I said. “I used to think he never had parents. I wonder what their like.” I said.

“I don’t know, Katlyn, but their pretty private, and they must be pretty stern since Milo spends like ninety-nine percent of his time with you.” Jessica said.

“Milo looks kind of anxious. I hope everything’s okay,” I said as I tried to stand up to go check on Milo in the kitchen, but Jessica pulled me back onto the couch.

“Mom said we can’t bother him.” Jessica said. “Now just watch some T.V. He’ll be back soon and we ask him, okay.” Milo hung up the phone a few minutes later, and walked back to the recliner and sat down.

“So, Miles,” I said. “Are your parents coming by to pick you up?” I asked.

“Yeah,” he replied in a rather monotone voice. “My dad will be here in a few minutes.”

“Okay,” I gulped. I knew Milo was agitated about what had happened on the bus earlier, but seeing him so drained of all emotion just wasn’t like Milo at all. When bad things happened, I was the one to act strange and outlandish, while Milo was always the one to make some kind of sarcastic remark to calm me down, like that one time I failed my math final and Milo started cracking jokes to make me feel better.

“Yikes,” Jessica said. “Someone’s in a bad mood.”

“You said it,” I sighed. I fluttered my lips and slouched into the soft couch cushion.

“Katlyn, Jessica, can you set the table while I get the twins in their high chairs.” Cindy said from the kitchen.

“Yeah,” Jessica sighed. “Come on, Katlyn,” Jessica grabbed my wrist and pulled me off the couch and pulled me forward. I took one last look at Milo before following Jessica into the kitchen. Jessica grabbed the cups while I grabbed paper plates when the sound of the doorbell echoed through the house. Jessica and I glanced at each other. She and I were thinking the same thing. We dropped everything onto the table and raced each other to the door. I shoved Jessica aside and grabbed the doorknob to open the door.

“Katlyn, I have to go, will you just—” Milo groaned as he dragged his feet to the door. I swung the door open and looked up to a pale skinned man in a rather expensive business suit. His jet-black hair was sleeked back behind his ears with a nice pair of sunglasses covering his eyes.

“You must be Katlyn,” he said in a rather gentle and soothing tone. He smiled and reached out his hand to shake mine. I nonchalantly reached out my hand in return as my I kept my gaze fixated on him. He seemed rather normal and private, just as Jessica had said, but he was much different than I anticipated. “May I come in? I really need to take Milo home.”

“Yeah, of course,” I stammered.

“Hello, Mr. Salazar.” Cindy came to the door and shook Mr. Salazar’s hand. “Milo is right here,” she gestured to her right where Milo stood calmly by the door.

“Thank you very much, Mrs. Caldwell for taking such good care of him. My wife and I were worried sick when we heard something had happened on the bus today,” Mr. Salazar walked over to Milo and wrapped his arm around him. Milo sighed as he readjusted his backpack.

“Of course, Mr. Salazar,” Cindy said.

“Let’s go, Milo,” Mr. Salazar pulled Milo along with him towards the door. “We can’t be late. Grandpa is coming to dinner tonight. You’re going to have to tell him all about what happened today after you give me the run down in the car.” Milo’s eyes winded, as a fearful expression stretched across his brow for a brief moment. Milo cleared his throat as he and his father walked towards the door.

I opened my mouth to say goodbye, but before I could the door closed behind them and Milo was gone. Jessica and I glanced at each other and we both quickly raced to the living room door. I opened the door just as Milo climbed into a small black car. Mr. Salazar glanced over at me as he waved goodbye and drove off.

“Bye Miles,” I mumbled. That was the first time Milo had just left without saying goodbye.

“That was weird,” Jessica said as I closed the door in front of me.

“You could say that again,” I said. I pressed my back against the door frame and pondered on what had just happened as feelings of dread and confusion came over me. *What just happened? Milo never leaves without saying goodbye. Why did Milo seemed so scared to go home? What if he comes from an abusive family and that’s why he never talks about them?*

“You okay, Katlyn,” Jessica asked. I gasped and looked up at her.

“I…I just don’t understand, Jess,” I managed to say. “Something felt really off when Milo’s dad mentioned his grandfather. Do you think Milo’s going to be okay?”

“Katlyn,” Jessica said. “A lot of weird stuff happened today. Milo got glue stuck in his hair. The lights on the bus shattered and kids were being treated by medical professionals. Honestly, this was the worst way to start spring break. I’m not going to lie and say that wasn’t weird, but you should know just as well as I do, that not everyone is blessed to have a happy family.” Jessica explained as we both sat down on the couch next to each other.

“I know,” I mumbled. “I just want my best friend to be happy. I mean you and him are all I really have,” I glanced down at me feet as a tear tricked down my cheek.

“Listen,” Jessica pulled me up and looked me straight in the eye. “My family life before Cindy sucked. It was so bad that my parents through me out one night because they were drunk out of their minds, but life is better now. We all find the good in the world. Maybe hanging out with us is Milo’s way of finding the good until things at home get better.” Jessica let out a long sigh. “Just promise me you won’t mention it to him, because honestly Katlyn, I hate to say it, but you don’t know what’s actually going on,” she said.

I knit my brow and glanced back at the floor, a feeling of resentment and confusion pulsed through every fiber in my body. I hate it when people tell me I don’t understand something. My entire life has been nothing but confusion and heartache before Cindy came along. That phrase just brings back memories of my years spent in foster care. I still can’t understand why no wanted me. I hate not knowing why.

“I know you don’t like it when people say that, Katlyn,” Jessica continued, “but sometimes you need to hear that, especially after all that has happened today.” Jessica tried to make eye contact with me, but I avoided her gaze. “Sorry. I shouldn’t have said anything. It’s been a long day and we’ve all been through a lot.” Jessica wrapped her arm around me for a brief moment as she rested her head on my shoulder. “I love you, sis. I hope you feel better.” With that Jessica stood up and walked upstairs. Once I heard her door shut I let out a small cry. Jessica is right. Everything bad that could have happened today, happened. I can’t even think straight. I just want to go to bed.

I laid down on the couch and tried to take nap before dinner, but I cried instead. Everything rolled around in my head like a broken track playing the same scenarios over and over again until I slowly drifted off to sleep. The last thought that lingered through my mind before I dozed was of Milo stepping into his car.

I tried calling him later, but he never answered.

Katlyn

I didn’t have my dream tonight…but I did have a nightmare

After Milo’s dad showed up, Cindy had gone back up to her room and had entirely forgotten about the casserole in the over. Let’s just say when she finally did notice she woke up the entire house with her frantic screams. Needless to say, it looked more like a hockey puck than a casserole when she took it out. You can imagine what we ate for dinner that night; pizza.

Once the pizza had arrived we all gather around the table to eat. I didn’t realize how hungry I was until now, but granted it was almost eight o’clock.

After dinner I helped Cindy clean up the twins and get them ready for bed while Jessica took a nap on the couch.

“Thank you, Katlyn,” Cindy kissed me on the cheek as we quietly closed the twin’s door behind us. “I need a nap.” She chuckled as she sluggishly walked to the master bedroom as she mumbled things about the burned casserole under her breath before closing the bedroom door behind her.

I quietly tip-toed over to the front door and grabbed my backpack from off the hook raced back to the kitchen table and sat down. I grabbed my backpack and pulled out my math homework, slamming my thick textbook onto the table and slumped down in my chair. I opened my textbook and started the first problem; factoring polynomials. Finally, something I could do. I scribbled down the problem, , and factored out the problem as instructed in the book hoping that math, the subject that strained my brain to its limit’s, would help me forget even for just a moment.

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I felt a tap on my shoulder and I jolted up still in a daze. Oh great, I fell asleep again. I hope I finished my homework. I didn’t want to have to worry about homework over Spring break. I looked down at my paper and peered down at the first problem and the empty space below with a small two written by the margin. I groaned and slammed the book shut.

“It’s almost midnight. You should be heading to bed, my little mathematician.” Cindy whispered into my ear as she kissed me gently on the cheek. “And you and Jessica still need to pack for Friday. You can finish your homework tomorrow. After everything that happened today, you really need to go to bed.”

“I know, thanks mom,” I sighed. Cindy smiled. “Yeah, homework, I was working *really* hard.” I mumbled under my breath so Cindy wouldn’t hear me. I closed my notebook and stuffed it back into my backpack. I quietly ran upstairs and changed into my fuzzy green and blue pajama bottoms and white tank top and tiptoed over to my room. Jessica’s door creaked open and she peered her head out with a groggy smile.

“Goodnight, Katlyn, sleep well.” She said. She closed her door as I grabbed hold of my doorknob. The door eerily creaked open, but nobody seemed to notice, so I ran to my bed and slipped under my covers and rested my head against my pillow and watched the ceiling fan spin around and round as I drifted off to sleep.

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The next day I called Milo on the phone. He actually answered this time and by the tone of his voice, was actually in a good mood. I decided to ask if he wanted to hang out. It was nice to hear his sarcastic know-it-all self again.

Milo arrived around three o’clock and helped me pack my luggage. Now when I say that he helped me pack I don’t mean that he actually picked out my clothes. Instead he randomly snatched things from my suitcase that I had already packed as he impersonated a fashion designer.

Milo grabbed my pink blouse and let out a fake laugh.

“This will not do, Katlyn,” Milo said in a sarcastic tone. “It’s just hideous,” He said as he threw it to the side. I rolled my eyes and grabbed the blouse and proceeded to fold it once again.

“Will you stop that,” I said as smacked his hands away. “I’m almost done packing my clothes. I looked away just as Milo snatched something else from my bag. “Milo, what did I say—

“Katlyn, this is like so out of style!” Milo said imitating a stereotypical teenage girl as he held up my tan bra in his hands.

“Oh my,” I finally managed to say. “Milo give me that.” I demanded.

“Oh, calm down, Katlyn” Milo wrinkled my bra his hands. Milo’s face went pale as he slowly curled his hands around my bra feeling ever seem and wire. “What kind of clothes do you wear, Katlyn?” Milo croaked.

“Milo, give me back my bra!” I demanded.

Milo yelped and threw the bra towards me as if they were playing a game of hot potato.

“I’m so sorry. I’ll never take your stuff again.” Milo whimpered. His dark skin turned a dark shade of red. Let’s just say I finished packing in peace as Milo remained wide eyes and completely silent until I was done.

My door opened and Cindy walked in.

“Milo, your mom called. She said you guys are meeting your grandfather for dinner tonight before you leave, and she’d like you to get dressed and take a shower. She’s on her way right now.” Cindy said.

“Okay,” Milo pushed himself up and walked towards the door.

“Bye, Katlyn,” he said.

“Go take a shower, Miles, you stink,” I snickered.

“Whatever,” he said as he followed Cindy out of my room and down the stairs.

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After finishing the rest of my math homework, Jessica and I popped some popcorn and curled up in blankets on the couch and tried watched the latest season of Teenage Mutant Wolverine. Honestly, it’s just a cheap knock off version of another popular show, but the main character is really hot, so it’s worth it.

*Maryann, I need to tell you something.*

*I don’t want to hear anymore of your excuses, Jackson!*

*I love you. (Maryann gasps and the credits roll.)*

“WHAT!” Jessica shrieked throwing the popcorn on the ground. “You had your chance with Maryann back in season three, Jackson!”

“Yeah—wait that’s it?” I threw my blanket on the ground and turned the T.V off. “Well that was stupid,” I said. “I swear, if Maryann gets back together with Jackson, I’m going to be so mad. He might be James’ twin brother, but Maryann can do better.”

“You said it,” she yawned. “Goodnight, Katlyn,” Jessica said as she cleaned up the bowl of popcorn she had spilled on the floor. We both tiptoed upstairs, and headed to our rooms. Jessica waved me goodnight with a yawn and then closed her door softly behind her.

“Night,” I said. I closed my door behind me and swiftly changed into my fuzzy green and blue pajamas and tank top and climbed into bed turning out the lamp next to my bed leaving only a dim night-light to light my room. I tried to fall asleep, but the idea of sleep just added to my already amounting stress. I sighed and pushed myself up and leaned against the wooden board of my bed frame.

I pulled out my necklace and examined it. Even in the darkness of my room, the glistening lightning bolt shaped crystal still let out a faint electric blue glow. At the center, swirled around inside. It rotated with a smooth fluid motion as if someone had trapped a piece of the universe inside. I smiled and rubbed my finger across the rigged glass. By the looks of it had been broken once before as the outer edges were cracked. I don’t know what could have happened to it, what it means or what it is. I’ve tried countless time to open it, and examine the liquid inside, but it never worked, so I just left it alone. I’ve never taken it off before. I’m always afraid that I might lose it just like I lost my memory, but after what happened yesterday I wasn’t in the mood to hang onto to things from my past. I didn’t want any answers. I just wanted things to be normal again. I just want to be normal.

With my hands shaking I gently took the necklace off from around my neck.

“Just for tonight,” I reassured myself as I gently put it on my lamp desk and stuffed my face into my pillow and pulled my blanket close to my face. I fell asleep to the sound of my ceiling fan as I waited for the dark forest to appear, but it never came.

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I looked up at my ceiling fan as I watched it turn slowly round and round. My room was still dark except for the night light next to the door, which was gentle yet haunting. That’s when I heard them, voices coming from outside the door. I couldn’t make out what they were saying. It was as if a giant crowd of people were standing outside the door whispering amongst themselves. From the crowd a voice emerged. It was Jessica.

“*Katlyn, come here*,” she called. “*Katlyn, hurry*,” her voice filled with fear. Alarmed and a bit afraid I pulled my covers off and stepped out of bed rubbing my eyes. When I opened my eyes, I was standing on the bus. All the kids sat comfortably in their seats with their eyes geared towards me.

“*Freak,*” a voice from behind said. I gasped, whipping my head around to find the source of the voice when another emerged.

“*Monster*,” a girl a few seats away said. I tried to find which of them was speaking, but the voices came to frequently. I couldn’t catch them. I felt trapped as the voices blared in and out from all directions.

“*She’s dangerous*.”

“*She tried to kill my daughter.*”

“*Why can’t you remember, freak*?” I looked just in time as the girl next to me cranked her head to the side as if she were some kind of animatronic. “*You call yourself Katlyn Caldwell, but deep down you don’t know anything*.”

“*Stop it*,” I yelled. “*You’re lying!*”

“*Then tell me*,” she said. “*Tell me, tell me, tell me!*”

“*Tell you what*?” I cried as I a girl in front stood up and pointed her finger at me.

“*She has something in her hands. What does the freak have in her hands*?” she stammered. I whimpered as I looked down at my hands only to watch the world around me fade into darkness and my body went weightless. I was falling, falling into a bottomless pit. Voices spiraled around me laughing and chanting as I fell. Suddenly a light flashed before my eyes and I saw a woman; her complexion blurred, as if she were standing behind dirty glass. I reached out my hand for you as her voice chimed in my ears.

“*Run*!” she screamed.

“Katlyn its five o’clock, I need to get you and Jess down to the airport. It’s a two hour and a half hour drive to the airport.” Cindy shook me as my eyes flashed open. She smiled and kissed me on the forehead. “The dream is gone. You’re safe now.” She brushed my fingers through my bangs before turning on the light and walking out the door to Jessica’s room.

I sat up and clasped my hand over my chest. The woman’s blurred face and the children’s taunting words still lingered in my mind I shook my head and looked down at my necklace. I had never had that dream before. I wasn’t expecting something different. My heart hammered in my chest as I tried to catch my breath. I picked up my necklace and glanced at it. The light inside had died down.

“That’s odd,” I mumbled. “I wonder, why it—”

“Katlyn,” I gasped and I looked up to see Cindy at my door once again. “Was the dream a little more than you could handle?” she asked as she sat down beside me.

“Yeah,” I lied. I didn’t want to worry her with anything, especially before spring break. She would just worry about me all day long until I came home. I didn’t want to bother her. I wrapped my arms around her and held her tight. “I just love you so much, mom,” I said.

Cindy gasped, a bit taken back.

“Mom?” she said. “I like the sound of that from my precious little Kate.” My mom stroked my arm as she gently kissed me on the cheek. “Is everything alright, Katlyn?” she asked. “Is there anything you need to talk about before you go? You know, you can always talk to me about anything. I know you we’ve only been together for 3 years now, and it’s hard opening up to others, but I’m hear if you need to talk.”

My heart hammered in my chest as I contemplated, whether or not I should ask her about the necklace and tell her about the nightmare I just had. I should be honest with er, right?

“I just,” I began. “I…I just wanted to say that I love you to, mom,” I couldn’t get myself to say it. I didn’t want to worry her. I loved her too much. I’ll just tell her when I come home.

“I love you to, Katlyn,” she squeezed me tightly in her arms as she kissed the top of my head. “But,” she continued, “we do need to get to the airport if we are to meet everyone there and make your flight, so grab your stuff and let’s go,” she stood up and walked the door, turning on my light as she left.

I love my family. I’m going to miss everyone while Jessica and I are gone. It’ll only be gone for three days. I’m excited for the theme park with my government club members, but I’m excited to spend the rest of spring break with my family, especially my mom, Cindy.

Now I have to actually get out of bed. I moaned and grudgingly got out of bed and dressed myself and double checked my bags. I quickly brushed my teeth and stuffed my toothbrush in my backpack. I hauled my luggage downstairs and set it by the couch. I sat down on the couch and pulled out my phone and headphones.

Ten minutes later, Cindy hauled Jessica, the twins and I in the car and we started the long drive to the airport. Jessica and the twins fell back asleep while I watched the cars pass by. The car was silent with the exception of Cindy’s eighties jams playing in the background, so I took out my phone and played some games to keep me distracted. As I played my thoughts turned towards the trip.

I was pretty excited for the trip. Jessica and I joined this student government club at the beginning of the school year to get involved. I even dragged Milo into it. Honestly all Milo does is sit around and eat the snacks and make sarcastic remarks the whole time. It’s been fun so far. All year we’ve been raising money to go to this theme park by spring break and we finally made it. I’m just excited for the break, honestly. We all need it.

“We’re finally here,” Cindy said. I pulled out my earbuds and sighed.

Cindy unloaded our luggage as our government advisor, Mr. Thomas stepped forward with the others including Milo behind him.

“Morning girls,” Mr. Thomas waved us down as he checked out names off his list of club members. “It looks like everyone is here. Perfect,” he cheered.

“Alright, you girls be safe, and stick together, okay.” Cindy hugged us both and gave us each a kiss on the cheek. “I love you both very much.” Cindy let us go and walked back to the car. “Bye girls. I love you,” she waved before climbing back in the car and driving away. “Have fun as well Milo,” Milo grumbled as he shrugged his shoulders and yawned.

“Thanks, Mrs. Caldwell,” he mumbled. I laughed and punched him in the arm. Milo gasped and shoved me back. “Stop! I’m too tired for this, Katlyn,” Jessica and I looked at each other and laughed.

“Let’s get going, kids. It takes a while to get through security.” Mr. Thomas gestured for us to follow him into the airport and quickly got in line for security. It was a long wait, but my classmates and I chatted amongst ourselves to pass the time, and soon we were the next in line.

Let me tell you, that was fun trying to get fourteen children through security, and of course I was the one who gets called out. Obviously, I looked like a person who would be caring a gun in her pink suitcase and Magical Creatures backpack.

After the security check we stopped at a few places to get some breakfast before we all headed to our gate and waited for the plane to arrive.

“Katlyn,” Jessica nudged my shoulder. “Smile. We’re going on a vacation. Our first trip together as sisters. Aren’t you excited?” she asked. In all honesty I really was very excited for the trip, but my mind was still stuck on my dream and the fact that I had lied to my mom. Everything that had happened in the past few days had put me in a rather sour mood, I didn’t want to disappoint Jessica though. I couldn’t go wrong with the smile on her face and the light in her eyes, so I lightened up my expression and smiled in return. Putting on a fake smile was the only thing I had learned and taken with me from foster care. All those years in foster care taught me that people have a tendency to discard others when they are struggling mentally, so I taught myself that it was better to pretend to be happy then to be rejected and interrogated for not sharing the same definition of emotions as everyone else.

“Sorry, can we talk about this later, Jess? I’m just not in the mood.” I said. “Where are you sitting?” I asked. Jessica pulled out her ticket.

“Twenty-three, F. What about you?” she replied. I looked at my ticket and smiled.

“You, Milo and I are all next to each other.” I said. “He had me read his ticket before we went through security.” I said.

We all entered the plane and went to our seats. I had the window, Jessica sat next to me and Milo had the aisle seat across from Mr. Thomas. The rest of my classmates were in front of us in rows.

“Smile, Katlyn, we’ll be in paradise soon.” Jessica poked me in the arm.

“I know,” I said. “I’m just tired, that’s all.” I let out a gentle chuckle in attempt to convince Jessica that I was alright.

“It’s okay, me to,” Jessica yawned and nestled her head on my shoulder. I sighed and shifted my attention back to the small window to my left.

The plane took off to the skies and the lights turned off. I wanted to look at the view outside as we rose higher and higher into the air and above the clouds, but I couldn’t keep my eyes open. I yawned and curled up next to the window and closed my eyes and fell into a light sleep.

Katlyn

I ride the plane of death

*I have to pee so bad…Oh please seat belt sign be off. Please!* I opened my eyes and to my disappointment the seat belt sign was still on.

“Oh who cares about the stupid seat belt sign any way,” I unlatched my seat belt and crawled over Jessica and Milo’s sleeping bodies. Milo moaned and turned over nearly knocking me over in the process. I latched onto another seat and regained my balance. I took in a deep breath and grumbled as I looked back at Milo in disgust. “Dumby,” I turned my head back and gasped at what I saw in front of me.

Now I don’t know if I was dreaming or if this was actually reality, but the plane was empty. Everyone was gone, except for Milo, Jessica and I. I had to be dreaming. They wouldn’t just leave us on the plane. Mr. Thomas would come looking for us. I must be dreaming.

As I walked down to the bathrooms at the end of the plane I looked at the sign on the doors. They were both vacant. No one was using them. I took in a deep breath and shook my head. It’s just a dream. I’ll wake up soon and realize that I really have to go to the bathroom and everything will be okay. That’s how these things work, right?

I went to the bathroom and washed my face with cold water before I left. The water felt so real and refreshing. It was hard to believe that this may have been a dream. My fears were soon realized when I exited the bathroom and took another look around the plane. Nothing had changed. The plane was still empty and Milo and Jessica were there. Milo had his seat reclined with his eyes closed with his arms folded across his chest as Jessica yawned and turned over to her side.

I crawled back to my seat and peered out the window. Small fluffy clouds loomed below us as we soared through the open blue sky. We were still in the air. They couldn’t have left, but that doesn’t explain why they are gone. Where could they have gone?

“Milo, Jessica, wake up,” I whispered shaking them violently. Milo snorted and turned over. Jessica opened her eyes and stretched.

“What’s up, Katlyn, is everything okay?” she yawned. “Just remember it’s just a dream. It can’t hurt you,” she tried falling back asleep, but I grabbed her shoulders and shook her.

“No!” I exclaimed. “This isn’t a dream. Somethings wrong, Jessica!” At that point Milo turned over and moaned.

“Katlyn, be quiet. We’re trying to sleep,” he grumbled.

“No, I won’t be quiet! The plane is empty! Everyone’s gone!” I exclaimed. Milo’s eyes flashed open. I could see the fear in his greyish green eyes. Jessica titled her head to the side, but inevitably unbuckled her seatbelt and looked around. I half expected her to laugh and tell me that I was just making things up, but upon seeing the fear in her eyes as she sat back down I knew instantly this was real.

“Well…you’re not wrong,” she managed to say as she shakily sat back in her seat.

“What do you mean by *their* gone, Katlyn?” Milo asked. His voice was harsh and demanding as if he too couldn’t believe the words I was speaking.

“The plane is empty, Milo, except for you, me and Jessica.” I said. Milo shook his head in disbelief. His the expression on his face was filled with distress and above all fear. He unexpectedly whipped his arm over Jessica’s seat inevitably slapping her in the face.

“Watch it, Milo,” Jessica shoved his arm away. “We’re right here, dude.”

“Where is everyone?” Milo demanded.

“I don’t know, Milo,” I said. “They’re all gone. I know just as much as you do,”

“This wasn’t supposed to happen,” Milo exclaimed as he gripped his fingers through his curly black hair. “This doesn’t make any sense!”

“Milo, just calm down. Surely there’s a logical explanation to this,” Jessica tried to calm him, but Milo being his stubborn self didn’t listen. “Katlyn, help me!” Jessica growled through gritted teeth as Milo fell into a deep despair.

“Milo, I get it, but please, calm down everything is going to be alright—Milo interrupted me mid-sentence with a fearsome snarl.

“No, Katlyn, you don’t know. You don’t know anything! You have no idea the severity of the situation. This wasn’t supposed to happen. We were supposed to go on a trip to Florida and have fun and return home to our normal lives.” Milo shrieked. Milo rested his back against his seat with his eyes wide open as he shook his head. “My dad…my dad is going to be so worried, and my grandfather…I don’t even want to know what he’s going to do when he finds out how I died.”

“Dude,” Jessica shoved Milo, nearly knocking him out of his seat. “We’re not going to die! Now just—” Jessica stopped mid-sentence as she gazed out the window.

“Jess,” I whimpered. “Jess, what’s wrong?”

“Katlyn,” Jessica gulped.

“What?” I exclaimed. Her eyes were wide as she pointed a finger to the window outside. My hair stood on end as I thought of the endless possibilities of what could be lurking outside the window. “What is that?” she asked. I shook off the fear and pushed past her to see what could possibly be outside. My eyes widened in horror at what lingered to the left of the plane.

“What the…” my words got caught in my throat as my heart raced in my chest. The clear blue skies and fluffy white clouds had all but vanished and were replaced with what appeared to be a black hole. It was large, larger than any cloud I’d ever seen. It spun round and round like a vortex. The center circle was as dark as night. Clouds of dark purple and blue spiraled around it.

“Milo, what’s that?” I stammered. I know the question was stupid, but it was the only thing I could think to say. I grabbed hold of Jessica and wrapped my arms around her.

“Katlyn, I’m blind,” Milo waved his hand in front of his face and narrowed his eyes. “I have no idea what *that* is!” He snapped. “What is it?”

I tried to speak, but I couldn’t get the words to escape my lips.

“Outside,” Jessica managed to say, her voice all but a whisper. “It’s huge…it looks like some kind of vortex, a black hole, maybe even a portal—” Jessica’s eyes widened; an idea had come to her mind. I could see it in her eyes. “Guys, are we dead?”

“Wait…WHAT!” Milo shrieked. He grabbed his shirt and started to chew on it like he always does when he’s overly stressed.

“Wait a second,” I pulled myself away from Jessica and pressed my face against the cold glass. The more I looked at it the closer the vortex appeared, but it was no trick of the mind. The plane was turning towards it as if the vortex was pulling it in by some unseen force. “Oh no,” I cried. “Why?”

“Why what?” Jessica asked just as plane started to shake violently back and forth as it spiraled out of control towards the dark spinning vortex below. The latches from above opened and breathing mask’s fell from them. I tried to put back on my seatbelt just as my body went weightless. We were plummeting down in the vortex. The light shut off as I floated in mid-air. “KATLYN!” Jessica grabbed my arm and yanked me down. She held me down as she strapped back on my seat belt. I grabbed hold of Jessica and pulled Milo in close.

“Oh Gosh, what’s happening!” Milo cried. “Mom, Dad!”

The plane took another hard hit causing my backpack to hit me square in the chest lashing my head against the window. My whole world seemed to slow down as my vision blurred in and out. Jessica screamed my name, but I wasn’t able to answer. Jessica wrapped her arm around me just as she pulled something out of her pocket. Milo raised his right hand up in the air as if looking for some unseen object. My vision blurred in and out before fading into darkness. Milo and Jessica’s fearful cries drifted off into the silence of space until there was nothing.

Kahlavar

Welcome to Kàtzu

Life isn’t fair. Everyone learns that at some time in their life, but unlike most of you who may have lost your favorite toy, or got yelled, I had to learn the hard way when strange alien creatures invaded my home planet, Kàtzu. We call them *mànà*, but they are most commonly known on their home planet as, *humans*.

Seven years ago, *mànà’ahat—*humans with the ability to control magic*—* invaded our world seeking out for something. No one really knows why they came or what they wanted. Some say they came to study us, but their leader became corrupted in getting evidence for his research. Others say they were looking for something, but what we do know is that they tried everything in their power to get exactly what they wanted.

When they came to Ra’Koza, my home country, the king, our Pharoka, went to war and evacuated the women and children to a safe haven in the northern mountains of Ya’Za. Everything was going to plan until their commander, Jason and his son took my sister as one of their victims.

Her name was Katya. She was only seven. She had her whole life ahead of her and he took it from her as if she were nothing more than an insect in his eyes. My cousin, Azàk, and I had tried to save her. They nearly killed Azàk leaving me to take on the task. I was only thirteen at the time. I had barley learned to fly, and still had no control or concept of the extent of my powers. I still remember it all like it was yesterday.

The site of Jason handing my sister motionless body over to one of his men, and watching him vanish through the only portal still remaining between Kàtzu and Earth with my sister in his clutches, filled me with rage.

That’s when I lost it. My sister was gone, my cousin was injured, and my parents were nowhere to be found. I had lashed out at him using my power to control the darkness. I was naïve and stupid and I couldn’t comprehend the power an elemental wizard such as himself could do. He nearly killed me trapping me in a prison of stone, but at the last second, I snatched his son and pulled him in front of me causing the blow to hit his son square in the face. The rocks around me crumbled and I ran to Azàk’s aid. I remember glancing over at Jason as he knelt down in the sand with his son cradled in his arms screaming out his name to wake up. Now I can’t really explain what happened next. The power I felt was something I have yet to experience again. You would think I would have liked it, but I didn’t. Kahaizans aren’t supposed to feel like that when using their powers. I don’t even know how to describe it. I knew instantly something was wrong.

I screamed and sent a wave of dark energy out of me in fear of my new-found power. It all happened so fast. Jason vanished with his son through the portal and the Ra’Kozan captain flew down from the skies, in an attempt to save me and cousin, just as he was hit by my blow. He was killed instantly.

After the humans left I was taken in custody and put on trial, and I was banished for my crime; the death of my sister, and the captain of the royal guard. It’s been seven years now since my banishment. I’m forced to live outside the borders of my home country, away from my family knowing that my sister is gone, and it’s all my fault.

My name is Kahlavar Natashka, as you might have guessed, I’m a kahaizan from the planet Kàtzu. I’m twenty years old and the banished convict of Ra’Koza.

Kahlavar

I see a giant white bird in the sky

I’m almost there just a few more steps.I crouched down in the grass quietly watching the giant blue beast in front of me, slowly moving closer.

*Kahlavar be careful.*

I jumped backwards almost falling into the giant mud pit. That would have taken hours to get out off. I looked up to see the giant beast staring back at me with it’s huge brown eyes. I crouched down in the grass trying to act like that whole scene had never happened. The beast roared and trotted off into the woods, towards the Kabeshan mountains.

“Hey wait! I just want to eat you, please come back!” I cried. My stomach growled. I haven’t eaten in a week. I’m starving. I couldn’t let this one get away from me, not this time.

I took off into a sprint after the beast, my long black tail keeping me balanced as I drew closer and closer to the beast before me. I roared and jumped up onto its back, extending my massive black wings in the process, and tried my best to hold on. It kept trying to kick me off, but I probably would have done the same thing if a crazy man jumped on my back yelling at me to slow down so he could eat me.

Soon the beast grew tired of my games and its pace slowed, so I took an opportunity to strike. I barred my fangs and aimed for its throat.

SMACK!

I hit my head hard against a branch flipping backwards off the beast and smashing head first into the ground and finishing with a summersault into the mud pit.

“Wait,” I shrieked. I moaned and collapsed into the mud. “I just wanted to eat you,” I whimpered as my stomach wailed in reply. “I know,” I patted my empty stomach as I pushed myself up.

I looked down at my clothes in disgust. My black saggy trousers were torn and covered in splotches of mud. My grey kimono top was drenched in mud and my sleeves were ripping at the seams. The bandages around my knuckles and forearms were unraveling and soaked. The only part of my clothing that was safe from the mud was my red scarf and black belt that had fallen off during the fall.

“My wings too,” I exclaimed as I examined the dirt and grim splattered on my feathers. I snarled and shook my wings releasing all of the excess dirt. “Much better,” I sighed as I folded my wings up behind my back. All instantaneously, my wings, camouflaged with my surroundings and appeared invisible to the naked eye. Our wings have camouflage capabilities when we fold them up. It’s designed to make us appear as big as possible when necessary. The illusion of massive wings appearing on our back’s, wards off pretenders. It usually works wonders when hunting. If I hadn’t hit my head on that branch I would have finally had something to eat.

“Today is going to be a good day, Kahlavar, just wait and—” I said in an attempt to regain some dignity and pride, but it all slipped away when Fooshka just had to comment on what just happened like he always does. I hate that guy.

*You tried so hard. You almost had him, but you hit your head on the branch and fell into the pit. Now you look like a Kahaizan gone wild.* Fooshka laughed. I cringed at the sound of his laughter. He’s so annoying.

“It’s your fault, Fooshka.” I growled.

In case you are wondering, Fooshka isn’t a physical person. He’s a *navask*, which in my native tongue, Kalvetna translates to *companion*. Technically speaking they’re spirits. Once a child reaches the age of 8, they are given a navask through a special ceremony and blessing. They’re our companions for life. They’re always with us. They usually stay invisible to others, as ones navask should never be seen in public. It’s considered rude and disrespectful as they are considered to be holy revered spirits sent from our God, Malan to guide his children. Malan must really hate me for sending an idiot like Fooshka to guide me.

They are said to be the last child born under your symbol of power, on your father’s side. They’re meant to be very helpful and give you advice, but I swear that Fooshka is a demon sent from the depths of the underworld, to torture me till the end of my days with his childish laughter and idiotic jokes. I can’t believe that he is my grandfather.

I got up and scraped off the excess mud and walked over to a nearby watering hole to wash off. Before dipping my hands in the water, I groomed my long black tail to get any dirt or bugs out my long-tangled fur.

I sighed and dipped my hands in the water, once again, washing out the stains from my clothes and the mud from off my face.

I looked down at my refection in the water only to look up and find a pair of glowing yellow transparent eyes and an energetic grin staring back at me. I shrieked and jumped back.

“Why do you always do that?” I snarled and wacked my arm through Fooshka’s head. He giggled as he hovered a few centimeters above the water. His body flickering as the light coming through the tree’s passed through him.

Fooshka, when he was alive, had dark mahogany skin, spiked, untamed hair and bright yellow eyes. He was usually seen wearing a silk tunic, no top, and his arms gripped with gold bracelets and a massive golden necklace that wrapped around his neck and covered his upper chest.

He still looks the same as he did when he was alive, but much lighter. Sometimes he almost appears white, except for his eyes. His eyes are just as bright as those of a living person. It’s rather unsettling if you ask me.

*Hey Kahlavar.*

“What, Fooshka?” I groaned. Fooshka vanished in a plume of smoke. I rolled my eyes. He’s trying to cheer me up by scaring me again, isn’t he? I can’t believe this. I turned around to find Fooshka hovering above me upside down.

*Boo!*

“I hate you,” I scoffed.

*Come on, Kahl. Cheer up. You used to love that as a kid, just you dad. He was so cute when he got scared.*

“Yeah, well not I’m not kid anymore Fooshka, and stop comparing me to my father. I hate him. He could have done something for me, but he did nothing. He just stood there and watched as I was banished.” I snarled. My stomach growled again. I clutched my stomach and grumbled. “Besides, I’m starving. I haven’t eaten anything in a week. I hate this place.”

*Kahlavar, your father loves you very much. I know what happened. I see what you see. I feel what you feel, and I know things that you do not know. I don’t know why he did that, but I do know that he loves you. If you can’t see that then just know that I love you.*

I glanced back at Fooshka and gave him a soft, but quick smile. Even though Fooshka is annoying and I wish every day that Malan would take him back and give me someone else, I know deep down that he cares. Sometimes it was hard to believe that my father, stern and malicious as he is, was the offspring of this guy. Fooshka is about as loving as they come. He cares a lot more about me then most do. In all honesty, I would miss him if he disappeared one day. He’s all I left to reminisce on my once happy family before the *mànà* came.

I looked down at my reflection once more. My dark olive skin was filthy and bruised and my black wavy hair flowed down to my shoulders in a tattered mess. My red cat like slit eyes were worn down from many sleepless nights in the forest. We have very similar features to humans, aside from the tail, wings, larger fangs and, of course, the slit pupils. That’s probably why our ancestors traveled to Earth in search of refuge. They thought humans would want to help them, because we are so similar, but humans betrayed them, according the legend of King Kalvran anyway.

“Disgusting,” I hissed and splashed away my reflection. “Thanks for caring Fooshka, but why did you do that?” I growled. I pushed myself up onto my feet, and walked away from the waterhole dragging Fooshka along with me, who soon disappeared in a puff of smoke and reappeared with his hand pressed against the tree, his legs crossed in mid-air as he checked his nails.

*Those mood swings really do come out nowhere, don’t they? Just like your father.*

“Will you stop saying that,” I snapped. “Listen, If you had just kept your mouth shut none of this would have ever happened and I would be eating a fresh meal of Zargonian meat.” I snarled. Fooshka laughed and rested his hands on his hips and swooped down in front of me with his belly facing down, his legs bent upwards and his hands cradling his face.

*It’s what I’m here for, right, to make your life as miserable as possible. Come on, Kahl, I was just trying to protect you. That Zargonian could have hurt you. They’re dangerous creatures. They may be big and stupid, but they’re very strong and powerful. I didn’t want anything to happen to my grandson.*

“Well at least there not as stupid as you,” I muttered under my breath.

*Oh, man, Kahl’s getting feisty today. That hurt.* Fooshka chuckled. *Kahl, you know I love you. You’re my grandson. I would do anything to protect you, but if you don’t listen to me I can’t help you. I can talk all day, but until you listen I may as well be talking to a brick wall…I felt that way talking with your grandmother sometimes. Maybe that’s where your father gets it from.*

I narrowed my eyes and grabbed hold of a nearby branch and pulled myself up.

“If you care about me so much then just stay out of my way. Why can’t you just be like every other navask, quiet, helpful, and thoughtful? Why can’t you just be normal?” I grabbed hold of the next branch and began climbing up the tree.

*Kahl, people do things for a reason. Nobody ever does something without first consulting it with themselves and besides why would I not want to be me? It’s no fun pretending to be someone else, Kahlavar. If you only know who loved you more than anything—*

“Leave Malan and my father out of this. Where were they when I was banished? If they really loved me they would have saved me,” I huffed. Fooshka rolled his eyes.

*Sorry. It’s true though. Let’s find you some food, so I can talk to my real grandson again.*

“Alright, Fooshka, now go away. I’m not in the mood.” I said. Fooshka rolled his eyes, and evaporated into smoke.

I growled and continued to climb up.

I climbed to the top and sat on the highest branch and looked around at the valley below. It was beautiful today. The sky was blue and Pharoka and Pharokani, our two suns, hovered at opposite ends of the sky.

In two weeks, our two sons, would cross paths and form the yearly solar eclipse for the upcoming New Year. There would be songs and dances and feasts that would last all day and night, but the food and songs weren’t the only reason I was excited for the New Year. Since my banishment seven years ago it has been my favorite time of the year. Because of my mother’s mercy I was allowed one week to return to my homeland and be with my family. One week to prove myself, but despite it all something always happened. Something to prove to the king, his ambassadors, and trusted servants that I wasn’t worthy to reclaim my citizenship and I was once again sent back to the wild to fend for myself. It’s the same cycle year after year.

I sighed and flew to my small fort that overlooked Lake Saionai located a few miles from the village, Ét. The fort was nothing more than an abandoned house I had found when I was thirteen. I cleaned it up, stole some blankets and pillows from the local village and called it home. It’s been my home for the past seven years. The house had a nice view of the lake. During the day the lake shimmered in the light of Kàtzu’s two suns with brilliant blue and green colors. The lake was most beautiful though during sunrise and sunset. All those pink, yellow and red colors shimmering in the water. It was quite a sight to see.

I landed in front of the house and folded up my wings. The wood was molding and the straw roof was caving in at the center, but it was better than sleeping in a tree in the midst of wild beasts.

I stumbled forward and pulled open the door, well that’s what I wanted to happen.

“Stupid door,” I grumbled throwing the old piece of plywood on the ground. “I’ll fix it later,” I yawned as I stepped inside. I stopped in my tracks and scanned the room. Something was in here with me. I looked towards the old fireplace just as a massive creature, six foot at best, arouse on all fours and walked towards me. Its electric blue eyes stared back at me as it sniffed the air and licked its chops. It was a Lúpka.

A Lúpka is a Ra’Kozan carnivorous wild cat found in central and Northern parts of Ra’Koza. Their massive jaws and fangs could rip apart a Zargonian in a matter of seconds, and its sharp claws were etched with venom if necessary. Most Lúpka’s were a light brown color, with dark strips across their whole body and beautiful detailed markings on their face and deep red eyes. This one however was white with black strips and a black patch of fur around its left eye. Thick, spiked fur, etched the creatures spine down to its lioness tale. Its pointed ears turned towards me as its arctic blue eyes met my mine, and tackled me to the ground.

“Kida,” I laughed as she licked my face. “Stop it that tickles.”

This is Kida. I found her as a cub and raised her myself. She’s my best friend and protector. She trusts no one and eats anything in front of her except for me. Usually when I bring her hunting with me, but I couldn’t get her lazy butt off the pile of Kala leaves that I had made for her; lazy cat.

“Did you miss me?” I kissed her on the cheek. She let out an innocent meow and slammed her massive head into my shoulder as she continued to lick my face clean. “Okay, that’s enough,” I shoved her down and ruffled my fingers through her fur. She sniffed my hand and whimpered. “Sorry, girl, I lost it. I’ll try again later, okay?” I yawned and walked over to my bed. I made it entirely out of straw and simply layered a blanket over it and stuffed a pillow case with moss. Believe me, when you’re tired this bed feels like heaven.

“I need a nap,” I moaned. I plopped onto my bed and sighed. Kida jumped on the bed and snuggled next to me nearly knocking me off the bed in the process. I rolled my eyes and gripped my arms tightly around her chest as she licked my fingers.

“Goodnight, Kida,” I yawned. She replied with a meow and nestled her head next to mine. Her chest vibrated as her deep purr hummed in my ears and against my chest. I closed my eyes and smiled. I was surprised it was so quiet. Fooshka wasn’t talking or singing. I could finally actually get some sleep for once—

*Do you want me to sing you bedtime song?* My eyes flashed open as I narrowed my brow.

“No,” I hissed. Kida purred and tried to bat at Fooshka.

*Fine. Still in a bad mood, I see.* Fooshka rolled his eyes and evaporated into a puff of smoke.

I smiled and drifted off into a deep sleep.

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I woke up finding myself on the floor with Kida’s tongue in my face. She meowed and her massive paw patted my cheek. I moaned and pushed myself up.

“I don’t want to get up,” I grumbled. Kida jumped off the bed and brushed against my shoulder blade. I opened my eyes to find a pair of piercing golden eyes staring right back at me in mid-air.

*How was your nap? Do you want to hear my song now?*

“If you ask to sing to me again I will personally escort you to the underworld.” I said.

*Rude. How dare you talk to your navask like that, S…I mean Kahlavar*

Fooshka gasped and vanished in a puff of smoke. “Good riddance,” I said. I smiled and looked over at Kida. I scratched behind her head and kissed her ear. She licked my arm and pounced around the house causing the roof to shake. I gasped and tried to calm her down as she got into a playful position. Her irises grew in size as she swatted me with her paw. “Outside, Kida,” I said gesturing to the door. “We’re going hunting, okay?” Kida’s eyes widened in amazement. She raced to the open space where the door had once been and waited for me outside. I smiled and together we raced into the Salvetka forest.

Kida is fast. I have to fly sometimes to even keep up with her. She loves it when I fly. It makes her so happy for some reason. I grasped onto a nearby tree branch and pulled myself up. Kida moaned and clawed the bark of the tree towards me.

“Stay here, girl,” I said. “I’ll be right back.” Kida grumbled and licked her lips. She jumped down and curled up next to the base of the tree. “Good girl.” I smiled and climbed up the tall white trunk towards the bright blue sky above.

The wind blew through my hair as I breathed in the fresh warm Ra’Kozan air; Fresh rosemary and mil dew filled my nostrils. I took in another big breath and a new smell arose. It was a strange smell. It reminded me of smoke, but with a tinge of oil and molten metal. I sniffed the air again. The smell was stronger now, stronger than before. Off in the distance a sound very much like the flapping of Kahaizan wings, a hundred or more in fact echoed through the vast valley. I shrieked as my feathers and tail puffed up. I franticly looked around for the source of the commotion. That’s when I spotted it; a massive object near the Eastern Sea. It was a very dark object and it spiraled round and round like a windup toy. It had to have been at least a few miles wide as the Eastern Sea was a good, two hundred miles east from where I stood.

*What is that?* Fooshka appeared by my side hovering in mid-air at the end of the tree branch with a very serious and intrigued expression on his face. My heart started to race rapidly in my chest out of anxiety. Anytime Fooshka was serious about something it meant danger. Despite his annoying jokes and dumb remarks he was very smart, protective and could switch from a joking tone to a very serious tone in a matter of seconds almost like a light switch turning on and off.

I gulped down my fear and observed the object more carefully. I titled my head from side to side trying to grasp what it could possibly be when an even smaller object came out of it. It looked like nothing more than a small white bird. The bird was spiraling out of control. One of its wings appeared to be broken. I gasped and crouched down in the tree’s thick branches. Fooshka gasped and vanished in a puff of smoke only to reappear right in front of me. His golden eyes stern and serious very much like my fathers.

*Kahlavar, stay away from that thing. I don’t like the looks of it, one bit.* Fooshka glanced back it, and snarled.

“Come on, Fooshka,” I chuckled nervously in an attempt to calm my chaotic nerves. “It’s nothing more than a helpless bird, and besides what’s the worst that could happen?”

*That doesn’t look any bird I’ve ever seen. Kahalavr, what if it—*

I regained my confidence and arose to my feet and carefully walked to edge of the branch.

*What are you doing? Get back here.* Fooshka appeared in a puff of smoke with his arms crossed in front of me. *You don’t really think that you are actually going to after that thing, do you?*

“I just want to take a quick look,” I said.

*NO! I FORBID YOU TO—*

I unfolded my wings and took off to the skies.

*Kahlavar, get back to the fort right now. Are you even listening to me, boy? Kahlavar!*

“Fooshka, just calm down, everything’s going to be fine, you’ll see.” I assured him. He flew along side me with his ghostly golden wings spread out as trails of smoke followed him. He glared at me and scoffed.

*Fine then, just go and get eaten by this giant white bird of yours. Don’t listen to your old man or anything. It’s not like I’m your Navask or your GRANDFATHER or something stupid like that. Oh no.*

“Will you stop?” I exclaimed.

*No. I won’t stop until you turn around, and…hey are you even listening to me? Get back to that tree now! Kahlavar!* Fooshka narrowed his eyes and evaporated into smoke.

I rolled my eyes as I approached the place where I believed that bird hand landed. The giant dark object where the bird had flown out of was much larger and darker in person, but that’s not what terrified me. The giant dark object was a portal. I had only seen the portal once. It was during the war between Kahaizans and Humans seven years ago. Only one portal existed on Kàtzu; a few miles from Lake Saionai. Thousands of years ago Kàtzu was a common port between the nine planets of the Zún realm, but something happened and all the portals mysteriously disappeared. Leaving the nine planets in complete isolation until a kahaizan magician, Kalún, crafted one in his hut bordering the Eastern Sea. The only problem is Kalún died before he could finish it, so it can only be opened by a kahaizan or one who wields magic, and it only went to one port.

I remember as a boy seeing the flocks of these creatures known as humans as they swarmed through that portal like Bee’s on their flying brooms and glowing sticks that killed Kahaizans upon impact. My father told me that they were a peculiar race of Human, wizards is what he called them, and they were far more dangerous than the Humans my mother used to tell about each night before I went to bed. They were deadly creatures, fearsome and savage. The Humans were already bad enough with their long crooked claws, sharp fangs, and evil minds. I was terrified of Humans. I had watched them murder my people as if they were animals. They had even taken my sister and tried to take my life as well. The very thought of them made me quake with fear.

Most people didn’t know about the portal. I had only seen it once in my life up until now. I found the portal by accident a few years back when a strange pink animal with a curly tail that made squealing sounds came through it. I was so frightened by it that I never looked for it again. I have no idea where it goes. The only thing I do know is there’s life on the other side. My father told me as a boy that the creatures known as humans lived a planet commonly known among us as, *Kajash*. Scientifically it was known as planet; Kelka-574. No one knows the real name of the planet. History has taken the memories of all the planets in the Zún realm. All we do know is that they exist.

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Smoke eructed from the forest below half a mile from the portal. I jumped from tree to tree until I had reached the edge of the dark smoke that smelled of oil and burning bark. I slide down the tree using my wings to cushion my fall.

I pushed aside a few broken bushes and fallen tree limbs. A large fire raged burning the tree’s caught its deadly flames. There was no sign of a bird just old metal parts.

Fooshka appeared in front of me with a worried expression on his face.

*Kahlavar, wait!*

I rolled my eyes and walked right through him. He evaporated and formed in front of once again.

*It could be dangerous.* T*hose are metal objects are Kajashian. They are made by the hands of Humans. They might be toxic.*

“I just want to take a quick look.” I said. “I’ve never seen something like this before.”

I stepped into the clearing and observed the burning objects beneath me. Although my foot were naturally padded and Kahaizans had no reason to wear shoes aside from social status the hot ash still scorched my feet.

I grabbed a long stick and pushed the metal objects over. I had never seen something so strange in all my life. We had metal objects to, but these were made of strange metals not found on Kàtzu.

I pushed another one over with my stick and flames burst from underneath it. My tail fluffed up and I spread out my wings and jumped back hissing at the burning flames.

*KAHLAVAR!* *Get away from there!*

“What was that?” I shrieked just as dark object jumped out from the bushes onto me. Fooshka screamed and evaporated into smoke.

“KIDA!” I hollered. “You scared me. I thought I told you to stay.” Kida shoved me aside and snarled at the blazing flames.

“It’s okay, girl, its okay,” I wrapped my arms around her neck and gently pet her soft fur. She licked me on the cheek, brushing her face against my chin. “Stay here, girl,” Kida moaned and tried to pull me back with her paw. I examined the burning objects when a deep roar echoed through the forest. Fooshka screamed and appeared by my side and wrapped his arms and legs around me.

*What was that? Kahlavar, stay away from there!* His voice cracked as we both frantically looked around for the source of the commotion. *Kahlavar, let’s go home. It’s too dangerous. It’s Kajeshian. Looking for it could mean certain death.* Fooshka tried to push me away but being just a spirit he went straight through me.

I gasped and scurried back to Kida’s side. The sound raged on in a periodic pattern as large object flew overhead. Kida’s back fur spiked up as she roared at the object above. It was large and white just like the bird I had seen earlier. One of its wings appeared to be broken making its flight pattern unstable. It was so low to the ground. It was liable to crash soon. I have to know where it’s going.

“Kida, go home, girl,” I ordered. Kida moaned and paced back and forth. I could see the worry in her blue as she gripped her paws around my waist. “No, girl,” I pushed her off and gestured to the forest. “Home,” I said. Kida whimpered and licked my hand. “I’m going to be fine, girl. Don’t worry about me,” I kissed her ear and brushed my hand through her thick fur. Kida took one last look at me before disappearing into the thicket of trees.

*You’re not doing what I think you’re doing, are you? Please don’t do this. Let’s just go back to hunting and telling jokes. You want to hear my newest joke? Kahlavar, are you even listening to me? Why don’t you ever listen to me?*

“Calm down, Fooshka. We’ll go hunting, I promise. I have to find out where that bird is going.” I jumped and latched onto a nearby branch and pulled myself up.

*No you don’t. Kahlavar, get off the tree. Kahlavar, Kahlavar, Kahlavar!*

“Fooshka,” I warned him. Fooshka huffed and his presence vanished from behind me. I climbed up and watched the giant white bird fly towards the Ra’Kozan border.

“Where’s it going?” it was heading straight for…it can’t be.

“Fooshka, somethings wrong.” I said. Fooshka appeared by my side with his hands folded and a stern expression on his face.

*I wouldn’t have guessed. If you would just listen to me—*

“Anoka!” I exclaimed. “Fooshka it’s heading straight for Anoka.”

*See? I’m not always a big jokester. I am helpful...wait, what!*

“I have to warn them,” I said. I unfolded my wings to take flight, but I pulled myself back. “I can’t.”

*What? Kahlavar, that thing could kill your friends, and it could kill my children! Your father and uncle. You have to go. I don’t care what the law says or what Suko…I mean Pharoka Suko may say, just go!*

“You know what happened last time, and the time before that. I was banished, Fooshka. I’m not supposed to be there, and my week of trail hasn’t come yet, and won’t come for another two weeks. If I go storming in there without a plan he’ll have me thrown out. Pharoka Suko, the king will personally drag me out of the city himself. I…I’m just scared, Fooshka.

*It’s okay to be scared, but doing nothing is worse than failing. Failing at least means you tried. Now move your lazy butt and fly, you kaka brain!*

I gulped and my wings materialized as I unfolded them. I was definitely going to pay for this later, but I wasn’t going to let that thing destroy my home.

I jumped from the tree and flew towards the Ra’Kozan and Itamotosakeyian border just seventy five miles west of the Eastern Sea. Within the hour I had crossed the border. I had lost sight of the bird, but continued my course towards Anoka.

I may have be alive now, but I wouldn’t be much longer not to…not to him. I gulped and continued flying towards Anoka hoping that I would be able to catch them in time.

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Kahlavar

Azàk, and Zula, save me…again

The bad news, I had lost sight of the Human machine, but the on the upside I was approaching Anoka and fast. Within ten minutes I was flying right over Anoka; the city I had once called home. Anoka was a massive city located in the middle of an oasis at the center of the Maskan desert. Roughly thirty-five million people lived here. Great skyscrapers, shining lights and sandstone buildings made up the beautiful city and a massive wall surrounded the great city. Paved with streets of fine stones and gems it was considered the city of luxury, and at the center of it all was the great Ra’Kozan palace.

Anoka kept up its name as it is nearly impossible to break in with guards at every corner of the city wall as well as in the air. Being the current residence of the Ra’kozan royal family, Anoka is also home to the Ra’Kozan military. Along with the military there are the guards. There are three types of guards, guards that protected the wall, guards that protect the king and guards that protect the skies from any sky born attacks; the sky guards. The sky guards are highly skilled and trained. They are always alert, always watching and impossible to get past. Even children of darkness, such as myself, couldn’t escape them. They were trained to sense aurous and any sudden movement, and track any sound that could pose to be a threat to Ra’Koza. Of course if their captain happens to be your cousin, it’s not so bad.

I approached the wall and examined my surroundings as my feet gently pressed the soft yellowing sand. I pressed my hand to the stone wall as I morphed into a shadow. No one appeared to be coming. Azàk must have told them not to come. I grinned as I took a step forward. I shrugged my shoulder and proceeded to move forward just as something latched onto my ankle. I shrieked, materializing, as I was flung backwards nearly hitting s nearby tree. I moaned and tried to stand up as a massive boulder plummeted towards me. I rolled out of the way just in time to see a young sky guard in golden armor.

“I’m sorry,” I raised my hand in surrender as the guard approached me. “I just need to speak with the king. It’s urgent. You can even deliver the message,” I chuckled nervously as the guard drew his sword and etched it under my neck. “Let’s not get to rash here, okay,”

“Malik,” another guard rushed down from the skies and landed next to the boy. “I’ll take it from here. You return to your post.” The boy nodded, lowering his sword and took off to the skies. The new guard turned his attention back to me. He chuckled as he lifted off his helmet. “My *Malan*, Kahlavar, you look like death itself.”

“Azàk,” I grinned. Azàk is my cousin and one of my best friends. He’s the closest thing I have to a brother; an annoying little brother. Azàk’s golden armor lit up and illuminated his dark skin, and gave light to his golden eyes. His black hair is shaved on one side with a Ra’Kozan design etched into it. The rest of his hair is thick and curly and flowed over the other side of his head past his ear. Azàk’s is two years younger than me, but smarter and far more skilled, I must admit. He was born in the month of air giving him power or the air and mighty storms. He is one the strongest children of air to be born in centuries. He has a true gift.

“Trying to sneak in again, Kahlavar?” he snickered. “What is this now, the fourth or fifth time in the past few months?”

“Maybe, but Azàk I really need to get in. Anoka could be in danger. I have to inform, you know who.” I said.

“Should I inform the military?” he asked reaching for his phone with a grin on his smirk face. I gasped as I frantically waved my arms in protest.

“NO!” I shrieked. “If *he* finds out *he’ll* try and do something rash and plus we don’t need to frighten the citizens. Not after what happened last time with the kaka birds,” I said my face blushing.

“Are you sure?” he asked.

“Yes, now please will you let me go?” I asked. Azàk nodded his head and gestured for me to go.

“Fine, but please just don’t do anything stupid, and don’t tell anyone I let you in,” he said. “Be careful, Kahl,” Azàk said as I morphed into a shadow. “I would like my cousin to return on the day of eclipse, so please just promise me that you won’t do anything too stupid,” I nodded as he took off to the skies.

I scurried over to a nearby alley way and morphed back into my material form. I peered around the corner. The streets were empty. People were either still at work or in the safety of their homes.

I sighed and tiptoed over to the old beaten down mobile home where my friend, Zula lived with her sister and three year old niece.

I knocked on the door and looked around to see if anyone was coming. I gasped at the sight of two people coming around the corner. I quickly turned into a shadow and hid on Zula’s stairwell just as Zula opened the door.

“Hello, is anyone, there?” she asked. Zula’s short purple pixie cut hair was pinned back with a pink and yellow flower. Her olive skin radiated with a rare glow. Her beautiful purple cat slit eyes are large and manipulative. She was tall for a girl, but I suppose that it true for all Ra’Kozan’s even myself. Her dark purple shirt was old and wrinkled and her light brown skirt was just an old bed sheet that had been patched over the years. A small rope was tied around her thin waist to keep her skirt from falling.

Zula was born in the month of lightning, so don’t be fooled by her appearance. She may look like a beautiful and kind girl from the town of Maska, a small dirty town just outside of the prestigious Anoka, but if you cross her you might as well dig your grave because you’re bound to be dead sooner than later.

“Hello? Is anyone there?” she repeated again in English this time. “Stupid kids,” she said reverting back to our native tongue, Kalvetna. I ignored her and waited till the people had by passed. Zula rolled her eyes and grabbed the door to close it. At that moment I materialized and snatched the door before it slammed shut. Zula screamed and slapped me across the face with a zap of electricity in her hand. It was a reaction of course, but it still hurt.

“Kahlavar,” she looked deep into my eyes. I smiled and she seemed to lighten up, but her expression quickly changed. Lighting zapped across her purple hair “What are you doing here? Are you trying to get yourself killed?” Zula whispered irritably. She grabbed my arm and yanked me into her house and slammed the door behind her.

“It’s nice to see you to.” I said in a sarcastic tone. Zula locked her door and frantically closed all the curtains in her house. She sighed with relief as she closed the last curtain to which she followed with a death glare as she whipped her head around towards me. I gulped and took a few steps back as sweat dripped down my face.

“You,” she snarled. I clutched the back of her couch and braced myself. “I can’t believe you would do this.” Zula stormed around her small apartment flailing her arms up and down. “I thought you were smarter than this. You have no idea what you have done. This is terrible. If Pharoka Suko finds out he’ll never let us hear the end of it and worse you could be killed.” Zula ripped at the strands of her hair and groaned.

“Don’t be such a drama queen.” I said.

“Why would you do this?” Zula exclaimed.

“I need help.” I replied.

“You do need help!” Zula groaned.

“Zula, I need to get into Anoka. I have to speak to speak with...you know who.” I said. Zula’s mouth dropped.

“What?” Zula shrieked.

“I swear that it’s not like the last time. It’s real and it’s coming straight for us.”

“What?” Zula slapped herself on the forehead.

“I said that\_”

“I know you don’t need to remind me, fancy pants.” Zula sighed.

“Zula please you’re one of the few people I can trust. You said that you would be there for me in whatever situation, what makes this so different?” I asked. I needed to hurry. I didn’t know how much time we had left before the human plane struck down on our home or nearby.

Zula paced back and forth with her eye brows knit. Her long short haired purple tail twitched back and forth with irritation as if she was mentally throwing knives in in my general direction.

“Fine, but only this once,” Zula pointed her finger at me and gave me “the eye”.

“Thank you,” I cheered.

“You better be thankful. This is a onetime deal, fancy pants. I’m never going to do this again.” Zula took in a deep breath and sighed. “So what’s your grand plan to get into Anoka?” Zula asked.

My heart raced. Plan, I’d never thought about a plan. I had just assumed Zula would have come up with one by now. She was the smart one.

“Uhh…” I snickered nervously.

“You don’t have a plan, do you?” Zula rolled her eyes and groaned. “It’s alright. I’ve got this. You are so lucky I had planned something out knowing that this was going to happen.” Zula walked over to her tiny couch and sat down. “Gather around my ridiculously small coffee table.” Zula gestured for me to follow.

The plan was simple; I would turn into a shadow and form into Zula’s shadow and follow her around. It sounds simple, but it’s not. After my banishment Pharoka Suko had taken extra precautions to ensure that I never enter the city and because of this everyone’s shadow is monitored to make sure that they are actually real. If I move one step out of line with Zula the guards will have us both thrown in the dungeon. They will have me cast back into the wilderness and they could sentence Zula to death for having affiliation with a convict of Ra’Koza.

Zula quickly ran to the her small cramped bathroom and changed into a black tank top and leggings with a thick black belt around her waist.

“What’s with the outfit?” I asked.

“Malan knows that we’re bound to get into trouble with you involved, so let’s just say their extra precautions so the captain of the guard and you know who won’t have me hanged.” Zula grabbed a long black scarf and wrapped it around her face and over her shoulders. Before we left she grabbed a pair of sunglasses and put them on as she stuck a stick of blue gum in her mouth.

We exited Zula’s apartment and ventured towards the raging streets of Anoka, the largest city in Ra’Koza.

I quickly turned into a shadow and formed myself to look like Zula’s unique shadow and walked casually behind her monitoring her every move so I could copy it and appear as one unique shadow.

Anoka was a massive city filled with tall skyscrapers and shining lights. The streets were always filled with people of all various shapes, sizes and ages, and the skies were filled with even more. Anoka has a nickname, *et sika nako noolash,* the city of endless night. Most of Anoka was comprised of small apartments and individual houses made of mud and rock painted with colors of red, blue, yellow and orange, the sacred colors of Ra’Koza. I missed my home, but I had grown fond of the quiet free nature of the forest and vast mountains.

As we walked I looked around at the city. We were in central station, which hence the name is directly at the center of Anoka, the busiest place in the city. It has parks, water fountains, countless marketplaces selling fresh goods, shopping malls, and the local bank and courthouse where Pharoka meets with his appointed governors.

I had been so engrossed in my thoughts that I had ventured a good foot away from Zula. I ran to catch up when a guard shrieked; “HAULT!”

Kahlavar

Zula stopped in her tracks and looked up at the bulky guard wearing golden armor and helm with four feathers on the top. A long double edge sword was attached to his leather belt. His red wings were visible and were folded up behind his back. His face was stern and serious as he walked around Zula observing her every move.

“Is there a problem, officer?” she asked.

“Ma’am, I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to take you into custody.” He pulled metal handcuffs from behind him and walked towards us. A large flaming ember burned in his other hand as he took a step closer.

“I don’t understand. I haven’t done anything wrong.” Zula took a step back ramming into the large silver and gold water fountain where a gold statue of the king, Pharoka Suko rested proud and tall.

The guard lashed out at her, but Zula ducked. The guard and Zula did it a few more times, back and forth. The way they moved it almost appeared that they were dancing with each other. The guard growled and Zula hisses and spread out her wings. The guard did the same.

“Fine, if you want to dance, then let’s dance,” the guard dropped the handcuffs and pulled out a long leather whip lathered in oil and lit it with his flaming ember. He spun the whip up over his head and lashed it against the cold hard pavement. The grey stone where the whip had met the ground was scorched in ashes and cracked. Zula’s eyes widened with fear.

Zula took several steps back, but was stopped by the base of the fountain. At this point a large group of civilians had gathered around to witness all the commotion. I had materialized and was standing in the back overlooking the scene trying to keep myself as hidden as possible.

“Please, let me go,” she pleaded with the guard. “I don’t want any trouble.”

“Where is he?” the guard hissed. “I know he’s with you. You, and those two kadonai children are the only ones stupid enough to befriend that traitor. I’m telling you now, he’s not your friend. He’s a monster. Bringing him into this city would only bring about pain and suffering. We both know this, Zula Mionet.”

Zula narrowed her brow as she grabbed a small rock off the ground. She roared and threw the rock at the guards face hitting him in the eye. He yelped in pain as she ran towards the innocent civilians trying to get through.

“Get back here,” The guard roared. She had barley gone a few meters when the guard caught sight of her running through the crowd.

“Zula,” I called out for her. She caught sight of me and ran towards me as the guard lashed at her once more. This time his whip snagged her wrist and flung her into the base of the fountain. “ZULA!” I screamed. “GET OUT OF MY WAY! MOVE!” I exclaimed as I shoved my through the crowd. Zula lay their motionless for a few seconds as the guard approached her.

“Stand down,” he yelled as Zula pushed herself up, her eyes still in a daze. The guard lashed his whip against the cold stone of the fountain a few inches from Zula’s face. Zula snarled and shoved him back. “Why you little, sh—

The guard was cut off as Zula snatched his flame covered whip and sent a surge of electricity through. The guard cried out in agony as he fell to his knees, his arms and legs convulsing from the shock. She roared and with the whip in her hand threw the guard against the base of the fountain. A loud thud echoed through the streets. Everyone gasped and many started to flee. In the distance I could see other guards coming to the scene.

Zula didn’t waste any time. She shoved her way through the crowd until she caught sight of me, and together we ran towards the Ra’Kozan palace.

“Behind here,” she said as she dragged me into a dark alley and shoved me behind a dumpster.

“Zula, are you alright?” I asked. Zula narrowed her eyebrows and sent an electric pulse up my arm. She winced in pain as she looked down at the deep burn on her wrist.

“You idiot,” she snarled. “I almost died.” She sighed trying to collect her thoughts. “You’re lucky I’m your friend, you kaka brain.” She peered around the garbage bin. She took of the scarf and glasses and threw them in the trash.

“Is it clear?” I asked. Zula narrowed her eyes and thrust me forward by my collar.

“Kaka,” she rolled her eyes and gestured for me to follow her. “Let’s go,” I looked towards the skies. The giant white bird hadn’t arrived, but I could hear a feint hum in the distance. We needed to hurry. I morphed into a shadow and followed behind Zula as we ran towards the Ra’Kozan palace at the center of the city.

Zula gasped for breath and collapsed to her knees in front of the golden palace gate. Inside there stood statues of ancient kings past, guarding the way to the main entrance where two guards where posted equipped with swords. They appeared to pay no attention to us.

I morphed back into my material form gasping for air, falling to my knees behind Zula.

Zula and I took a step forward towards the gate. The guards finally took notice of us and stepped forward crossing their swords and putting up their shields.

“What business do you have here?” the guards demanded. They didn’t appear to recognize me. My black hair had grown long and shaggy from my many years of sleepless night in the forest. The people of Kàtzu hadn’t seen me in nearly seven years, and even then they didn’t pay much attention to me either. I was nothing more than a foreigner to them.

“We have business with Pharoka Suko, please, it’s urgent.” Zula said. The guards consulted with each other and nodded their heads in agreement.

“We will let you pass, but we can’t assure you that the guards at the top post will allow you to pass.” The guards opened the gates and allowed us to pass.

I observed the palace as we walked up the stone steps toward the palace doors. The palace of Ra’Koza was a massive structure made of limestone and mud to create a thick, rough outer wall. Three large domes made of various colors of green and blue glass covered the top surrounded by smaller additional golden domes spread throughout. The tall stained glass on the windows told the story of the creation of Kàtzu. A large black arched door sat behind five large columns striped in red, orange and blue. Just above the door was the eye, the great eye of Malan, the God of the universe and of all creation.

We walked up to the door, but flames enveloped our paths. I morphed back into a shadow and hid behind Zula. We both looked around frantically for the guards at the top of the staircase, but no one seemed to be there. The palace was heavily guarded all day and all night, so not having a guard at their post was strange and unheard of.

“What do you think, you’re doing, beautiful?”

I gasped and morphed into a shadow as I scanned the area. A deep soothingly laugh echoed from behind the stone pillars. I’d recognize that laugh anywhere. A tall kahaizan in golden armor and fiery red hair stepped forward from behind the stone pillars.

“Hello, Havask,” Zula said. I gazed up at one of my best friends, Havask Kadonai. A tall, muscular kahaizan, and a real ladies man, and a child of fire. His red eyes appeared serious, but I could see the mischievous look hidden under the surface. His tan skin was darker than I had remembered and a few burns and scars could be found across his face.

Havask folded his large muscular arms and grinned. The fire crept higher and higher around us.

“Havask, what are you doing here?” she asked as a small grin pursed her lips. I was just as surprised and thrilled as she was. I hadn’t seen, Havask ever since I was banished. He had joined the Ra’Kozan army, and told me before I left that he was going to protect the people, so no more kahaizans like his parents would die.

“All that work payed off. I’m still working on becoming a sky guard, but being one of Pharoka’s personal guards is good and it pays well too,” he snickered. “What about you? What are you doing here?” Zula glanced from side to side, and let out a nervous chuckle.

“I don’t think we have time to talk,” Zula said as she looked to the horizon. The deep hum was getting louder.

“What is that?” Havask squinted his eyes. Zula shoved him towards the door.

“Let’s not find out,” she said. “Now let us inside.”

“Us?” Havask looked around Zula. “Who are you talking about?” He shrugged his shoulders and sighed. “We can talk about that later. What is your request with the king?”

“It’s not mine.” She said. “It’s his.” I materialized and spread out my arms wide. Havask grasped hold of me nearly sucking the air out of my body.

“You’re…you’re alive!” he cheered. “Wait…it’s not the new year…what are you doing here? Are you trying to get yourself killed?”

“He almost got me killed just getting him here, so just let us through. There’s a human machine coming straight for Anoka. We need to hurry.” Zula said as a loud rumbling echoed in the distance. “Now, Havask.” Havask let go of me and regained his posture.

“Right this way,” he said as he walked over to the great doors.

“One more thing,” Zula snatched Havask by his hair and pulled him down to her level. “If you tell anyone about this I will have your head, understand? This is a onetime deal, buddy!” Zula narrowed her eyes as lighting flickered around her. Havask gulped. Zula shoved him away and crossed her arms. “Now let’s go. Kahlavar, you stay as a shadow until I say so, and don’t say anything, kaka brain. Let me do the talking.” I nodded and morphed into a shadow and stayed behind Zula as Havask looked for the key to open the door. “By the way, Havask, how is your brother, Tavask doing?” Zula asked as Havask opened the doors and gestured for Zula and I to walk inside.

“He got in a training wreck. He was testing his mechanism that provides better and more convenient ways to train. The child of earth he was working with missed the target, and the rock bounced off and slammed directly into Tavask’s face. It was pretty funny, but he had to be rushed to the Saskaiya’s for medical treatment. He’s fine now, but he still has to be at the clinic for another week before he can come back to work.” Havask stated. He didn’t sound like he cared, but I could see the pain in his eyes. Havask cared a lot about his little brother. He was very protective of him, sometimes too much.

We all walked into the throne room. Marble floors covered the area as giant stained glass windows illuminated the room with a large golden chandelier and painted dome above. A large golden throne was seated at the end of the room with four smaller seats by its side. A long red carpet led to the edge of the empty throne. There was no sign of Pharoka, but the room was filled with countless servants, and a few members of the Ra’Kozan council. All of which were dressed in the finest clothing.

“Where’s Pharoka?” Zula asked Havask punching him in the arm.

“He’s most likely asleep or at one of his meetings, but he should be back anytime now if he was at a meeting.” Havask stated. “Since he’s not here I’ll just speak with Oshnak.” Havask gestured to the elderly kahaizan heading towards the west wing. “Oshank!” Havask called. Oshnak turned, and walked over to Havask with elegance and great pride.

“Yes, boy, what do you want?” He asked with a stern expression slabbed across his face.

“This young lady here has some very serious business that must be addressed with the councilmen and Pharoka himself. Can you deliver the message to him?” Havask asked as he bowed his head in respect.

“If it’s a peasant’s problem,” Oshnak said gesturning to Zula, “then I can personally deal with it myself. Besides, Pharoka is not feeling well. He does not want any visitors. He has appointed me to take charge of such things\_”

“That’s enough, Oshnak.” Footsteps echoed through the room as we all turned our attention to the eastern staircase.

“Pharoka,” Havask gasped as he fell to his knees. Zula frantically followed suite as Oshnak nodded his head in respect.

“You’re majesty,” Oshnak tittered. “I…I didn’t see you there. How are you feeling?”

“Fine, thank you, Oshnak,” Pharoka Suko rasied his hand to silence him.

Pharoka Suko’s pale tanned skin glimmered in the light. His cold blue eyes were stern and exhausted, and his short black hair was freshly combed back. He wore a long sleeved white tunic that draped down to ankles. An elegant teal belt and purple sash wrapped around his thin waist. Gold and jeweled accessories decorated his chest, arms, and wrists. The royal crown rested gracefully around his head just above the brow. He may be a monster, but there’s no doubt that he was a king. His stern eyes, firm stance, and collected behavior exhibited power.

“Your majesty,” Oshnak said. “I was just telling these…children that I could\_”

“I said, that’s enough, Oshnak.” Pharoka Suko ordered. “Now, go back to the council room. I will meet you and the others there in approximately one hour. Do you understand?”

“Yes!” Oshnak exclaimed nervously. “Of course,” Oshnak cleared his throat, brushed himself off, and walked upstairs.

“Good afternoon, Havask, Zula,” Pharoka Suko bowed his head in respect. Havask and Zula touched their foreheads and heart and fell to their knees as Pharoka Suko seated himself down on his thrown.

“So, what brings you here?” We all looked up to see Pharoka Suko standing tall before us. I don’t remember him moving from his seat, but that was common with him being born in the month of time. He often froze time to catch up with someone making it appear is if he had just teleported to that exact location. It was quite terrifying if you asked me. Especially when was angry.

“We honor and praise you great Pharoka,” Zula said. I rolled my eyes in disgust.

“Now what is it that you wish to speak to me about? I hope it has nothing to do with…well you know. He’s tried coming back here several times. I’m trying to…nevermind, what do you want?”

Zula went pale. Sweat beat down her forehead.

“You’re not seeing him are you, Zula?” He said calmly, but his eyes were cold and harsh as he walked closer to Zula, his tail swaying gently back and forth.

*Zula be careful*

*He looks like he’s in a sour mood. M—*

“*Fooshka, I know what you’re going to say, now shut it. You know perfectly well what I have to say about that. Now be quiet. I want to listen.*

“No…No, your majesty,” Zula stuttered. “I would never interact with a traitor to Ra’Koza.” Zula clenched her fist and tried her best to stay calm, but I could see it written plainly on her face. It was the same look Zula gave when she encountered the man who had killed her parents; merciless.

“I know you’re lying, Zula Mionet,” he said. I saw Zula’s eyes widen in disbelief as she looked down at the ground trying to collect her thoughts. “For what purpose I do not know, but I will let it slide for now, but be warned I will find out the truth. No one keeps secrets from me. Not even you.” He said. Zula’s body tensed up, but her expression remained calm and collected as she bowed her head in respect. “Now, what is it that you wish to discuss with me?” he asked. Zula and Havask looked at each other and then back at me before diverting their attention back to Pharoka Suko. Sweat beat down Zula’s brow.

“If you have nothing to say, then I say that it would be best that you leave.” He vanished and appeared back at his throne. He grabbed a grape and put it in his mouth and gestured for Havask to escort Zula out of the palace.

“Wait,” I materialized and reached out my hand in objection.

“Kahlavar,” his voice cracked under the harshness of his tone. He vanished from his throne and appeared right before me. I gasped and crouched down with my tail tucked between my legs. His cold blue eyes peered down at me like as I was another one of his criminals he was sentencing to death.

“How dare you show your face here!” he snarled. “Get out. Get out! GET OUT!” His cold blue eyes were filled with intense emotion and rage, and above all fear. I watched in horror as he frantically grabbed a small vase and aimed it at my head. “GET OUT,” he roared.

“KAHLAVAR,” Zula cried.

I blocked the vase with my hand. My hand turned black and the vase disintegrated. My hand turned back to normal as I latched my hand around his oncoming fist and twisted it counter clockwise. He hissed and pulled his hand out of my grasp.

“PHAROKA!” The servants became aware of the commotion.

“Everything is fine,” he said. “Just stay where you are,”

The servants nodded and returned to their cleaning as they kept a close eye on Pharoka.

“What do you want?” he snarled as he rubbed his injured hand.

“I came to warn you. When I was out there I saw this big white bird. I think it might Kajeshian. It was heading towards Anoka. I don’t know how close it is or if it could crash here, but I came to warn you. I…I don’t want it to hurt anyone.” I paused as he narrowed his brow at me. “You have to believe me, please!” I knelt down on my knees to show him that I was serious about the matter. I even rested my tail on his feet to reassure him that I wasn’t here to rebel or cause trouble.

“You said that last time, and the time before and the time before that. When are you going to grow up?” He spat.

“This time it’s real. I swear. I’m telling you the truth. It’s coming, and quickly.” I said. He narrowed his eyes as he pulled me up off the floor.

“Show me.” He said.

“What?” I stammered.

“Show me this Kajeshisn bird of yours and if it’s real I’ll let you come home today and stay for two months, but if you’re lying expect the same time and the same week.” He shoved me back and gestured for me to go to the window.

I nodded and rushed over to window and stuck my head outside. I could hear the birds metallic cry in the distance. It was getting closer, and closer. A few of the guards below appeared to take notice. A loud crash echoed through the valley as a pillar of smoke erected in the distance. I smiled with delight as he stepped closer.

“SEE!” I gleefully pointed to the pillar of smoke near Lake Saionai. “It’s right there. It didn’t hit, Anoka or Maska, but it’s there. You believe now, right?” Pharoka Suko nodded his head.

“Hmm,” he sighed. “I suppose I will send a few of my trusted guards and soldiers to investigate, but don’t think this changes anything. All I can see is a pillar of smoke. It could be anything,” he paused and examined the dark circles under my eyes. “You look tired. Have you been sleeping well?”

I roared and stormed off. Zula grabbed hold of me and yanked me back.

“You need to calm down,” she said through gritted teeth. I rolled my eyes and growled. I shoved her arm away and diverted my attention back to Pharoka Suko.

“Why you son of a—

“Kahlavar, he’s the Pharoka! That’s enough!” Zula snarled. “Show him some respect.” Tears formed in the corner of my eyes, but I couldn’t let them fall. That would make me appear weak. I couldn’t appear weak in front of him. I tried to sound brave, but my voice came out shaky.

“It was there, I swear. It was flying right towards Anoka. It was bigger than any bird I’ve ever seen, please, you have to believe me.” I pleaded. Pharoka Suko raised his hand to silence me.

“Havask, escort, this traitor out of here.” Pharoka Suko turned away and slowly walked back to his throne as his purple cape gracefully wisped across the marble floors. I roared as Havask grabbed hold of me and dragged me towards the great doors.

“Kahl, don’t make this harder on yourself.” He said. “I’m just following orders. Now come one stop fussing around.”

“NO! HAVASK, LET GO OF ME! I’M NOT DONE YET! LET ME FINISH!” I grabbed hold of Havask’s wrist and flipped him over. Havask snatched my ankle and pulled me back.

“Stop, you’re going to hurt yourself. I’m saying this as your friend not your enemy,” Havask tried to drag me once again towards the door, but I sent a blast of dark energy at him. He screamed and slammed head first into the door.

“Kahlavar!” Zula exclaimed in disbelief as I took a few steps forward. Zula rushed over to Havask’s side to help him up keeping close to the door and as far from me as possible. This wasn’t about Kajeshan bird anymore.

My heart was beating and sweat beat down my brow. There was only one way I could get him to listen to me. One way I could have a civil conversation with him. I hadn’t called him this in years. I didn’t feel he deserved it. I didn’t even think he deserved to be called Pharoka either, but there was no way he would listen to me otherwise. I sighed and took in a deep breath to calm my nerves. When I had regained myself I opened my mouth to speak.

“Father, please” I spat out the name as if it were poison in my mouth. Pharoka Suko, my father, stopped in his tracks. My heartbeat in my chest as he turned around to face me. Three years ago I had told him that I hated him, and wished him dead. I told him that he wasn’t my father and that I wasn’t his son. I told him he was nothing to me. I still feel that way today.

When his eyes met mine I was surprised. I had half expected him to be angry or taken back by it all, but his cold blue eyes were soft and filled with aguish. The whole room fell silent for several minutes. No one spoke as my father and I looked deep into each other’s eyes not moving an inch out of place.

Finally after what felt like ten minutes my father opened his mouth and with a weak hand gestured to Havask.

“Havask,” he said with a shaky breath. “Take Zula outside and close the door. I need to speak with my son,” he paused, “in private.” Havask bowed with respect as he escorted Zula out of the throne room with his hand clutching his head and closed the great doors behind them. My father ordered the servants in the area to leave and told them to stay clear of the throne room until he came to get them.

My father turned back to me. His eyes were dark and lifeless as he narrowed his brow.

“I have been many things, my son; a king, a prince, a husband and a father, but I don’t ever remember being the father of a liar.” He said.

“I’m not lying to you. I saw it with my own eyes!” I exclaimed clenching my fists and trying to control my breathing, but noting could control that storm that was raging inside of me.

“This seems very familiar doesn’t it? Do you remember the kaka bird story last year and the Zargonian stampede the year before, and the Anotoian army the year before that? They all ended the same way. They were all lies. Why is this any different? If I really was so merciless I would have you executed you for lying to the Pharoka.” He stated. Tears filled his eyes as did mine.

“Why can’t you just believe me for once?” I exclaimed. My father took notice and looked away. “Why is that so hard? Why do you hate me so much? I’m sorry for what I did. It wasn’t my fault. I didn’t meant to do it. It was an accident, father, please,” I whimpered as my voice cracked.

“It’s not that I don’t believe you,” he said. “I do, but I can’t have you go waltzing around telling the whole city about it,” his tone grew as he approached those last few words. “Besides I know what you saw. It is Kajeshian, and it’s dangerous. Humans are dangerous. You and I both know this, Kahlavar. I don’t want you searching for that thing. Just forget about it, and if you see anything that’s not of Kàtzu out there don’t try to meddle with it, and don’t you dare talk to it. Humans are cunning creatures. They love power and hate what they don’t understand. Why do you think they’re planet is so divided?”

“If it’s dangerous then shouldn’t we investigate? I live out there. I can find it—

“Did you even listen to me?” he snapped. “We lost your sister to those creatures. I don’t need to lose you to.”

“You lost me a long time ago,” I shouted.

“It is the tradition of our fathers to banish those who commit a horrendous crime, and plus I couldn’t justify your crime. I couldn’t…” his voiced cracked under pressure. “I couldn’t overthrow the council.” His eyes grew dark. He snarled and grabbed my hair and shoved me away. I hunched down with my tail tucked between my legs and my eyes wide with fear as my father paced back and forth like a wild animal. “You…you…you don’t even realize the magnitude of what you did. You don’t even know how much it cost your mother and I— He stopped mid-sentence and regained his posterior. His tanned skin returned to normal, and all the emotion in his eyes left. It was as if an entirely different person had just been present only moments ago.

“It was an accident. I was aiming for Jason, but he vanished and your former captain got in the way. That’s all I did.” I said.

“No, you did more than that, Kahlavar,” he said. “Why do you think I had to reestablish my army after you left? You killed them. I had no other choice. A crime like that required death, but I disobeyed my own law and banished you. I even allowed you one week to come home because your mother and I insisted. I push you away so the others won’t hurt you. WHY CAN’T YOU JUST FOLLOW PROTOCOL?” I arose to my feet and looked at him in disbelief. What is he talking about? I never did that. He wasn’t even there! How would he know? He doesn’t even care about me.

“STOP LYING!” I cried. “YOU’RE THE ONE WHO DOESN’T KNOW ANYTHING! YOU—

“ENOUGH!” my father roared. His cry echoed through the palace walls. Many of the servants coming down the stairs turned right back around and quietly closed the doors behind them.

“I don’t care what you have to say, and I take back what I said earlier. You’re not my father, you’re a worthless pile of scum! I hope you die with the guilt of how you treated me. I HATE YOU!” I thrust his hand away. My father vanished and reappeared next to his throne. His eyes darkened as bent over and clutched his hands on the arm rests of his throne. His body trembling with rage.

“Get out. I don’t want to see your face for the next two weeks, do you understand?” He snarled trying to regain his breath.

“I hate you,” I hissed.

“I SAID GET OUT!” he screamed.

“Why should I?” I snarled.

“How dare you talk back to me? I am Pharoka Suko, king of Ra’Koza and I demand that you get out of my house and my city immediately! ” He snapped.

“I am prince Kahlavar of Ra’Koza and heir to the\_”

“You’re not the prince of Ra’Koza anymore, and you’re…” my father paused as sat down in his throne. His eyes dark and his whole frame motionless as if he were nothing more than a glass statue.

“I don’t care what you have to say.” I grumbled. “I don’t want to be you’re son anyway,” I hollered back. He didn’t budge. “Monster,” I hissed under my breath as I turned to face the great door. Rage built up inside of me. I turned to face him last time. I opened my mouth to speak, but I quickly swallowed my words upon seeing my father’s icy blue eyes. They were glowing. His pupils had contracted into such small slits that they were nearly invisible. When kahaizans feel deep rage, hatred, resentment, revenge or even agonizing sorrow our pupils contract and our iris’s glow. The glow is bright and powerful and is noticeable even in broad daylight. Seeing someone like that is often a sign that it’s time to back away or to not approach. I’ve seen this look on my father’s face many times.

His expression grew dark and dismal as a scowl formed across his thin lips. He flared his nostrils and hollered; “HAVASK!” Havask rushed back inside and looked over at me a bit confused and fearful. “Why are you standing there, seize this fowl creature.” he ordered. I gasped and took a step back as I narrowed my brow.

“Yes, your majesty.” Havask grabbed my arms and dragged me away. “Sorry, man, the big man has spoken. I must obey. It’s part of my job description as a royal guard to the Pharoka.” I didn’t fight back this time as Havask lead me to the door, but I kept my eyes fixated on my father as he sat back down in his seat and cradled his head in his hand.

“Kahlavar,” Zula ran to my side. “How did it go? Is everything alright?” I didn’t budge as Havask closed the door behind him. “You know, Kahl, if you keep up that scowl it’s going to stay like that forever,” she chuckled. I glared at her and headed towards the staircase. “Kahlavar, talk to me,” she grabbed my shoulder and pulled me back. “Fancy pants?” I shrugged her off and groaned.

“Hey, Kahl, I’m sorry. Things are going to be okay,” Havask reassured me.

“Now you say that to me?” I snapped. “You left me when I needed you most! All of you! I was alone when my father banished me. Stop with the act already and just leave me alone!” I roared. Havask stepped back in shock. He narrowed his brow as his hair burst into flames. He stepped forward flaring his nostrils and snagged my shirt in his muscular hands.

“Why you selfish little—

“HAVASK!” Zula shoved him back. “That’s enough. Both of you need to calm down. You’re acting like a bunch of children. Now both of you get along.” She sighed and turned to me. “Kahlavar, everything is going to be fine. Please, why don’t you just come over and hang out for a while? I’m sure the girls will love to see you,” she said.

“Zula, you know the rules…I’m not allowed to be here. I don’t even know why I came here. I hate this place.” I sighed.

“Well I need to get back to my post,” Havask said. “I’ll see you guys later. He winked at Zula and walked back inside the palace probably to apologize for what had just happened.

“I know what you said, Kahl, but I just don’t care,” she rolled her eyes. “You’re such a drama queen sometimes. Lighten up. I’m making kamamishch for lunch. I have the day off so I told the girls I would make them kamamishch, and then take them out to dinner. It’ll be fun, and it’ll help take your mind off of things,” I tried to protest, but every time I attempted to transform into a shadow I got electrocuted, so I just excepted my fate, and with that I found myself being dragged to Zula’s house against my own will.

Kahlavar

A half an hour later we found ourselves at the doorsteps of Zula’s small house once again. Zula opened the door and thrust me inside, closing the door behind her and locking the bolt.

“Girls, I’m home,” she hollered. From behind the couch a girl with shoulder length midnight blue and purple hair, and bright blue eyes appeared. She rolled her eyes and groaned.

“Finally! We’ve been here forever! Where did you go, Zula? You weren’t here this morning. You said you didn’t have work,” Zula’s younger sister, Ano complained. Ano is a child of water, but is still mastering her abilities. “Oh, and hi, Kahlavar,” she waved to me in a mocking motion then sat back down and continued to watch some children’s broadcast on Zula’s small television.

“Ano, I had to help, Kahlavar, big grown up stuff,” she said.

“Pssh!” Ano scoffed. “Yeah, right. You just love him, admit it,” she turned back around us and sighed. “You guys are just so cute together.” My face felt hot as Ano continued to imitate kissing noises.

“No, Ano. It’s not like that. We’re just friends,” I said.

“Yes, so no more teasing, and come help me do the dishes.” Zula said.

I narrowed my eyes at Ano, and she gave me a devlish smirk then got up and went to the table.

“Ano, where is—

“TALA-A-DAR!” Zula’s four year old niece, Hatka, came running down the hallway and latched herself onto my leg. Hatka has choppy, green hair with bangs that Zula often has tied back in a pink bow. She has tan skin, various freckles across her nose, and light green eyes. “I missded you, tala-a-dar!” she crawled up my leg.

“Wow, there, little kitty,” I chuckled swinging her up into my arms. I gasped with delight and tickled her. She laughed as she wrapped her arms around my neck.

“Can tala-a-dar, stay?” Hatka asked. I kissed her cheek and attempted to readjust her pink bow.

“He is—

“FOREVER!” Hatka squealed. “TALA-A-DAR!”

“No, Hatka, just for lunch.” Zula said. “He can’t stay. He’s…” Zula paused. She had never explained my banishment to Hatka before. I shrugged my shoulders as she tried to come up with an answer.

“Kahlavar, is a banished convict of Ra’Koza, Hatka,” Ano replied in a rather snooty tone. “You act like he’s some hero, but people like mom and dad died because of him,” I gave Ano a confused look just as Hatka burst into tears.

“NO!” She bellowed. “Tala-a-dar, would…would never hurt anybody. He…He…so nice!” she cried.

“ANO!” Zula snapped as she set down the last remaining dish on the table. “Why would you say that? Kahlavar isn’t responsible for what happened to mom and dad. Those creatures known as humans are the reason they are gone. Even you should know that,”

“I want mom and dad,” Ano groaned.

“Ano, let’s not start this again,” Zula pleaded as she grabbed the food out of her over. The entire room filled with the smell of freshly carved meat, sugars and herbs, and cheesy pasta. My stomach growled as Zula and Ano continued to fight back and forth.

“At least mom and dad wouldn’t have befriended a raging psycho path!” Ano jumped up from her seat and marched down the hallway. Sparks of electricity surged through Zula’s short purple hair.

“That’s enough,” Zula pointed a finger down the hallway. “Go to your room!”

“I’m already in my room you nasty good for nothing, sister!” and with that Ano slammed the door behind her.

My heart hammered in my chest as my eyes widended in fear. My father had said the same thing just moments earlier today. Did everyone else in my life know something about me that I didn’t? How could I have done something so horrendous and evil and have no recollection of it whatsoever. I put Hatka and slowly made my way to the door.

“Oh the joys of raising an angst emotional tween,” Zula sighed just as I grabbed the doorknob. “What are you doing?” she asked. I groaned and turned my attention to her. I wanted to tell her about everything my dad had said right then and then, but my words got caught in my mouth and all I could manage to say was;

“I…I…I need to feed Kida,” I sprang the door open and took off to the skies; the sound of Zula calling out my name echoing in the distance as I flew past the wall and into the depths of the Salvetka forest.

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I flew to my fort and stumbled through the door. I tried to hold back the tears, but I couldn’t they all came spilling out. I groggily walked over to my bed and curled up on my side. I closed my eyes and tried to fall asleep. Something warm and soft brushed against my face. I gasped and opened my eyes to see Kida looking down at me. I smiled and sat up gripping my arms around her neck and nestling my head into her shoulder.

“Good, girl, Kida,” I whimpered. “Good, girl,” Kida purred and licked inside my ear. I chuckled and cringed. “Kida, stop it,” I said. Kida meowed and jumped up onto the bed, knocking me over. I moaned as she rested her upper body on mine. “Oh Malan, you’re heavy,” I managed to say. Kida meowed as she rested her head against my chest.

“I love you, Kida,” I said. Kida meowed in reply as she closed her eyes. “You know, Kida. I just wish my father wouldn’t be such a jerk all the time. I didn’t do anything wrong. I was blamed for something I didn’t do. I just don’t understand. We were so close when I was young. He and mother were so protective of me, and my sister. They cared about me so much, and now he’s just the two-faced manipulator. I just want my father back. You understand right?” I said. Kida opened her eyes and looked at me. I sighed and rubbed her ears. “What am I kidding? I’m the only father you’ve ever known, and besides you wouldn’t understand because you are a cat,” I said. Kida yawned as she stretched out her paws. “But thank you for coming to my rescue today. That Kajeshan thing was pretty terrifying,” I held up my hand and Kida pressed her head against it. “You’re such a good girl. My brave little Kida, well you’re not little anymore,” I said. I smiled at her then collapsed onto my bed. “I’m talking to a giant cat about my life problems. Is this what my life has come to?”

Fooshka appeared by my bed side with his legs crossed, his upper back hutched over and his hands clasped against his thighs.

*Kahlavar do you want to talk about it? You know I love to talk, and I’m a great listener…well sometimes…but let’s forget about that shall we?* He swept down and evaporated into smoke only to reappear hovering over Kida and I. I gave him a slight grin. I usually hated when Fooshka came out of nowhere, but for the first I was glad to see him.

“Sometimes I can’t believe you’re my grandfather, especially after what just happened,” I laughed. “At least you don’t treat me like the scum of the Kàtzu.”

*Why thank you.*

“Hey, Fooshka, can I ask you something?” I asked.

*Wait, let me get this straight. You want to talk with me?*

“You just asked me if I wanted to talk about it and now I want to talk about it, and plus who else am I going to talk to? Who else is here aside from you? I mean I could talk to Kida, but all I get out of her is an innocent meow and a deep pure.” I said. Kida perked up her head, and yawned.

“Isn’t that right, Kida,” Kida opened her eyes and meowed as she scooted closer. “You have no idea what I’m saying do you,” Kida purred and licked my cheek. “But you are cute, so it’s okay,” I said.

*Hello, Kàtzu to Kahlavar. Are you going to keep petting your cat or are we gonna talk.*

“I was just saying that you’re the only one here that I can actually talk to me.” I said. “Can you please be serious?” I asked. Fooshka sat up straight and moved to the side of me bed so he could get direct eye contact with you, his expression serious and his ear open to listen.

*I’m sorry, I was out of place, now talk.*

“Do you think my father is right?” I asked.

*About what? For banishing you?*

“Did I really kill all those people? I don’t remember anything. How could I not remember something like that?”

*Kahlavar, there’s a lot that you don’t know, but in time you will, so just be patient. Your parents are the ones who need to tell you everything, but you also need to be ready to listen to them, and right now you’re not.*

“Are you saying my parents have been lying to me?” I exclaimed sitting straight up.

*No, but sometimes truth is hidden to protect people. Sometimes truth is hidden to ease the pain, but like all things it can’t be hidden forever and sadly my son hasn’t grasped that yet. Weird things did happen that night when Katya was taken. Things that even I can’t explain, but please don’t blame yourself or your father for them. I don’t know why he’s doing what he’s doing, but gloating about it and running away from your problems isn’t going to make anything better. Do I agree with the way he’s treating you, no, of course not, but Kahlavar he’s been through a lot. If you had seen what he has seen you wouldn’t be so agitated with him. From Katya, to you, to…* Fooshka’s eyes went off into a daze. For the first time his bright golden eyes were dull and lifeless, so much like my fathers. *Nevermind. Even I don’t want to talk about that.*

“Yeah, right. He’s just a greedy old man who wants to erase the day his only son was born into this world. He kept me kept me locked up as a child, and then he just pushed me aside all because I made a mistake. Anyway, it’s not like I care.” I scoffed.

*Kahlavar, you can choose to hate your father for what you believe he has done, but let me tell you that I know more things about your father than you do, and he is not that kind of kahaizan. There are many things that have happened to him and choices he’s had to make that no kahaizan should ever have to make. He may seem cold hearted, but he and your mother are only trying to protect you.*

“Protect me, from what?” I asked. “You sound just like my father.”

*Well, I am his father.*

*“*How would you know?” I demanded. I rolled my eyes and turned my back to him. “You know what,” I snapped. “I don’t care. Why would I want to know anyway?” I huffed and folded my arms across my chest. I paused and a small growl formed in my throat. I didn’t want to believe that what Fooshka was saying was true, but who else could be more honest than a navask?

*I’m sorry. I never should have brought it up. I’m the worst grandfather ever. I’ll never speak again.* Fooshka pressed his hands against his face and melted into a pile of smoke.

“No, don’t go. I don’t care what you talk about just keep talking. It helps…calm me down.” I said. Fooshka reappeared with a jump and hovered close to me. I cringed. He didn’t say anything for a few seconds, so I thought he had left again. I grumbled and rolled my eyes. “You can keep talking,”

*Alright then can we play a game of I spy?* Fooshka upside in front of me with a goofy grin on his face.

“Sure.” I grumbled.

*Okay, I spy with my little eyes something white and fluffy.*

“Let me guess, is it Kida perhaps?” I stated.

*No way! How did you know?* I gave Fooshka a slight gri./

“I’m physic.” I grinned.

I rolled my eyes and tried to fall asleep to the sound of Kida’s hypnotic purring as I continued to play I spy with Fooshka and so far I was winning. Fooshka got bored though and fell silent. I frowned at the silence, but embraced it all the same.

After a few minutes of complete silence Kida’s whole body tensed up as she looked out into the darkness of my invisible door. Lightning flashed outside as rain drizzled from the roof.

“Oh great,” I moaned. “It’s raining again.” Kida pounced off of me and crawled towards the door. The thick black fur along her spine stood on end as a deep growl echoed in her chest. “Kida, what’s wrong?” I asked my heart hammering in my chest. I slowly put two foot down on the wooden floor and walked towards her. Kida roared as lightning flashed revealing a figure just a few feet away. I screamed as the shadowy figure stepped inside. Neurotic laughing echoed through the walls as a familiar face came into the dim light.

“Real, manly, fancy pants,” Zula said as she stepped inside. She was drenched from head to toe and her feet were covered in layers of mud and strands of grass. “Can you tell your cat to stop growling at me? It’s creeping me out,”

“Kida, stand down,” I said. “Zula is a friend. You remember Zula, don’t you?” Kida snorted and crawled back over to me side. The ferocity in her eyes vanished as she licked the palm of my hand and set herself down by my bedside. “She won’t hurt you. You can come in,” I said. Kida snarled as Zula approached me and sat down. “Kida, that’s enough. Be a good girl, okay,” Kida’s blue eyes lightened up as she sniffed Zula’s leg. She snorted and sat down by my side. “What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Really, fancy pants?” she grinned as she arched her brow. She pressed her hand to her chest and spoke in a deep dramatic voice in an attempt to impersonate me; “I…I…just need to feed my cat. I’m just so heart broken.” She pressed her hand to her forehead and bent her knees. “I’m an overdramatic teenage prince, pay attention to me.” She burst into laughter and punched me in the shoulder, which hurt since she added a few volts of electricity with it.

“Haha,” I said in a monotone voice as I rubbed my throbbing shoulder. “You’re so funny,” I narrowed my brow and sat down. Zula sighed and sat down next to me. Kida growled at her and hissed. I rolled my eyes and motioned for her to lay down in her bed. Kida snorted in frustration, but obeyed, keeping a close eye on Zula.

“Now talk,” Zula said. “If it’s about Ano, she’s a pre-teen, girl. You know how it goes. Girls get angry and boys cry a lot. She’s got all the mood swings and anything and everything she hears is the truth,” Zula put quotation marks around the last word. “Don’t take her words to heart. We talked about it and she said that she’s sorry for her outburst and would love for you to come over again, and plus, Hatka, wouldn’t stop crying after you left. She really likes you. You remind her of dad,” Zula’s eyes grew dark. “Enough about that. Tell me what’s in that brain of yours.”

I grunted and turned my back to her. I wasn’t really in a talking mood.

“Okay,” she sighed. “You talk or we can do the hard way,” Zula lifted her left hand that zapped with electricity. I gulped and turned back towards her.

“Fine,” I said. “I’ll talk.” She smiled and put her hand down and listened attentively. “It’s not just about what Ano said. I mean it is, but it’s just that…” I paused to regain my thoughts. “When you and Havask were waiting outside while my father had a private chat with me he told me…the same thing that Ano said to me. He said I killed his armies and innocent civilians like your…your parents,” my voice cracked at the end as Zula’s body tensed up. “I don’t get. I know what I did to the previous captain of the sky guards, but it was an accident, and I remember it. You don’t forget stuff like that. I just don’t understand. How could I just not remember killing thousands of people?” I cradled my head in my hands. “To be honest though I’m just so frustrated with my father. I know he’s not going to crown me his heir till his daughter comes home, but I’m still his son. I thought he would care more, but back there he was heartless. I really hate him.” I took in a deep breath and sighed.

“You’re not alone. I hate him to.” Zula said. “Pharoka Suko has always given me the chills.” She said.

“Yeah with his cold eyes and vampire fangs,” I snickered.

I smiled and we both burst into laughing untill our sides were sore.

“Zula,” I said.

“Yes,” she replied still trying to regain her breath

“I know you would do anything for me, but just answer me this. If I did kill thousands and I did kill your parents, why would you still defend me? Why would you stay? I know you’re my friend, but why?” I asked.

“I would stay and I have stayed because I care about you, Kahlavar Natashka. I wasn’t willing to have my best friend drown in the lies that these people have said about you, and I refuse to believe that, that little thirteen year old boy gave up his only sister to those nasty humans. I refuse to believe that you could have been or ever would be willing to end someone’s life. I don’t care what they say. Children of darkness aren’t dangerous. I shoot lightning out of my finger tips for goodness sake. Havask can create fire and his little brother, Tavask is so smart that he could create a new chemical that could kill you just by looking at it. You’re not dangerous, Kahlavar. You’re a kahaizan, and you’re my friend and I will do anything to defend you and protect you. We all make mistakes, but as long as we turn the other way and seek forgiveness and learn to forgive ourselves things will get better.” Zula smiled and sighed.

My eyes opened in surprise as my heartbeat increased. I was glad to know that she would go to such lengths to defend me. She’s right I didn’t sell Katya to Jason Salazar. It’s not my fault. I need to find out more.

“You would do that for me?” I asked focusing in on Zula’s beautiful eyes.

“You’re my friend. It’s part of my job to keep you and the boys out of trouble. If I didn’t the world would be in ruins.” Zula smiled admiring her rare talent.

“Yeah right,” I shoved her over and she punched me back. Kida snarled and roared at Zula. “Kida, doesn’t like that I touched you.”

“She’s just jealous,” I said. Kida grumbled and laid her head down on the wood flooring. “What is it with you woman and punching people in the arm?” I grumbled.

“Somebody’s got to keep you men in line.” Zula said with a smirk. “I don’t think you’re a monster, you’re a bit of an idiot at times, but so is every other guy on Kàtzu. I care about you, Kahlavar, you know that right?” Zula smiled.

I should have been offended that she had just called me and every other man on Kàtzu naturally born idiots, but her smile wouldn’t let me feel that way towards her.

“I should go. The girls are probably wondering where I ran off to. See you in two weeks, Kahl.” She said. She arose and walked out the door. She looked back at me and waved goodbye. I waved in return as I watched her vanish into the night.

I yawned snuggled up in my blankets and patted the bed and called for Kida. Kida meowed and jumped on top of me nearly knocking the air out of me. She nestled on top of my legs and cradled her head by my side. I yawned and tried to fall asleep.

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I awoke to a loud thud and an irate cry coming from outside. My eyes were crusted and red from a lack of sleep. I yawned and uncurled my wings and folded them up behind my back and they vanished from sight. I stretched pushing Kida off the bed and groggily standing on my own two feet.

The irate cry sounded again. They appeared to be screaming. I think it was English, but with the creatures loud and obnoxious cry it was hard to tell.

“Shut up,” I rubbed my eyes and moved my messy black hair out of my face. “Kida, make the annoying creature stop,” I moaned. Kida looked up at me confused then trotted over to the molding fireplace and laid down. I groaned and walked towards the door. The sound appeared to be getting louder and louder by the minute. I took in a deep breath and sighed. I looked back at Kida and motioned for her to stay. “I’ll be right back, Kida, so just stay here. Be a good, girl,” Kida meowed in reply as her blue eyes watched me walk outside.

Fresh mildew glazed the fine yellow grassed plains. The wet dew felt nice on my feet, but my pleasure was soon interrupted by yet another shrilling cry.

*I’ve never heard of a creature like that? Kind of sounds like you when you’re hungry.*

*I don’t know…HEY! I do not sound like that when I’m hungry. Will you just be quiet? I’m going to scout the area.*

I crouched down and cautiously turned the corner from my fort facing the elegant waters of lake Saionai. I sighed and shrugged my shoulder seeing that the coast was clear and casually walked out onto the white sanded beach and around a nearby Lamoka tree; a water tree with white bark and fine tipped blue and green leaves found only around lakes and large bodies of water.

“I HATE NATURE!”

I shrieked at the sudden cry and jumped into a nearby tree. About ten meters away, two, what appeared to be, humans, rested by a nearby tree. One had short curly black hair, dark skin and a green shirt with a rugged old English seven and the other was a girl with skin as pale as the white sands around her, and golden locks of hair. She kicked her foot into the sand as she ran around screaming phrases in English that I couldn’t understand. Dark circles formed under their eyes from a long night in the forest.

They looked rather harmless at the moment. I didn’t see any claws or sharp fangs or any strange metal weapons of any kind. They must be in some kind of disguise. The girl looked up in towards the tree where I sat. I crawled back pressing my back against the trunk of the tree. Her eyes were blue like sapphires with pupils as big and dark as black holes. My sister had blue eyes like that, but far more beautiful and Kahaizan like with snow white blonde hair. I guess you could say they were similar physically speaking, this human appeared more psychotic and irate. My sister never would have lashed out at someone like that. The girl yelled something at the boy and planted herself next to the tree. The boy appeared to be trying to calm her down, but his efforts weren’t doing him much good.

*Kahlavar, the girl looks kind of like Katya, don’t you think?*

*I guess, but she’s a human. You said humans have scary claws, fangs and devilish metallic weapons to kill their pray. These guys look harmless.*

*That’s right, so who cares if they look harmless? They’re filthy slimy know it all humans. At any moment their hooked claws and sharp fangs are going to pop out, you’ll see.*

I silently, but swiftly shadow traveled to the tree where the two humans sat at base of its white trunk.

*Kahlavar when I said they look familiar that wasn’t an invitation to get closer. They could be dangerous.*

*Fooshka, they haven’t taken out their claws or fangs yet. I don’t think they want to hurt us. I’m just curious that’s all.*

*Curiosity is what killed the cat, now back to the fort.*

*Fooshka, be quiet. I can’t hear what they’re saying with you blabbering on and on like that.*

*If you die I am not going to be the one to explain the story to the big guy upstairs, no sir.*

*Fooshka, shhh!*

I leaned my head in closer and listened as the two humans talked to each other as they sat quietly at the base of the tree on the white sand of Lake Saionai.

5

Katlyn

I had forgotten most of the crash and of the past few days. I knew we had crashed, but I couldn’t remember where we were going and why. I had a lot of questions, but I was more curious about where we had landed. The forest surrounding us was thick and ancient like the forests you would only hear about in an old fairytale. Tall tree’s spread out for miles in each direction covered in various strange colored mushrooms, mosses and lined with a thick layers of fog. The smell of mildew and musk filled the air.

“The dark forest,” I shivered.

“Katlyn, if you’re going to complain about how dark it is outside while standing right next to a blind man, then I don’t know if we can be friends anymore.” Milo said. I clasped tightly onto his arm and glared at him. He’s so annoying sometimes.

I paused pulling Milo back with me. Milo gasped and tripped on a nearby stick and planted his face into a large tree truck covered in thick layers of green, blue and red moss.

“Katlyn,” Milo exclaimed. “What was that for? Why did you stop? I could have died! Katlyn…are you even listening to me?” The truth is I didn’t really care that Milo fell and hit his face, and that he was yelling at me.

“Will you two stop bickering?” Jessica popped her head out from behind a nearby tree. Her black hair was tangled and her clothes like ours were covered in dirt and ripping at the seams. “I want to go home as much you two do.”

I looked up at the sky. It was brighter and bluer here than back at home, although to tell you the truth I really only could see and I don’t know if my mind was playing tricks on me because of the lack of food and water, but I could have sworn that there two twin suns hovering high above the clouds; one blue and the other yellow.

We had been wondering all day and night. After the plane crashed we had all grabbed our bags and started walking. We had crashed near this lake. It must have been a massive lake because we had been trying to get around it for the past day since we crashed yesterday afternoon. We had taken some water bottles with us and those small snack packs they feed you on the plane and a couple of their deli packs and stuffed them into my small Pokémon backpack.

Our water supply ran out quickly due to the extreme heat. We must have landed on an unidentified tropical island near the equator. We still had snack packs but we were running out fast and if we didn’t find another source of food and water soon we were going to either die of starvation or dehydration.

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“Where are we even going?” I kicked my foot into the sand sending piles of dirt into my lungs. I coughed and waved away the excess dirt. I looked back and forth from the lake to the forest anticipating something to come charging out of them towards us.

Large bags had formed under my dull blue crusted eyes. My white blonde hair was greasy and tangled with old mossy twigs and dead dried up leaves. I hadn’t slept the night before and couldn’t take a chance of sleeping now. I was afraid to fall asleep in this jungle.

“Why are you asking me?” Milo asked. His pale green eyes were worn down from a lack of sleep the night before or possibly from me constantly wondering where we were every two to five minutes. I couldn’t help it. I was terrified, and Milo and Jessica were the only living human beings I could actually talk to out here.

“We never should have left the plane. Now we’re lost in an amazon wasteland.” I exclaimed. Milo grumbled something under his breath and continued walking.

“Then maybe we should stop and just think about this for moment.” Milo suggested.

“And do what Milo?” I asked. “Ask for directions at the next gas station? We’re in the middle of a jungle!” I exclaimed. My voice echoed through the forest rattling the trees and scaring a few birds and animals. I grumbled and turned my attention back to Milo who sat down at the base of a nearby tree clearing out his left ear. Waves from the vast lake crashed in the distance.

“Katlyn, Milo’s right. Let’s just think about this.” Jessica tried to calm me down, but I wasn’t in the mood.

“You’re going to get us both killed yelling like that.” Milo said. “Now sit down and let’s talk this through.” I hated to admit it, but Milo and Jessica were right. We’d been walking all night and come to think of it none us had eaten or drunken anything since the plane crash. My stomach growled. I was starving. Luckily we still had some peanuts snacks left from the planes food supply.

“Now let’s calm down and talk about our options. We’re obviously by some body of water from the sound of it and I presume that if we keep following the sound of the waves that we’ll eventually come upon a village. We can find a map, and you can locate where we are. I can…hey Katlyn are even listening to me?” Milo continued to talk about our plans to find our way back home, but in all honesty I didn’t care. I’m too hungry to listen to Milo blabber on about stupid things like he does when he’s agitated.

I unzipped my Pokémon backpack that I had been carrying and went to grab three snack packs for us, but when I opened it all the packs were gone. A small hole was torn at the bottom. All of our food supply was gone. It must have slipped out while we were walking. The water was still there, but I didn’t want water I wanted food. Now we’re going to starve.

I roared and threw the red Pokémon pack on the ground. Milo’s eyes widened and a look of confusion spread across his face.

“Katlyn, I thought I told you to calm down...I know that this is probably a stupid question, but is everything alright?” Milo asked.

“No, everything is not alright!” I snarled. “Why would you ask such a stupid question?” I kicked my foot inside the sand sending chucks of sand into my mouth and a small rock flying at my head. I yelped in pain and snarled.

“I HATE NATURE!”

Milo raised his arms in surrender.

“I’m sorry that I even asked.” Milo sighed and shook his head.

“Wait…where’s Jessica?” I asked. She must have slipped away somewhere not long before my outburst.

“Katlyn, Milo!” I heard Jessica’s voice faintly in the distance. I listened attentively for the direction of the voice when all at once I found myself peering into the depths of the forest.

“Jess?” I peered through the thickets of tree’s and braches. I could see some type of fruit hanging from the tree’s just a few meters inside, but I didn’t want to go in there by myself, but Jessica was in there, and should could be in trouble. There could be bears or tigers prowling around in those woods.

“Katlyn, Milo!” I heard Jessica’s voice again as I stepped inside.

As soon as I walked in the sound of the lakes rushing water subsided, replaced with the sound of strange birds and crawling insects and whatever else was hiding in these woods. I heard the sound of bushes rattling somewhere close by and if I listened hard enough I could hear it breathe as if the forest itself was a living entity. I even thought I heard it speak. It must just be my imagination.

“Katlyn!” I heard Jess scream as something rapidly rushed through the bushes. I screamed as something jumped from behind me. I ducked for cover in some bushes nearby. “Ha!” The bushes opended and Jessica’s head popped through. “I got you good!” She laughed.

“Not funny, Jess!” I snarled as I scrapped the excess leaves and moss off from my knees and shoulders and followed Jessica back to the base of the tree.

“I found fruit!” Jessica rejoiced as she pulled out some exotic fruits of various colors, shapes and sizes. I wanted to protest and say something, but my stomach said otherwise. I snatched one from her had and took a bite. My eyes widened in disbelief. It was delicious.

“Where did you get these, Jess?” I asked as I took yet another bite.

“In there,” Jessica pointed into the depths of the forest. “The forest isn’t as bad as it looks. It’s rather peaceful if you ask me.”

“What’s going on?” Milo asked.

“Milo, Jessica found some food!” I cheered.

“Yeah, but I was only able to grab three. We’re going to need more, so we’ll have to go back.” Jessica said. “Hopefully it’s not too far. These took some time to find, but I’m sure that we’ll find more, right?”

“Maybe we should just stay by the water where it’s safe?” I chuckled nervously.

“Are you scared?” Milo grinned with his head facing Jessica. I turned his head towards me and scowled.

“No! I’m just thinking rationally,” I crossed my arms and huffed.

“Hmmm,” Jessica snickered. “I say we should go. What do you say, Milo?”

“I guess we can go, but we should come back to the water before it gets too late.” He said.

I sighed and turned back to them.

“Fine,” I grumbled. “We’ll go, but I am not going in first.” I wrapped my arm around Milo’s and duct down behind him pushing him forward.

“Stop pushing.” Milo said.

“Sorry. Where are my manors?” I said. “Gentlemen first,” Jessica and I laughed as I eyed the ancient forest around us with my hands clamped on Milo’s shoulders.

“I think its ladies first, if I’m not mistaken.” Milo corrected.

“Not when were stranded in an amazon wasteland.” I said. Milo grumbled and continued walking.

“Just tell me when you guys see food and I’ll stop. You know if we get lost don’t blame me. I’m the blind man in the group, literally.” Milo said.

“Okay,” I said. A felt safe for a few quick seconds, but it quickly faded when the sense of fear swept back over me. The rushing sound of the Lake bed soon died down and chattering of strange animals returned. The trees were thick and enclosed. They were covered with various colors of moss, large mushrooms and crawling with strange insects bigger than any I’d ever seen. The ground was tattered with thick roots and a bright green colored moss that was used as a refuge for bugs and small animals. We must be in the Amazon. We have to be. Where else could we be?

I could have sworn I had seen fruit not far from the beach, but we had been walking for about ten minutes now and I hadn’t seen a single fruit hanging from any kind of tree or branch.

The farther we walked the more I felt that something or someone was watching us, following us, tracking our footsteps, but when I turned my head around to look, there was no one there. Not even an animal. It must have been my imagination.

“You guys, I can’t see the lake! We’re lost…again! I hate this place!” I cried slumping down on the nearest tree bringing Milo down with me. I let out a sober cry as tears trickled down my cheeks. Milo shrieked and fell hard on his butt. I had forgotten I was still holding onto him. “Sorry, Miles,” I sobbed.

“You could have just said ‘hey, Milo, I lost sight of the food, how about we stop for a minute’, but no. You just have to make things difficult,” Milo complained.

“Katlyn,” Jessica knelt down next to me. “You’re a mess,” she smiled. She wrapped her arms around my neck. I curled up into a ball next to Milo and took deep breaths in and out. Milo sighed and wrapped his arm around me to try and calm me down to.

I raised my head for a quick second just as something caught my eye. It looked like a shadow, a human shadow, but it was deformed. It had a long tail and demonic wings. I could feel it peering into me as if it had eyes of its own. Branches from above rattled and cracked as the shadow drew closer. Then it vanished.

“I’m losing my mind, Milo” I whimpered. “I’m hungry, my butt’s wet, my feet hurt, I have twigs in my hair, I smell like a skunk, I see things that aren’t really there, and I’m scared. I’m so scared, guys. I want to go home, Jess.” Tears streamed down my cheeks as Jessica pulled me closer.

“Kate,” Jessica and Milo gently rested their heads against mine. A sense of peace washed over me. For once since we had crashed I felt safe. We were going to fine. We’re going to make it home. I just know it. I sighed and wrapped my arms tighter around them. We stayed that way for a couple minutes. I’d never felt so safe with a group of people before. I wanted to stay in this moment forever, but like all things it had to end.

Milo tensed up and quickly swayed his head from side to side. There was something moving out there.

“Milo, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“What’s happening?” Jessica’s voice quivered.

Milo grabbed my arm and pulled me up as he his attention to a spot behind us. I tensed up and tried to slow down my beating heart. Whatever Milo was sensing I could sense it as well. Jessica grabbed a nearby stick and held it above her shoulder as she eyed our surroundings.

The dark energy was overwhelming as if death himself was standing over my shoulder peering down on me. Come to think of it I had felt this dark energy before. It was right after Milo and I had decided to venture into the woods, but I had just taken it as my mind playing tricks on me, but this feeling wasn’t a trick of the mind. It was real.

Milo took a step forward, and we followed suit. Suddenly Milo stopped in his tracks dragging me along with him. His grasp was different than before. He seemed to be in distress.

“Milo that hurt!” I said. “Why did you ­­­­­­\_”

“I can hear you, now come out, you coward!” Milo snarled just as a dark, slender creature walked from out of the bushes. It looked like a Tiger, a Lynx, and a Lion mixed into one tangled mess. The creature had the face shape and pointed ears of a Lynx. The slender and stripped body of Tiger and large stature and tail of a Lion. It’s white and black fur shimmered in the sun as its cold blue eyes watched our every move. Jessica whimpered as she raised her stick a little higher. A deep growl came from it’s under belly as it paced back and forth.

My heart beat heavy in my chest as a feeling of dread and despair over took me. We’re going to die here. I clamped down in Milo’s arm as sweat drizzeled down my brow. Milo shrieked and tried to free his arm.

The creature roared revealing long, thick razor sharp fangs. It then knelt down to the ground and looked at us with a vicious curiosity in its eyes. It was moving its body up and down slightly, as if it was getting ready to pounce. I tightened my grip around Milo’s arm as sweat beat down my forehead. We were dead, we were so dead.

“KIDA!,” I screamed at the sound of a voice that seemed to be coming from above. I closed my eyes and pressed my face into Milo’s chest.

“Kó va’noa kavatka èt manà. Ka hatko ét manà!” I opened my eyes and examined the area. I looked above in the looming branches to see where the voice had come from. Leaves rattled above. There was something there. Were there humans here like Milo and I? We’re they friendly or were they planning to kill us also?

The creatures blue silted pupils expanded and a soft gentle meow came out of its mouth. A deep purr echoed from it’s chest as it pranced around a nearby tree waving it’s paw at something above.

“Kida,” the voice from earlier said. “Ka tah kó satàk en ét hāmal. Wé kó dékobonal?” The creature tucked its tail between its legs and whimpered like a puppy. “Nako, Kida. Ka sàd vàk hāmal!” The creature narrowed his eyes and snorted before disappearing into the dark forest. Just as the creature vanished into the depths of the forest a dark and humanly figure descended from the tree’s above, gently nestling his feet down on the mossy soil below. The figure was tall, slender and muscular. He had his back face toward us, so I couldn’t see his face, but I didn’t want to. Whatever this guy or was it wasn’t human. A long black tail swayed behind him as it brushed across the moss covered terrain. I couldn’t see much else of him. He was hiding in the depths of the shadows.

“Ka aim savalash àbā Kida. Da’noa wénā. Ka noa hash híka kó.” The creature said. He turned around to face us and took a step forward into the light.

He had olive colored skin and long greasy black hair that flowed down to his shoulders. His eyes were cat like and were the color of fresh blood very much the like the one I had seen in my dream the night before we crashed on this tropical wasteland. He smelled of three month old body odor with a tinge of rotten milk, and I thought I smelled bad. This guy probably had bathed once in his life. He probably didn’t even know what a bath was. He probably lived in these forests, some kind of alien wild man.

He wore wrinkled grey kimono top and puffy black trousers that flowed down to his ankles. A red scarf tattered with holes of all sizes wrapped around his neck. Dirty white bandages covered in mud and dirt were wrapped around his forearms and spiraled up to his knuckles.

He crouched down arching his back and took a step forward like some kind of wild man who had never seen another human or should I say creature before. I took a step back afraid of what he or it, I should say, might do next. His red cat like eyes were wide and filled with not only fear but curiosity. He skipped towards us and grabbed hold of my arm and examined my finger nails as if searching for claws or some kind of sharp object. He then grabbed my mouth and quickly observed my teeth. I screamed and kicked him in the gut. He hissed and shook his head. Moss and twigs feel out of his greasy black hair.

I snatched up a nearby branch and held it out in front of me. “Now you just stay back you wild man…thing,” I pushed Milo back and took a step back as well, but the man followed. “I said stay back!” I exclaimed. He hissed and giant wings unfolded behind his back. He spread them out his wings and hissed at me like some kind of cat revealing sharp vampire like fangs. He was just full of surprises wasn’t he.

He took another step forward and stood up completely. The guy must have been six foot four, at least. I felt like an ant compared to him. He reached out a long slender but muscular hand and grabbed a piece of my hair. I looked down at a small rock nestled next to my feet. “I said stay back,” I smacked him across the head with my stick as I left out a vengeful cry.

“Ika,” the man shrieked. “Waä esa taha faä?” the language he spoke sounded like a combination of middle Eastern languages, some Swedish or Danish and or Spanish with a tinge of some kind of Asian language like Japanese or Korean, but far more ancient and guttural. It sounded a lot like the language from my dream, but this time it was real.

“Just stay away from us!” Despite my warnings and the wrath of my stick the man continued to come closer. What’s this guy’s problem? Is he deaf? I don’t have time to find out though. The man stood to the right of me. He bent his knee’s and looked deep into my eyes. His black tail flickered back and forth like. I had seen this on cat’s. It usually happened right before they were about to…pounce…oh no he isn’t.

I raised my stick high above my head and screamed aiming for his head. The man gasped and just as my stick made contact with his chest he vanished into a thicket of black smoke. Great, so he’s a wizard too! Who does this guy think he is?

I made a sharp turn to my left and found him standing next to Milo with his hands grasped against the tree. His red eyes wide with fear as he took in quick breaths.

“Katlyn, seriously what’s all the fuss about? First you push me, then you start speaking in a man’s voice, and in a different language, might I add.” Milo said. The man and I glanced at each other. He pointed to Milo and then made a cicular motion around his head. I snarled and raised my stick even higher. He gasped and went back to his normal position. “I mean come on, girl, how many time do I have to tell you to calm down!” Milo, in rage, grabbed hold of the man’s leg. The man shrieked and tried to shake him off. “Whoa…Katlyn I didn’t think you were this strong,” Milo grazed his hand over the man’s hairy leg’s and turned his head in disgust. “This what a woman’s leg feels like? That’s just nasty!”

“Milo,” I yelled. “I’m over here!” Milo’s eyes widened in fear.

“If you’re over there, then who’s leg am I…oh my gosh!” My shrieked just as the man chucked him a few feet back.

“Get off!” the man screamed. I dropped my stick in shock. He spoke, in English. Taken for granted that his accent’s so thick that I’m amazed I even understood those two words, but he did. This must be dream. It could also be an illusion and I’ve just dropped into the depths of insanity as we speak. Either one word suffice.

“You spoke,” I pointed at the man. He pointed finger at himself in confusion and I nodded in reply. He gulped and crouched down like a scared animal. “You spoke in English. I heard you. Now tell me who you are and what do you want?” I demanded. “Answer me!” I picked up my stick again and aimed it at his forehead. A minute past and the man continued to look at me as if I were some kind of alien. “I know you can speak English, now tell me your name!”

“Waä et ko’ra navathka?” it sounded like a question, but I had no idea what he was asking of me.

“I asked for your name, not for you to ask me questions, nor answer me!” Then the thought dawned on me. If I could just talk to him maybe he could help us. I really didn’t want to be lead around by some alien wild man who smelled of body odor and rotten milk, but I certainly didn’t see anyone else around here who could help us.

“What is your name?” I asked. He gave me a strange look tilting his head to the side. I sighed and put down the stick and put my arms up in surrender. “I’ll say it again, okay? What is your name,” I made sure to pronounce each vowel and constant. His red eyes seemed to lighten up. He smiled and crouched down and took a step closer. I kept my stick far out in front of me for safety precautions.

He pointed to himself and with a silly grin said, “Kahlavar,”

“Call…huh…luh…var?” I replied making sure that I gutturalized the ‘h’ just like he did. “Kahlavar.” I said again. He smiled and pointed to me.

“You’re name is Kahlavar?” I asked pointing to him. He nodded and pointed to me.

“What…is…you…your….name,” obviously his English needed work but he could speak, but at least he was trying.

“My name,” I asked pointing to myself. He nodded and gestured for me to continue. “My name is Katlyn and this is my friend Milo,” I said. “We’re lost, do you know where are we?” I asked.

He stood up straight, sighed and looked up towards the sky as if it had the answers.

“You…you are in the Salvetka…forest. What are you doing here?” the more he talked the more his English appeared to come with ease. He took another step forward, but I picked up my stick and pushed him back.

“I never said that you could move, now stay right where you are, understand.” I stammered.

“Okay, please, forgive. I am just…curious. I am sorry. I should not have been following you two in the first place.” He said.

“You’ve been following us?” I asked. I didn’t know whether I should be terrified or intrigued.

“As I said, I was just curious. I never…in…inte…”

“Intended,” I corrected him.

“Sai,” he said. “I never in…intended to frighten you, please, do forgive me,”

“No, we were the ones who trespassed into your territory, we should be the ones who should be sorry,” I said.

“If you are truly sorry, then drop your stick,” he said. I looked down at my stick and with shaky hands gently out it down and raised my hands to show him that they were free. “Now can you help us, you know where to find water and possibly even food?” I asked as my stomach growled. His stomach growled in reply.

“I have not eaten in a few days, so yes, I will help you, but don’t think I am taking a liking to you, human.” His ‘h’ came out of his throat as if he was trying to hack up a fur ball.

“I don’t like this guy, Katlyn, not one bit,” Milo snarled. Milo raised his fists and walked towards the Kahlavar almost tripping on a root on the way over.

“Milo, please, he said he would help us, now just leave the guy alone,” I pleaded, but Milo didn’t listen. He never listens. He charged at Kahlavar kicking and screaming. Kahlavar casually moved out of the way and Milo slammed hard into a tree and fell to the ground unconscious. Kahlavar gave me a strange look as if to say, *where did you pick up this weird guy.* I shrugged my shoulders and walked over to Kahlavar. Milo groggily woke up and slowly sat up with his hand pressed against his bulging forehead. I pulled him and slapped his across the shoulder.

“Idiot,” I snapped. Milo growled and latched his arm around him.

“Let’s go before another one of you, filthy human’s runs into a tree,” Kahlavar hissed and walked away.

“Milo, hurry up,” I punched him in the side and together we followed Kahlavar into the wilderness.

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“So…” I began trying to break the awkward silence. We had been walking for what seemed like an hour now with nothing more the sound of wild animals to keep us company. “How long have you lived in these woods?” I asked.

Kahlavar narrowed his eyes at me and sighed as if that was a question he hadn’t wanted to answer.

“I have lived here for seven years,” he said.

“Seven years,” I repeated, “wow that must get really lonely.” I said. Kahlavar’s eyes filled with sorrow as if he was remembering something he wished he could forget.

“It is, but my personal life is none of your concern,” he said.

“How come you live in the forest?” I asked. I know he told me not to ask, but I couldn’t help it. I was curious, okay? “I mean if I had the choice I would rather live in a nice warm house with a family sitting next to a warm campfire.”

“I wish,” Kahlavar smiled, “but it’s not that simple, now please no more question, human. Be quiet until we get there.”

“He’s going to kill us, I just now it.” Milo said shaking his head.

“Be nice. He offered to help us and I agreed so whether you like it or not we’re still going to following Kahlavar.” I punched Milo in the arm and pulled him alongside of me as we followed Kahlavar deeper into the forest.

6

Katlyn

It was starting to get dark. I was having trouble seeing Kahlavar. Sometimes he was visible and other times it was like he just disappeared. Kahlavar hadn’t talked since I had asked him that last question about five or so hours ago. I didn’t mind the silence. I was just glad that we weren’t lost anymore, but I wasn’t exactly pleased with all this walking. All the tree’s looked the same. If he was taking us in circles I was going to mess up that pretty face and make him regret that he had ever been born.

“Kahlavar, where are we going? I saw a lot of perfectly good places to sleep. If you’re taking us circles I swear I’ll do more than just punch you in the face” I growled clenching my fists.

“If you do not like what I am doing then how about you lead the way, but I promise you that we are almost to Telatakani.” he said calmly gesturing to the large hill and distant mountains ahead. I couldn’t believe that I was actually going to do this, but I was little prideful, and it got in the way of my true actions. Milo didn’t help. He wanted to get as far away from Kahlavar as possible and I was giving him that opportunity.

“We will” she protested.

“Gladly,” Milo snickered.

“Let’s go, Miles.” I turned to my right and saw a nice pathway with very few tree’s that we could take. I could easily find a place for us to rest for the night without Kahlavar’s help. “This way,” I gestured to the path to my right.

“I’ll go with anything as long as I can get away from that creep.” Milo whispered.

“Goodbye!” Kahlavar waved. “I hope you to see you again, but then again you might be popsicles by then.” Kahlavar shrugged his shoulders and smiled, “But, hey, just one less thing for me to worry about, right.” Kahlavar said.

I stopped in my tracks. Milo tried to keep moving forward, but I wouldn’t let him.

“Popsicles,” I choked at the thought of turning into a frozen cheat in this jungle.

“Sai, you know, when you take water and fruit and let it freeze overnight. The water and fruit freeze and fuse together to form a delicious treat. I’m sure the Baraka’s will love to take a nibble out of you.” Kahlavar snickered. “I guess this is goodbye.” Kahlavar smiled and continued walking in the dark.

“Don’t leave us, please.” I screamed dragging Milo along with her. “We’re really sorry. Please, you have to help us. I was being really stupid. I don’t know what I thinking. Please don’t leave us.”

Kahlavar stopped in his tracks just as Milo and I caught up to him. His tail twitched back and forth in small motions. That only meant one thing; he was really ticked off and probably had enough of Milo and I for one day. Kahlavar turned around and peered down at Milo and I and let out a large sigh.

Milo wrinkled his nose and waved his hand in front of his face.

“Dude, have you ever heard of a toothbrush, and a bath? I would highly recommend you get one because that is rank, man.” He coughed.

“Have you ever heard of ‘shut your mouth and listen to the guy who is helping you’? Kahlavar snapped. Milo slumped down and grabbed hold of my shoulder.

I paid no attention to the smell. I was too engrossed in his eyes. Yes, those eyes resembled the ones in my dream, but this was something entirely different. There was something hauntingly familiar about him, but I didn’t know what. It was like déjà-vu, but then again I couldn’t remember a lick of anything before I was seven, so it was probably nothing.

“You better not be lying because if you are lying I am not going to stop for you pathetic humans the next time you decide to go an adventure to mystical land of Aiwa. Do you understand?” Kahlavar said. His voice was calm, but his tone was firm. I nodded my head, but in reality I felt like a child being lectured on what no to do. Milo let a huge sigh and crossed his arms.

“Don’t give me that kind of attitude. I’m the oldest one here, so you have to obey my rules and listen to exactly what I say. Do you two humans understand?” he spat out the last sentence as if it was poison in his mouth. I nodded and smiled to reassure him that I understood.

“We understand, right, Milo.” I elbowed Milo in the side. Milo groaned, sighed and nodded his head.

“Yeah, sure, whatever, I’m just hungry, alright.” Milo grumbled.

“Now that this appears to be over, Telatakanai is just over the hill. We’ll rest just outside the village for the night. I’ll go inside and grab you food and blankets. You won’t need to worry about those things, but we have to keep moving. We cannot stay in one place for more than a day.” He gestured us to follow with his tail which sent a spark of uneasiness down my spine.

“I understand, but why can’t we go into the village, and why do we have to keep moving? You’re not some kind of criminal are you?” I asked. Sweat beat down my brow. I had put a lot of faith in this guy and now the idea that he could be a criminal sent chills down my spine

“Do you humans all have to ask so many questions?” Kahlavar snarled. I narrowed my eyes and he continued. “Yes and no,” Kahlavar continued. “Let’s say the people of Ra’Koza, the country we are currently in, do not like me very much.” He said air quoting his last few words.

“What did you do, if you don’t mind me asking?” I asked. I felt a little guilty about asking, but I couldn’t sit around knowing that he was an enemy to this country without knowing why.

“There are more important things to worry about than my ‘social life.’” Kahlavar said. “First we should focus on getting you two some food, water and a place to sleep.”

In other words; *don’t ask stupid questions, puny humans.*

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Within ten minutes we arrived outside a small village, the one Kahlavar had called Telatakani. The houses appeared to be small huts with straw roofs. Strange colored animals that resembled that of cows and chickens as well as people much like Kahlavar wondered the dirt roads. A large pegged fence surrounded the town’s perimeter.

“Do you see that small meadow patch about five meters away?” Kahlavar said pointing to a small meadow filled with green grass and surrounded by willow like trees.

“Nope,” Milo said.

I jabbed my elbow into Milo’s ribs, and grabbed his hand.

“Yes,” I replied.

“I want you two to stay there while I go and get you some food and a couple of warm blankets, alright?” Kahlavar said.

“Sounds like a plan to me.” I said. Kahlavar smiled and walked over to the meadow and Milo and I sat down. We’d been walking for the past five or six hours. I hadn’t realized how hungry and sore I was till now. My stomach roared and my stomach growled in pain.

“Food is coming, I promise,” I reassured my crying stomach.

Milo and I waited for Kahlavar to return with food, water and blankets. Fifteen minutes later Kahlavar returned with a basket filled with a variety of fruits and two jugs of water as well as two soft colorful wool blankets.

“Thank you, so much,” I cried with joy stuffing my cheeks with fruit. I had no idea what I was eating, but it tasted better than anything I had ever tasted back at home.

“I guess I owe you an apology.” Milo told Kahlavar, “I should have believed you. This is very nice of you.” Milo smiled grabbing a piece of dirt next to the basket of fruit and attempting to stuff his face. I grabbed his hand and dropped a fruit in his palm. Milo gasped and laughed nervously dropping the excess dirt and eating the piece of fruit. “I knew that,” he said.

“You’re welcome.” Kahlavar smiled and sat down next to me and grabbed a purple pear shaped fruit with an artichoke texture and took a bite and sighed.

I looked up at Kahlavar with curiosity. Milo and I had been wondering with this guy for a while and I didn’t even know who he was. He had never answered my question about why we couldn’t go into the village and I was still completely puzzled on what he had done to be considered a criminal in the eyes of an entire nation.

“Kahlavar,” I asked.

“Sai,” he replied. I didn’t know what that meant, but I assumed it meant yes.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“Sai,” he replied.

“What are you?” I asked. Kahlavar froze and put his half eaten artichoke pear down.

“I am a kahaizan.” He replied.

“I never thought aliens were real. I always thought that was crazy people talk, and I suppose you know all about Earth and humans.” I said.

“No, not me. I was required by law to take courses on Earth history, culture and one of their main languages; English. I never paid attention though, but my friend, her name is Zula, is an Earth addict. She knows every country city, race, and cultural. I’ve learned more about Earth from her than I had from any teacher.” Kahlavar smiled at the very thought of his friends name. Kahlavar turned his attention back to the stars and pointed a finger up into the sky. “Do you see that bright star, just above the Eastern Mountains?” he asked.

I searched for a good few seconds before I locked my eyes on the bright star that Kahlavar had described. The star reminded me a lot of what Venus looked like from Earth on a clear night; a glimmering dot just above the horizon.

“Yes, I see it,” I said.

“That is what our scientists call K2-55678, it’s a small sun with many planets orbiting it. It’s home to one of the few habitat planets within our galaxy. It’s said to be very dangerous and the creatures that inhabit it are much like us, but with the brain capacity of a kaka bird.” He said.

I awed the star in amazement.

“You humans know about this planet to, did you know that?” he said.

“We do? I know that we’ve discovered some potential habitat planets but we’ve never visited them. Do you know the name of the planet?” I asked.

“How should I know?” he stated. “You’re the ones who live on it, not me.” It took me a few seconds to register the fact that he had just labelled all humans as pea-brained worms. I gasped in disbelief and punched in the arm. Kahlavar chuckled and shoved me aside.

“You take that back, right now.” I said.

“Oh come on, Human, I was only joking. You humans sure are sensitive.” He said. I sighed and tried to calm my nerves. He’s right. I’m acting like a child. I need to be mature about this.

but Kahlavar paused and pointed to the large mountains far to the East. “That is how you two came into our world, Kàtzu through the portal that connects Earth to the Kàtzu. There are nine other portals that connect us to the nine plants of the Zùn releam. All of them know about each other except for one, and that would be Earth. I don’t really know why, but none of you have ever figured it out even when we come to visit you still never quite understood.” Kahlavar shrugged his shoulders.

“Aliens have actually visited Earth?” I asked in astonishment.

“Oh yes, but only a few humans ever notice. It’s almost like your kind is trapped inside in some kind of magical barrio enabling you from seeing what is truly there.” Kahlavar said.

I looked up at the sky in amazement. To think that a vortex that had almost claimed my life was the entrance to another world astonished me. I hoped Milo was listening to all of this. I looked back at Milo. He had fallen asleep head first onto the basket of fruit. Drool trickled down his chin. I had wanted to grab another piece of fruit, but the thought of Milo’s drool being on my next piece of fruit demolished the idea quickly.

“Kahlavar, are we the first humans you’ve met before? We must look really ugly to you, well expect for me.” I flipped my hair back and smiled. Kahlavar rolled his eyes.

“No, you are not the first humans I have met, but I will admit you much nicer than the last humans I met. They were fowl and cruel. They did a lot of terrible things, but I’d rather not talk about that.” Pain weighed heavy in Kahlavar’s eyes. I felt terrible for asking such a stupid question in the first place.

I looked up into the sky. It was getting darker and darker. We had been chatting for a lot longer than I had expected. The two suns were setting over the horizon leaving a pink, purple and blue glow on the mountain tops. I threw one of the wool blankets over Milo and grabbed the other and wrapped it around myself. Kahlavar arose up off the ground and walked over the nearest tree.

“Where are you going?” I asked.

“If you need me I’ll be up in this tree.” He said gesturing to the tall oak behind him. “I won’t be able to hear you unless you yell so you don’t have to worry about me listening to you.” He paused and with a small, awkward wave of his hand launched into the tree and climbed up gracefully like a cat.

I sighed and lied down in the grass and tried to fall asleep. I wanted to go home or even better wake up and realize that this whole thing was nothing more than the terrifying dreams that haunted me in my sleep, but I would have to wait and see. I closed my eyes and fell into a dreamless sleep.

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I yawned and slowly opened my eyes. The two suns were coming over the horizon, one in the west and the other in the east. I gazed around the small meadow. Tall tree’s bordered the meadow along with bushes, and a nice pair of tan muscular legs. Wait…what?

I looked up to see Kahlavar gazing down at me with blood red eyes. I screamed and threw the blanket off onto Milo. Milo snorted and rolled over.

“I tried waking up your friend a few minutes ago before you woke up, but he just slapped me and rolled over and continued snoring. You humans sure like your sleep.” He said. He sat with his legs crossed as he looked up at me like an innocent child.

“Oh man,” I moaned. “This was supposed to all be a dream and was supposed to wake up on the plane with Milo snoring next to me and Jessica mumbling under her breath about how cute the new guy at school was.” I pointed a quivering finger at Kahlavar. He smiled as he continued to fiddle with his fingers. “You’re not real. You’re just that weird guy in my head who has a tail, wings, and is really…annoying, what am I saying. Of course it’s real!” I groaned and fell to my knee’s.

“I didn’t know human’s had navask’s too.” Kahlavar said. I had no idea what he was talking about so I just ignored it and continued telling myself that it was just a dream.

“We need to go human, so when you’re done having your mental breakdown, I would suggest that you go and wake up your friend and get out of here before the nobleman finds us.” Kahlavar arose to his feet and waited patiently by the tree for me to wake up Milo.

After about thirty seconds it became obvious that this wasn’t a dream and that I needed to wake up Milo before Kahlavar’s so called nobleman came looking for us.

“Any day now would be nice, human.” Kahlavar yawned. “But please do take your time.” He’s almost as bad as Milo, but if Milo and I hope to make it home alive we have to listen to him, and that means keeping up with his rude attitude and stupid nicknames.

“My name is Katlyn, and don’t worry I can wake him up.” I walked over to Milo, raising my arm up high and slapped Milo across the head. A loud thud echoed through the trees. Milo moaned and quickly sat up waving his arms out in front of him. “Wake up, Miles, we’re leaving.” I yelled into his ear. Milo jumped up from the ground with wide eyes.

“Katlyn,” he said. I laughed and wrapped up our blankets and stuffed them into my Pokémon backpack and zipped it up.

“Don’t scare me like that!” Milo barked. “I thought we were being ambushed.” Milo scratched his head. His curly black hair stuck out in all sorts of directions, and dark bags had formed under his eyes. Milo yawned and walked up to me. Milo took a step forward and nearly tricked from stepping on my foot. Luckily I caught him and no feet were stepped on.

“Watch the feet, pretty boy,” I said pushing him back. Milo mumbled something under his breath and crossed his arms.

“We’re leaving, and I fixed the holes in you pack while you were sleeping, so you don’t need to worry about anything falling out again.” Kahlavar said gesturing to their packs.

“How did you know there were holes in our packs?” I asked.

“I heard you talking with your friend when you were by the lake.” Kahlavar replied.

“We hadn’t met till long after we left the lake, and how did you know we were at the lake?” I asked.

“I have my ways, now let’s go before the towns people wake up.” Kahlavar gestured for us to follow.

I grabbed hold of Milo and dragged him to my side and caught up with Kahlavar.

“Why do we have to leave so early?” Milo moaned. “The morning is evil.”

We followed Kahlavar back into the forest, but after about an hour the tree’s vanished and massive fields of grass and bright colored flowers lay ahead of us. In the distance tall orange colored rocks masked the horizon.

By nightfall we came upon a small city that Kahlavar called Tito. Just as before we weren’t allowed to go in so we camped out in the field while Kahlavar went into the city to get us something to eat. We had some food along the way, but it wasn’t until Milo and I had settled down that I realized how hungry I was.

“Eat,” Kahlavar chucked a two loaves of bread at me. I handed the other loave to Milo and started eating. This is the best bread in the entire world…no, the universe. I took another huge bite out of my bread and chewed it down, but as I went to take another I noticed that Kahlavar didn’t have any food. He sat just a few feet away from me with his legs pressed against his chest and his arms hung over his knee’s as he watched their two sun’s set. One in the east and the other in the west. Just as they did every night.

“Kahlavar,” I said. Kahlavar turned his head at the sound of my voice. I reached my hand with the piece of bread in hopes that he would take it.

“That’s you’re food, not mine,” he said.

“Aren’t you hungry though?” I asked.

“I’ll be fine. You need it more than me, so stop complaining and eat it already.” He said. I pulled my hand back and continued to eat my piece of bread. Kahlavar continued to watch the sunset. He looked lonely so I decided to move closer, then even closer, then even closer, until I was no more than a few inches away from him. “I already told you, human, I don’t want the bread.” He said as I stuffed the last piece of bread into my mouth.

“You looked lonely, so I thought I’d keep you company you know since Milo’s already asleep.” I said as Milo’s snorted and pulled his blanket up to his chin. Kahlavar didn’t respond so I assumed that that he didn’t care or he’s just trying to be nice and not hurt my feelings.

The two sun’s set and sky filled with strange stars and a small red moon hovered high above the orange rocks and mountains in the distance. Kahlavar sighed and laid down on his back, so I did the same.

“What are you doing, human?” he asked.

“Just watching the stars,” I lied.

“What do you want?” he asked.

“How old are you, Kahlavar?” I asked. Kahlavar took in a deep breath through his nose and out through his mouth.

“I’m twenty years old.” He replied. “How about you?” he asked. My eyes widened in amazement. I can’t believe it. He’s actually talking back to me like I’m an actual person. I better not mess this up.

“I’m fourteen.” I replied back. Kahlavar smiled and looked back up into the sky.

“What?” I asked.

“Nothing, it’s just my sister, if she were still here with us, she would be around fourteen too.” He said.

“I’m sorry.” I said feeling saddened by his response. “Kahlavar, if you don’t mind, may I ask what exactly happened to your sister?” Kahlavar sighed and turned his attention back to me.

“Seven years ago my kind, the kahaizans as we call ourselves, we attacked by human wizards.” He began.

“Wait…wizards, as in magic?” I asked a bit intrigued and a little alarmed by his response.

“Yes, they came to our world in search of something. I don’t know what exactly that something was, but they certainly took every initiative to find it. They searched all four corners of Kátzu. They searched very town, city, village, house, and family to find it. They slaughtered anyone who got in the way of their plans. My best friend’s parents were murdered when the wizards came to my home city.” He said. I could sense the sadness in his voice, and although I wanted to tell him to stop I also wanted to learn more so for once in my life I kept my mouth shut and listened. “My sister and I had been playing out in the forest during the attack. Luckily some soliders found us and attempted to us to a clearing where our mother waited for us. Not long after the soliders were killed off one by one and I had to lead my little sister through the forest to my mother. I knew where it was, so I wasn’t worried about not finding our mother, but I was so scared. I was only thirteen at the time and my sister only six. As her older brother it was my responsibility to be protect her. I couldn’t be scared. I had to be brave for her. It was all for her.” Kahlavar paused as he recalled the memories of his past.

“Did you find your mother?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied. “We did. My mother took my sister up in her arms and told me to find my father. I watched my mother fly high up into the sky with my sister cradled in her arms. They were soon attacked and I watched in horror as my baby sister, who had yet learned how to fly, fell from my mother’s arms.” Kahlavar’s eyes filled with tears.

“She died.” I said. Kahlavar wipped his tears and shook his head.

“No,” he said. “I quickly flew after her and found her. By some miracle she managed to survive and in perfect condition, but I was too late. Their commander, Jason Salazar,” Milo snorted and perked up his head at the sound of the name. He yawned and fell back down on his pack. I could tell that he was still awake, but I didn’t care. I wanted to know more, so I gestured for Kahlavar to continue, “...and his son, whose name has slipped my mind over the years, had taken her. I attacked them and tried everything in my power to get her back, but nothing worked. Jason was too powerful. I watched as Jason handed my sister over to his son, who couldn’t have been no more than eight or nine at the time, and together they vanished into the depths of a nearby portal. That was the last time I ever saw my sister. There’s more, but I’d rather not talk about it. Even I can’t explain what exactly happened after Jason’s son escaped through the portal with my sister in his arms.”

“I’m so sorry.” I said. “I hope that one day you’ll be able to see her again.”

“I wish that could be true, but everyone even my friends claim that she’s dead. I don’t think she’s dead, but to say that she’ll return soon is a lot to ask.” Kahlavar rolled over onto his side and closed his eyes. “Well goodnight, human. If you have nightmares of wicked wizards and bloody battles, don’t blame me. You’re the one who asked in the first place.” Kahlavar yawned and quickly fell into a deep sleep.

I walked back to my previous spot next to Milo and quickly fell asleep to the sound of Milo’s and eventually Kahlavar’s rhythmic snoring.

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Two weeks passed by and we were still wondering the forest going from town to town and city to city. We passed through exactly four towns and cities along the way: Tito, Mék, Kila and now Kàra. A large city much like Seattle that we could actually walk into and hide in the alley ways. For a girl who has lived most of her life in small towns I have to say that I do miss the sight of city lights and billboard’s and the sound of traffic. Although the traffic here didn’t involve cars, but people; flying people.

We got something to eat at a local restaurant. Kahlavar made sure to keep his face hidden and told us to not make eye-contact with anyone. We ate and soon retreated back to our dark alley way and curled up among the smelly garbage bins in our warm blankets and comfy backpacks.

Not much was said for a good hour or maybe even two. Milo continued to fill his cheeks with air and then slap the air out of them creating an irate popping sound. I tried getting him to stop, but as soon I said anything he came back with a sassy come back, *oh, I’m sorry am I aggravating you, your majesty? I’ll stop as soon as life stops buffering.* Someday I’m going to straggle that boy and make him feel sorry for every sarcastic, rude and stupid comment he ever said to me.

Kahlavar on the other hand sat at the base of the garbage bin out our line of sight. I crawled towards him, and watched as a shadow of a girl and boy appeared on the brick wall. They were dancing, and laughing and then the boy spun her around drooped her down, giving her a kiss on the lips. I came around the corner and sat next to Kahlavar. He didn’t seem to notice, so I just remained silent and waited till he did.

“Zula,” Kahlavar sighed as he fiddled with his fingers and admired the shadows of the two couple as they returned back to their elegant dance from earlier. I quickly glanced behind him to see where the couple could be since there shadows were still seen on the brick wall, but no one was there.

“Well that’s weird,” I said. Kahlavar’s tail and hair stood on end as he jumped smacking his head against the piece of metal sticking out of the bin. The shadows on the wall melted away.

“IKA!” he roared as he curled up into a ball with his hands covering his injurned head. I should have been more concerned since he just hit his head against a piece of metal, but I really wasn’t. The guy had lived in that jungle for seven years. I’m pretty sure that he could handle a little pain to his head.

“Who’s Zula?” I asked. Kahlavar looked over at me out of the corner of his eyes. His eyes were filled with a flaming fire. I had obviously asked the wrong question, but why did it matter. I was going to get my answer. I always get what I want, except for when it comes to Milo or Cindy, but let’s just forget about those two. Kahlavar slowly dropped his hands down to his hands. A firm scowl rested on his face.

“Nothing, now go away.” He hissed. “Go and sleep with your boyfriend. My love life does not concern you, human.” I narrowed my eyes and punched him in the arm. Kahlavar’s widened in disbelief. “What is this, beat up Kahlavar day?”

“He’s not my boyfriend!” I snapped, “and I’m sorry I asked.” Kahlavar and I both rolled our eyes and turned our backs to each other. Kahlavar once again returned to fiddling with his fingers, and just as before the shadows returned only this time it was of a little girl and a tall slender kahaizan. The boy’s shadow towered over the girl’s and I watched in disbelief as the man raised his hand and a dark presence picked up the little girl and entangled her inside it’s dark coils. Within seconds the girl was gone. The man laughed, all sound effects made by Kahlavar, and something exploded in the background. For being in his twenties, Kahlavar was more a child than I was, and that was saying something.

Kahlavar turned his attention back to me with a grin, and that’s when I realized who the girl was. It was me and the kahaizan was Kahlavar.

“How dare you…wait, how did you do that?” I asked. “You…you moved those shadows with…with your hands…but how…what?” I stammered. Kahlavar turned towards me and raised his hands, and a sailboat appeared in the brick wall.

“I can control the shadows, morph into one at will, and disintegrate things, but don’t worry I only do that to people who really piss me off, so don’t test me, human.” Kahlavar snickered

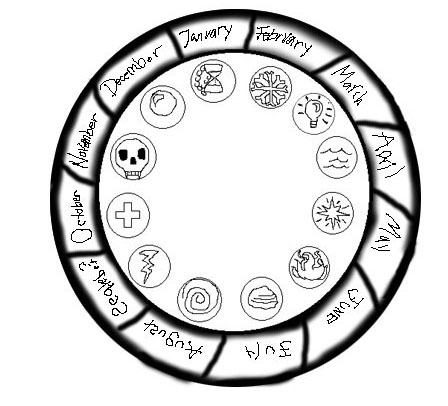
“Do all kahaizans have powers to control the shadows, and disintegrate things or are you just the freak with the demonic powers?” I asked as I shifted a few inches away from where Kahlavar sat.

“Only some have powers like me. There are twelve different powers that a person can be born with; fire, earth, water, air, lightning, intelligence, healing, snow and ice, time, space, light, and darkness.” He replied. “Why do you care anyway?” he asked.

“I’m just curious,” I stated. Kahlavar sighed shaking his head and continued playing with his shadow puppets. “Kahlavar, how do you know what power you’re born with? There has to be some kind of system to it, right?” I asked

“You would be right on that, human. There is a pattern to it. It all depends on the month that you are born into you. Much like your western human system of months and years, we too have a system, but unlike yours, our names are literally the power that we are gifted with at birth. If you are born in the month of Fire, then you can control fire. If you’re born in the month of water, then you control water, and if you’re born into the month of darkness, like me, then you can control the shadows. Do you understand?” he asked.

I wanted to say yes, so we could forget about the whole conversation and get some sleep, but my curiosity took over me. I was completely and utterly confused. The idea of kahaizans and this whole world was already very radical as it is, but now they have powers. This guy is just full of surprises isn’t he?

“No,” I said slowly as I shook my head in confusion. Kahlavar dropped his hands and the sailboat vanished. He let out an aggravating sigh and snorted. He raised a finger motioning for me to stay put and searched the ground for something. He grabbed a piece of burnt wood a few feet away and turned towards the garbage bin and sketched a picture into it. I watched intently until he finished.

“Our months coincide with your Earthly months, January, March, and so on. Each month’s name is its power. The first month is time, then ice, then intelligence, water, light and life, fire, earth, air, lightning, healing and plants, darkness, and finally space.

“Kahlavar, you said there were twelve powers, but I counted fourteen when you were talking, but there’s twelve up there. I’m kind of confused.” I asked. Kahlavar pondered the question for a minute, then replied to my question.

“You think that light and life and healing and plants are different powers. The truth is, light and life are one power, and the ability to heal and control plants is another. Do you understand, know?” Kahlavar paused, his facing turning bright red. “Sorry, that probably made no sense at all in any shape or form” he said as he smudged out the picture he had drawn. “I’ve never had to explain this to anyone before, so I’ve never really given any thought to it. It’s not every day that two humans come waltzing through Kátzu.”

“No it made sense. You were born in the month of November, or Darkness as you call it, so you have the powers to control the shadows. If I were a kahaizan I would be able to control fire, since I was born in the month of June, well at least that’s what Cindy told me. Then that would mean Milo would be able to control plants and have the ability to heal others, since he was born in March.” I chuckled at the very thought of Milo summoning a bunch of lilies and daffodillies’ from the ground. “Did you hear that Miles? You’re a flower bender.” Kahlavar and I chuckled and laughed at the very thought of it.

“Why is every time you call my name I always hear you two chuckling in the distance, and what are you even talking about? A flower bender? Even if I was a flower bender I would still kick your butt, so if this just another one of you, *I’m better than you Milo,* jokes then just drop it because we all know who wins.” Milo said from the other said of the garbage bin. Kahlavar glanced at each other and burst into laughter. “You know what, that’s it! I’m going to bed. Have fun laughing your heads because I can sure account to it that it’s not funny.” Milo explained. A few moments later Milo fell silent after mumbling to himself under his breath.

“So you were really born in the month of Fire. Well that explains why you’re always so hot heated.” Kahlavar nudged me in the shoulder and chuckled.

“Well that’s what my mother told me. You see she’s my adopted mother, and there were no records of me, so she just gave me that birthday. I could have been born in the flowers too, and kicked Milo’s butt silly.” I said. Kahlavar looked down at me with a gentle smile. “What? Do I have something on my face?” I asked wimping my mouth.

“It’s nothing, you’re fine, it’s just you remind me a lot of my sister. Not your stubbornness or your naïve human nature, but we often shared moments like this. Most of them, though, were mocking our father. You don’t ever want to meet him, trust me.” He said.

“You told me about her back in the *Telatubby* place,” I said. Kahlavar burst into laughter and corrected me.

“It’s Telatakanai,” he giggled. “Where did you even…where did you,” Kahlavar couldn’t even finish his sentence without busting out laughing. I shoved him away and walked back to Milo and curled up in my blanket and rested my head against my pillow.

“Goodnight, Kahlavar, goodnight Milo,” I elbowed Milo in the side and closed my eyes. He snorted and grumbled something under his breath.

“Da kó hesh tàk, Fooshka? Màs kal et, Telatubby,” Kahlavar continued to laugh, but this time, although he was speaking in his native tongue, I could have sworn he was talking to someone. Over the past two weeks I learned to recognize Kalvetna names from their language. I had no idea what they were saying, but I did know that, Fooshka, was a name. Who the heck was Fooshka? Maybe Kahlavar really is insane and we’ve been following a mad man this whole time. Wouldn’t that just be splendid?

“Of course,” I lied. That made just as much sense as reading people’s claims on how America didn’t actual land on the moon. I didn’t want to make him feel bad though so I smiled and headed to bed.

“Goodnight, Katlyn, and Milo, dream of kaka birds…tonight,” Kahlavar mumbled under his breath. I waited a few seconds before both him and Milo fell into perfect sync with each other.

I did miss my home, my family and Cindy, but for what it’s worth this has been one great ride. I don’t want it to ever end.

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Our last stop was a small city just outside of the country’s capital. Kahlavar called it Maska.

Kahlavar stopped and sat down in the brittle, hot sand. We had been wondering the desert for the past two days. My pale skin was burning and peeling off. Small boils had formed on my cheeks and across my forehead. It could have been worse, luckily Kahlavar had lent me his scarf so I could wrap it around my face to protect me from their two sun’s harmful rays. Why did their planet have to have two suns? One’s enough, right?

“You should drink some more water. The deserts of Maska are very harsh in the day and extremely cold at night. Luckily Maska is only ten minutes away.” Kahlavar pointed to a spot just ahead. A small city glistened in the light. I smiled. My lips were extremely chapped so I couldn’t smile for long, but I was so happy to finally see civilization again, and for once not have to leave it the next day.

I grabbed our jug of water and guzzled it down. We were running out, but I could refill once we reached the city. Milo gasped and clamped his hand on my shoulder. Milo had pulled off his short and tied it around his head to cool himself down. His whole body was drenched in sweat.

“How…much …farther,” Milo gasped between breaths.

“Ten minute hike, I promise.” Kahlavar reassured him.

“Thank Goodness, I was about lie down and die for a second back there.” Milo said. I handed Milo the jug of water. He snatched it up and slurped it down till the last drop. “Thank you.” Milo gasped.

“Don’t get too comfortable.” Kahlavar said. “We’re leaving in a few minutes.”

Two minutes later we packed up our things and headed to the city of Maska. A giant wall made of mud, granite and iron wrapped around the vast city. The wall stretched on for miles. The city must have been twice the size of New York City at best. I stopped and backed away from the cities wall.

“You haven’t let us enter any of the other cities, except Kíla, because you said that the people don’t like you.” She stated. “What makes this place so different?” I asked.

“For one,” he began. “The people of Maska don’t exactly follow all the laws given by the king. Secondly, today is the day of the eclipse where our two suns overlap each other.” Kahlavar pointed up into the sky and sure enough their two suns were crossing paths with each other forming an eclipse. “It only happens once every year. It’s the sign that a new year is coming and for the past seven years of my life that has been a sign indicating the day I get to come home and live a normal life, well as normal as someone like me gets anyways.”

“Do you just stay for the day?” I asked.

“I get exactly one week. No more and no less. I have to be guarded at all costs and I have to sleep in the dungeons with the other criminals and prisoners of war.” He said.

“I’m sorry that I asked.” I apologized. Kahlavar didn’t say anything back. He just smiled and kept walking.

Kahlavar stood in front of the great wall that wrapped around the vast city. Now that we were closer I could make out a large golden sign that hung above the wall with strange characters unlike any that I’d ever seen on Earth.

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I had no idea what it said, but I assumed it was the name of the town in Kahlavar’s native language.

“What does that say?” I asked pointing to the sign.

“The first name is Anoka, the capitol of Ra’Koza and the second is its neighboring city Maska, which we are about to enter right now.” Kahlavar said.

“It’s beautiful,” I continued to look up at the rocky wall with a pleasing smile. Kahlavar snorted and walked towards the wall.

“Now stand back, things might get a little hectic here.” Kahlavar said.

“Kanto, apa ét gitskash!” Kahlavar yelled in his native tongue.

“Waä?” a whiny older man from above replied back.

“Apa ét gitskash, Kanto!” Kahlavar screamed. Kahlavar rolled his eyes and sighed and looked back at Milo and I. “He is so old.”

I laughed. Milo tried to let out a little laugh, but it sounded more like a dying donkey. Milo sighed and rested his head on my shoulder.

I looked up at the top of the wall where a small figure, proud and strong, stood on. They paced back and forth impatiently and appeared to be talking aloud to no one in particular.

“Kanto, open the gates!” Kahlavar screamed. The man at top, who I know to be Kanto, paused mid-sentence and peered down at us in disbelief as if we had done the unspeakable. Although I don’t know exactly what we could have done wrong. I just wanted to get inside the city and get something to eat. I’m starving.

Kanto’s tail flickered back and forth annoyance. He crouched down like a cat getting ready to pounce just as two huge wings unfolded behind his back, just as Kahlavar’s had done yesterday. It still amazed me that they could hide such monstrous things from plain sight.

Kanto hit the ground with a loud bang sending a few giant boulders in both directions.

“Kó nar noa drastanya hà.” Kanto snarled. Kanto was about seven inches shorter than Kahlavar. He had dark skin, brown hair, that was rather thin and greying, and dull green eyes that had worn down over the years. Defined creases rested on his forehead and just below his eyes making him look either really agitated or just really tired and agitated.

He wore a simple dark green kimono with a thick black belt and puffy black trousers pants, similar to the ones Kahlavar was wearing and a pair of leaf bracelets around his ankles.

“What did he say?” I whispered to Kahlavar. Kahlavar leaned back as Kanto paced back and forth in annoyance.

“He said I wasn’t welcome here, but don’t worry he’ll let us in. Today’s the day of the eclipse, and by law I’m allowed to enter. He can’t deny orders given by the king.” He said.

“Kama, Kanto, a’ha nar kó tùvra?” Kahlavar asked. I had no idea what they were saying, but I loved hearing the language. It was quite fascinating. “Tùvra es ét dàl of ét maiala.” Kahlavar said. Kanto looked up into the sky at the eclipse. He snorted and folded his arms nodding his head for Kahlavar to continue.

“Wó nar ét manàsh?” Kanto hissed pointing a dirty finger in me and Milo’s direction.

“Watch where you’re pointing that thing, ugly,” I exclaimed.

Kanto gasped and looked down at me with disgust. I poked Kahlavar in the side and whispered quiet enough so Kanto wouldn’t over hear our conversation.

“I thought all of you could speak English,” I said, “but he looked utterly confused when I was talking to him.”

“Only the kahaizans my father’s age and younger can speak English. Kanto over here is older than a bag dirt.” Kahlavar chuckled. Kanto narrowed his eyes and snorted.

“Ka saäd, wó nar ét manàsh!” Kanto growled. We were obviously pushing this guys patience and from what I’ve already seen I did not want to get on this guys bad side.

“Kanto, tàr nar con mi.” Kahlavar said. Kanto growled and quickly turned his attention to the wall. Kanto clenched his hands into fists. He spread his legs apart and angled himself in a somewhat squat like position. He lifted his fists high into the air. I gasped as the ground beneath began to quake. I thought the whole thing was the powers was just a stupid saying that Kahlavar told everyone when asked about his freak show powers. I didn’t think that it was actually real.

I watched in amazement as a section of the wall slide into the ground. Kanto gently moved his hands toward his sides and let out a quick breath. He his legs and folded his arms and gestured for us to go inside.

Kahlavar bowed his head with respect and walked into the city. I grabbed Milo’s hand and attempted to give Kanto a reassuring smile.

“Sorry for calling you ugly.” I laughed nervously, but by the look in Kanto’s eyes he didn’t think it was funny. “Well that went well.”

“Hurry up, humans. Kanto can only hold the wall for so long. He is old you know.” Kahlavar smiled and looked back Kanto. I grabbed Milo’s hand and we ran to catch up with Kahlavar as we entered into the city of Anoka.

7

Katlyn

Anoka reminded me an ancient Roman city, but more modern and equipped with modern technological advances with a Middle Eastern twist. It was twice times the size of Seattle at least and about the size of New York City if New York City was hundreds of miles long and existed in a large oasis in the middle of a desert. Tall skyscrapers and classic ancient roman homes made of mud and stone covered the hills and trees. People like Kahlavar swarmed the city streets more than any other town Kahlavar had taken us. At the center a large palace with colored domes and stained glass windows glistened at the center of the grand city. That must be where the Royal family lives. I’d never met anyone of any royal blood before.

I looked around the borders of the city and awed in amazement. It was beautiful. It was a strange beauty, but I loved it. I felt connected to it somehow. The two suns beat warmly down on my skin and the air was fresh and full of life. I’d never felt so alive before.

Kahlavar bumped me on the shoulder and I snapped back into reality with Milo’s hand grasping tightly on my shoulder. I smiled at everyone and waved like I was a princess. Some of the kahaizan children waved back. One even came up to me. She must have been at least three years old. I smiled as she reached out her hand towards me, but her mother snatched her up with her tail before I had a chance to say hello. The other children were gone as well. They are probably afraid of humans after the way last humans that they had encountered these people had treated them. I didn’t blame them, but I hated the feeling of rejection no matter what form it took.

As we walked the buildings became smaller and smaller. The people started vanishing until there were only a few left outside. The fancy stone roads turned to dirt and the air become smoggy and the lush green mountains turned back into the familiar desert hills.

“Welcome to Maska.” Kahlavar said. I looked around the tiny town in disgust. Telatakani was better than this old dump. If I hadn’t seen those kids and two adults outside I would have assumed that Kahlavar had led us to an abandoned village.

“What a lovely place,” I coughed breathing in a mouthful of dirt.

“It smells like a dump,” Milo coughed waving his hand in front of his face trying to get rid of all the dirt that was flying around us.

“So, where are we staying?” I asked trying to sound optimistic about the situation even though I hated every second we were in this deserted town.

“Right there,” Kahlavar pointed to the only nice building here. The building was a turquoise Chinese styled building with golden trim.

“Come on let’s go” he said walking toward the Chinese styled building with Milo and I close behind. He knocked on the door and beautiful woman answered. She had greenish-blue hair, yellow cat-like eyes and pale skin. She wore a simple pink dress covering her shoulders with a light pink band around her tiny waist. The woman gasped and embraced Kahlavar.

“Ka aim asha zuma kó’nar safrà.” The woman smiled as the look of relief spread across her beautiful face.

“Ka hatka kó tó.” Kahlavar said gently pushing her away.

“Katlyn, Milo, this is Saskaiya, the royal family physician as well as the local healer.” Kahlavar gestured to Saskaiya. Saskaiya smiled and gestured for us to come inside.

“You can call me Katlyn, ma’am,” I said. Saskaiya smiled nodded her head.

“Where are you two humans from?” Saskaiya asked. Her accent was thicker than Kahlavar’s, but she was still understandable.

“We’re from Sequim, Washington, ma’am,” Milo said.

“Is that on Earth?” she asked pouring some kind of hot drink into four cups.

“Yes,” Milo replied.

“You two can take off your turbans.” She said setting down a small tray of drinks and bread. “Please, sit down.” She offered gesturing to the black leather couches behind a flat screen T.V. A young man rested on one of the couches watching a kahaizan version of what appeared to be reality show. I had no idea what was going on, but it was interesting to watch, none the less.

“Thank you.” I said. Milo and I sat down on Saskaiya’s couch and I looked around the room as I slowly unfolded the turban that held my hair and shielded my eyes from the sun. I looked over at the man on the other couch. He had lightly tanned skin and short choppy brown hair with a green band around his forehead. He looked to be around my age, fifteen or sixteen. He wore a simple green kimono like top with a black belt and black puffy trousers that flowed down to his knees. A thick scar ran across his forehead with a few stiches. He didn’t seem to notice that anyone had walked in.

Kahlavar crawled on all fours and crept behind the black leather couch where the other kahaizan sat. Kahlavar stood up and latched his hand on the other kahaizans shoulder. The other kahaizans boy let out a high pitch scream and flung the remote half way across the room.

“Kama, Tavask,” Kahlavar snickered.

“Kahlavar,” his friend grabbed a long white pillow and beat him over with it. His friend snickered at Kahlavar’s pain. “Katyln, Milo,” Kahlavar gestured to his friend who he had straggled in his arms.

“Ika, waä esa taha faä?” Kahlavar pushed his friend over and laughed.

“Maho’s, hana,” Saskaiya shook her head and giggled. “Do not mind them. They are just messing around as long as they don’t break anything.”

“Savalsh, Saskaiya,” Kahlavar appeared to be apologizing for his mistake, but him and his friend still continued to laugh and carry on as usual.

“Humans,” Kahlavar said. “I forgot to introduce this little twerp.” Kahlavar ruffled his fingers through his friend’s hair. “This is my friend, Tavask. He’s a child of intelligence.” I smiled and waved hello. Tavask gasped in surprise and crawled on all fours towards Milo and I. I leaned back into Milo as he crawled over the couch and grasped stands of my hair, examining it as if we were some kind of scientific experiment.

“Inataka,” Tavask eyed us in amazement.

“That one right there, with the blonde hair is talkative one,” Kahlavar gestured a hand towards me. “Màsh es a vana kalus, manà.” I narrowed my eyes at Kahlavar as Tavask moved over to Milo. He must be calling me names, in his native tongue, or telling his friends some embarrassing thing I did while on our journey to Maska. I’ll find out what he said, one way or another.

Kahlavar gasped as Tavask poked through Milo’s curly black hair.

“Tavask, I wouldn’t pester that human, if I were you. He doesn’t like people…getting in his face…oh my…” Kahlavar’s voice trailed off as Tavask poked Milo in the face.

“Interesting. I’ve never seen a human with such dark skin before, and look at its eyes. Amazing.” Tavask awed in amazement.

“Poke me one more time in the face, and I’ll make you regret the day you were born.” Milo grumbled as he narrowed his eyes. Tavask gasped and pulled his finger back. “You know just do it. I dare you.” Tavask shrugged his shoulders and poked Milo in the face again. Milo growled and whopped Tavask across the side of his head. Tavask shrieked and ran into Kahlavar’s arms.

“Ét manà hika mi.” Tavask said. Kahlavar rolled his eyes and pushed Tavask over the side of the couch.

“What did you expect,” Kahlavar snickered. “I told you not to mess him.”

“That’s right,” Milo said.

“Kahlavar, valsh mi kahai-na.,” Saskaiya opened her arms wide for Kahlavar to come over.

Kahlavar and Saskaiya talked with each other and laughed as Saskaiya made small mini sandwiches on a tray. I looked around Saskaiya’s house. I’d never had anything this fancy back at home.

The inside was about as beautiful as the outside. The walls were a light jade color with beautiful pictures. In the left corner was a very modern kitchen with open windows that allowed cool air evenly throughout the house. There was a table just outside the kitchen with a fancy glass ceiling ornament above it. A hand made reddish golden rug sat under the brown table just in front of the chocolate brown couches that they were sitting on. A large door stood between her home and what I suspected to be her doctor’s office with all of her medical equipment.

“Your house is beautiful” I said. Saskaiya looked at me surprised that I said a word and smiled.

“Thank you” she said “Your name is Katlyn, am I correct.” she asked.

I unfolded the last piece of Kahlavar’s scarf and pulled it off as Saskaiya slowly walked over to the leather where we sat. My long wavy white blonde hair cascaded down my shoulders. I sighed with relief. The conditioned air felt so good against my head. Finally my hair can breathe. I turned to Saskaiya and smiled. Saskaiya screamed and dropped the silver tray she was holding. Tavask jumped and looked to see what all the commotion was. He appeared to be confused as his eyes went from Saskaiya and Kahlavar to the other leather couch where Milo and I sat. I looked over at him and shrugged my shoulders, but he appeared just as terrified as the others as he sunk back down on the couch keeping his eyes on the rest of us.

“Saskiaya it is not her. I swear.” Kahlavar reassured her grabbing hold of her shoulder to keep her steady.

“I’m not who?” I demanded. Saskaiya looked down at me. Terror struck in her yellow eyes.

“What have you done?” Saskiaya grabbed a rag and whipped Kahlavar on the hand. Kahlavar flinched and backed away. “If it is not her, then what is it?” she demanded. Kahlavar’s friend on the turned his attention towards me. He appeared to be the only kahaizan not traumatized by me letting my hair down. He looked quite fascinated actually.

“I’m right here, you know.” I jumped from my seat, but Milo grabbed me by the arm and pulled me back down. By the look on his face I instantly knew that was not the time to be speak up. In fact Milo looked angry, more than angry in fact, as if he was going to jump from the couch and straggle Kahlavar and Saskaiya. Fire appeared to burn in his pale green eyes.

“Keep them here. I don’t want anyone to see them especially you know who.” Kahlavar walked over to the door and opened it as Saskaiya screamed.

“You get back here right now!” Saskaiya screamed. “Ka aim kó’ra gash-aganamother! Kahlavar Ra Natashka! Valsh bakash akish daraka naä!” Kahlavar slammed the door behind him. Saskaiya threw her towel on the ground in rage and turned her attention back to us and pointed a figure at the boy on the couch. “Ka dó’noa waä kó dó wé tàn. Ka ja wastaka tàn ut of mi malwa!” Saskaiya ordered as she slammed the door behind her racing after Kahlavar.

Tavask slowly arose from his comfortable seat next to me. He green cat like eyes scanned the room as if he was anticipating for Saskaiya and Kahlavar to march back into the house screaming and yelling at one another, but nothing happened. The boy sighed and his green eyes softened and his long brown tail bounced up like a playful cat as he turned his attention to Milo and I.

“Please do forgive my friend and his family,” he began. “They’ve always been ones to be loud and open to anger, but they are very kind and generous people, I can assure you.” He smiled.

I smiled back and jumped up from the couch and reached out my small pale hand for him to shake. He looked at me with a strange look in his eyes as if he didn’t know how to react to me thrusting my hand in front of his alien face.

“My name’s Katlyn, and the hand, you shake it.” I reassured him. Tavask smiled and slowly reached out his hand to shake mine.

“Tavask Kadonai, well you already knew that. I’m sorry I acted so childish back there, it’s just I have never met a human in person before let alone two.” He said with fascination in his green eyes. “What is Earth like? Is it cold or hot or in between? What’s food like there? Yes, definitely answer that one.” Tavask asked with wide eyes as he awaited my reply.

“It’s good, I guess,” Feeling a bit uneasy of him being literally two inches away from my face.

“I’m sorry; I’m bothering you aren’t I? I always bother people. I can’t help that I’m curious. ” Tavask sulked back in his seat.

“No, not all,” I lied. I really did mind and yes he was kind of bothering me, but his awkward quirky attitude was kind of cute and not only that he was quite handsome for a kahaizan such as himself. He reminded me of a friend I had. I can’t recall which friend and where we met, but I remember having a friend like him.

“Well that’s good,” he said. “I’m not very good around people. They say I talk too much, and that I ask too many questions.”

“Really, don’t worry about it. I do too. ” I reassured him. The muffled ring of a cell phone echoed through the room. Tavask looked around and pulled out a thin touchscreen phone from his back pocket. He rolled his eyes and groaned.

“It’s my brother,” he sighed. “He’s called me like ten times in the last twenty minutes just to check and see how I’m doing. He’s so annoying.” Tavask touched his phone and pressed it against his ear. “Ka aim fà, Havask.” Tavask rolled his eyes and looked over at me as if to say, *he’s such an idiot,* as a voice from the other line continued to ramble on in their native language. “Koda, Havask.” Tavask hung up the phone as he rolled his green eyes. “My brother is what you would call overly protective, but that’s alright. He may be annoying, but I couldn’t live without him. Havask has always been there for me. Tavask smiled, but I could see the pain in his green eyes.

“Hey, Tavask, can I ask you a question?” I asked. Milo groaned and mumbled something under his breath, but I tried my best to ignore it.

“Of course,” he said. “I love questions.”

“Why did Saskaiya get so mad when I undid my hair? Who did they think I was?” I asked.

“Her name was Katya,” Tavask began. “She was the only daughter of King Suko and Queen Laveria. She was...” Tavask paused and a quirky smile spread across his face. Tavask continued, “She was beautiful with her snow white locks of hair and eyes as bright as the blue sky. She had to have been a gift from Malan to the royal family.”

“It sounds like you were fond of her, am I right,” I smiled. Tavask’s face turned red as a smile spread across his gentle face.

“I guess you could say that. She was a really good friend of mine. We were just kids when she vanished. I miss her a lot.” He said. His green eyes filled with sadness and tears formed at the corner of his eyes as if the very thought of her brought him to tears. “Saskaeiya was just upset because you looked just like her, but you’re a human, and kahaizans are not very fond of humans, except for a few like me and my brother’s friend, Zula Mionet.”

“What happened to her?” I asked.

“She disappeared during a war seven years ago. I suppose Kahlavar already told you the whole story. I don’t know the whole story, but I know that she was taken captive by the human wizard’s and\_\_”

“Wizards, but wizards can’t be real. There is no such thing as magic” I snickered. Tavask gave me a strange look and the room fell silent.

“Katlyn,” Milo said. “After all we’ve been through are you really going to think that magic is a thing of fantasy?”

“Well, no, but...”

“Magic is real,” Tavask interupted. “I saw it with my own eyes. I watched my own people die at the hands of it.”

“I’m so sorry,” I said. “I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“It’s alright, you’re just a human.” He began. “You appear as if you know everything with your advanced technology and civilizations, but in reality you know nothing. That’s what my brother used to tell me.”

I sighed and tried to shake away his rude comment and gestured for him to continue with a fake smile spread across my pale face.

“Anyway, some say that she fell into their hands and others believe that her brother, the prince, who had been seen as a disappointment in the eyes of the king, had sold her to them in exchange that they would spare his life.” He said.

“The prince is her brother. He wouldn’t so something like that, right? He loved her, didn’t he?” I said my voice getting quieter as I went on.

“Yes, he did love her. I don’t believe the prince is a bad person. He’s just misunderstood and rejected.” I could hear the pain in Tavask’s voice as if he knew the prince on a personally.

“What was the prince’s name?” I asked now curious about this whole topic.

“I can’t tell you that. He would kill me.” Tavask’s eyes widened at the very thought of the prince’s name.

“Please, he’ll never now.” I said.

“Oh yes he will. He’s called the prince of darkness for a reason, and plus his father, the king, is my boss, so it’s going to get to him somehow.” Tavask laughed nervously. I bit my lip and pondered what to say next. I could tell that this was a touchy subject, so I wanted to change, but I didn’t know what to say to help lighten the mood.

“What do you do for the king?” I asked. Tavask’s eyes lit up. I’d obviously asked the right question.

“I’m the king’s head engineer. I create new ideas for building projects. I’m also work as a leading scientist for SANA. We deal with chemicals, build rockets and work and perform many experiments under the order of the king. I love it.” He said.

I laughed along with him. I sighed and leaned into Milo who willing wrapped his arm around me.

“What about you? Tell me about you.” Tavask asked. I chuckled and shook me head.

“If you expecting an exciting adventure involving lots of humans and Earth, you’re not going to get it. You see, I’m an orphan. I lived in foster care for many years. I have no memory of my life before I was seven. All of the families I went to, didn’t want me, so eventually the caretaker, Cindy, adopted me as her daughter, a couple years back. I’ve been living with her and this kid ever since.” I said.

“What about him?” Tavask asked.

“Milo, doesn’t like to talk about his past, so I’d rather not bring it up. Even I don’t know much about his past, but that’s okay. He’s here with me know and that’s all that matters.” I said.

“Are you two lovers?” Tavask asked. Milo and I gasped as we pulled away from each other and sat up straight in our spots on the couch.

“No…No, we’re just friends. We were the only ones left on board when the plane crashed here. It’s a long story, but yes, we’re just friends.” I said. I could feel my cheeks burning as my heart pounded in my chest. I don’t know why I felt this way. Milo was just my friend and that’s he’s ever been to me. What happened between now and then to change all of that? I don’t know. I’m just insane. I pushed the thoughts of Milo aside and focused back on Tavask.

A chime sounded in the distance and Tavask looked up at the clock that rested against the wall.

“I have to go. I have a party to get too.” Tavask with wide eyes looked towards the door, but something stopped him. Tavask jumped up from his seat with a grin spread from ear to ear across his face.

“I just had the best idea ever! Why don’t you guys come with me to the Prince’s returning home party? I can get you guys some disguises and take you into the city. It will be great!” Tavask jumped up and down with excitement with his tail held high in the air like a squirrel. “I’d love to see how you humans would react out in our culture. This is going to be amazing!”

“Really?” I squealed jumping out of my seat, jumping up and down in place with a huge smile spread across my face. I’d never felt so excited about something in my life. The more I learned about this world the more I seemed to remember my past, and that was all I’d ever wanted. Milo grabbed me from behind and pulled me back in my seat and all the joy and happiness I’d just felt vanished.

Milo had a scowl on his face and I could feel his eyes on me even though it was obvious that he wasn’t turned towards me.

“Saskaiya told us to stay put and I’d prefer that we listen to her. Katlyn, you have no idea what could be out there. These creatures are dangerous, violent and cruel. They can’t be trusted.” Milo whispered in my ear.

“You trusted Kahlavar, and plus Tavask wouldn’t hurt a fly.” I replied. A vase crashed to the ground and Milo snarled. Tavask tucked his tail between his legs and grinned nervously.

“The tail’s got a mind of its own, you know.” He laughed apprehensively. “Saskaiya’s going to kill me,” Tavask mumbled to himself as he knelt down to pick up the broken pieces of the vase shattered on the wood floor.

“Sweet as a caterpillar,” I smiled.

“We’re all going to die,” Milo rose up from his seat and reached out his hand to pull me up.

“So we can go?” I asked.

“You weren’t going to let it go till I said yes, so why not just get it over with,” Milo sighed. I cheered and gave him a quick hug and ran to the door. Tavask smiled and quickly opened the door and lead us outside.

Tavask led us to a large house mansion with a marble fountain, pool and lavish garden set out in front. Fine marble steps lead to a white French door and crisp arched windows. We’d only been in Maska for a little while, but it’s wasn’t hard to tell that there was a fine line between the rich and wealthy and the poor and hungry.

“Whose house is this?” I asked.

“My house, but don’t worry the house is empty. My mother is working and my father is on a business trip, and my brother is hanging out with his friends or I should say ‘girls’.” Tavask said as he unlocked the large French doors and gestured for us to come inside.

We walked inside into the large modern kitchen with a large island, granite countertops and round lights on the ceilings illuminating the house. A large modernized table was set in front of the window not far from the kitchen. A large living area equipped with a T.V, every game like council that I had ever dreamed of and the finest leather couches that I had ever seen rested to the east of the kitchen across the wide wooden floors and spiral staircase.

“I’m guessing you come from a rich family?” I said as I continued to look around his beautiful mansion.

“Yeah, my family descends from a long line of nobles and on top of that my parents both work for the world council, which is a big deal, but like I really care. It’s not like my parents are here anyway. They’re always so busy with work that they never have any time for us.” Tavask sat down in a high chair by the island and gestured for Milo and I too come over and take a seat. I felt bad for him. I knew what it felt like to be rejected in a way and left alone, but it was still sad to think that their parents chose work over their own children.

“The party doesn’t start for another hour and a half, and my brother is on duty, so we have some to relax if you want.” Tavask jumped down from his seat and opened the large stainless steel fridge. “Are you guy’s hungry? I can make some pretty awesome sandwiches, just asks my brother.” Tavask asked.

“Yes and thank you,” I said elbowing Milo in the side. “Say thank you, Milo.”

“Thanks…I guess,” Milo sighed and rested his head against the cold granite countertops. Tavask pulled out some bread, meat and cheese with a jar of blue paste. I looked at the paste in disgust.

“Don’t worry, the paste is just mayo. My brother thought it would be funny to drop blue colored dye in it and he wouldn’t let me throw it away, so I kept it. My brother’s kind of an idiot sometimes, but I love him. He was the one who kind of raised me and helped take care of me. My brother has always been there. I don’t really know what I’d do without him even if he is dumber than a sack of potatoes.” Tavask said.

I giggled and looked around the room. Modern paintings, family photos and a doctrines degree in nuclear chemistry hung the wall with Tavask’s name written all over it and a picture of him at a college graduation holding his degree.

“You have a doctrines degree, but you don’t look old enough for that.” I said.

“Oh yeah,” Tavask grinned as he spread the blue mayo across the last two pieces of bread. “I got it this year. I’m pretty proud of it. I’m considered the youngest kahaizan in Ra’Koza to get there doctrine.”

“That’s impressive,” I said. “I wish I was that smart. I can barely do math let alone nuclear engineering. I wish I was a child of intelligence. Then maybe math might come a bit easier to me, you know.” Tavask smiled and opened his mouth to say something when a voice from above echoed down the spiral staircase and into the kitchen.

“Tavask, is that you?” the voice was deep and soothing, but I could hear the cunning and mischievousness behind its charming character.

“Oh kaka feathers,” Tavask dropped his knife on the granite countertop gripping his hands onto his brown hair with wide eyes as he barred his vampire like fangs. “He told me he would be working before and during the party. He’s such a little liar,” Tavask slammed a fist on the granite countertop and snarled.

“Tavask, you there, buddy?” his brother asked.

“I’m fine, Havask, now go away. Just stay where you are,” Tavask exclaimed gesturing for Milo and I to hide behind the island. I grabbed hold of Milo’s hand as I slipped off my chair and pressed my back against the dark wood of the large island.

“Katlyn, what the\_” I pressed my hand over his mouth and elbowed him in the side. Milo groaned and shoved my hand away. He mumbled something under his breath as I peered around the corner of the island.

“I’m heading down,” Havask said as a dark figure crept down the spiral staircase.

“HAVASK,” Tavask bellowed as his brother walked into the kitchen.

My jaw dropped. There was no way this guy was Tavask’s brother. He was the kind of guy you would only see in the movies; tall, tan with large muscular arms, legs, a six pack, perfectly angled face, and an award winning smile. The two brothers couldn’t be more different.

He must have just taken a shower because his fiery red hair was wet and sleeked back behind his ears and he wore nothing more than a white towel tied around his waist. His red cat-like eyes were filled with mischievousness and pride as he scanned the room for his brother.

Tavask groaned at the sight of his brother and slammed his face onto the granite countertop.

“Good evening to you to,” Havask said with a sarcastic tone. He walked up to his brother and wrapped his beefy arm around his head lifting him off the ground as he kissed him on the forehead.

“Will you stop that,” Tavask grumbled trying to free himself from his brother’s robust grasp. Havask let him go and pushed him away.

“What’s the matter with you? I was just messing around. Come on, Tavask. You know I’d never hurt you.” Havask said as he ruffled his fingers through his brother’s hair. Tavask growled and walked over to the leather couch across the way. “I see what’s going on here.” Havask said. My heart raced. Kahlavar and the other kahaizans didn’t appear to be very fond of humans. They hissed and snarled at us like we were some kind of monsters. If Havask found out we were here I didn’t know what he’d do, and I wasn’t willing to find out.

“You do,” Tavask gasped with wide eyes as his tail curved between his legs. He clasped his hands together and wiggled his fingers around, most likely a nervous habit.

“You’ve been cramped up in Saskaiya’s house all week. You’re probably just tired and a little irritable. It’s okay I get it, but you know what will help,” Havask walked over to his brother and opened his arms wide as his tail flickered behind him. Havask wiggled his eyebrows and grinned. “A hug from your big brother Havask,” Havask wrapped his beefy arms around his brother and picked him cradling him close to his chest as he let out a pleasing sigh. Havask quickly put his brother down and kissed him on the top of his head.

“Havask, I love you to, man, but why can’t you just understand that sometimes I just like to be alone,” Tavask exclaimed as Havask walked over to the kitchen and opened the fridge.

“Calm down, man.” Havask said. “I’m just worried about you. First I get a call that you nearly died in a training accident and you have to be rushed to Saskaiya’s for immediate care due to a head injury, and now you’re acting like a spoiled brat. This just isn’t like you.” Tavask gestured for us to come out as his brother continued to talk with the fridge door open. I grabbed Milo’s hand and sprinted up the stairs with Tavask following close behind.

We reached the top of the stairs and Tavask led us into a massive master bedroom, most likely their parent’s room, and opened the grand walk in closet.

Tavask grabbed a simple blue dress and a white turban for me and a pair of black trousers and a simple green kimono top for Milo and a two pairs of sunglasses for each of us. We quickly got dressed and I swiftly stuffed my hair into the Turban and wrapped it around my small head. We scurried out of the room, but to our disbelief Tavask’s brother was standing at the top of the stairs with a strange look on his face.

“Tavask, what’s going here and who are they?” Havask had changed since we had last met. He wore black silk trousers, much like the ones Kahlavar wore, that wrapped around his ankles and a tan and maroon stripped skirt that flowed down to his knees, a large Egyptian styled gold necklace with blue and red streaks that ran across his neck and shoulders covering the top half of his barren skin.

“Havask, please, I can explain,” Tavask stated with his tail tucked between his legs like a scared kitten.

“I just asked who they were, that’s all.” His brother laughed and walked over to his brother and ruffled his fingers through his hair. Tavask shoved him away and tried to reposition his hair and green head band.

“They’re…friends of mine and I wanted to take them to the party.” I knew Tavask was lying through his teeth, but I didn’t want to see his brother’s bad side if he found out who Milo and I really were, so I kept my mouth shut and smiled and waved.

“How come I’ve never met these friends before?” Havask asked walking closer to Milo and I. He was much taller up close, not quite as tall as Kahlavar, but to a five foot human like me he was a giant.

“Maybe if you weren’t off with your girlfriends so much you would know.” Tavask snorted.

“Hey, that was uncalled for. I was just asking a question.” Havask rolled his eyes and pointed a finger at me. “What’s with the glasses? Do you have issues with the light?” Havask scoffed.

“Leave them alone!” Tavask pushed his brother away accidently bumping into me and knocking my sunglasses clear off my face. Tavask yelped and tried to put them back on before Havask could see anything, but it was too late.

“Tavask, get away from them!” Havask exclaimed grabbing his brother by the arm and pulling him away grasping him tightly in his arms. Havask examined us then looked back at his brother. He narrows his eyes and barred his fangs. “Tavask, I demand an explanation, now!”

“I…I just wanted to bring them to the parry, please, Havask, you can understand, right,” Tavask pleaded.

“I want them out of this house right now, do you hear me. Those things are dangerous Tavask. You have no idea what those humans are capable of. They could have hurt you. You have to get rid of them.” Havask ordered.

“Havask, please, it’s just for one night, please,” Tavask pleaded with his brother.

“Tavask, I get it,” Havask began. “You found these humans and you want to perform a social experiment on them, I get it, but humans are dangerous and not only that what do you think the prince is going to do when he finds out that we snuck two humans into his own party. Fancy pants would kill us, literally,” Havask exclaimed.

Tavask lip quivered and he burst into tears, which surprised me. For a kid who was smart enough to get his doctrine at fourteen he sure acted like a child, but I guess he was.

Havask sighed and knelt down by his side. Havask held onto Tavask’s tiny hands and looked up into Tavask’s green eyes as tears streamed down his face.

“Stop crying,” Havask whipped away his brothers tears. “You really want to do this, don’t you?” Havask asked. He looked over at Milo and I then back at his brother. “I can’t believe I’m doing this,” he mumbled. “Okay, fine, they can come with us.” Havask managed to say. Tavask’s eyes lit up and the tears stopped. He smiled and wrapped his arms around his brother.

“Thank you, Havask, thank you, thank you!” Tavask squealed.

“Yeah, yeah,” Havask pushed Tavask away and rose to his feet and looked over at Milo and I.

“You,” he pointed a beefy finger at me. “Put those glasses back on, and both of you keep your mouths shut. I’m not risking my family for you two humans to open your big mouths and ruin everything.” Havask narrowed his eyes and picked up my glasses and handed them back to me. He turned towards the staircase, grabbed his brother by the hand and dragged him down stairs.

“Katlyn, I told you that this was a bad idea.” Milo whispered in my ear as we followed Havask and Tavask down the stairs.

“Milo, it’s going to be fine, you’ll see.” I said.

Milo narrowed his eyes as we continued to follow Havask and Tavask outside and towards the grand party of the prince.

8

Katlyn

Havask and Tavask led Milo and I back into the city of Anoka. I could finally breath fresh air again. I felt so relieved to be out of that ghost town and back into the city. Even though Anoka wasn’t a country on Earth it still reminded me of home, oh how much I missed Boston, Cindy and the others.

“Welcome to the palace of the royal family of Ra’Koza.” Havask gestured to the tall and spacious marble encrusted castle with Greek like columns and massive arched stained glass windows, each telling its own unique story. The building was very impressive and beyond description, but I couldn’t help but be mesmerized by the stained glass windows. I felt as if I had seen them once before like in a dream or something of its likeness.

“What is the story printed on the glass?” I asked Tavask pointing to the palace above.

“It’s the story of the creation. In the beginning Kàtzu was nothing more than a world of fire and destruction a world without life,” Tavask gestured to the window with the large volcano and smoke on the farthest left, “Then Malan, the god of all creation came and divided the land demising the flames,” he gestured to the next picture of a kahaizan in fine white robes with a world rested in his large hands. “He created the waters and covered the land in grass and closed up the mountains. He created the animals and twelve kahaizan beings who with their powers gifted by Malan created the Tree’s, Seasons and elements as a tribute to Malan. Malan, pleased by his children, gave them the gift to multiple, so they did so and here we all are today.

I hadn’t realized I had zoned out till Tavask poked me in the shoulder. My mind had drawn into the story so much that I had forgotten who was telling it. I remembered the story and that name, Malan, but I didn’t know why. I hated not knowing why.

“It’s beautiful,” I said. Tavask smiled back as Havask stood behind Milo and I with his arms crossed and his eyes watching our every move. He was just as bad as Kahlavar, they must be friends.

Beautiful Hindu and Chinese like music began playing in the background with a little bit of a modern beat. People gathered around in a circle, boys on the outside and girls on the inside. Tavask reached out his hand and said with a charming smile; “May I have this dance, my fair lady…that’s how they say it on Earth, right.” I laughed and gently put my hand down on his.

“Yes, you may, good sir,” I spoke with a British accent. Tavask appeared to like as he dragged me to the dance floor. Milo and Havask both stood by the tables of food with scowls on their faces. Havask’s hair burst into flame as he narrowed his eyes at his little brother.

“Tavask, your brother’s hair just burst into flames,” I looked back at Havask with wide eyes as bright orange and yellow flames flickered across his red hair.

“Don’t worry about,” Tavask said. “He does that when he’s angry. He’s just jealous because I get to dance with a pretty human girl and he doesn’t,” Tavask s said. I blushed as Tavask let go of my hand and stood on the outer circle.

“Wait, what do I do?” I asked as the other girls raised one arm over their head and the other across their waist. I had no idea what I was doing, but I followed.

“Just do what the other girls do. It will be fun,” Tavask yelled over the blaring music.

“Behash!” someone screamed and the girls began dancing around their partners as they shook their hips and gracefully moved their arms up and down and spreading out their wings as they finished the circle. I followed no quite sure what to do, and it was obvious I wasn’t doing it right by the quirky smile spread across Tavask’s face. Once the girls had completed a circle around their partner they danced in and out of the circle gently grabbing the next boys hand as they went around until they reached their partner and completed one more circle around them before bowing. The girls and boys switched places taking long and slow strides reaching out their hands for their partner.

“You’re pretty good, for a human,” Tavask snickered. The boys dance was much different than the girls. They stretched out one leg and bent the other raising one hand over their hand and the other straight out in a fist. They moved around their partners changing moves each step making it appear as if they were training for a karate match.

After Tavask had completed a circle he grabbed my hands and dipped my head to the center circle just as everyone else did. The other girls spread out their wings upon the dip. We danced around in a circle doing more dips and turns until the music stopped.

I gasped for breath as did Tavask.

“My, my, human, you’re one feisty dancer,” he snickered. I laughed and walked me back to the place where Havask and Milo stood. Havask’s hair and shoulders were now on fire and the flames had turned from a bright orange to a deep blue.

“Don’t you dare touch me,” Havask snarled. “Not after you danced with that…that thing,” Tavask narrowed his eyes at his brother and let go of my hand and persisted to touch his brother’s arm. Havask hissed and jumped away. “Stop, that’s not funny,”

“Havask, help me,” Tavask groaned, but I could make out the mischievousness in his eyes. “I’ve been infected with Humanitis.”

Havask grinned and shoved his brother’s head away shaking his hand as if trying to shake off the human germs he might have picked up.

“Oh, shut you big fat kaka brain,” Havask snickered and grabbed his brother and gave him a rubbed his knuckled across his brother’s head. Tavask cried and tried to push his brother away.

“Havask,” Tavask groaned. Havask laughed and threw his little brother over his shoulders, which no longer held a fiery flame. Tavask kicked and screamed as Havask laughed at his brother’s pain.

I laughed and walked out into the crowd. I sped up my pace and raced through the crowd of kahaizans, but ended up ramming right into someone.

“Hey, watch it!” a young kahaizan boy around my age turned around. He had dark brown hair, black eyes and tan skin. A long brown tail swayed gently behind him.

“I’m so sorry,” I apologized.

“What are you wearing glasses for?” the boy asked as four other kids around his age joined in.

“I…” I hated lying, but if I told them I was human they would go try and run away just like the rest. “I have bad eyesight. I have to wear glasses so I can see during the day.” I laughed nervously and to my surprise the kahaizan teenagers seemed to buy it.

“What’s wrong with your head?” another boy in the group asked.

“I have really bad head lice.” I smiled. *Bad lice that was the best you could come up with, Brain?* “It’s very contagious, so I suggest that you stay far away from me.” I said. *What am I doing? Just walk back to Milo and the brothers.* I smiled and stood their frozen in place and waited for the party to begin.

Trumpets blared and two figures casually walked through the streets. The woman must have been the queen. She had a crown, a beautiful dress and an overload of golden jewelry around her neck, ankles and arms. The young man next to her must be the prince, but there was something strange about him. The prince reminded me of Kahlavar in way, but well groomed and powerful. They both shared the long black hair and red eyes, and tall stature with olive skin. The prince had his hair trimmed and combed back with a section at the top of his head tied up into a bun. He wore fine black trousers, but with fancy silk clothes and his black hair was trimmed and combed back, and a section at the top of his head separated into a small bun tied with a red ribbon, but it was too hard to tell at this distance. I had to move closer.

“Hey, mothersh, I wasn’t done talking to you!” One of the boys from earlier screamed at me from behind. Someone pushed me forward.

“Stay away from me!” I cried slapping him hard across the face. The boy looked back at me and snarled, baring his large fangs. Upon realizing what I had done I attempted to run away, but the boy caught me from behind and pulled me back.

“You’re not getting away with this!” he snarled. He reached out towards me as if to slap me but instead grabbed hold of my turban and pulled it off. My white blonde hair flowed down shoulders in a deranged mess. Everyone gasped and moved off the side of the rode, far from me. Havask tried to act as if he didn’t know me and Tavask hid behind his brother with his tail tucked between his legs. Milo stood next to the brother with a face that I couldn’t tell was pleased or confused.

The music stopped playing and the queen and the prince looked around to see what all the commotion was. I could finally see the prince’s face clearly, and I couldn’t believe my eyes. The prince of Ra’koza was none other than Kahlavar himself. I didn’t know whether to be enraged or in shock, but with all that was going on around me that was the last thing on my mind. The crowds had all formed a circle around us

The boy still had hold of my hand and tried stopped his foot on the ground. A large rock floated in the air near his foot. I could see the rage in his black eyes. He pulled his other hand back in a fist, the rock moved with him. He screamed and moved his fist forward to punch me. A ring of fire erupted around us. The boy screamed and looked at something coming from behind me. He let go of my hand and ran away and jumped over the fire along with his friends and fled the scene. I looked up to see Havask towering over me with balls of flames formed around his first.

“It’s a human!” A man from the crowd yelled. “Kill it!” A stone flew towards us, but Havask punched the air and sent a ball of fire flew towards the crowd. He continued to do that as more stones came our way. Havask snarled and hissed and spread out his large orange wings.

“That’s no human, it’s a face changer! It has taken the face of the princess! It must have been sent by the sorcerer, Jason Salazar!” Everyone gasped at the sound of the that name and backed away.

“Stay back!” Havask lifted up his fiery hand, but a ghostly hand wrapped around his wrist and extinguished the flames. I peered behind Havask to see Kahlavar standing behind him. His red eyes glowed and black smoke swirled around him. I could feel all matters of darkness swirling around him. Everyone backed away and kept their distance. “Kahl, this isn’t funny,” Havask kicked and screamed as he tried to break free from the hands grasp.

“Enough.” Kahlavar snarled. The ghostly hand vanished, releasing Havask. The smoke diminished and Kahlavar’s eyes returned back to normal. I took a step back, but Kahlavar reached out his hand and snatched me by the wrist and dragged me away. Havask tried to sneak away towards his brother, but Kahlavar gave them both a quick glare and Havask, Tavask, and Milo followed us closely behind.

“Kahlavar, what are you doing?” the woman, who I believed to be the queen, who had been walking down the steps with Kahlavar early, exclaimed as she marched up the stairs with Kahlavar and the rest of us. All I could hear was the sound of my beating heart as Kahlavar dragged me up the stairs to the palace above.

“Mother, just bring the girl before father, and explain where you found her. He’ll listen to you.” Kahlavar said. His mother sighed nodded her head in agreement.

We reached the top and the guards opened the gates and let us enter. Marble covered the floors and large chandeliers hung from the high ceilings above. The stain glass windows I had seen earlier eliminated the room leaving the glass designs imprinted on the marble floor. A long red carpet let to a large golden throne where a kahaizan with light blue hair, and pale skin in a long white tunic with various jewels, and clothing with a long purple cape sat with a staff in hand. A golden ground encrusted with fine jewels rested on top of his head. I assumed he was the king of Ra’Koza; Kahlavar’s father

The woman snapped her fingers and guards closed the door leaving us completely alone.

“My king,” the woman bowed and smiled. The king smiled back and bowed his head in return.

“My Queen,” he replied. I looked at the woman in the purple cape with the brown hair and red eyes. She was Kahlavar’s mother. She was very beautiful and exotic looking in a way. He had her eyes, but hers were much softer, kinder and full of wisdom. I knew someone with eyes like that once, but I can’t recall who.

“Suko, we found two humans hiding amongst the city folk during the party. They have no place to go and I would like for them to stay with us till we can find them a suitable place to thrive. I will watch them, so you don’t need to worry about them bothering you or Masko.” The queen smiled back at her husband.

Suko narrowed his eyes and even though it appeared that he was thinking deeply about what she had said I could feel his cold blue eyes staring down on me. A chill rippled down my spine.

“Bring me the girl,” Suko waved his hand and the queen gently pushed me forward. Suko arose from his throne and walked towards me. He was shorter than Kahlavar, but not by much, and even though the two looked nothing like their aura were very similar. I could feel their pains and anger radiating off their body as well as the overwhelming sensation of power.

Suko reached out his hand and grabbed my chin and raised it up so I was face to face with him. His hand was cold and boney. Up close his face was ill and sickly. Dark circles formed around his large blue eyes. His thin lips were chapped and pale. His eyes were full of negative emotion; sorrow, despair, anger, hatred, and fear all wrapped up in one.

Suko’s eyes softened and he whispered loud enough for my ears to hear; “Katya.” For a moment relief and joy sparked in his eyes, but before I could reply his eyes grew dark and vengeful as they had been before. Suko snarled and a large vase appeared in his hand. The queen and Kahlavar screamed and reached out their hands for the vase, but it was too late. The vase hit the rim of my cheekbone and eye and shattered into tiny pieces. I screamed and fell to the ground in agony as Milo snatched me up and cradled me in his arms. I closed my eyes and listened to the sound of faded screams and vengeful cries.

9

Kahlavar

“Suko, what is wrong with you?” my mother cried. “Why would you do that?”

“That thing is no human it’s a monster sent by him. He’s unraveled the prophecy and is sending his minions to collect his prize. That girl is no human, it’s a monster!” my father shrieked pointing at Katlyn who lay helplessly in Milo’s arms. A large streak of blood cascaded down her pale face.

“I understand that they are humans and I’m not fond of humans as any other kahaizan in this country, but they are just children. They can’t do any harm.” My mother tried to reason with my father, but his mind appeared to be made up.

“These creatures are dangerous. They want nothing more than revenge; vile and hateful creatures they are. Humans are nothing more than scurvy dogs; ugly and stupid.” My father said.

Milo gently put Katlyn down and rose to his feet. Blood dripped from her forehead and lips and splattered across the cold marble floor.

“We’re not the vile, ugly and stupid creatures, you are!” Milo snarled and latched his hands around my father’s neck knocking him to the floor. My father chocked as he tried to push Milo away.

“Suko,” my mother cried. She grabbed hold of Milo and yanked him off my father. Milo kicked and screamed. Milo’s eyes glowed a bright green in his rage. There was something officially strange yet familiar about those eyes.

“How dare you speak to her like that, you fowl creature,” Milo snarled. He reached out hand to the sky as if to grab something, but my mother pressed her fingers down on his pressure points and Milo collapsed in her arms. She gently set him down next to Katlyn and brushed her finger gently through Katlyn’s hair. Servants ran into the room with towels and medicine kits. They knelt down next to Katlyn dabbing a cold damp towel against her wound and put another cold rag against Milo’s forehead.

“You see,” my father arose to his feet and rubbed his neck. Two red hand prints stretched around my father’s pale neck. “That little curly haired brat tried to kill me, and you say that he was nothing more than a child. These humans and vile, cruel and heartless creatures, they cannot be trusted!” my father snarled.

“Fine, but they’re staying here in the palace until the girl is healed.” My mother protested.

“Fine, do what you want, but keep those vile creatures far from me. They will not be allowed upstairs or on any floors especially the third floor. They are to remain on this level and guarded at all times, do you understand?” My father said. My mother bowed gracefully with respect and gently kissed my father on the lips. My father smiled and spread out his wings and flew to the top floor, the third floor and slammed his corridors behind him.

“Let’s get you cleaned up, sweetheart.” My mother gently picked up Katlyn and smiled. I could see the pain in her eyes. I knew what she was thinking. Katlyn was obviously a human with her deep round pupils, non-existent tail, wings and flat teeth, but she reminded her, as well as me, very much of Katya. Katya would have be Katlyn’s age, fourteen, if she were still alive. “Take her and her friend to the first guest bedroom down the right hall and get her cleaned up.” My mother handed Katlyn over to one of the fellow servant who bowed her head. Another servant grabbed hold of Milo’s limp body and ran after the other servant. The other servants stayed with us and tended to my father’s sore neck.

“Enough,” my father barked at the servants. “Leave us,” the servants bowed in respect and ran down the west hall where the other servants had gone. My father barred his fangs and traced in front of his throne. “How could they let this happen? I want the guard doubled…no tripled. I won’t allow any more slimy humans enter into my city. The person responsible for this crime will be brought to justice. I will not tolerate such behavior.” I hide behind my father as my father continued to rant on with my tail tucked between my legs. “When I find them I’ll…I’ll kill them!”

“Suko, you need to calm down. You’re overacting again,” my mother pressed her gentle hand against my father’s burning cheek.

“Laveria, you don’t understand.” My father exclaimed. “These humans they’re like virus’s if you find one you’re sure to find another and then sooner or later they’ll try and over throw the system.”

“I know, my love, now please just relax,” my mother grabbed my father’s hands and looked into his wild blue eyes. “Remember what I told you, just take all that anger and roll it up into a big ball,” my mother pretended to roll an imaginary ball of dough in her hands, “then chuck it across the room, just chuck it,” my mother threw her imaginary ball and made a crashing sound as if it had hit the wall. “Now you try,” my mother said. My father did the same thing and threw his ball towards one of the guards standing by.

“Miktan, pretend you just got shot by an arrow,” my mother whispered to the guard. The guard cleared his throat and dramatically collapsed onto the marble floor. “You did it,” my mother cheered. She laughed and looked up at my father with an energetic smile and animated eyes. My father’s scowling face softened and his lips slightly curved upward.

My mother had a way of calming my father down like no other kahaizan could. The only time I’d ever seen him smile since Katya disappearance was when my mother was around. She made him so happy. She had this strange ability to wash away all his anger and hate just for that moment that they were together. Although my parents dealt with many issues and held many burdens on their shoulders and dealt with countless losses they still loved each other and that was enough for my father.

“I think you’ve had enough for one day.” My mother said. “Why don’t you go upstairs and get some rest before the festival tonight.”

“Will my queen be accompanying me upstairs,” my father smiled and brushed his hand across my mother’s soft cheek. My mother chuckled and kissed my father on the lips.

“Of course, my king, now go. I’ll meet you up there in five.” She said.

“As you wish, my queen,” my father smiled gently and kissed my mother passionately on the lips. My father kissed my mother once more on the forehead and spread out his wings and flew to the third floor, slamming the door the door to his corridors behind him.

My mother turned towards me. She appeared to be in her late twenties and early thirties, but she had looked that way for the past one hundred years. She’s only one hundred and thirty years old, fairly young for an adult kahaizan with a twenty year old son.

Her curly brown hair flowed down to her shoulders. Her feathery headpiece and golden crown were lopsided, but other than that she looked the same. Her long white tunic, maroon top, thick tan belt, layers of gold jewelry and long purple cape were just as they had always been. She smiled at me and the light lit up her eyes just as they had done every year that day.

“I’ve missed you so much, my kahai-na,” my mother embraced me as a tear trickled down her cheek. “I’ve waited for this day to come and it has finally arrived.”

“Mother, you told me that about twenty times now, and I’ve only been back for an hour.” I rolled my eyes. My mother made a pouting face and smiled.

“I love you my kahai-na, and plus I am your mother. I shouldn’t have to restrict my love for the two most beautiful men in my life because one happens to be a sarcastic teenage prince who seems to be growing up to fast for his mother to keep up.” My mother snickered. “I think we have a New Year’s celebration to attend to later this evening, so I suggest that you get changed.”

“Mom, I’m already dressed,” I gestured to my princely attire.

“You can’t dance in that, let alone breath with that thing around your waist, now do as I say, and get dressed.” She shoved me away and rolled her eyes with a quirky smile on her face. “Don’t just stand there, go,” she shooed me away and ran up the spiral staircase where my father waited for her in the king’s corridors on the third floor.

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The servants helped me pick out clothes for the upcoming event. They chose silk black trousers, similar to the ones I usually wear minus the holes and bugs, and a white blouse with long puffy sleeves with a golden vest to go over my shoulders encrusted with gold thread and a newly polished pair of black leather boots.

I quickly got dressed in my bedroom, the last room down the east hall on the third floor that over looked the great wall and into the vastness of the Salvetka forest. The clothes fit comfortably and the shoes worked fine, although I would prefer not to wear them, but I knew my mother would have said otherwise.

I waited down in the throne room for my parents to come out as the guards stood in front of the great doors and my personal servant, Akash, stayed by my side.

“How have you been, your majesty?” Akash asked as he brushed my hair back into a high bun and combed my bangs off to the side.

“Please, Akash, don’t call me your majesty. I’m not exactly the heir to the Ra’Kozan throne anymore.” I said.

“How about sire, or my lord or…I got it...your grace?” he asked.

“Akash,” I ordered. He fell silent and stepped aside. “To answer your question I’m doing fine minus the whole living in the wilderness, living off of nothing more than a slice of bread and the occasional Zargonian, I’ve been well. How about you, Akash, have you been well?” I said.

“I’ve been well, your…Kahlavar, thank you for asking.” He said. I looked over at my father’s throne and sat down feeling every crack and loose string in the wooden frame and comfortable pillows. This chair had been in my family for centuries and one day it would be mind, I hoped.

“The throne suits you, my prince. You will make a great king one day, just like your father.” Akash smiled. I narrowed my eyes and growled.

“I am not my father,” I said. “My father is not the man you think he is, he is vile and cruel. He’s one step shy of a monster. My father and I couldn’t be more different. I can’t wait for the day he dies so I become king. Ra’Koza is far too magnificent to have a selfish, monstrous king like him.” I grumbled crossing my arms across my chest.

Akash raised his brows in disbelief at my comment, but I didn’t care. I meant every word of it. Akash sighed and opened his mouth to speak, but my father’s malicious voice echoed through the marble floors and high stained glass domes of the throne room.

“What do you think you are doing, boy?” my father hissed as him and my mother walked down the last step into the throne room. My mother wore a strapless maroon dress that grasped her curved hips as it flowed down to the floor. Golden jewels covered her chest as a long purple cape grasped her neck and flowed a few feet behind her. The queen’s crown rested on her brown hair that was tied back in a complex bun.

My father on the other hand wore a long white tunic with a golden belt and boots with a long purple cape that grasped his shoulders and stretched far behind him. Thick strands of gold and all manner of jewels hung around his neck and across his chest. The king’s crown wrapped around his pale forward and sleeked back blue hair. My mother let go of my father and ran towards me wrapping her arms around my waist.

“You look like a prince, my kahai-na,” she smiled and kissed me on the forehead. “Come, my boys, we have a party to attend to,” my mother ringed her arms around me and father’s and walked us towards the great doors as the guards opened the gates to the New Year’s party.

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New Years was always my favorite celebration of the year since I was kid. There were songs, dances, endless supply of Ra’Kozan delicacies and a vast selection of drinks such as wines, beers and my favorite plain old soda, but my favorite part about the festival was watching the two suns form the yearly eclipse as we recited the phrase, *Bàhak ét nó vé, bless the new year.*

The celebration usually lasted all day and through the night, but half way through the evening my father passed out in the middle of a speech and was immediately transported back to the palace for urgent care. My mother didn’t want to leave my father alone so we headed back to the palace.

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My mother ran down the spiral staircase to the throne room where I had been waiting.

“How is he doing?” I asked.

“He’s fast asleep. The doctor said that he will be fine as long as he gets some rest and remains in bed for the rest of the evening. They have him hooked up to an oxygen bag, but other than that he appears to be completely fine. No sign of broken bones or head injuries.” My mother sighed and grasped her hand over her forehead.

“Are you going to be okay, mom?” I asked. My mother moved her hand away and smiled.

“Yes, I’m just worried about him that’s all. Our bodies are always replenishing themselves with new cells both on the outside and the inside to help us fight diseases and keep us looking young and youthful, which in a way means your father won’t die from the disease until after he has reached his four hundred year mark, but in turn that also means he’ll have to live with it for the next three hundred or so years, and that’s what worries me. I don’t like seeing my husband in pain. I know you and your father don’t have the best relationship, so you might have a harder time understanding, my kahai-na, but you and your father mean everything to me, and I’d hate it if anything happened to you, especially since one of you is severely ill and the other has been banished to the outskirts of the Kabeshan mountains.” My mother sighed and shook her and continuing on with a much happier note.

“So, did you enjoy your party?” she asked.

“I did,” I said. I told her that every year, but for once I meant it. I hadn’t realized how much I had needed my friends and fellow Ra’Kozan’s till now. Everyone still treated me like a street rat, but it was getting easier to except that now. This was my life and it will be till the day I die and pass on to the next life.

Three servants entered the room and informed my mother that Katlyn and Milo were fast asleep in the guest rooms downstairs, and that I had two more hours to spend with her till I would be escorted down to the dungeons.

My mother smiled and thanked the servant for notifying her, but I could see the pain in her eyes. My mother hated putting me down in that dungeon. If she had gotten her way I never would have been banished, but this life was never meant to fair and easy. I’ve learned that the hard way.

My mother gestured for them to leave and assured them that it was alright to leave us alone together. The guards at the doors stepped outside and closed the doors behind them. The throne room fell silent. The light from outside gleamed through the large stained glass windows illuminating the marble floors with bright, bold colors.

My mother reached out her hand for me. She looked around from side to side then back up at me. Her face was stern and serious. I knew she had something very important to ask me.

“Kahlavar, the human, the girl, where did you find her and her friend?” she asked.

“How…how did…” I stuttered. How did she know that I was the one who brought them into the city? I hadn’t told anyone that not even my closest friends. The only soul other than myself that knew the truth was Fooshka, and he was my navask.

“Kahlavar, I was born in the month of space. I see everything at that given moment in time, and I can teleport. Do you really think I’d allow myself to see my only son for one week out of the year?” she said.

“You’ve been watching me?” I asked.

“Yes, but that’s not what I asked you. Where did you find the human girl and her friend?” she asked.

“By the borders between Ra’Koza and Itamotosakeiya,” I replied. My mother looked down then back up at me. I could see the pain in her red eyes.

“The girl…she reminds me of my Katya. She had the same white blonde hair and blue eyes, but I could see the natural naïve nature of those prideful humans in her eyes. All humans have it. They are very complex yet incredibly stupid creatures it’s no wonder they live such short lives. They all wish to know more about the universe yet deny the truth when they are faced with it. These two were just children and are still learning, so I will show them compassion. I would never harm a child, not even a human child, but to see the likes of my own daughter in that human sickens me.” She sighed.

A tear trickled down my mother’s olive skin. I caught it and held it in my hand. My mother looked back up at me with a confused expression. “I hate to admit it, but in a way, I wish she was Katya. I miss her so much.”

“Mom, I promise, Katya will return to us some day. I don’t know when or how, but she’s a lot stronger than you think.” I reassured her. My mother smiled and wiped away her tears and sighed.

“Well,” she continued. “I’m going to the library for a while to read. You can come if you’d like my, kahai-na. I’d love to see your beautiful face before they take you down to the offal place.” My mother smiled.

*Go upstairs. You need to go and speak to your father.*

*Why would I want to talk with him? He hates me! There’s nothing to talk about.*

*For one because I am your grandfather and I said so, so you will do as your told, and two I want to see my little boy, please, come on Kahl. I’m worried about my kahai-na too.*

I paused and looked back down at my mother and thought about what Fooshka had said, but I couldn’t help it. Fooshka, for once, was actually right. I didn’t know exactly what I needed to ask him or talk to him about, but whatever it was I needed to do it, and plus Fooshka wasn’t going to stop pestering me till I walked up those stairs and into the kings corridors.

“I think I’m going to go upstairs, to the third floor, for the time being, but I promise I’ll meet you back down here before the guards come for me.” I said. I looked up at the large clock that hung above my father’s throne. It was only four thirty. I still had a few hours till the guards would come searching for me, and I doubt I will up there for long.

My mother smiled and reached up her hands for my head. I bowed down as she kissed me gently on the forehead.

“I love you, my kahai-na.” she said. She smiled and walked gracefully upstairs to the second floor and into the library. I waited till the door to the library was closed before I quietly tiptoed up the stairs to the top floor to the master bedroom of the king and queen. The door was large and etched in marble with gold handles and fine jewels.

I pulled my hand up to knock up on the door, but I caught myself. I couldn’t do it. I was terrified of my father. I could barely stop myself from shaking at the sights of him let alone talk to him alone and in person.

*Kahlavar open that door or I will.*

*Fooshka, just be quiet. You’re making me nervous.*

I sighed and pushed all my thoughts and feelings aside and knocked on the door three times. No one replied. My father was most likely sleeping. I shouldn’t disturb him. I tried to walk away, but Fooshka caught me.

*Kahlavar, please, I want to see my son. I know you’re scared, but don’t be. He’s your father, Kahl. You shouldn’t have to be afraid of him. Can you just do this for me, please?*

Fooshka was right. I was being stupid. He was my father and although I hated him more than anything in this world, he was still the man who had raised me and cared for me. I shouldn’t be afraid of him. I sighed and finally decided to take the situation into my own hands and slowly opened the door into my father’s chambers.

10

Kahlavar

I peered inside. The room was large with soft red carpet flooring, pale yellow walls with fine white trim and paintings of past kings and their families.

A large painting with a fine golden frame was set at the head of the colorful kings sized bed. It was of Fooshka, my grandmother, Raykoo and my father and uncle Masko. Fooshka looked well-trimmed in the same clothing and robes my father had worn earlier that day. My grandmother looked stern and sophisticated with her blue hair tied back in a bun and bangs hovering over her pale skin and bright blue eyes. My father was only ten in the picture and my uncle was only four.

The closet door opened and out walked my father. He wore a simple red silk robe with slippers. His blue hair was messy and tangled. Dark circles formed under his pale skin which had a bit of a greenish tinge to it. His blue eyes were dull and worn down from many sleepless nights and the dormant cancer cells flowing through his blood stream.

He stopped in front of the body length mirror and slowly untied his belt and let it fall revealing his pale naked body. His blue tail was greasy and tangled with knots. It appeared lifeless as lazily drooped behind his legs and onto the floor.

He examined the purple and blue bruises that ran up and down his spinal cord and arms. My father was skinnier than the last time I had seen him. His ribs were easily visible and his arms and legs were paper thin and in certain areas exposed some of the bone underneath.

My father trailed his eyes up his spinal cord catching sight of my reflection in the door way. He picked up his robe and threw it back on and tied the silk band around his thinning waist.

We both paused and stared at each other in shock to see the other. I had taught myself to hate my father since my banishment since he had been the one to initial sign the decree, but seeing him so frail and sick made me feel guilty for ever thinking that.

“Kahlavar,” he exclaimed as he frantically grabbed his silk robe and threw it over his shoulders. “What do you want?” he snarled as he tightened the silk belt around his thin waist. He turned around and walked back to his bed where his oxygen bag rested. “I thought you would be in the dungeons by now.” He coughed nearly hacking up a lung and sighed looking back up at me with his dull blue eyes and pale skin.

I sighed. I had a feeling he would say that, but I tried my best to push that comment aside and focus on the task at hand.

“I wanted to talk to you,” I cleared my throat as sweat beat down my brow. I could feel my heart beating heavily against my chest.

“Fine, let’s get this over with.” He grumbled as he turned on his oxygen bag and shoved the small tubes up his nose to keep the oxygen flowing. I stepped closer, but he gestured for me to keep my distance. “Just stay where you are, I have another one of those colds, and I don’t need to get anyone else sick.” My father coughed and touched his hand to his forehead almost falling off the end of his bed. I reached out my hands to catch him, but he gestured for me to stay back as he pushed himself back with a weak and frail arm.

I paused and took a step back. I had come this far because Fooshka had told me to and I knew it was right thing to do, but when the time had finally come I couldn’t think of what to say and not only that it pained me to see him like this. It was true that my father and I didn’t get along well since the banishment, but prior to that my father had been the man I had looked up to and loved, and I still loved him although it was getting harder and harder to find that love.

“Well, what is it that you wish to speak to me about?” he asked wrapping a thick wool blanket over his shivering body.

My cheeks burned red as my father stared at me with his cold blue eyes awaiting my reply. I waited a few moments longer then opened my mouth to speak. I knew exactly what I needed to say.

“It’s my fault,” I began.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“I led the humans into Anoka. It was a mistake. I never intended for this to happen. I’m so sorry, father.” I looked down and pretended to be ashamed and continued. “But, father the way you lashed out at her, you could have killed her. I don’t know if this is true or not, but mother…mother believes that human might actually be Katya. She believes that you think the same way. Is that true?” I asked.

“Yes, I did for a moment. I thought my little girl had returned, but then I saw those human eyes and that white blonde hair and I knew it had to of been a human shape-shifter sent by the sorcerer himself.” He snarled. “I hate humans they are nasty, stupid and cruel and believe themselves to be superior to all other beings even their own kind.”

“I don’t like humans either, but their just children. What I’m trying to say is that what harm can they do?” I said.

“You know nothing,” my father looked up at me and growled. A cold feeling shivered down my spine and through my bones. I had a bad feeling about what he was going to say next.

“Father,” I said slowly not wanting to hear his reply.

“You will regret the day those words escaped your lips when you watch as the ones you love die at the hands of those creatures.” He snarled at me.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized. I really wasn’t sorry for what I had said. I didn’t believe I had said anything wrong, but I didn’t want to get on his bad side and it was obvious I was making my way over there.

My father’s blue eyes darkened as he clawed his pale boney fingers into his red silk robe.

“Kahlavar can’t you see that the sorcerer is trying to distract us so he can get hold of his real target, but if you kill the girl then he will leave us alone, and give me my daughter back.” A devilish grin spread across pale face.

“Father, I don’t know what you’re about, but please I don’t want to hurt anybody,” I whimpered. I was scared, but I tried to maintain control.

“You’re a child of darkness and death. That is what you are good at, killing.” My father rose up and grabbed hold of my shirt with a frail hand and pulled me in. “You can correct the mess that you created seven years ago and I will exterminate your banishment and we can be a family again, I promise.” My father tried to reassure me.

“I’m not going to hurt anyone,” I gently pulled my father’s scrawny fingers off my collar and took a step back. I didn’t want to hurt him, but I also didn’t want him to hurt me. He grabbed hold of the chair by his bedside to keep himself steady. “Father, who is this great sorcerer? I can stop him\_\_”

“No, he’ll kill you!” my father cried. He coughed and rubbed his hand across his chest as a painful expression spread across his face.

“At least answer my question.” I said.

“He’s the reason that Katya’s gone!” my father finally managed to say. “He is the one. He is the one foretold by the ancient magician, Akmen of old. He is the holder of the amulet. He is the one destined to unlock its power with the aid of the foretold twins.” I could hear the panic in his voice and tears streamed down his pale cheeks. I took a few steps back and grabbed hold of the door handle prepared to run.

“Father you’re not making any sense,” I exclaimed, but it was obvious he hadn’t heard me as he continued to ramble on.

“He is trying to unravel the prophecy. He wants to be the king that is fated to rule the seven realms. That’s why he took her. Katya was the one thing that stood between him and his goal, and now that she is gone all he needs is you and Kaska.” His father cried.

I let go of the handle and took a step forward. I was confused and frustrated. I didn’t understand what he was trying to say to me. None of it made sense and none of it added up to anything that had ever happened in my life, but I wanted to know more.

“Kaska…who’s Kaska,” I asked.

“This never would have happened if you and your Kaska had never been born!” my father lashed out at me. I screamed and ran out the door, but my father caught my sleeve. I looked back for a quick second. He looked ashamed, terrified and deeply afraid as if he had exposed his deepest and darkest of secrets. I wanted to care, but I couldn’t. I was so scared. I wanted to get away. This was too much. This was not what I had wanted. I should have gone in the library with mother. I should have ignored, Fooshka. I never wanted this. I never wanted any of it.

“Let go of me!” I shrieked. I pushed him away and ran downstairs into the throne room. He collapsed onto the wooden floors with half his body still inside the door.

“Kahlavar, please, wait, I’m sorry!” my father cried as he walloped in pain. I was terrified and I wanted to get away as fast as possible, but the pain spread across my father’s agonizing face filled me with a tinge of sympathy, so I did the next the best thing.

“Guards,” I bellowed, “guards, come quick,” I took one last look at my father before running down the spiral staircase and into the library where my mother awaited quietly most likely reading another one of her romantic novels.

“Kahlavar, you finally came. It’s almost six o’clock. Where have you been?” my mother asked as I watched guards run up the staircase to assist my father.

“I went to go and visit, father,” I said.

“How did that go?” she asked with a smile.

I wanted to lie to her and tell her that everything had gone well and that he was sleeping soundly on his bed, but I couldn’t seem to get the words to come out.

“Kahlavar, what’s wrong, my kahai-na?” She said as she reached out a hand towards me, but I was caught by two guards who pulled my arms behind my back and locked me in hand cuffs. I usually didn’t like going down to the dungeons, but it sounded like a good idea for once.

“Let go of him!” My mother demanded, but the guards didn’t listen. They pushed her away and kept on walking with tightly in their grasp. My mother’s red eyes filled with hatred and rage. She snarled and took a step forward.

“How dare you? I am your Queen! You cannot order me around, now unhand him!” she snarled. She reached her hand for me, but one of the guards grabbed her wrist and held it up.

“This is the law created by the three Kings of Kàtzu and the council, and the government is no place for a woman. You have no say in this matter, woman.” The guard shoved her away. Fire burned in my mother’s eyes. She barred her fangs and spread out her pink wings and hissed.

“Suko, do something!” my mother snapped, but my father was frozen in fear. He just watched as the guards dragged me down to the dungeons. “SUKO!” she bellowed. I watched as my mother slapped my father across his pale lifeless face and screamed at him with tears in her eyes as she pointed a finger at me. The guards dragged me down stairs to the throne and down another staircase where the steel and iron doors contained the dark dungeons below.

Katlyn

I moaned as I arose from my motionless position in the soft cushioned bed that the queen and her servants had brought me to. I had no idea how much time had passed since my encounter with the King or where they had put Milo. I assumed that he was right next door snoring his night away. The queen had knocked him out pretty hard, but I really don’t remember much of anything after his majesty slammed that vase against my forehead. I gently pressed two fingers against the bandage against my head. It still hurt beyond reason, but it was bearable.

I groaned as I slipped off the covers and rested my foot against the soft warm carpet. My bones cracked as I arose to my feet and walked unstably towards the door and walked outside into the hallway. I turned to the left and peered inside the next door to find Milo fast asleep on his bed curled up in his covers. I quietly closed the door behind me with a smile and walked down the opposite end of the hallway to the throne room. Luckily the throne room was empty even the King himself wasn’t upon his mighty throne. I wonder where they all could have gone.

Now that I wasn’t being dragged by the arm by the prince of lies and being slapped across the head by the king of doom I finally had a chance to get a good look at my surroundings. Light came in through the giant stained glass windows next to the great doors. The images of the Kátzu creation myth were imprinted on the floor. I still remember the story that Tavask had told me as we walked through the busy streets of Anoka and danced together at the party. It still amazed me that such a complex society as my own was out here right under our noses and we never knew.

I walked across the marble floors my footsteps echoing through the walls and massive blue and green dome above to a wall of paintings. I didn’t recognize any of them, but one. It was the farthest one to the right. The painting was about ten feet high and eight feet wide. It was a painting of the current royal family although it must have been ten or more years old since Kahlavar’s younger sister Katya was still present in the picture and by the looks of it she only appeared to be four or five.

She wore a beautiful blue and white dress with a tan belt wrapped around her waist. Her curly white hair flowed down to her shoulders with a large bun at top held in by a silver flower shaped clip. Tavask was right Katya was beautiful, and I could see why Saskaiya screamed when she saw me. We both had blue eyes, although hers were a gentle glacier blue like me father’s, unlike my own. We both shared the same curly locks, but mine is blonde and hers was white, and no not white blonde, but white like snow. I had never seen anything like it. It flowed gracefully down her tiny shoulder like waves of fine silk. Physically I never would have guessed or ever assumed that Katya and Kahlavar were related. They looked nothing alike. Katya looked more like their father and Kahlavar looked more like their father.

Kahlavar appeared to be at least eleven in the picture. His hair was much shorter than it is now and clean. He wore a white kimono top and a nice pair of teal pants with a black belt around his waist as well as a gold satchel across his tiny chest. His blood red eyes were full of light and excitement with a joy filled smile spread across his face. His olive skin was lighter than it is now, but all and all I could still tell that it was Kahlavar. The queen and the king looked just as I had seen them in both appearance and attire, but over all they all looked happier. The king was even smiling.

Not only was a princess lost, when Katya disappeared, the king and queen had lost a daughter, and to Kahlavar, a sister. I’ve never felt family loss, as far as I can remember anyway, so I don’t really understand how painful it must have been when news spread that the princess, and their only daughter had vanished on the battlefield.

I gasped at the sound of heated screams echoed through the walls of the throne from the third floor above. It was obvious that they were speaking Kalvetna, but although I had no idea what was being said what I did know was that someone was going to die a horrible death. A door slammed as three people marched down the spiral staircase with a fourth in their hands with their hands tied behind their back. I quickly hid behind a statue before they came to the final step. I couldn’t see the face of the fourth man, but it was obvious that he was in serious trouble.

“*NAKO!*” The queen’s voice rang through the palace walls as the men marched down another set of stairs into the darkness below. Pleading cries could be heard just to the right of the king’s throne where a large wooden door stood. The cries soon died down and the sound of footsteps coming down the steps echoed across the marble floors. I peeked my head out, but nobody appeared to be coming down and come to think of it the footsteps had stopped as well. I took a step away from the statue, but immediately jumped back at the sight of two figures running down the staircase.

Laveria and Suko entered the throne room, their capes rippling behind them like the waves of a deadly ocean and by the look on their faces a war was soon to rage right before my eyes. The most dangerous and deadly; the one between a husband and a wife.

They hissed and snarled cruel words that I could not understand. Their gestures, the flickering of their tails and the harsh fangs they barred reminded me of two cats fighting. Their hair stood on end and occasionally Laveria or Suko would snap something back at the other in an irate tone. They occasionally shouted out their names, but for the most part there was only one name I heard. A name I had come to know over the past two weeks. A name that had helped me and yet deceived me all that same time; *Kahlavar*. It then dawned on me that one of the men I had seen earlier did look very familiar. It must have been Kahlavar.

“HANÁ!” Suko exclaimed. The room fell silent. Tears formed in Laveria’s eyes. Suko sighed. He vanished and reappeared at the top of the third floor. A door slammed from above. Laveria cried out and fell to her knees. What should I do? Should I go and help, but if Suko comes back? He’ll kill me if he sees my face again. I watched from a distance for a few minutes until the tears stopped and Laveria came back to her feet. She looked around the room and set her eyes on the statue I hid behind. I kept quiet and hoped that she wouldn’t notice me. I took a quick glance behind me, but she was gone, so I decided to come out. I checked once more, but the throne room was empty and silent once again.

I turned my attention back to the painting wondering what could have happened to such a happy family. All I’d ever wanted was a family because mine was non-existent, but seeing one fall apart made me so sad. Don’t these people know what their missing?

“I thought that was you standing behind the statue,” I felt a soft hand touch my shoulder. I shrieked and jumped a good five feet away. Queen Laveria’s familiar face came out of the shadows and into the light of the throne room. “I am so sorry,” she giggled. “I didn’t intend to frighten you.” I sighed with relief as a smile spread across her beautiful face. Her blood red eyes lit up as she clasped her hands together just below her waist. Her eyes were lightly swollen and dark olive streaks ran down her rosy cheeks. “How are you feeling?” she asked.

“Good,” I said. The room fell silent as I turned my attention back to the painting of the royal family. “Is everything alright, your majesty?” I asked. Laveria’s eyes widened in surprise. She turned her attention to the staircase She sighed and turned her attention back to me with a gentle smile.

“You heard all of that I presume?” she said.

“Yeah, but don’t worry I had no idea what you guys were talking about, but I’ve got to say that wasn’t exactly a pretty sight to see. May I ask what exactly happened?” I asked.

“It was about the prince, Kahlavar, but it’s nothing, a human like yourself should concern yourself with.” Laveria said. I sighed and the room fell silent once again. I turned my attention back to the painting. Sweat beat down my brow as I waited for someone to break the ice. After a few minutes of awkward silence Laveria’s voice caught my attention.

“You seem quite interested in that painting.” Laveria said. I jumped and let a nervous chuckle.

“Yeah,” I said nervously. I gulped and waited for her to continue.

“It was painted over ten years ago, three years before the war between your kind and our kind.” She said.

“I know about the war, and why Kahlavar was banished.” I said. Why did I say that? What is wrong with me?

“How…would you…” Laveria’s voice trailed off as a look of confusion spread across her face.

I told her everything. I told her how Kahlavar led us through those four cities and villages and into Maska where he left us with Saskaiya. I didn’t dare tell her about Tavask and Havask in fear that they might lose their jobs because of it, so I left that part. Instead I told her that Milo and I happened to stumble upon the party by accident. “Please don’t punish Kahlavar. Kahlavar may have been rude and more than often expressed his dislike for humans, but the fact is that without him we’d be dead. You see if it wasn’t for Kahlavar, Milo and I wouldn’t be here. We probably would have either starved to death or been eaten by a pack of wild animals, so please don’t hurt him. Please, Laveria, please,” I pleaded with her. Laveria fell silent. I nipped at my finger nail as I impatiently awaited her reply.

“I promise I won’t tell anyone especially my husband, but I may have a few words with my son if you don’t mind.” Laveria said. I nodded with crooked smile on my face. “Oh, the painting, yes,” Laveria and I turned out attention back to the painting. “I still remember the day it was painted. I couldn’t get Kahlavar to hold still for the longest time. That boy used to be so full of energy. That boy could have probably run around the entire perimeter of Ra’Koza and still have enough energy to sprint from Anoka and Maska and back several more times.” Laveria chuckled as she pondered her gleeful memories. “His father was finally able to calm him down. They were very close back then. My how the times have changed.” Laveria’s voice cracked. I could tears forming in her eyes, but she held them back and continued on. “Then everything changed after the war. Katya disappeared, and Kahlavar was banished from the kingdom. Our whole family fell apart and we haven’t been able to put it back together since. Kahlavar hates his father, and I now and I want to believe that Katya will back or that she’s still alive even, but as the years pass the hope of seeing my daughter again has dwindled to practically nothing.” Laveria sighed and turned away from the painting and walked out to the center of the throne room and stood in the light of the stained glass window. The images reflecting off her beautiful olive skin and gentle red eyes.

“I guess I don’t understand,” I took a few steps closer, but still keeping my distance. “What exactly happened to Katya and how did Kahlavar get banished? I mean he would have only been…” I paused and counted seven take away twenty from my fingers. “He would have only been thirteen, right?” Laveria nodded her head in reply, but continued to stare off into the distance at something unseen hidden within the depths of her thoughts. “He was just a kid. What harm could he have done to deserve such a harsh punishment as banishment?” I asked.

“I can tell you like to ask questions and get answers, but I can’t answer this for you. I’m sorry. I can tell everything about any war, my husband, my country, my faith, but my children are not open to debate. That part of my life is too fragile. I’m afraid that if I tell anyone I’ll lose it; forever. I don’t want to lose, so please forgive me.” She said as a tear streamed down her rosey cheeks and onto the cold marble floor. Laveria extended her hand and a portal appeared. She took one last glance at me before vanishing into the depths of the portal. The portal disappeared and the room fell silent once again.

I guess I should just head back to my room then. I sighed and slowly walked down the west wing to my room. Milo’s door was open and a few servants were coming in and out. What’s going on in there? I shook the thought away and turned my attention back to my room and opened the door. I quietly closed the door behind me and walked over to me bed and sat down and tried to straighten out the light blue skirt of my dress. I had only come out there to investigate and then the painting caught my eye so I got a closer look. I didn’t intend to all of that. Now I understand the meaning of a broken family. I thought that when families broke apart either through divorce or other reasons it was because they didn’t love each other or they didn’t try, but it’s not true. They did try and they did love, but that didn’t matter. It still happened and there was nothing they could do about it. All they could do was sit back and watch and hope that things would get better. I wonder if that’s what hapended to my family? Were they broken too? I don’t know, but I’m afraid to find out.

I heard a knock at my door. I opened my mouth to welcome them in, but the door flew open before the words had the chance to roll off my tongue. Three of the Queen’s servants piled into my room. One carried a small box and a beautiful silver and gold brush that she held close to her chest. Another carried a dress similar to my own, but the top was made of silk with bell bottom sleeves that wrapped around the elbows and a long sky blue skirt with a teal belt wrapped around the waist encrusted with fine details of silver. The last servant to come into the room held a pair of beautiful black flats in her arms each with a small chain of silver across the front and side.

“What’s all of this…” I tried to say as the servant holding the shoes silenced me and dragged me over to the mirror and set me down in the chair. The servant holding the brush grabbed my hair and lightly brushed the gold and silver brush through my white blonde hair. I jolted back yanking my hair out of her hands. “Hey,” I exclaimed. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Be still,” the servant that had been holding the black flats said. “We’re not going to hurt you.” She assured me. “The queen has requested you and your friend’s presence later this evening and intend that we begin dressing you at once.”

“Where are we going?” I asked as the other servant continued to brush my hair and pull it back behind me ears.

“The queen has asked that we leave it a surprise until later this evening,” she replied. I sighed and watched in silence as the other servant pulled the top portion of my hair into a bun and wrapped it with a fine silk blue ribbon. I didn’t know what Laveria had planned for us, but I had a feeling that it wasn’t going to end well.

11

Kahlavar

The dungeons of the palace were modern and the cells were encased with a clear wall wired with electricity. It was impossible to escape, but there was a flaw to the system that I had discovered a few years back. I was eighteen at the time standing in my small cell practicing my shadow forms so it appeared that I was in two places at once. I finally figured it out, with Fooshka’s help. I remember I had noticed that the cell wall had no effect on me when I turned into a shadow, so I turned into a shadow leaving my shadow form in my bed to appear as if I were sleeping. The guards have yet to notice, so why stop now?

I waited patiently for the guards to leave before I created my secondary shadow. The other me was lifeless, I was still working on that, but he worked. I turned into a shadow and crawled under the electric wired wall and snuck past the guards and past the iron and steel doors and ran up the spiral staircase into the throne above. It had grown darker, but it was only the first setting sun.

Kàtzu’d two suns set at different times before nightfall. Pharoka, the largest and brightest set after my party, but Pharokani, the smaller and dismal of the two set four hours after Pharoka had set. Pharokanai was getting closer to the mountains, but we still had a few more hours of daylight before nightfall.

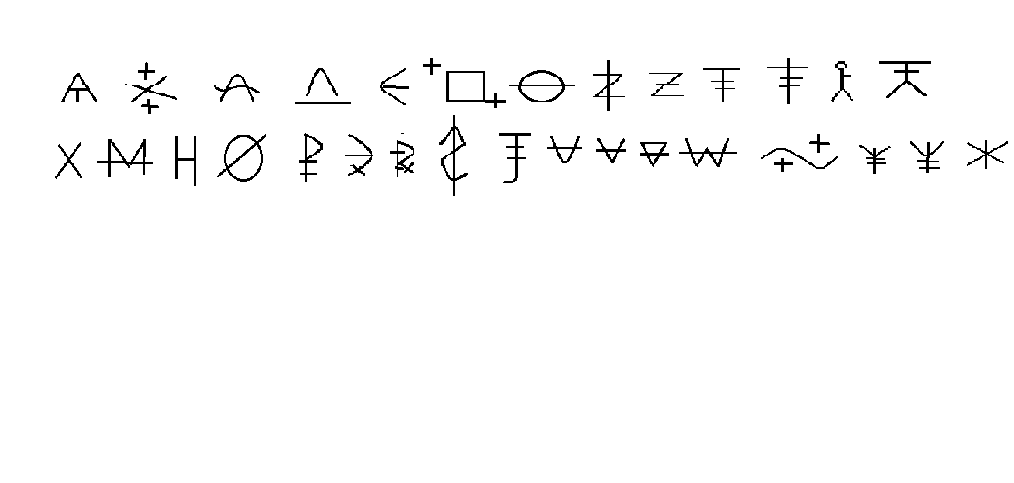
I marched up the stairs to the third to the one of many places my father had prohibited the royal staff to enter; my room. My room was the last door down the western hall on the third floor right next to Katya’s room which my father had locked, but I didn’t dare use my powers to sneak in. Even the sight of her white painted door with small blue flowers brought me to tears. I lowered my brow opening my door and quietly closing the door behind me.

I had escaped many times from that dungeon’s, but in all those years I hadn’t dared venter up here. I haven’t been in my room since my banishment, but it looked the same just as I had left it. My room was large, too large if you ask me. My king sized bed with red and gold sheets, thick covers and expensive pillows and black drapes rested at the center of my room against the wall. On either sides of my bed rested my massive white bookshelves filled with old music sheets, sketchbooks, paints and paintbrushes. I’d never filled my bookshelves with books. I’d dealt with dyslexia since I was a kid, and reading was never an enjoyment to me, but when the words and letters shift across the page it’s easy to see why.

My grand piano and my favorite instrument, the violin, lined up against my arched window. The instrument was introduced by humans about two hundred years ago, thirty years before my father was born. Of course they did more than bring instruments. They forced their religious beliefs on us, implemented English and Earth’s history into our school system, and the war as well. Fortunately the religious practices only lasted the three decades that the humans lived here before they were all whipped out, but some of the things like their music, and the school subjects stayed.

I picked up my violin and bow and played a note. I grinned and continued on with a complex rhythm I had learned from a small village in the Kabeshan mountains, but I’d never played it on my violin. It was beautiful. I didn’t realize how much I missed the sound of my violin till know.

I strung the last note and put the violin back in its case and turned my attention back to the rest of my room. The wooden floors, shelves and red, gold, blue and orange rug at the center of my room were covered in heaps of dirt and dust.

I sat down on my bed and curled against my fancy pillows and silk sheets. My bed still smelled of vanilla and cherry blossoms from the last time the servants had washed them. I looked up at the board above my bed that the wooden posts held up. The letters of the Kalvetna Alphabet still were etched into the dark wood. Some of the letters moved around out of order, but I still knew which letters belonged in which order:

As written; *Ah, Ba, Ce, De, Eh, Fe, Ge, He, Ha, I(E), Je, K, Ka, La, Ma, Na, O, Pe, Qe, Ra, Sa, Ta, Ooh, Ve, Va, We, Wa, Ye, Ya, Za.*

I loved my language and the Ra’Kozan culture, but since my father banished me I was technically no longer a part of it, but nothing could take that away from me, not even him. Of course none of it would have happened if I had just obeyed him in the first place, but that doesn’t change what he did. He wanted me gone, and I finally gave him a reason to do so.

*Kahlavar you know good and well that that’s not true.*

*Yes it is! You ruined everything, and now I stuck doing the same retuine every year in hopes that Katya will return and you KNOW good and well that she’d never coming back. I got what I deserved and he got what he wanted and that’s all there is to it.*

*Kahlavar, your father loves you. You may not have seen it, but I saw the pain and fear in his eyes when they banished you to those mountains. Please, you need to understand this.*

“If he loved me so much then how come he keeps pushing me away?” I snapped. I gasped and clamped my hands over my mouth. I didn’t meant to say that out load, but I suppose it doesn’t matter now does it. “I hate my life!” I exclaimed and fell back on my bed.

*Kahlavar, if you would just listen to me for one second\_*

*I don’t need you. You’re just like him. You act like you know what’s best for me, but nobody does. “Nobody!” I said aloud.* I let out an agitated sigh and reached out my hand for one of my old sketchbooks and looked upon the old crinkled pages. As I searched through the pages I came across a picture I had drawn after the war a few days before I was banished. It was the golden staff with the electric blue sphere that the sorcerer who had taken Katya had equipped himself with the night of her disappearance.

I didn’t want to think about him, but the words my father has spoken to me not to long ago kept back into my mind. Nothing he said made sense anymore. My friends are right. My father is a mad man, but that didn’t change the fact that I had questions. Who was the sorcerer that he had talked about? Was it Jason Salazar, the leading captain of the human army seven years ago, but that’s not what really bothered me. He said that if *Kaska* and I hadn’t been born that his life would have been so much better. He said that he was my *vaska.* I don’t have a brother let alone a twin and a set of twins haven’t been seen since the three ancient kings when out kind were forced to leave Kàtzu and colonize on Earth, and that was over three thousand years ago. I wanted to know the truth and I knew my father wouldn’t hear it. It was already hard enough just having a five minute conversation with the guy and to even think of asking him more questions would have me dragged to the edge of the city, but I had to know the truth. Either I was mistaken or my whole life was a lie.

I marched to the second floor and down the east hallway to the farthest room on the right; the library. Endless shelves of books stacked as high as the vast ceilings above covered every inch of the massive area. I didn’t go in here often except for school, but I haven’t but my father banned my teacher from the palace after my banishment. It was a shame; she was a very nice lady. She was the only one besides my mother who had the time and patience to teach me to read with my dyslexia.

I walked to the center of the library where a large reading lounge with a flat screen T.V, drinks and a small snack bar rested in front of a raging fireplace. My mother sat comfortable in a pink night gown with her hair tied up in a messy bun and her tail wrapped around her slender body with a large book in hand. I couldn’t read the title. The letters were shifted and distorted, but I could tell by the cover that it yet another one of her romantic novels.

I knocked on the wooden table next to me to get her attention. My mother raised her head from reading and smiled. She gently put the book down and quickly got up and raced over to me and gave me a hug quietly slamming the door behind me.

“I had a feeling you would break out of that dungeon.” She snickered.

“It’s a lot easier than it looks,” I laughed.

“I don’t blame you. If I had a say I wouldn’t have banished you in the first place, but I’m a woman, and as the guard said,” my mother created air quotes with her fingers as she mocked the guard in a deep raspy voice, “A woman should not interfere with the government.”

“Anyway, what brings my little kahai-na here? Do you want to sit down and read a book with me?” she asked.

“Mom, you know I can’t read that well and besides reading is boring.” I said.

“If the government and your father had listened to me and you had not been banished you would have been reading at the same level as the kids your age. You can’t let a disorder pull you down. You have to enjoy life and appreciate what Malan has given to you.” She smiled and sat down on the small couch and patted the seat next to her for me to sit.

I sat down and sighed. My mother ripped out a piece of paper from her journal and wrote down three words in Kalvetna characters and gestured for me to spell it and then read it out loud. I looked down at the words and examined every character before I opened my mouth to speak:



I sighed and cleared my throat.

“Ka, H, A, L, A, Va, R, R, A, N, A, T, A, S, H, Ka,” I said before reading the words out loud. “Ka…halavar Ra…Natashka,” I paused and looked up at my mother who smiled as pride filled her red eyes. “Mom, that’s my name.”

“It’s good practice, and plus I want you to remember that, that is your name. You are a Nastashka, Kahlavar, the bloodline of kings. You’re a prince Kahlavar, and nothing, not even a banishment can take that away from you.” My mother kissed me the cheek and room fell silent. She looked up at me as if she knew why I had come here in the first place, to talk to her, talk to her about everything.

“Mom,” I began slowly.

“Sai,” she replied curling her pink tail around her body.

“Well…” I paused. I didn’t know where to start. So much had happened I had so many questions to ask and I wanted an answer to every single one of them right now. “Mom, I talked with father today.” I said. A surprised expression spread across her face. Her body language was calm, but I could see the fear in her red eyes. I explained to her what I asked my father about Katlyn and everything had said concerning the great unknown sorcerer and the my unknown brother, Kaska.

“You already told me this, my kahai-na,” she replied.

“Well, yeah, but I lied,” I gulped and refused to meet my mother’s sharp gaze, “it didn’t go well. At first I told him about…something, and he got angry, and he said things, things that didn’t make any sense. He ran me out of there without giving me any straight answers to one of my many questions, so I thought I would ask you.”

“Anything for you, my kahai-na,” she smiled and listened attentively for my question.

“Mom,” I paused and took in a deep breath and sighed to calm my nerves. who is Kaska? Father called him my brother, but I don’t have a brother. He was making things up in his head, right?” I asked. My mother’s sweet smile faded. I couldn’t tell what she was thinking. Her eyes were clouded with every emotion you could think of. She didn’t reply so I asked again, and again. She finally gave me an answer after the third try, but it wasn’t exactly what I had in mind.

“Kahlavar, you know your father,” my mother rose from her seat on the couch and walked back and forth as she continued to talk. “He makes up these stories, these scenarios in his head. They’re very creative, but none of them are real. It was probably nothing. He could have been tired or just taken his evening medication.” My mother sighed and clutched her fists as if trying to come up with what to say. “All I’m trying to say is it’s probably nothing. You don’t need to worry about it. In all honesty I would prefer that you just forget about the whole thing and just have fun and enjoy your time here before the week is up. Do you understand?” Her tone was firm, but gentle. I understood what she saying, but she hadn’t answered my question.

“Mother, I understand, but you didn’t answer my question. Who is Kaska?” I asked with a very firm and aggressive tone. Didn’t mean to get so mad, but something was going on here. My mother never lied to me. She never hesitated or refused to answer my question and my father, even though he did make up stories, most of them were relevant to the time period or time of day. Today was the first of Jahakva, January. There was nothing special about as far as knew.

“You watch your tone!” My mother snapped back. I jumped back. My mother was usually a calm and collected person. She only got angry when something was truly bothering her.

“I just want to the truth,” I exclaimed.

“And I gave it to you,” she replied with a slight pause in her words.

“Don’t lie to me!” I snapped.

“Kahlavar I would never lie to you, and if I did I would only do it to protect you. I love you my kahai-na, and want what is best for you,” my mother’s eyes filled up with tears. I snarled. My face burned hot with anger. She was lying to me, they both were!

“If you’re lying to protect me then what are you trying to protect me from,” I asked. My mother looked away from my gaze and sighed shaking her head. “What is it, mother? What are you trying to protect me from? What are you so afraid of?” I snapped. Black smoke swirled around me. I could feel great power flowing through my veins. I had never felt such power before. My mother screamed and pointed a finger at the door.

“Get out,” she bellowed with tears in her eyes.

“What,” the power faded and I felt normal again. She’s never told me to leave, never.

“You heard me, get out! Go to your room or go hang out with your friends just leave me along.” She cried. I slowly backed away shaking my head. I grabbed the door handle behind and quickly escaped the room as fast as I could slamming door hard behind me. I didn’t care if the guards heard the noise and finally noticed my shadowy and came looking for me. I didn’t care anymore. I just wanted to be alone. I was so confused and frustrated. Nothing made sense. I had so many questions that nobody would give me answers to even Fooshka. I can’t seem to trust anyone is this cruel world. As I watched stead fastly in a deep rage towards the staircase to go up to the third floor, something below in the throne room caught my eye. I stopped and grabbed hold of the railing and looked down. From the depths of the shadows my cousin, Azak, frantically scurried to the great doors. He wore a white skirt and golden belt around his waist. His chest was bare and his favorite necklace hung across his shoulders and across his chest. A single red jewel hung from it. Golden bracelets hugged his upper arms and wrists.

He sleeked his hair to the side as he looked left and right as if worried that someone was watching him. I hadn’t seen him since the incident with Zula and his half-brother two weeks ago.

I morphed into a shadow and reappeared down in the throne room just a few feet away from my cousin, Azak.

U

Kahlavar

I grabbed hold of Azak’s shoulder as I said his name. Azak jumped, the hairs on his tail and back standing on end. He shrieked and looked back at me, his golden eyes wide with fear. The fear soon sunbsided when he realized it was me. He groaned and shoved me away.

“What do you want? Can’t you see I’m in a hurry?” he snapped. I gulped and took a step closer. I wanted to tell him the truth of what happened two weeks ago, but I couldn’t get the words to roll off my tongue, but I knew it had to be done, but not yet. Knowinf Azak he needed to be warmed up into a simple conversation before I mentioned anything about what happened two weeks ago.

“I…I noticed you walking down here. You look worried. Is everything alright?” I asked. Azak rolled his eyes and sighed. I could tell that I was irritating him, but surprisingly he answered my question.

“I’m fine…now just leave me alone,” Azak gestured for me to go as he continued his trek to the great doors. I couldn’t let him go without saying anything. He deserved to know.

“I know what happened to your brother a couple weeks ago,” I blurted out. My heart raced in my chest as Azak came to a sudden halt. I could see the muscles in his back tense up as he clenched his hands into tight fists. “I was informing my father of some danger, but he didn’t believe me,” I paused to recollect my thoughts, “all I’m trying to say is I’m sorry. I know you didn’t know if his existence until you were ten when uncle Masko explained why your mother left when you were only two years old. I…I’m sorry.”

Azak quickly turned around, a blast of wind hit me hard in the chest as Azak rushed back to me jabbing his finger into my chest as he barred his fangs at me.

“I don’t need your apology! I know it was you and that filthy peasant friend of yours. You could have done something, but you didn’t do anything! Do you hear me; nothing!”

The room fell silent for a few minutes. Azàk and I averted our eyes from each other, Azàk’s tail swung behind him in annoyance as his yellow let off a feint glow expressing his deep emotions.

I didn’t want my cousin to see me as a monster too. I loved Azàk, but after my banishment we had grown very distant from each other, and this only made things worse, but I couldn’t just let him go, not like this. I cleared his throat and opened my mouth to speak.

“You’re right,” my voice came out like a frail whisper. It was almost a surprise to me that Azàk even heard it.

“Wait…what?” Azàk’s voice cracked under pressure, his golden eyes wide with confusion and fear.

I told Azàk everything that had happened. I didn’t hold back. I left out no details about that day. I wanted him to know the truth. As I finished my spill I sighed and grasped Azàk’s shoulder. Azàk looked up atme like a child would to their parents when they were scared, lost and alone.

“Azàk, please forgive me, don’t hate me. I know what happened but I don’t want it to bring a rift between us, please.” I begged. Azàk looked down at the ground as I removed my hand from his shoulder. “Azàk…” I whispered. I slowly moved my hand up to Azàk’s faced, but the gentle whistling breeze of the wind caught my attention. I checked the windows and doors, but none of them we’re open, not even the tiniest bit cracked. “Azàk…what are you doing?” The wind picked up to such a degree that it caused vases and pictures to shake. I gasped as one fell from its pedestal and crashed to the ground. “Azàk, that’s enough!” I frantically reached out my hand in attempt to get Azàk’s attention, but as my hand came down, Azàk grabbed hold of it and looked him square in the eye.

“NO!” Azàk roared. Azàk unfolded his black wings as the wind increased, thrashing windows open and causing objects to fly across the room in disarray. His fangs were barred and his iris’s glowed with an unnatural yellow light. “Say, you’re sorry! Say it! Say it!” Azàk thrust me down to the ground, and sat on top of me as latched his hands around my neck. My eyes widened in fear as I tried pushing Azàk off of me, but I was too weak, and Azàk was too strong. I was going to die here by the hands of his own kin, I knew it.

By now a whirlwind and formed around us. Azàk continued to scream vengeful phrases at me, but the wind was so powerful, and gaudy that I couldn’t catch a word of it. It didn’t help much either that not only was I being choked to death the strong gust of wind from the whirlwind was sucking the air right out of my lungs. My vision had begun to blur. I needed air, now! I could feel himself slipping away.

*Kahlavar! Speak to me! Kahlavar!*

*I…I…I can’t breath…I can’t breath! Help me, Fooshka! Help me!*

*Everythings going to be alright, Kahlavar, just hold on. Surely, Azàk wouldn’t do this, right? I mean you did kill his only brother, but that was an accident right?*

*FOOSHKA! HELP ME! MALAN SAVE ME!*

*Kahlavar, hold on, I’ll give you some of my strength to push him away. Don’t you let go yet, boy!*

I could feel Fooshka’s strength flowing through my veins. I raised my hand to strike Azàk down, but before I could reach him, the wind came to a sudden decline and Azàk loosened his grip, and pulled himself and off of me. Though my vision was blurred I could still see the fear and guilt in Azàk’s eyes.

I gasped for air as I rolled over onto my side and pushed himself upright. I coughed and continued to take in massive heaps of air. My heart raced in my chest like a wild drum. I looked down at the marble floor, and caught a glimpse of my reflection. My eyes were blood shot from the lack of oxygen to my body, but the color in my olive skin was slowly returning with each gaping breath.

Once I had control over my breathing I rolled back over and sat on my butt facing Azàk. When Azàk finally took notice that I was still alive and breathing he gasped and leapt into my arms. Caught off guard and a bit stunned by his response I hung my arms in the air for a few seconds before hugging him back. Azàk’s body shook as he cried on my chest clinging to my clothes like a child.

“I’m sorry,” he whimpered his words barely audible. Kahlavar looked down at Azàk in surprise as he gently rubbed his back.

“I’m alright, Azàk,” I reassured him in the form of a gentle whisper. “Everything’s going to be alright.” I brushed his hair out of his face and laid my head down on his. “Don’t cry, I’m here.” I paused as I tightened my grip around his trembling body. “I’m here.”

Kahlavar

I took Azàk back to his room, which was just a few doors down from mine, in the upper eastern hallway on the third floor. He had fallen asleep in my arms so I tucked in bed and quietly closed the door behind me and took a right down the hallway towards my room, but a familiar white door with faded blue eyes and snowflakes caught my attention. It was the room right next to mine, it had once belonged to my dear sister, Katya Raykoo Natashka. My father had ordered the doors to be locked and sealed, but in all technicality I could still get in through the shadows, but I never did. Just seeing the door brought pain and anguish to my heart. No one in the this world other than my family shared the pain I felt when Katya was taken from my life forever. I missed her more than anything this cruel world had to offer.

I shook my head, and tried to push the thought out of my head. I needed to be alone. I had been through so much today. My parents were obviously hiding things from me, and I had nearly been killed by my own cousin just moments ago. I needed a break. I hadn’t ever missed living in the depths of the Salvetka forest, but now it sounded like a much better place than this mad house. Of course I couldn’t go back to the forest, so my room was as close as I was going to get to some along time.

My room was large, too large and floored with dark wood and fine red, orange and blue patterned carpets and rugs. Red drapes covered the massive windows and my king sized bed. My bed rested against the wall adjacent to the windows. A full screen T.V hung on the wall, parallel to my bed. Perfect for watching movies late at night or to catch up on daily news. A wide dresser rested beneath it with a large stereo, speakers and many different types of video game counsels. I had a walk in closet to the right of the door and red carpet. Things were still scattered all across the floor; old music sheets, drawings, dirty clothes, and candy wrappers. My father told the servants to not enter my room while I was gone, so it hasn’t been cleaned in seven years. It still smelled of moldy pizza, take-out and dinners servants had brought to my room when I refused to come out and eat with the family.

I sighed and kicked off my shoes and slumped down onto my bed with my face pressed against my soft pillow. I wanted nothing more than to sleep the rest of this day away. I didn’t even want to go to dinner. I didn’t want to do anything. I wanted it to be quiet so I could zone out everything I had heard today.

*Kahlavar, she loves you very much. She just wants what is best for you.*

*Yeah, right. She lied to my face. They’re hiding something from me. I don’t understand why they can’t just tell me the truth.*

*She’s trying to protect you.*

*From what exactly, Fooshka!*

*I can’t tell you.*

*You to! Are you all keeping secrets from me? I thought I could trust my navask at least, but you’re just as bad as they are.*

*Kahlavar you don’t understand. We’re doing this for your own good.*

*Whatever just leave me alone. I’ve had enough kít for one day.*

I zoned Fooshka out and tried my best to sleep everything off before dinner

\* \* \*

I snorted and jolted out of bed at the sound of a loud knock on my door. I forced myself to lift my head off my comfy pillow and turn my head towards the door.

I kept quiet. I had a feeling that the guards had finally noticed that I had escaped from my cell, but I wasn’t going to let them take me back there. I had escaped for a reason, why couldn’t they understand that. I pulled off my covers and rolled off the side of my bed onto the cold wooden floors. I curled up into a ball and morphed into a shadow as the door creaked open and a long dark shadow spread across my rug and stepped into my room gently closing the door behind them.

I trembled in my shadow form, but tried to remain calm in hopes that they wouldn’t spot me. I could sense their eyes peering around the room as I sat quietly on the other side of my bed. The man let out an obnoxious chuckle that echoed through the walls of my room, a chuckle that could only belong to one kahaizan; I morphed back into my material form and peered over the side of my bed catching site of my uncle Masko a feet few feet away from my messy bed.

My father and my uncle looked nothing like. My father had pale pasty skin while my uncle had dark skin that appeared to gleam in the light of the sun. My father’s blue hair was thin and greasy at times while my uncle’s short golden locks were sleeked back behind his ears in a sophisticated yet childish fashion. My father’s blue eyes were cold and stern while my uncle’s golden eyes were animated and sarcastic. My uncle was as tall as me, six foot and four inches, but he was seven years younger than my father.

My uncle wore a white knee length tunic with broad golden belt as well as golden trim across the sleeves and bottom. A long golden emblem once worn by Fooshka rested around his neck. Brown leather sandals were strapped to his enormous feet

*Kahlavar, stand up and go say hi to your uncle. I want to see my little baby boo.*

*Fooshka will you stop with all the baby talk; it’s kind of freaking me out.*

*It’s never bothered you before, now get up. Go!*

I groaned and rose to my feet. My uncle’s bright golden eyes caught sight of me as a quirky grin spread across his face.

“There you are,” my uncle opened his arms wide for me to come in. I burst into tears and ran into his arms wrapping my tail around his. “Rough day, huh,” he brushed his fingers through my tangled black hair and kissed me gently on the top of my head. “Whip away those tears, and let me get a good look at you,” my uncle pushed my shoulders back as his golden eyes examined my face. “You look more like your mother every day aside from that hair of yours,” my uncle ruffled his fingers through my hair. I laughed and waved him off. “I don’t know where you got that.”

“Mother used to say that I was kissed by the ancient spirit of the Pharaoh himself, Ra Nastahka,” I snickered as I tried to groom down my messy hair.

“That would explain the whole…you know,” my uncle raised his eyebrows as he moved one of his fingers in a circular motion beside his head. We laughed as I embraced him once more.

“I’ve missed you so much uncle Masko,” I said. “How come I haven’t seen you yet today? Have you been busy?” I asked. My uncle rolled his eyes and chuckled.

“Your father doesn’t want me to see you,” he said as we both dropped our arms to our sides.

“Why not,” I demanded.

“Well there are two reason’s; for one because of the incident two weeks ago with my other son. I never knew the boy mostly due to the fact that his mother told me to keep my distance, but Azàk was always very fond of him when I introduced them for the first time. It was all an accident though, and I know it was. I don’t blame the one who did it to him. It’s been hard on your cousin, Azak though. I’ve spent most of my time with him. He wouldn’t leave my side. He’s been through so much, and most of it is because of my stupid mistakes. I don’t understand how that boy can still look at me and call me his father,” a deep sadness filled his golden eyes. I sighed and looked down at the ground as I fiddled with my fingers.

“I put Azàk to bed a while ago.” I said.

“Is he sick?” My uncle Masko asked a sense of underlining concern in his voice.

“No…” I paused, and took in a deep breath and sighed. “I told him the truth about what happened with the soldier two weeks ago regarding Zula and I.

“I’m guessing he didn’t take it well,” he said.

“He tried to kill me,” I said. My uncle Masko’s eyes widened in surprise, but his golden eyes soon calmed down as he clamped his hand down on my shoulder.

“Azàk’s a troubled kid. His mother left when he was three after finding out that I had another child with another women a year before I asked her to marry me, and two years before Azàk was born. The war scarred him. He’s so afraid of humans now and of being alone. He just has so much built of anger, and if he doesn’t get it out he’s going to end up hurting himself. I’m sorry that he took out his anger on you though. I’ll talk with him after dinner tonight.” He said. I smiled and quickly gave him a hug.

Trying to change the subject and lighten the mood I asked what the other reason for him not being allowed to me today, although I already knew perfectly well it was. My uncle’s eyes lit up as a smile spread across his face. He let go of me and jumped back. He sleeked his hair back, and put one hand behind his back and the other in front of him in a sophisticated manor. I chuckled knowing exactly who he was trying to imiate.

“In my brother’s words,” my uncle cleared his throat in an attempt to imitate my father’s cold voice. “Masko, I want you as far from Kahlavar as possible, do you understand? I don’t need you filling his head with anymore of your silly stories. He’s not the same innocent child you once knew. He is a traitor to the nation. I never should have let you associate with him after his banishment, now go and play with your silly video games you lazy kaka brain.”

My uncle and I busted out laughing and gripped onto each other’s shoulders. We walked over the front side of my bed and slid down onto the floor. I sighed and rested my head on his muscular shoulder as he rested his head on mine.

“I love you, uncle Masko,” I said. My uncle chuckled, and pulled me in close and ruffled his fingers through my hair.

“I love you to, kaka brain!” he said.

“I’m not a kaka brain,” I laughed trying to pull away.

“You may look like your mother, but you got your fathers big kaka of a brain,” he knocked on my head, and listened. “Yep, nothing there.”

“Hey,” I shoved him aside, but he snatched me and pulled me in close. We laughed and settled down again. I laid my head down on his shoulder again and he laid his head back down on my head. We both sighed as we listened to the sound of the birds chirping outside and the chattering voices of the guards below.

My uncle’s stomach growled in dismay. He chuckled and pressed his hand over his crying stomach.

“Quiet, stomach, can’t you see that we’re having a moment.” My uncle said.

“Its dinner time isn’t it,” I asked.

“Yep,” my uncle replied.

“My mom sent you didn’t she,” I asked.

“Righto,” he replied again.

“We should leave before my mother rings my neck,” I said.

“And my brother beheads me,” we both looked at each other and raced for the door, down the hall and to the dining room a few doors down from the king’s corridors.

“I was going to tell you before we got to the door, but your mother invited a few Earthly guests to the dinner.” My uncle said as he grabbed hold of the golden knob that of the dining room door.

“Are you kidding me,” I exclaimed.

“I tried to tell her otherwise, but she only listens to Suko,” he objected as he pushed open the door and peered inside. I stood on my tip toes and peered inside to see a two familiar humans sitting to the left of the head of the table beside my mother. My father didn’t appear to be in the room, but I had a feeling that this was going to be a rather interesting dinner.

Katlyn

“Thank you for inviting us to dinner.” I bowed my head down to the Queen elbowing Milo in the side to do the same. I looked around the large dining room in amazement.

The table was covered with a red cloth with an orange outline and a few strings tied at each end. There was an expensive looking rug stripped in a pattern of red, orange, blue then yellow, which sat on top of a dark brown wooden floor. The plates and silver ware were golden. There was a huge, fancy glass ceiling ornament that hung over the table lighted by bright orange candles. The walls were painted a poppy seed red giving it that rich fancy, ballroom feel.

“I know that you’re not technically allowed up here, but I couldn’t let you eat down in the dungeons now could I.” the queen smiled. I had seen her once before when Kahlavar had dragged us into the throne room to speak to his psychotic father, but she was far more beautiful than I had remembered almost exotic in a way. She wore a simple, yet complex, white dress with maroon tulip skirt that hung over it and a golden belt. A long purple cape with beautiful gold markings that wrapped around her shoulders and attached to the front draped gracefully behind her sleek body. A slender pink tail occasionally peered under the purple cape. Various golden necklaces and fine jewels rested around her neck. A fine golden crown with three colorful feathers rested on top of her curly brown hair.

“Thank you, again, your majesty,” Milo and I sat down in our seats and waited quietly for dinner.

“Please, call me Laveria.” Laveria smiled and sat down as the maids and servants quietly set food down at the table. I’d never been given my food before. Back at Cindy’s we all get in a straight line and put food on our plates and sat down at a raggedy old table barley big enough for all us to fit. This table spread across most of the length of the long of the narrow room.

Across the table from Milo and sat a boy with dark skin and a muscular build. He wore noting more than a white skirt, and a golden belt. His black styled hair was shaved on one side and flipped over on the side in gentle waves. A large golden necklace stretched across his shoulders and chest. His golden eyes occasionally glanced back at Milo and I, but never in a neutral or curious way. He twirled his fork around on his plate with his hand pressed against his cheek. Laveria had formally introduced him as Azàk, her nephew, in other words, this weirdo was Kahlavar’s cousin. He seemed quiet, but I could see a lot of build of rage in his eyes. I was afraid to speak to him in fear that all that bottled up anger would be released on Milo and I, so I just kept my mouth and turned my attention back to Laveria.

“I have a question.” Laveria asked with sparks in her red eyes.

“Sure,” I said quietly.

“How did you get to Ra’Koza?” she asked politely.

I explained to her briefly on how we got here and how Kahlavar took care of us and dropped us off in Maska with that lady named Saskaiya.

“My kahai-na is such a fine young man. I wish more people would notice that especially his father.” She said with a smile, but I could tell she was in pain. She had the same look in her eyes that I had when I was angry or upset.

The queen didn’t say anything so out of nervousness I kept my mouth shut and tried making conversation with Milo, but even he didn’t appear to want to talk. I sighed and pulled my necklace from under my shirt and fiddled it in my hands like I always did when I was nervous.

“What a beautiful necklace,” Laveria said as she reached out her hand towards it. “May I?” she asked. I nodded and pulled the necklace up and over my head and handed it to her. She cradled it in her arm and examined it. “You know my little Katya had a necklace this, but the center jewel was in the shape of an eight piece star, and the chain was metallic, not an old piece of rubber string, but this is still beautiful none the less. “Where did you get it?”

“I…I don’t know.” I replied. “I like to believe it was a gift from my parents, but to be honest I have no recollection of either of them. I could have found it on the side of a dumpster for all I know.” I sighed as Laveria put the necklace back over my head. “It used to have a metal band, but Milo,” I elbowed Milo in the side. Milo snorted and narrowed his eyes. “Milo’s clumsy butt broke it,” I said, “idiot,” I whispered just loud enough for Milo to hear. Milo perked up his head. He mumbled something under his breath as he folded his arms and slouched down in his chair. I rolled my eyes and stuffed my necklace back down my shirt.

“I wish the best of luck in you finding your parents.” Laveria said. I smiled and nodded in respect and admiration.

“I hope you find your daughter soon.” I said. “I bet you miss her a lot. I’ve heard that she was quite beautiful, but that’s understandable seeing that you are her mother,” I said. Laveria blushed as servants piled our plates with mashed potatoes, steaks, a strange variety of corns and peas as well as plates full of fruits and vegetables similar to the ones Kahlavar had given Milo and I on our way to Maska.

“I am terribly sorry about my husband earlier. He’s very ill and loses his temper quickly, but he means no harm. He has been through a lot in his life and has kept all of his feelings deep inside, but recently they’ve started to boil over. He loses his temper much easier than he used to.” She said.

“It’s alright,” I said as I touched the aching scar on my forehead. “But I do have just one question.”

“And what might that be?” Laveria asked as the servants poured a dark red liquid into our golden grails.

“Why does the king hate humans so much?” I asked. Milo elbowed me in the side to be quiet, but I didn’t listen. I was going to get my answer whether he liked it or not.

“None of us have ever been very fond of humans, but Suko has a tragic past involving two humans that he’s never truly forgotten, but it’s understandable. If you knew the story you would be afraid too.” She said. I wanted to know the details of the story, but I didn’t want to upset anyone especially the wife of that monster. I nodded with a smiled and looked down at my late full of food as my stomach growled in reply.

Voices from outside the door laughed and talked as the door to the dining room opened.

“Boom baby, the princes are in the house,” a tall man with golden hair sleeked back behind his ears, animated golden eyes and dark skin walked into the room and plopped down in his seat across from Laveria. Kahlavar followed closely behind in nothing more than a black boxers and a white tank top. The black hair on his head and tail were tangled and greasy. A huge smile spread across both their faces as they took their seats across from us. Kahlavar didn’t appear to notice Milo and I, but I could feel his blood red eyes peering over at me. Azàk purked up his head at the sight of them, and smiled.

“Takta,” he said with glee.

“Azàk,” the man with the golden hair sqeeked. “My little baby. Oh my little angel.” He said as he wrapped his arms around Azàk and repeatedly kissed him on the cheek. “Daddy loves you so much. My kahai-na….”

“Dad, will you stop? Seriously,” Azàk rolled his eyes and pushed Masko back in his seat.

“Fine…be that way,” Masko mumbled to himself.

“Masko, do you always have to do that when you come to dinner,” Laveria asked before looking over at Kahlavar with a deadly glare, “and Kahlavar, where in Kàtzu are your clothes?” she demanded.

“Laveria, stop whining, he’s just a boy. He’s a teenager for goodness sake. He needs a little room to breathe and rebel once in a while, and yes I do have to have to do that everytime at dinner. I’m not a stranger in this house, thank you very much. If you’re worried about Suko don’t be. He’s not going to care as long as I’m here.” Masko said. Laveria’s red eyes darkened as she slammed her fist onto the table and leaned her head over.

“Masko, how dare you talk down to me,” she snarled. “You may be the prince’s brother, but you are still nothing more than a prince, and I am your queen, and I will not tolerate this kind of behavior, so keep your mouth shut and let me deal with my son,”

“You’re Suko’s brother,” I said. The room fell silent and all eyes turned towards me. Milo groaned and cupped his hands over his face in disappointment. Everyone appeared to be shocked that I had spoken out of turn except for Masko who still had a grin on his face and a charming look in his golden eyes.

“I know, it’s hard to believe, but it’s true.” He said. “I’m the younger brother of that heartless creature,” Masko and the other laughed at his comment including myself. “What might your names be?” he asked. My eyes widened with fear as I cleared my throat and pulled Milo’s hands away from his face.

“My name is Katlyn Caldwell, and this is my friend Milo Caldwell. We’re adopted siblings.” I lied smiling as I wrapping my arms around Milo who groaned and shook his head in disbelief. Milo wasn’t my adopted brother, he was just one of the foster kids at Cindy’s house and a good friend of mine, but I didn’t want to get into depth on my complicated family life.

“I didn’t know a human as young as yourself could have such white blonde hair,” Masko stated as he pointed a long slender finger at my wavy locks of white blonde hair.

“It’s not common, but it happens,” I said twisting a strand of white blonde hair. “I was born with it, but I used to day dream that I was kissed by an angel of light.” My comment seemed to make everyone smile bringing life back into the still silence of the room. I sighed with relief as everyone continued on with their conversations.

Kahlavar and Masko talked and snickered amongst themselves as Masko piled a massive heap of mashed potatoes onto his silver spoon and flung the heap towards Laveria’s face hitting her directly in the nose. Kahlavar and Masko burst out laughing as Laveria clenched her teeth revealing her vampire like fangs. Laveria whipped away the mashed potatoes on her face and snarled.

“Dad, she’s going to get mad, you know what happens when…” Azàk tried to warn Masko, but it was too late. Shots had already been fired. If Masko was a real man he would get himself out of that seat and run.

“Enough with this childish behavior, now both of you sit down and be quiet,” Laveria waved her hand and the room fell silent once more. Masko, with wide eyes, took another scoop of his potatoes, and whispered something to Kahlavar. Laveria’s soft red eyes grew dark. She reached out her hand, and a scarlet like flame warped around it. Objects lifted off the table, as her red eyes glowed with great intensity. I gasped and watched in amazement. “Don’t get on my bad side, Masko,” she said, her voice calm but serious. “Or I will send all of this food flying at your face, do you understand?” Masko gulped and dropped his spoon. He smiled and let out a nervous chuckle. He nodded and placed his hands in his lap. Kahlavar watched his mother with fear in his eyes. Laveria smiled and placed all the objects gently down on the table. The scarlet flame vanished and the room fell silent once again.

“Yes, your majesty,” Masko and Kahlavar said as they sulked back in their seats.

“There,” Laveria smiled as she brushed the crumbs off her clothes and washed the remainder of mashed potatoes off her face. “Now, Kahlavar, my kahai-na, how has your day been so far? I’m so glad to have you back home.”

“It’s been good I guess.” Kahlavar mumbled. “Other than you and dad acting weird and Azàk almost sucking the life out of me, it’s been great,” Kahlavar took a sip of his drink as sweat dripped down his forhead. Azàk’s eyes widended in fear as he sulked back in his chair keeping a close on Laveria.

“Oh that’s great, my kahai-na, that’s,” Laveria paused and her soft red eyes darkended as the strange red fire enveloped her hands. “Wait…WHAT!”

“I…It was an accident your majesty. My powers…they got out of control…I,” Azàk slid down his chair until only his head and hands were visable. “I’m making things worse. I should just shut up now,” Azàk mumbled to himself.

Laveria in rage turned her attention to Masko. She slammed her fist down on the table, and snarled. Objects arose from the table and floated above our heads; plates, forks, knives, the fine roasted meats, the fruits and vegatbles, and the giant bowl of mashed potatoes that hung above my head.

“I have a feeling that something is lingering over my head, ready to fall on top of me, and that if it does, I have the right to blame you, am I right, Katlyn?” Milo said.

“Shut up, Miles,” I pinched him in the side. “Do you want her to drop the bowl of mashed potatoes on my head?”

“Well then maybe I’ll actually get to eat something.” He said.

“Miles,” I snapped.

“MASKO!” Laveria roared. The forks and knives appeared by Masko’s face, and around his neck.

“Ahh!” Masko shrieked. “What did I do? Seriously you need to calm down.”

“You’re his father, you idiot. You raised a cold blooded killer or nearly murdered my son!” Laveria snapped.

“Well Kahlavar’s not dead, for one, Azàk’s not a cold blooded killer, and you have forks and knives aimed at my throat,” Masko said.

“Why you little…” Laveria gasped as the door cracked open. She returned everything back to its proper place and smiled with delight.

The door opened and King Suko walked in, I panicked and ducked under the table pulling Milo along with me.

“Suko, mei amaka.” Laveria said. I heard the sound of people kissing. My stomach churned. I still couldn’t believe Laveria, a beautiful woman like herself, would marry an ugly psychotic prince like Suko, but when I saw Kahlavar it all made sense. It makes me wonder what Katya was *really* like. Either she was sweet, gentle and energetic like her mother or she was just as psychotic and delusional as her father and brother. Suko sat down. His tail swayed back and forth between his feet.

“What is that smell?” Suko asked in English.

“It’s the food, mei amaka.” Laveria said gently. Suko sniffed the air again and hissed.

“Why do I smell humans, Laveria? I thought I told you that they were not allowed upstairs especially on the third floor!” Suko snapped.

“They’re downstairs sleeping. It’s probably just me. I did clean their clothes and put them to bed.” She lied. Laveria had done that, but that was over three hours ago, and we only slept for like twenty minutes before she brought us a little snack to eat.

Suko scooted out of his chair and walked around the table. Milo and I curled up next to each other and tried our best to keep our breathing as quiet as possible. Suko stopped behind his brother, Masko. Masko’s tail curled around his right leg. I didn’t know what that meant, but I assumed he must have been terrified.

“Masko, where are they?” Suko demanded.

“Where are what?” Masko asked as his tail tightened around his leg cutting off circulation.

“The humans, where are they?” Suko said.

“I…I don’t know, Suko.” Masko gulped.

“Don’t lie to me, now where are they!” Suko snapped. Masko didn’t reply. Suko continued walking. He sniffed the air and walked a few more steps. Suko paused and leaned down and pulled up the drapes to peer under the table. Milo and I tried our best to scurry away, but Suko caught us before we could move more than a few feet.

“Laveria I told you not to bring these humans upstairs. I tried my best to reason with you and let them stay here with one simple rule not to bring the upstairs especially to the third floor. I trusted you.” Suko exclaimed. Milo and I crawled out from under the table and stood behind Laveria. Milo and I crawled out from under the table and stood behind Masko and Kahlavar. Laveria arose from her seat to face her husband.

“I understand, but they were starving and I wasn’t going to let them eat in that filthy place downstairs.” Laveria protested.

“I want them out of this palace, this city, and this county at once. I don’t want any of my people to have to stand up to these filthy creatures.” Suko said. “Masko,” Suko pointed a finger at his brother who trembled his seat. Masko jumped up and bowed his head respectively. “I order you to take these humans and give them to captain Kavàn and tell him to take these humans to Anotato. It will be a few weeks journey, but I don’t want my country to be contaminated by these filthy animals any longer.” Suko ordered. “And Azàk, in the morning I want you to go with Captain Kalvran, you are cspatin of the skyguards, he’ll need your expert eye.”

Azàk scoffed and arose from his seat, pushing his chair back. A cold gentle breeze wisped through my hair, catching me off guard, as Suko’s hand tightened my wrist.

“They’re insist humans. Yes I am not fond of humans myself, but they are just children. I will not allow you to order my father to send this creatures to captian Kalvran, and send me to do his bidding!” Azàk spat.

“Azàk, that’s enough, just do as he says,” Masko pleaded with his son.

“No!” Azàk roared. “I will not do as he says. He’s trying to kill innocent children.”

“That’s enough talking from you,” a blue aurora formed around Suko’s hand, as he raised it up high ready to strike, but Azàk caught his wrist and looked him straight in the eyes. “I don’t care those humans did to you, you’re a coward!” Azàk snapped. Suko’s cold eyes widended in disbelief as his tight grip on my wrist softended. “Do you hear me, a coward!”

“Azàk,” Masko arose from his seat and snatched Azàk’s wrist and pulled him back. “I said that’s enough. Now go to your room!”

“But, father,” Azàk pleaded.

“We’ll talk about this later,” Masko pulled Azàk away from Suko and shoved towards the door. Azàk roared and a gust of wind blew in knocking all the plates and silverware off the table.

“You need to control that boy, Masko,” Suko snarled. “Now do as I asked,” Suko threw Milo and I in Masko’s direction and then proceeded to sit back down in his seat.

Masko bowed and walked over to Milo and I and dragged us out of the room and closed the door behind us. I looked back at Kahlavar and the others as the servants closed the doors behind us, and Milo and I were left at the hands of prince Masko.

Katlyn

“Please, don’t hurt us.” I cried as Masko dragged Milo and I down the grand staircase. “You have to listen to you son. We didn’t do anything wrong.” When we reached the first floor Masko leaned over to me and smiled.

“Don’t worry I’m not going to take you to the captain. I’m going to take you to the east wing. Suko never goes down there. Suko and I don’t have fond memories of that place.” Masko smiled, but I could see the pain his eyes.

Masko lead us to the east wings down on the first floor across the throne room from the west wing where Milo and I had previously stayed. The wing was closed off by a large red door that was torn and scratched as if an animal had clawed on it. Masko opened the door and turned on the lights quietly closing them behind him.

The wing looked just like the west wing, but it felt dark, abandoned and haunted as if someone had died here and their spirit still roamed these halls. He led us to a small room and grabbed his keys to unlock it. A few doors down across the hall, dried blood lathered the walls. Claw marks etched the doors and floors and the light above was broken and shattered. It occasionally flickered on and off. I shivered and held on tightly to Milo’s arm.

“What happened there?” I asked. Masko paused and looked to see where I was pointing. He sighed and went back to finding the right key.

“It’s a long story.” He said. “I doubt you would want to hear it.”

“We have time, right Miles,” I elbowed Milo in the side who jabbed me back.

“Katlyn,” he said. I jabbed him in the side one more time and smiled. Milo sighed and clenched his jaw.

“Of course,” he spat out the words as if they were poison in his mouth. Masko looked back at us in shock. His golden eyes were filled with pain and deep sorrow. He sighed and shook his head dropping his keys to the floor red stained carpet. He walked over to the doors where the blood ran across the ivory walls and claw marks etched the doors. He pressed the hand against the marks and sighed.

“I would suggest you take a seat,” he said. “This might take a while.” He sighed and continued on with the story. “A hundred and ten years ago Suko and I were playing in the pool in front of the palace. I was only four at the time and Suko eleven. I remember it like it was yesterday.”

Masko clenched his jaw and took in a deep breath and sighed.

“You don’t have to tell us if you don’t want to,” Milo said. “We mean you kahaizans no harm.” Masko shook his head and continued on with the story.

“Our father, Pharoka Fooshka, the previous king of Ra’Koza, ran over to the pool and jumped in. I remember because he was wearing nothing more than a white skirt with a golden belt.” Masko smiled at the thought of his father.

“He sounds like he was a bit of jokester,” I said.

“He was, believe me,” he said. “Anyway, our mother, Raykoo, got all mad at our father and made us all get out and dry off. Later my father was informed that two humans had come into the city. They were scientists, or so they said, wishing to research our species and culture.” He said. “My father took Suko and I down the steps of the palace to meet these humans. It was a man and a woman. The man was short compared to my father with plain brown hair and electric green eyes. The woman was very beautiful for a human. She had short black hair and soft blue eyes.” He cleared his throat and paused as he recalled his past.

“What were their names,” I asked.

“Julius and Rachel,” Masko said. I could feel Milo’s body tense at the sound of the human’s names.

“As I was saying,” Masko continued, “my father was skeptical of letting them enter the palace. He was afraid of them just as any other kahaizan would be, but he finally agreed and allowed them to enter the palace. Our father wouldn’t let us leave his side, but I didn’t want to leave and neither did Suko. We were afraid of them too. I’d never seen a human before until they arrived.” Masko paused and looked back at Milo and I. He sighed and continued on. “Our father and his servants showed them around the palace, every window, door and painting. When they were finished the second sun had already set behind the western hills of the Maskan desert, so my father allowed them to stay for the night, but they had to be gone by morning. They slept in this very room.”

Masko gestured to the door where he stood with the clawed wood and blood stained walls. Masko remained silent for a moment and rested his arm above his head against the door where Julius and Rachel had slept for the night.

“Sorry,” he shook his head and continued on. “It was around midnight. Suko told me that I had been sleep walking when I found myself in his arms in front of Rachel and Julius’s door. Suko picked me up and walked back down the hallway, but we were stopped by Rachel’s mopping cries. She had come out of their room with her arm pressed against her stomach as blood dripped from her mouth and onto the floor.” He said.

I looked down at the dark dried stains of blood on the dim red carpet. I shivered at the thought of seeing another human bleed to death before my very eyes, and to think that Masko was only four years old when he witnessed such a tragedy.

“Rachel collapsed in her own pile of blood and died. Suko and I didn’t cry, but I can tell you that we were horrified by the scene and with me in his arms Suko ran down the hallway and into the throne room where we were stopped by our father. He asked us what we were doing up so late, and Suko tried his best to explain what we had seen. Our father had told us to stay in the throne room and wait for him to come back, but Suko and I were young and naïve so we disobeyed our father’s orders and followed him back into the eastern hall where Rachel’s body lay. When we got there we found our father holding her limp body in his arms. Our father yelled at Suko reminding him that he had asked us to stay in the throne and wait for him to come back. That’s when Julius came out of his room demanding what all the ruckus was.” Masko clenched his fist as a tear slid down his cheek.

“What did he do,” I asked. Milo moved his arm down mine and grabbed hold of my fingers. I smiled and intertwined my fingers around his. A tears formed around the corners of Milo’s pale green eyes. “Miles, what’s wrong” I whispered in his ear. Milo refused to answer my question, so I diverted my attention back to Masko.

“When Julius saw Rachel’s limp body and her blood stained lips he immediately accused our father. You see our father was a child of darkness, born in the month of darkness and death, which in your human months would be November. Julius was furious with my father and pulled out this long golden staff from the air with a glowing red sphere. It was true that Julius had come for research, but what he didn’t tell us was that he had magic. Julius was a sorcerer, and a powerful one at that. My father pushed Suko and I against the wall behind him. He ordered the two of us to go back upstairs to our mother, but neither of us budged. We were both so scared.” Masko paused and took a deep breath in and out. “The rest of the night is a blur to me; only glimpses of memories here and there. I only know the truth of the events that happened because of Suko. He covered my eyes for most of it. He wouldn’t let me look at what was about to take place. I remember the sounds and all the cries, and the sound of blood. The only thing I can remember is the fearful look in my brother’s blue eyes as he tightened his grip around my four year old body.” Masko paused and silence enveloped the room for a minute. Masko sighed and continued on. “Suko told me that our father in a rage tried to explain the situation to Julius, but Julius wouldn’t listen. Suko said he saw a bright current of electric green light hit my father in the chest knocking him to the ground. Suko put me down to check on him, but he…” Masko’s lips trembled. “He was dead.” Masko’s kneels bent as he tried to regain his balance. “Now…of that I do remember.”

I gasped and tightened my grip around Milo’s hand and pulling my body closer to Milo’s body resting my head on his broad shoulder.

“Suko was furious with Julius and tried to attack him. I remember screaming out his name as Julius wacked my brother down with his staff. Suko was fine of course, but upon hearing the commotion my mother came rushing down the opposite end of the hallway jumping onto Julius’s back. She hissed and snarled at him with her blue wings spread out across the hallway as Julius tried to whack her off. My mother managed to claw his face with her nails forming a thick scar of blood from his right eye across his crooked nose. My mother yelled at Suko to take me outside and inform the captain of the guard as she smashed Julius head into door way, but Suko didn’t budge and I couldn’t get myself to leave his side, so we stayed and watched in horror. My mother continued to beat Julius head into the wall splattering blood across the ivory walls and onto our skin as Julius clawed his hand across the door frame.” Masko brushed his hand over the thin claw marks against the broken door.

“Julius managed to push my mother off causing her to slam against the wall. At the moment she hadn’t seen our father’s body until Julius had thrown her off. I remember her desperate cries as she bent over our father’s lifeless body calling his name. That’s when Julius struck her down. My brother and I watched as our mother’s body fell limp and collapsed on top of my father’s lifeless body. Julius then came over to us. He ripped me out of my brother’s arms and threw me against the wall and put his staff against Suko’s throat. At that moment I ran and grabbed the guards and informed them of the situation, but by the time we got there, Julius was gone and my brother was crying over our parents dead bodies.” Masko whimpered as he fell to his knees.

“I’m so sorry,” I whimpered. I felt bad for even saying sorry upon hearing the end of the story. The hallway fell silent as Masko whipped his tears and bent down to the grab the keys that he had dropped. After a few moments I finally found the voice and the courage to speak again. “Masko,” I managaed to say.

“Yes,” he said as he pushed pulled himself back up and attempted to find the right key to unlock the door.

“When Azàk said that he didn’t care what those humans had done to him, is that he meant? I mean the story that you told? Is that way he called him a coward?” I asked.

“My brother is no coward. Yes he’s mentally unstable, but witness the murder of your parents, being forced to rule a country at the age of tweeleve, and raise a brother and later on lose your children to the same creatures who killed your parents, can really do it for man. Yes, my brother’s actions are not justified because of his past, but his past gives a reason for why he acts the way he does, and why he’s done so much for K…” Masko paused and shook his head as he inserted the key into the keyhole. “Nevermind,” he smiled as he opened the door to let us in.

The room was just as the one Milo and I had stayed in while the maids tended to my cut. It was small with white walls, two plain twin sized beds separated by a small wooden table rested off to the side of the room. It wasn’t much, but I’d rather stay here then be forcefully dragged thousands of miles away to another country on an alien planet.

“Thank you, so much, prince Masko,” I bowed to him in respect, but he wouldn’t have it.

“Please, you don’t need to bow to me. I just don’t want my brother to cause himself anymore pain then he has already.” Masko smiled and sighed. His eyes were red and swollen with tears.

“Yes, thank you for everything, prince Masko,” Milo acknowledged.

“Oh,” Masko smiled. “You don’t need to worry about food or water. My son, Azàk, and I will provide with whatever you may need, now get some rest. Well that’s to say if I can get Azàk to talk to me again after what happened.” He said. “I’ll bring you some dinner after Suko and the other’s go to sleep.” Masko smiled and quietly closed the door behind him leaving Milo and I alone in the small quest bedroom.

Milo took the first bed on the right and I took the bed on the left closest to the wall and large wooden wardrobe.

“Are you okay, Milo,” I asked. Milo cleared his throat as he laid his head down on the firm pillows and soft white blankets.

“Of course,” he said. I knew that he was lying. I could see it written all over his face. Masko’s words had pained him as if he knew each person involved individual, but that was common for Milo. Family had always been a rather sensitive topic with Milo. I don’t think he’s ever mentioned a word of his family to me before. In a way I knew everything about him, but when it came to his past I knew nothing about him. “Masko’s right, Katlyn, we should get some sleep.” Milo’s stomach growled as he kicked off his shoes and snuck into under his covers. “But I will admit I am a bit hungry.” Milo rolled onto his side facing me and smiled

“Milo, you know if you ever need to talk to someone I’ll always be here for you,” I reassured him. Milo yawned and closed his eyes.

“Goodnight, Katlyn,” he mumbled.

“Goodnight, Milo,” I mumbled under my breath as I reached for the lamp at the center of the room and turned it off. The world around me turned to darkness as I curled up under my covers kicking off my shoes and pressing my head against my hard pillow. I listened to the sound of Milo’s hypnotic breathing as I slowly fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

13

Kahlavar

We ate dinner in silence after my father had ordered uncle Masko to take Katlyn and Milo out of the city, and Azàk had stormed out. I was relieved that they were gone. I never should have brought them in the first place. They brought more trouble than they were worth. The servants had picked up the food and plates and rearranged the table for dinner as it had been before after Azàk’s violent outburst.

The door cracked open and uncle Masko walked in. He closed the door softly behind him and quietly sat down on the right hand of my father. His yellow eyes were a bit swollen and red, as if he had been crying. Enough had happened tonight that I didn’t dare ask him why. He had been gone for so long. I presumed that he had gone and talked with Azàk.

“I presume you have brought them into the hands of captain Kavàn. You wouldn’t back here if you hadn’t. That would be dishonorable on your part.” My father said as he cut a piece off of his Zargonian steak.

“Of course, *vaska*, I would never lie to you.” My uncle smiled and picked up his spoon and took a bite of his mashed potatoes. He was lying. I could see it in his eyes and the way he shifted uncomfortably back and forth in his seat as he spoke to my father. He hadn’t taken Katlyn and Milo to captain Kavàn, they were still here, in the palace. I didn’t know where, but by the looks in his eye he was confident that it was place my father would never look, and I knew exactly where that was; the east wing guest rooms on the first floor.

“Suko,” my uncle said.

“Yes, Masko,” my father replied as he took a bite of his fruit.

“I…I love you, you know that, right,” my uncle said. My father dropped his fork and looked at my uncle in confusion. My mother and I glanced at each other and then looked back at our father.

“I am not playing kalami the video game with you again…” my father paused and leaned in closer to my uncle, “you know I suck at that game.”

“I don’t want you to…I just wanted you to know how much I loved you, that’s all.” My uncle said with a smile as he took in another spoon full of food.

“Well…then thank you, Masko.” My father smiled, a very rare sight to see. “I love you too, you kaka brain.”

“I’m not a kid anymore, will you stop calling me that?” my uncle said. My father laughed as he took another bite.

“I raised you, I can call you whatever I want,” my father snickered. My mother chuckled and kissed my father on the cheek. I smiled as I took a bite of my mashed potatoes. I hadn’t had a dinner like this with the family in a while. It was nice.

“Well I’m glad all of this stress and anger is out of the door. It’s nice to sit down and have a nice family dinner again,” my mother smiled, as her red eyes glicended in the light.

I coughed and continued to eat my food. I still hadn’t put on any clothes since uncle Masko had left. I knew mother was still furious with me, but my father didn’t seem to care, but he was probably used to it. When I was younger and we were a lot closer to one another he used to tell me stores of how Fooshka would come to dinner, the king of Ra’Koza, in his underwear and crown.

*I only did that a few times,* Fooshka tried to explain.

*Not according to your son.*

*Okay…I did it more than often, but it made Raykoo laugh. She had the cutest laugh in the whole world, but she hated it. I would do anything, even wear my underwear to dinner, to put a smile on her beautiful face. I loved her, and I still do.*

*That’s weird.*

*You turn bright red whenever Zula comes within a thirty feet radius of you, so don’t be bashing out on me. You’ll understand when you get married.*

*Ugh!*

I sighed and cleared my throat. I had no idea what I was about to say, but I was going to break this awkward silence.

“I…I missed you guys,” I stammered. The room fell silent and everyone put their forks down and looked up at me. My mother smiled and touched my hand. My uncle Masko smiled as well. My father on the other hand looked conflicted and confused by my comment.

“We missed you two, *kikash.*” My uncle Masko replied. I was glad that my uncle had said something, but I wanted my father to say something to me. I didn’t really care what the others had to say at the moment.

“You want me, the three kings, and the council to denounce your banishment decree.” My father looked me straight in the eyes. His blue eyes were cold, but I could see something hiding behind them, but I couldn’t make out what it was.

“That’s not what I meant, but of course I do.” I replied.

“Now, Kahlavar, I understand, but the decree wasn’t set in place just because of the war. We were trying to protect you.” He said.

I snarled and slammed my fist on the table.

“From what?” I demanded. “Both you and mom keep telling me that you were just trying to protect me, but from what. What are you guys so afraid of? Are you afraid of my powers, of me…what! Just tell me the truth!” I exclaimed.

“You wouldn’t understand, Kahlavar, now stop arguing and eat your food, you’re making a scene,” my father said as he continued to cut his meat. I snarled as I arose from my seat. “Kahlavar, sit down,” my father said as he arose from his seat.

“No, not until you or mom tells me what the heck is going on around here. Every year of my banishment has been fairly normal, but this year you two have been acting strange, and not only you, so has my navask, and uncle Masko, Azàk, and then these humans show up and one of them happens to share similar straits to Katya. I don’t know what’s going on, but I want to know the truth, and I’m not going to let you put it off for the next twenty years of my life!”

“I said,” my mother interrupted as the red flame of her telekinetic powers formed around her hands. “let’s have a nice dinner for once, now the both of you sit,” my mother exclaimed as she used her powers to slam both my father and I back in our seats. “Suko, Masko, can I speak with the both of you, out in the hall. We’ll be right back my kahai-na,” she said as she dragged my father and uncle out into the hallway and slammed the doors behind her.

I growled and turned into a shadow crawling under the door and peered in on their conversation. They all stood in a circle close to one another with horrified expressions on their faces just outside the door.

“Suko, I can’t do this anymore. He wants to know. Why don’t we just tell him? We can’t just keep feeding him lies eventually the truth will come out!” my mother whispered.

“No, if we tell him we don’t know what *they* will do to him. We’ve done this for twenty years now. We can’t stop now. I’m not letting my children become some weapon for someone else’s personal gain.” My father snapped.

I took a few steps back. We’ve been doing this for twenty years we can’t stop now? I’m not letting my children become some weapon for someone else’s personal gain? What are they saying? How long have they been keeping secrets from me? What are they trying to separate me from?

“My queen, Suko is right.” My uncle began. “If we tell him we don’t know what Julius or his son will do to him and possibly Kaska.” There was that name again, Kaska. Who was Kaska? They’re talking about him as if I know him on a personal level. I’ve never known a Kaska in my life. The worst part of it all was that even my uncle, the only one in my family who still loved me for who I was, was in on this too. Was there anyone in my family that I could actually trust anymore?

“Laveria, you know exactly why Kaska isn’t here anymore. We can’t let *him* find Kaska. If we tell Kahlavar, *he* will know and my brother is right, we don’t know what he’ll try and do.” My uncle sighed and looked down at my mother. My mother was in tears.

Who was this *he* that they keep talking about? Why is everything in my life hiding things from me? Don’t I deserve a right to know about my own past? What the hell is going on?

“I know you’re right, but I hate it. I don’t want to hurt my kahai-na. He’s all we have left of Kaska.” She cried. My father wrapped his arms around her and gently kissed her on the cheek. Their tails intertwined with one another.

“I think we all know what we should do. I’ll call the council and the kings together for a meeting, but in the meantime we should go back inside. Kahlavar’s probably listening to this whole thing as we speak.” My father said. They all agreed and walked back to the door. I scurried back into the dining room and sat in my seat and picked up my fork and spoon and shoved some more Zargonian meat into my mouth trying to act like I had heard nothing of their conversation.

I gave them all a fake smile as they entered the room. I tried finishing my steak, but I wasn’t too hungry after what I had heard earlier. I needed to get away, just for the night. Maybe I could stay the night at Havask and Tavask’s and hang out with Zula as well. I needed my friends more than ever. They wouldn’t lie to me. They wouldn’t hurt me or mock me. They were more like a family to me then these people were.

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After dinner I said goodnight and headed to bed. I walked past Katya’s old room, and brushed my fingers across the old paint, and sighed.

“Things were better when you were here, Katya, but in a way I’m glad you don’t have to see what your big brother has become.” I opened my door and gently closed it behind me.

I was tired, but I had too much on my mind to sleep, so I opened my window and sat on the large window seal with the padded cushions, and looked up at Kàtzu’s fiery red moon.

“Katya, wherever you are, I need you. I know I’m supposed to be the big protective older brother, but right now I need my little brave sister to pick up my pieces. I don’t feel like myself anymore. Actually nothing in this house feels like how it used to be anymore. I’m just so confused, Katya. Will you please just come home?” I whimpered as I tears streamed down my cheeks. “Katya,” I sighed and slipped down my window seal and closed the window, and shut the curtains. I yawned and climbed into bed, and tried my best to fall asleep. I had a feeling this was going to be a long restless night.

Kahlavar

I woke up to the chirping sound of birds outside my window. I groaned and threw my pillow at the window; the chirping ceased and I nestled back into my pillow.

*Kahlavar, we should do something fun today!*

*Oh! I have an idea!*

*Really?*

*It’s called sleeping. It’s said to be very relaxing and calming.*

*Kahlavar if I still had a body I would roll your sorry butt out of this bed, and drag you downstairs.*

*Too bad, you don’t, now shut up. I’m trying to sleep.*

*Kahlavar, please!*

Fooshka continued his pleading cries from the next five minutes until I finally rolled myself out of bed, got dressed and dragged my butt downstairs to the throne room.

*It worked! Maybe I should do that more often,*

*Please don’t*

I moaned as I groggily walked over to the great doors and pushed them open. The two suns beat down on me in warming rays. I smiled and walked down the stairs into Anoka.

The streets were busy, like always, the markets were packed as merchants tried selling their products to the locals. I missed Anoka. As a kid I wasn’t allowed to go past the palace walls, unless I was heavily guarded and with my father by my side at all times, and even after I was banished I didn’t get to see much of it. It will still always be the most beautiful place in the world to me. No mountains, hills, caves, waters or trees could compare to the beauty of seeing peace in your kingdom even if you had no peace at home.

I walked towards the Southern gate where Kanto, and the Southern sky guards kept watch. Kanto, used me and Katya’s personal guard. He was very close to my father, and was very high up in status, that’s until he took Katya and I on a short walk around the city and nearly lost, but to be honest it was more Katya and I trying to lose him, then him losing us, but unfortunately that cost him his job, and now he works as a guard. He still hates me to this day for what I did, and still sees me as a naïve and brainless child.

“Good morning, Kanto,” I waved upwards to where Kanto sat on the wall. Kanto rolled his eyes as he jumped down from the wall.

“What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be in the palace? You’re mother never lets you leave the palace during this time of year.” He said.

“She doesn’t know, and I don’t think she will,” I said.

“Stupid boy,” he scoffed. “Fine, then what do you want with me?”

“I wanted to take a stroll through the forest, just outside the wall. I need a little fresh air.” I said.

“Too attached to the woods, huh?” Kanto said. “Happens to all of us. My new job may be boring, but it sure is beautiful. Makes me very grateful for what I have, and plus I don’t have to babysit you anymore. Your sister was fine, but you,” Kanto poked my in the stomach, “you were a real pain in my butt. You had so much energy, too much.” Kanto shook his head and sighed. “Never mind, just go away.” Kanto opened the gates and pushed me outside.

“Thanks, Kanto,” I said as I waved goodbye. Kanto rolled his eyes and shooed me away.

“Oh and Kahlavar,” Kanto called from above. “If you get lost, I’m not telling your mother, and especially not your father, so just don’t die, okay… you know what, just go away. I’m done talking to you,” Kanto said.

“Thanks, Kanto,” I said as I walked into the Salvetka forest.

“Yeah, whatever,” he grumbled.

I didn’t walk far before something crackled in the bushes. I sniffed the air and scanned the area. It wasn’t a predator or any creature of that sort. It was a kahaizan, but a specific kahaizan, but the smell was all around me. I couldn’t find where they could possibly be or if there was even anyone there at all. I frantically turned in circles until I came face to face with two bright yellow eyes.

“Ahhh!” I gasped and took a step back. I regained my focus and looked back at the terrified creature that had startled me. “Azàk,” I said a little bewilderded.

“Kahlavar,” he said. “What are you doing out here?”

“I’d like to ask you he same thing.” I said.

“I had a weird dream last night. I needed to get out, and get some fresh air, and plus I’m trying to avoid my dad. I know he wants to sit down and talk to me, but I don’t want to talk to him, not yet.” He said.

“I’m trying to avoid my life right now,” I said.

“Sounds like a typically Nastashka family story,” he said. I chuckled as we both continued walked through the woods.

“What was your dream about?” I asked. Azàk stopped in his tracks as he pondered the question. He grasped the nearest tree trunk next to him and sighed. “You don’t have to tell me. I am your banished cousin, traitor to the nation, cousin, who probably shouldn’t be trusted with anything, but I thought I might ask.”

“It was about Jason,” he said as he let go of the tree and continued walking.

“Jason, as in Jason Salazar?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“What about Jason?” I asked.

“Well that’s where it gets strange,” he said.

“Okay,” I said. “I’m listening. I’ve heard enough crazy stuff in my life time.”

“He was hurt, physically, but mentally. He looked like he needed help, so I tried to help him. I thought he was going to attack me or kill me, but he didn’t. He just grabbed my hand, and we talked.”

“You just talked…about what?” I asked.

“Lots of things I suppose. I don’t really remember, but I do remember how I felt afterwards.” He said.

“How did you feel?” I asked. “We’re you scared, angry, vengeful, fearful, all of these emotion are pretty normal when attached to Jason Salazar and those nasty, slimy humans.” I said.

“No,” he replied. I looked back at him confused and a bit taken back. “I felt,” Azàk paused and looked back me, his yellow eyes serious, and content, “sympathy for him, Kahlavar. I…I felt sorry for him.”

“How could you feel sorry for him?” I snapped. “He’s a human, and a sorcerer none the less. Humans bring nothing but trouble and ones gifted with magic are even worse. My sister is gone because of him. He nearly killed you, and he and his men slaughtered a fourth of Ra’Koza, and you feel sympathy for him?”

“I knew you wouldn’t understand!” Azàk groaned. “It’s just how I felt when I woke up. I didn’t like it either, but think about it Kahlavar, are humans really all that bad? Yes they’ve done a lot of bad things to us, but haven’t we done the same to them? When I spoke to Jason in my dream, I had a strong feeling as we spoke that his actions were not coming from him, as in he is just some kind of puppet for something bigger. I know Jason’s pretty scary, and I’m not going to lie, but just think about it.”

“You’re insane,” I said. “Jason is dangerous, end of story,”

“Whatever, I’m just saying.” He said.

“Azàk, just promise me you won’t join Jason and his men because of some silly dream,” I said.

“Sure thing, Kahl,” he said as we entered into a small meadow, a quarter of a mile from the great wall. “It’s really pretty out here. I haven’t been out here in a while. I’m the captain of the sky guards so I often have to patrol the area with my men, but being in it is a little different. You’re lucky, you get to be in this all day long. Yes, you can’t come into Ra’Koza, but the Kabeshan Mountains are beautiful.”

“Yeah I suppose,” I said as we both sat down in the grass with a warm breeze coming in through the east.

“Hey, Kahl,” Azàk said.

“Yeah,” I replied.

“Last night, after dinner, I heard you, outside my door, you were talking to Katya as if she were standing right in front of you.” He said. “Is everything alright? I know I’ve been a jerk, and I nearly killed you, and everyone’s been a bit on edge, but you’ve acting pretty strange yourself.”

“I…” I paused and shook my head. I couldn’t tell him the truth. How could I? Knowing Azàk he was either going to take it lightly or do as he had done earlier, and try and kill me. Either way I didn’t trust him right now. To think he’d even consider Jason Salazar, the mass murderer of Ra’Koza, a friend, and feel sympathy for him was strange enough as it is.

I can’t seem to trust anyone in this house. I just found out that my parents and my loving uncle have been keeping a deadly secret from me since birth, and my cousin, the one thing I really had left of Katya, was turning on me for the man who had taken my sister from me and nearly killed my entire race. It just didn’t make sense. I needed answers, but I had a feeling they would be much more horrific than even I could have imagined.

“Kahlavar,” Azàk snapped his fingers bringing me back into reality. “Hello?”

“Sorry,” I said. “I was just going to say that I’d rather not talk about it.”

“Okay,” Azàk shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

“Hey, Azàk, you haven’t tried contacting Jason have you? I mean I don’t know how you would do it, but I know kahaizans who have, like Kavan, and Taka. All I’m trying to say is\_”

“No,” Azàk interrupted me mid-sentence, his golden eyes piercing back at me. “Why would you think that? I’m not a traitor to the nation, Kahlavar, it was just a dream. It doesn’t mean anything, and even if I was, why would you care?” he his grew in rage with each word that slipped through his lips.

“I’m sorry I asked,” I gulped seeing the fiery rage in his yellow eyes as that gentle warm breeze turned cold and fierce, “and you know what, I’m probably going to head back. I want to go and visit my friends for a while, you remember Zula, Havask and Tavask, right? Anyway, you coming with?” I said.

“You go on ahead. Tell Havask I said hello,” Azàk replied. “I think I’m going to stay out here for a little longer.”

“Bye,” I shook my head and walked back to the great wall in search of my friends. I kept looking back to see if Azàk had changed his mind and decided to follow me back, but he never did.

Kahlavar

I walked back into Anoka, and wandered the city streets once again trying to clear my mind of everything that had just happened with Azàk back in the Salvetka forest. I was really worried about him, but I tried not think about it too much. I had too much on my mind to worry with him.

“We don’t sell to peasants, now go back to the slum where you belong,” I stopped in my tracks too the sound of an old merchant to the right of me. He was selling meats, and breads, and various vegetables and fruits. People gathered around him, but out of the crowd I could see the familiar electric sparks and purple hair.

“My sisters and I are hungry and because my bow is broken, I can’t go hunting until I get it fixed, so don’t tell me you don’t sell to peasants, you filthy merchant!” Zula snarled. I took a step closer, and watched from a distance.

“How dare you use that tone with me!” the merchant snarled. “I said I don’t sell to peasants, now go home. I’m pretty sure you can find some good food for your sisters in the nearby trash bin outside the new restaurant.”

“I’m not a piece of trash you can just throw around! Peasants are no different than you, you slimy good for nothing…” Zula growled as a ball of lightning formed in her hands. I gasped and ran towards her and snatched her hand before she had a chance to strike him down.

“That’s enough,” I said. Zula’s electrified purple eyes darkened as I tightened my grip on her wrist.

“Fancy pants, what are you doing? Let go of me!” Zula snarled as she tried to free her wrist from my strong grasp, but it was no use.

“It’s the prince,” a man from behind whispered to his wife.

“He’s a traitor to the nation. He’s no prince. He’s a monster,” his wife replied.

“What are you doing here? You think you have some kind of power over me?” the merchant laughed. “I know who you are. You’re Prince Kahlavar, or should I say banished prince. You let the enemy get away with your sister, and killed hundreds. You’re no different than this girl.”

“How much does the food she was buying cost?” I asked. The merchant laughed.

“And you think you have money to buy? Daddy cut you off from the royal treasury when he banished you,” the merchant snickered.

“Answer the question,” I said.

“All together it’s twenty *kana’s.* I don’t where you’re going to get twenty *kana’s*, but…”

I reached into my pocket and pulled out a fifty *kana* bill and slammed it down on the table.

“Giver her this amount of meat, and bread, no cash back,” I said.

“Kahl,” Zula said as I let go of her wrist. The merchant handed me four blocks of meat, ten loaves of bread and a two baskets of fruit.

“Thank you very much sir, have a good rest of your day,” I said as I picked up the food and lead Zula out of the crowd.

“Why did you do that?” Zula asked.

“Because you’re my friend, and I wasn’t going to let a man mistreat a women like that, let alone one of your status. It’s wrong, and plus, I know you and your sisters are in need of food. I never let you guys starve.” I said.

“Thanks, fancy pants, I know Ano and Hatka will appreciate it. You should stay for a bit. I wanted to make something special for the girls tonight. It’s mom and dad’s anniversary. We still celebrate it, you to remind us that they’re still with us.” She smiled. “And the boys and I we’re planning on having a Kalkami match out in the woods later this evening. I know Kalakami is technically illegal, but it’s so much. I don’t know why your father has deemed it illegal,” she said.

“Nothing my father does makes any sense,” I said. We laughed and hurried back to Zula’s house to make lunch for the girls.

Zula unlocked her door, and her sister Ano, and niece Hatka came running. I set down the food on her small table and opened my arms wide as Ano came running into my chest.

Ano was a child of water. She had their father’s blue hair and mother’s blue eyes and pale skin. She was a skinny girl and fairly tall for a thirteen year old, as is the case for all Ra’Kozan’s. She’s quite the adventurer, but doesn’t share the same brave determination that Zula has.

Hatkta, Zula’s four year old niece, a child of plants, was the daughter of Zula’s older brother, Zakan. He along with his wife were killed off in the Itamotosakeiyan and Ra’Kozan war over land two years back. Zakan was Zula’s older brother. I knew him very well growing up. They were five years apart but were often mistaken for each other. They shared very similar physical features. They often wore wigs and wore each other’s clothes to trick people. That’s why she cut her hair so short. It reminded her of her brother.

Hatka shared her mother’s green hair, which Zula always had pulled back into a pink bow, and her father’s curious purple eyes. She was small for age with orient eyes, but it was understandable since her mother was Itamotoian, but she didn’t share their pasty white skin, a physically trait of an Itamotoian. Her skin was a light caramel color dotted with little brown freckles across her rosy cheeks and button nose.

“Kahlavar!” Ano cheered jumping on my shoulders and wrapping her tail around my neck.

“Girls, Kahlavar is the prince of Ra’Koza,” Zula said. “You need to treat him with respect.” Ano mumbled something under her breath as she tightened her grip around my leg.

“He doesn’t care, right Kahlavar,” Ano argued. I smiled and nodded in reply.

“Kala-dar!” Hatka giggled as she ran towards me with her arms raised, gesturing for me to pick her up. I picked her up and cradled her in my arms.

“I’m going to start on dinner,” Zula said. “Can you watch them, Kahl? I do’t want them getting into the food like last time.” Zula grabbed an old cutting board and knife and started chopping up the fruits and vegetables.

“Zula,” Ano raced over to the table and eyes the large meats and fruits that rested on the table. “I’ve never seen so much food in my life. Is this for us?”

“Yes, but don’t thank me,” she said. “Kahlavar bought it,”

“Thank you, Kahlavar,” Ano cheered as she rammed into my side and wrapped her arms tightly around my waist. Hatka clapped her hands and chuckled.

“You’re welcome,” I said as I brushed my fingers through Ano’s tangled blue hair.

“Kala-dar,” Hatka squealed as she wrapped her arms around my neck. I kissed her cheek as I patted her back.

“Kahlavar, play with us, please,” Ano pleaded as she yanked on my pants.

“Okay, okay,” I chuckled as I set them both down on the couch. I pulled out a deck of cards from Zula’s closet and we played some simple card games while Zula cooked dinner.

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The girls and I sat around Zula’s small dining room table as Zula set down a large plate of roasted Zargonian meat, a fresh salad, diced fruit, and buttered bread and two boxes of juice for the girls and cups of water for us.

“Wait,” Ano gasped. She jumped up from the table and grabbed a picture of their family off the wall. She raced back to her seat and rested the picture upright against the table. “Now we can eat.”

The food was nothing compared to food I had been given in the palace, but to Zula and the girls this was fine dining. I smiled as light gleamed in Ano’s eyes as she took another large bite of meat.

“Ano,” Zula reached across the table attempted to cut up her food. “Smaller pieces. You’re going to choke, and Hatka, slow down,” Zula rolled her eyes and took a bite of her own food. “Thanks for everything, Kahlavar, I know the girls really appreciate it. I haven’t had a meal like this since mom and dad died and before Zakan was sent off to war. It’s so nice to have a nice family dinner again.”

“Yeah,” I said as I pondered my own experiences of my last family dinner. At least I did something right.

“Kala-dar, look, Kala-dar, I cutted all by myself,” Hatka cheered as a small sliver of meat rested beside her Zargonian steak.

“Yes you did, Hatka,” I said. “You’re such a big girl, now,” I brushed my fingers through her green hair. “Here, let me help you,” I grabbed her fork and knife and cut into her meat.

Katlyn

Masko had brought us food later that night just as promised, but I wasn’t hungry. I couldn’t sleep. I had too much on my mind to sleep. It wasn’t so much about Masko had said, but more about what Milo was doing. Milo often talked in his sleep, but usually in mumbles, and even if you did understand it none of it ever made any sense. At times it even seemed like he was talking to someone, but when I looked over, he was turned towards me, talking to himself, and the only other person in the room was myself.

“Miles, is everything okay?” I asked just as Milo pulled the covers off and jumped out of bed. I gasped and pretended I was sleeping.

“Go back to sleep, Katlyn,” he said. “I just need some fresh air. I’ll be right outside the door if you need me.”

“Okay,” I mumbled as I watched Milo open the door and close it gently behind him. I pulled the covers off and jumped out of bed and tiptoed over to the door. I tried my best to keep quiet as I turned the doorknob and peered out into the dark hallway.

“Curiosity killed the cat, did you know that Katlyn,” Milo’s voice echoed through the dark halls as I closed the door behind. The light in the hallway were on, but most had burned out over the years and only four remained including the one that hung over our heads, which flickered on off as it swung back and forth illuminating the blood stained walls and giving depth to the claw marks on the walls, and floor. Milo sat across the hall with his back leaned against the broken clawed door, just beneath the large blood splatter on the white molding walls. His green eyes appeared to glow in the dim light and dark shadows curved around his face and eyes giving him an uncanny appearance.

“Sorry,” I said as I sat down beside him. “I can’t sleep.”

“Why do you think I’m out here?” he said swinging an arm over his bent knee as he rested the back of his head against the wall. I hadn’t noticed, but Milo’s black hair had grown a lot since we had landed here. We’d been here for three weeks now, almost four. He’d even grown some scruff around his jawline and upper lip. It made him look older, more mature, but also a little hostile. Dark circled had formed under his eyes.

“You know, Miles, I’m a little worried about you,” I said. “I know you hate this place as much as I do, but when Masko told us that story you tensed up and you’ve been acting a bit strange ever since. Is everything alright? I’m only asking you because your friend.” I tried resting my hand on his shoulder, but he shrugged it off.

“It just reminded me of something that’s all,” he said. “Just like how you freaked out that one time in sixth grade when we came across that meadow while wondering outside. You said it reminded you of the one in your dream, and you cried and made us go back home. It’s the same thing. The story reminded me of something, and it freaked me out.” He said.

“What did it remind you off, Miles?” I asked. Milo didn’t answer, so I tried to come up with an explanation. “Was it,” I began, “your family?” Milo’s eyes widened as sweat beat down his brow. “It is isn’t,” I said.

“I don’t want to talk about,” he scoffed.

“Milo, I’m just trying to help you,” I said. “You never tell me anything. I know Milo the foster kid, but I don’t know the real Milo. I know how to make you laugh, and what radio stations you like and your sarcastic comments, but if someone asked me who Milo was I couldn’t answer them.” I said. “Miles, please, I’m here for you.

“I said I don’t want to talk about it, and besides I wouldn’t tell you anyway,” he said.

“Why not?” I exclaimed. “I tell you about my dreams all the time. If I could remember anything about my life before and my family I would tell you everything because that’s what friends are for.”

“You don’t understand,” he said his tone suddenly very serious a chaotic. “You think Jessica’s life was messed up well mine was even worse. Trust me Katlyn when I say this,” Milo grasped my shoulders and turned towards me. “If you knew the real Milo you would hate him.” He shook my shoulders and snarled. “I don’t want you to hate me, Katlyn. You understand don’t you, Katlyn,” he whimpered.

“Milo,” I wrapped my arms around him and gave him a hug. “Of course I do.”

“Katlyn,” Milo whispered.

“Yes,” I replied as I let go.

“I will tell you one thing though,” he said. I smiled and listened carefully.

“When Masko was telling his story,” he began, “the reason I tensed up is…” Milo gulped and took in a shaky breath and sighed. “I knew those names,”

“What names?” I asked.

“Julius and Racheal Salazar,” he said.

“How?” I asked.

“You’ve heard of Jason Salazar from Kahlavar, and the others haven’t you,” he said.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Jason is Julius’s son,” he said.

“What,” I said a bit taken back. “How do you know?” I asked.

“These creatures, these kahaizans, they have horrific memories of him. I can sense their fear just at the utterance of his name. I too have memories of Jason Salazar. I knew him more than most people know themselves.” He said.

“He’s hurt you hasn’t he, Milo?” I brushed my fingers over his cheek. Milo grabbed my hand and gently set it down by my side.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” he said his voice practically a whisper.

“You know I’m here if you need me, Miles,” I said.

“I know, Katlyn,” he smiled. Milo jolted upright and turned his head to long hallway behind me that lead to the boarded door. “Katlyn somethings behind you,”

“What,” I shrieked. I grabbed the sides of my collar and pulled it up to my nose. “Milo, stop it. That’s not funny,”

“Katlyn behind you,” he gasped. I jumped and looked behind me just as the light above flickered on. I screamed as something poked me at the center of my back. I flinched and karate chopped the air only to see Milo rolled across the floor laughing hysterically.

“You think that was funny?” I snapped punching him in the leg. Milo snorted as tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Okay,” he sneered as he pushed himself upright, “I’m sorry, but the way you screamed…” Milo burst into laughter once again.

“You’re mean,” I whined. Milo smiled as we both went back into the room, and tried to get some sleep. I grabbed my pillow just as Milo slipped into bed, and slapped him across the face with it, and quickly climbed into bed. I laughed and looked back just as a pillow slammed into me.

“Okay, you win,” I chuckled. “Now go to bed.” I chucked the pillow back at him, and closed my eyes. “Goodnight, Miles,” I mumbled.

“Katlyn,” Milo said.

“What,” I yawned.

“Can you promise me something?” he asked.

“Promise you what?” I asked.

“Promise me that if you ever find Jason, Julius, or any of his children that you run as far away as you can. I don’t care how nice they are, their dangerous. I don’t want you to get hurt, Katlyn,” Milo said

“Sure thing, Miles,” I mumbled.

“Goodnight, Katlyn,” he whispered.

“Goodnight, Miles,” I yawned as I drifted off into another dreamless sleep.

Kahlavar

After dinner, Zula got ready for our game of Kalakami with the boys. She changed into black leggings, a black padded jacket and Kalakami fight gear; leather boots, and a full head helmet, fire proof gloves, patch that indicated your elemental of power. I didn’t have any Kalakami gear since it was technically deemed illegal by my father back in 1995, the year I was born. I knew of it though. The Itomatioan and Anotatoian Kalakami were still available in Ra’Koza. I always watched them late at night when he was asleep and after my banishment my friends snuck out and played a match with me from time to time.

“Girls I’ll be back late so Sala, the nice lady next door, has agreed to watch you two and put you to bed while I’m gone. Be good to her. I want her to come back.” Zula gestured her sister and niece to come forward. She kissed them both on the forehead and shuffled her fingers through their hair.

“Zula, you’re going to get in trouble,” Ano gasped. “Kalakami is illegal!” Ano pulled on Zula’s jacket, but Zula shoved her off.

“Not if you know how to play, and besides the Salvetka forest is safe. Don’t worry about me, but I am worried that you two get to bed on time,” she said.

“But,” Ano slammed face first into the couch cushion. “I’m not tired. Sala can’t make me go to bed!”

“Oh yes she will,” Zula scoffed. She laughed as she opened the door and stepped outside. Hatka latched onto her leg and raised her arms for Zula to pick her up. “I’ve got to go,” she kissed Hatka on the cheek and set her down. “Ano, be nice to Hatka. She’s only four.”

“Mommy, stay,” Hatka whimpered.

“Silly girl you know I’m not your momma, now goodbye girls. Sala is on her way. I can see her grabbing her things. Be good, and don’t destroy the house. I just cleaned it today after work.” Zula closed the door behind her and sighed. “Those girls are going to be my end.

“She called you, mom,” I chuckled. Zula punched me in the side.

“She doesn’t remember her mother. Her mother gave up parental rights after she was born and left her with Zakan. She remembers my brother. She talks to his picture on the wall a lot, but so do I.” Zula sighed. I knew how much she missed her brother.

Zula and I hurried over to Havask and Tavask’s house who appeared to be ready and waiting outside their mansion in full Kalakami fear and by the expressions on their face they had been there for quite some time. Havask yawned as Tavask rested his head against his brother’s muscular shoulder. Havask had on the same black clothing that Zula wore, but with a red helmet and a small fire symbol by his chest. Tavask a thin layered metal suit with blue, green and yellow colored metallic colors, and a stylish helmet that thoroughly protected his head that he had instructed himself. He didn’t appear to have any weapons on him. As a child of intelligence his weapons and skill at mortal combat were all he had.

“Tavask, nice suit, but are you planning on doing one on one combat?” I asked. Tavask smiled with delight and raised at bent them at a ninety degree angle. He balled his hands into fists and two electric blue swords appeared. I shrieked and took a step back. Zula nodded in agreement and gave him a quick thumbs up.

“I like it,” she said.

“Plasma induced swords,” he said filing them away. “It was all I could do in an hour. I forget we were doing this, so I made this before you came.” I widened my eyes in surprise

“It took me an hour to make this,” I pointed to the small beaded necklace around Zula’s neck, “and you just whip up two plasma swords in an hour and call it good, like what the heck, dude,” I said.

“Kahlavar,” Havask grasped my shoulder and looked me in the eyes. “We don’t compare ourselves with Tavask. Not even other children of Intelligence. It’s just not healthy, oh and where have you guys been? We’ve been waiting here for about an hour now.”

Zula and I gave each other a quick glance and smiled.

“Dinner with the girls went a little late because the merchant was a jerk, and I invited Kahlavar to dinner since he bought the food. I’m sorry,” she said.

The four of us traveled to the east wall and snuck under a crack in the wall to keep ourselves hidden from sky guards flying high above the city walls. Once we were well within the forest we searched for a large meadow to play Kalakami.

Once we had found the meadow Tavask marked the corners of the meadow with large piles of rock to set the boundaries and the game begun. On Earth Kalakami is known as boxing, but humans don’t have powers or the ability to fly which bring that much more thrill to the game. The goal is to get all of the opposing team members to fall outside the boundary lines. The last team standing wins.

Zula and I joined forces while the brothers took the opposing side. Our team was allowed first serve. I created a dark cloud of energy and thrust it towards Tavask. Tavask reflected the attack with his swords, and fell into split as Zula’s lightning bolt came rushing toward him.

“Havask,” Tavask roared. Havask grinned and blasted a ball of fire in front of his brother. Tavask jumped to his feet and sent the fire attack with his sword right in my general direction. The flames had turned a dark shade of blue, and I could feel the heat from here. I unfolded my wings and took off to the skies.

Down below Zula created a lighting whip and lashed out at Havask. Havask tried to dodge it with fire, but Zula’s whip was much faster. It hit him square in the chest and sent him flying a few feet away from the boundary. He was now stuck there till the end of the game hoping that he didn’t get knocked out.

“Havask,” Tavask asked as he dodged Zula’s whip. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” he replied. “Now be careful, and watch out for Zula’s whip.”

Zula took off to the skies as well as Tavask, and the three of us looked at each other with devilish grins. Tavask tried to attack me with his swords, but I used my powers and disintegrated his right sword in contact.

“Now that’s cheating!” Tavask snarled as he slashed me across the chest with his sword. I cried out in pain and clutched the small cut on my chest.

“That little thing really hurts,” I said. “Oh my Malan,” I winced as I tried to stop the bleeding.

“You can’t cheat when there are no rules, Tavask. That’s that fun in Kalakami!” Zula snarled as she summoned lighting. Dark clouds covered the area and lighting struck down on the meadow. Zula’s eyes filled with power and determination. Tavask was shocked and plummeted down to Earth. He hit the ground hard and laid their motionless. His suit unfolded around his tiny body into the small watch on his arm. Sweat beat down his brow as his arm twitched uncontrollably.

We waited for him to stir so we could continue the game. Minutes passed and Tavask still lay motionless and silent on the grass below.

“Zula,” I shoved her aside and flew down by his side. Zula joined me a few seconds later.

“Tavask,” Havask came running and picked up his brother. Tavask gasped and his eyes flashed open.

“I’m okay,” he croaked pushing his brother away and trying to stand on his feet, but he was still weak from the fall. The shaking in his arms had stopped, but he appeared to be unharmed.

“I told you this was a bad idea Zula!” Havask snapped grabbing hold of his little brother and cradling him in his arms.

“You were the one who decided to bring him in the first place. How many time have I told you not to bring Tavask to a Kalakami match until he’s had experience with it. These games are dangerous if you don’t know what you’re doing!” Zula exclaimed.

“You could have been easy on him, but no you had to summon lighting! He’s still a child!” Havask snapped.

“We’re all children, and you should be grateful I had struck him instead of Kahlavar. He would have been dead if Kahlavar had even laid a finger on him!” Zula shrieked.

“Then why did you bring the freak of a prince along anyway? You know how dangerous children of darkness and death are!” Havask objected.

I took a few steps back. I couldn’t believe what was coming out of Havask’s mouth. He was my friend. He was one of the few who tried to persuade my father out of my banishment. He didn’t see me as a monster at least I thought he didn’t. I escaped from the palace to get away from all the lies and to be around people who trusted me and saw me as an individual being, but I guess I was wrong.

“Kahlavar isn’t a monster!” Zula snarled. “The only monster around here is you!” Zula grabbed hold of my arm and dragged me away, but we had barley taken a few steps when a loud echo rang through the meadow. It appeared to be coming from the South of the meadow, in the direction of Boét.

We all paused and looked back at each other. Zula and I raced to Havask and Tavask’s side and knelt back down. We huddled close to together with wide eyes.

“Did you hear that?” Havask asked.

“Havask, I’m scared,” Tavask whimpered. “I want to go home.”

“Put your suit back on,” Havask tapped Tavask’s watch. Tavask shook his head and shrugged.

“It’s in need of some repairs,” Tavask said as he tapped the watch. “I can’t even open it.”

“Then just stay close to me. I don’t need you getting hurt again especially now that you have nothing to protect you,” Havask said.

“I’m not a baby, Havask,” Tavask rolled his eyes as he mumbled something under his breath.

“Just do as I say, okay, nerd?” Havask said. “You’re so annoying. You should be glad I love you.”

The same voice from before echoed through the meadow as it had done before. We all raced to the South end of the meadow and knelt down in the grass with Zula at the lead. Zula gestured for us to follow and we crawled farther into the forest leaving the meadow far behind us. Not far from the Boét borders we stumbled across a small camp of humans. We all jumped into the trees and watched them from above.

All of the humans had unnatural bright blue eyes. I didn’t recognize any of their faces, except the tall pale human with the jet black hair and glasses. His eyes appeared to be brighter than the others as if they were enchanted. I knew that face and I knew those eyes. These weren’t any normal humans like Katlyn and Milo these were human wizards, and the man with the jet black hair, trimmed glasses in the white blouse and black slacks, with freshly shined black shoes, was the same wizard that had taken my sister from me all those years ago; Jason Salazar.

“Humans are so ugly.” Havask wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“Kahlavar is that Jason?” Zula asked.

“Yes,” I hissed.

“What’s he doing here? He got what he wanted. He should leave us be.” I could hear the pain in her voice. She was thinking about her parents and all the kahaizans that had been killed during the war.

“I don’t know,” I said as I peered down and tuned in to the conversation.

“You all know why you are here,” Jason began. His voice, as I had remembered, was soothing, proud, and drew all eyes towards him. From a distance he didn’t look like much, but a fine dressed, fun, outgoing human, but we all knew the truth; he was a monster, and I wanted to see him hung for his crimes.

“Kahlavar, I think we should go,” Tavask whimpered as he tried to escape. I snatched his tail and pulled him back.

“Wait, I want to hear more,” I said as I leaned in closer as Jason continued his speech.

“…To follow through with my father’s plan, although there have been some minor set backs,” Jason announced. The crowd gasped and murmured among themselves until Jason raised his hand to bring the attention back towards him. “Don’t worry, it’s nothing we can’t fix. As you know the girl has escaped from our grasp. We need her back. If she gets her memories back who known what she may be capable of.” Jason paused and put his hands behind his back and walked back and forth in front of the large tent that rested behind them in the grove of tree’s. “She should be fourteen to fifteen years old now; blonde, pale skin, blue eyed, and undeniably human. It’s finding her location that will be the hard part, but that is only a minor part in the plan.”

“Kahlavar, are they talking about, Katlyn?” Tavask asked. I nodded my head in disbelief. “What do they want with her? Is she one of them?” the presence of fear struck in Tavask’s green eyes. I shook my head.

“I don’t know, Tavask. I didn’t see anything wrong with her when I met her, but if she’s what they say, she could be a real threat to Kàtzu, but we can’t be certain of anything.” I said. I turned my attention back to Jason and the other humans.

“In two days’ time we will make our way North and seek out the twins of darkness, that my father and I have long searched for.” He said.

“Sir, how do we know where to find them? Centuries of wizards and sorcerer’s have searched for them and have died trying. What makes this time so different?” One of the humans said. He was tall, dark haired and fairly muscular, and by the medals on his uniform I assumed he was Jason’s new commanding officer after his first died in combat during the war seven years ago.”

“Because, my dear Jackson, we have this,” Jason pulled a golden amulet with a large simmering red stone hung around it and showed it to the crowd. “The amulet of Ra,”

I couldn’t help but be drawn to it. It was strange for me to say, but I felt connected to it, as if that amulet had once belonged to me, but in all honesty I didn’t recognize the thing in the slightest. I moved closer to get a better look. Then all at once an odd, overwhelming power overtook me. A thick fog formed in my sight, but through the mist I could see the amulet. It was calling me.

*Take me away! Help me! Save me!*

This voice didn’t belong to Fooshka. It sounded like a kahaizan crying out for help. I gasped and tried to pull away, but I couldn’t. I was stuck. I reached out my hand, but something snatched my pant leg and pulled me back into reality. The fog vanished and the world came back into motion.

“Kahlavar,” Zula snapped. “Are you trying to get us all killed? If I hadn’t pulled you back you would have waltzed right into their camp. What were you thinking?”

“I…I don’t know,” I said shaking my head. I blinked a few times and turned my attention back to Jason and the other humans.

Jason raised his hand to quiet the crowd and gestured for his captain, Jackson, to come forward. He whispered something in his ear and Jackson nodded and returned to his post. “Now, as for the girl, I have both an alibi, and bait.” Jason snapped his fingers, and two men rose to their feet. “Bring me the girl.”

The two men hurried inside the tent returned within a few second with a young girl in their arms. She kicked and screamed as they set her down. Her hands and legs were tied and two white clothes covered her mouth and eyes. Her thick black hair was messy and tangled with sticks and leaves. Her deep tan skin was covered in mud and small purple bruises.

“That poor little girl,” Zula muttered under her.

“Captain Jackson, you and your men will take this girl and find the one we are looking for. She’ll know what she looks, and plus she’ll come crawling back if she sees this one. You’ll leave at dawn, and then meet us up North with or without the girl. But we do not leave this planet till we have her and the twins within our grasp.” Jason ordered.

“Yes, sir,” Jackson saluted him. “When we find the girl, what do you want us to do with this one?” he asked. Jason turned his back on the ground, glanced at the girl, and walked back into the tent.

“Kill her,” he said. The girl screamed and cried as the men dragged her back into the tent with Jason.

“Kahlavar, we have to stop them,” Zula snatched hold of my arm. Her orchid eyes were dark and filled with fear and overwhelming concern for the young human girl whom we had seen just moments ago.

“We don’t even know who she is? It could be a trick, Zula. What if that girl is dangerous?” I said.

“I don’t care,” she snapped back at me in a low whisper. “She’s no less a living and breathing creature just like you and me, and he’s going to kill her and possibly this other girl if he gets hold of her. I haven’t met Katlyn, but I know how much you two care for her, and I will not let these monsters get hold of her.”

“Please, Kahl, Katlyn is innocent. I don’t know why they want her, but please, don’t let them use this girl to find her. We have to do something. I don’t know what this amulet thing is or why their going up North, but I’m not going to let them hurt Katlyn or her friend, Milo.” Tavask said.

“I agree with my brother,” Havask rested his hand on Tavask’s shoulder.

“Are you all deaf? She could be dangerous!” I said.

“Kahlavar, I hate humans, as much or more than you, but Zula and Tavask are right. These wizards are dangerous and I won’t let an innocent person get killed because of them.” Havask said.

I growled and took in a deep breath and sighed.

“Fine.” I said through closed teeth. “What do you suppose we do about it? There’s hundreds of them out there.”

Havask lifted up his hand and a ball of fire appeared in his hands. He grinned at the sight of it, and looked over at me. His red eyes radiated with power and cunning devices.

“I have my ways.” Havask said as he pushed past me and walked into the camp. “Be back in five guys.” He said as he popped his neck and shoulders, spread out his wings and walked into the crowd of humans.

“Oh Malan, please help us,” I prayed. The crowd gasped and all of them pulled out their wands and aimed them at Havask’s head. Havask snickered as his hair burst into flames. One of the humans screamed and tripped on a log.

“Get the girl!” He ordered as erupted into flames and shot balls of fire at the wizards. They all tried to shoot him, but most coward in fear or Havask burned their wands to a crisp.

“Zula, come with me. Tavask, go out by the meadow and wait for us. We’ll meet you there.” I said.

“But…” Tavask tried to intervene.

“I said, go! That’s an order!” I snarled. Tavask nodded his head and scurried out of the forest towards the meadow.

“Zula, you help, Havask, I’ll get the girl.” I said. Zula nodded as her electric sparks zapped through her hair and in the palms of her hands. She roared and jumped on the nearest human. He cried out in pain as the electric shock flowed through his body. She spun around and kicked two others in the face and knocked three more out with her electric touch. She’s so beautiful.

*Kahlavar, stop staring, and go.*

*Oh! Sorry!*

I quickly turned into a shadow and scurried into tent. Jason was yelling at one of the men demanding what was going on. The soldiers left arm was burned and one of his legs appeared to be broken. I tried to stay unnoticed as I snatched the girl, and shadow traveled out into the woods. From the distance I could here, Jason’s vengeful cry.

“They’ve taken the girl! After them! Don’t just stand there, move!” He exclaimed.

“Kahlavar, Zula and Havask ran up beside. Havask’s face was covered in blood and his right arm had been tempered by magic. Zula was covered in dirt and a streak of blood drizzled down her forehead, but other than that she appeared to be fine.

“Hurry,” I said as we took off towards the meadow where Tavask waited patiently for our return. Tavask’s perked his head up as we burst through the tree’s and into the meadow. He gasped and ran up to Havask who was breathing heavily. The black mark on his arm was growing. He groaned in pain, but tried to keep a level head for his brother.

“Havask, you’re hurt, we have to get you back to Saskaiya’s immediately.” Tavask whimpered as he examined the mark on his brother’s arms.

“I’ll be fine, Tavask,” Havask assured him. “I’m just glad that you’re safe,” He said as he pulled his baby brother into his grasp. He gasped out in pain, but tried to shake it off.

“They’re coming. I can hear them.” Zula said. “Let’s go, now!” She exclaimed. We all spread out our wings and leaped just as Jason and his men burst through the trees. Jason’s blue eyes were bright and wild with an intense rage.

“Sir, they’re getting away,” Captain Jackson exclaimed. “We have to do something.”

“No,” Jason put his hand in front of him. “Let them go!” Jason ordered. I looked back one last time as we flew towards Maska. Jason stood at the edge of the meadow with a golden staff in hand. His blue eyes peered right at me. The amulet in his hands glowed with great intensity which appeared to please him, but that’s not what caught my attention. Behind his men, out of the corner of the bushes leaned against a tree stood a familiar pair of yellow eyes, black hair, and dark skin.

“Azàk,” I stopped in my tracks, flapping my wings to stay a flout. How could he do this to me…not how could he do this to our family. Azàk’s eye caught mine and he gasped and retreated into the woods.

“Fancy pants,” Zula snagged my shoulder, “what are you doing? We need to go,” Jason looked back towards the spot where Azàk had been. He smiled and chuckled as he stuffed the amulet into his pant pocket. I hissed at him and caught up with my friends as we made our way back to Maska.

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“That was close,” Havask said gasping for air.

“He tried to kill us,” Zula exclaimed.

“He wanted something to,” Tavask stated.

“He has taken everything from us! What could he want from a people who have nothing left?” Zula asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. I wish I knew what he wanted, but I didn’t. Nothing in my life right now made sense and this was just another question that required an answer.

“Kahlavar, we should probably untie the girl.” Zula said. I gasped and looked behind me. I was so tired and frightened from the heat of it all that I had forgotten why we had fled in the first place.

“Yeah,” I knelt down and ripped off the ropes and the untied the white clothes, but I had scarcely done so when a blast of green energy came off of her, and where the girl had once had been was nothing more than a pile of rubble and sticks. I snarled and disintegrated the remaining ruble and twigs.

“What the…” Tavask gasped.

“I told you it was a trick!” I snapped. “Jason must have known we were there the whole time, and probably new that we would save her too,” I groaned and pulled at my hair.

“Kahlavar, we’re in the city walls,” Zula bumped me in the shoulder, “you can’t just use his name like that.” She said.

“I can use his name however I want!” I exclaimed. “JASON, JASON, JASON!” I screamed. “That monster took my sister and slaughtered my people! He killed your parents Zula, so no I don’t care if I’m saying his name in public. He’s a monster and deserves all the negative attention that we kahaizans can give him!”

“Kahlavar, it was a mistake,” Zula said. “Everything going to be alright…”

“My brother is dying because of our mistake!” Tavask cried clutching onto Havask’s waist.

“Tavask, I’m fine…” Havask grasped his shoulder and winced in pain, “yep…completely fine.”

“No you’re not!” Tavask exclaimed.

“Yes I am,” he brushed his fingers through Tavask’s hair as sweat beat down his brow. “Stop worrying.”

“Tavask, come here,” Zula gestured.

“I’m not a baby, Zula,” he snarled. Zula grabbed his wrist and pulled him forward.

“We’re going to take him to see Saskaiya, okay,” she said her voice very calm and collected, almost motherly. “Saskaiya will take care of him. The more you worry, the more you’re going to make Havask worry. Havask is a big boy. He’s going to be alright.”

“Ahhhh!” Havask cried aloud as he clenched his arm and fell to his knees.

“Havask!” Tavask shrieked and knelt down by his brother side. “I told you he’s not alright!” he exclaimed at Zula as tears streamed down his cheeks.

“Oh my Malan,” Havask cried.

“We need to get him to Saskaiya’s right away. His arm.” Tavask gestured to Tavask’s shoulder. The small black blotch had spread to his elbow and reached toward his neck. His eyes were bloodshot, and his breathing was coarse and heavy.

“Zula, go inform Saskaiya of what happened. We’ll meet you there. I said. Zula nodded and ran off towards Saskaiya’s house a few blocks down.

I picked up Havask, and ran with Tavask to Saskaiya’s.

Kahlavar

“Set him down here,” Saskaiya ordered as she opened her medicine cabinet and handed Tavask a cold wet wash cloth to put over Havask’s burning forehead. The three of us sat close to Havask as we waited for Saskaiya to find her things. “Out of the way,” Saskaiya shoved us aside as she opened a small container with a purple liquid inside. She pulled a brush from her pocket and grabbed hold of Havask’s arm. “Kahlavar, Zula, hold him down. This is going to hurt.” Saskaiya dunked the brush in the liquid and lathered it across the black blotch which had now extended past his elbow and up through his neck to his jawline. Havask cried out in agony as he clenched the wooden frame of the couch. Saskaiya dunked the brush once again to apply more to the blotch, but Havask’s body tensed up and his breathing came in agonizing gasps. His red bloodshot eyes widened in fear.

“What’s happening?” Saskaiya took a step back to examine him.

“Havask,” Tavask pushed Saskiaya and the others aside and reached into Havask’s trouser pocket and pulled out a small white inhaler. I had forgotten that Havask had asthma. It had been so long since I had seen him suffer from an attack, but by the look on Tavask’s face this must have happened more often than I thought back at home.

Tavask pulled his brother upright. He told him to breath out and take a breath in with the inhaler. He did this three times before Havask’s breathing finally returned back to normal. Tavask gently laid his brother’s head back on the pillow.

“You’re okay, Havask. You’re okay.” Tavask said he wrapped his arms around his brother’s good arm and leaned his head against Havask’s burning forehead. Tears rolled down Tavask’s cheeks as he muttered the phrase, “please don’t leave me,” under his breath.

“Tavask, it’s alright,” Saskaiya gently grazed her hand across Tavask’s cheek with a gentle smile on her face. “Havask is going to be fine. I’m going to apply the antidote one more time and then put a cold cloth over it. It should be healed by morning. He’ll be fine.”

“Poor thing,” Zula said.

“Good thing we got here in time or something even worse could have happened.” I said.

“Yeah,” Zula replied as he rested her head against my shoulder. I tensed up and tried to calm my beating heart.

“Zula, Kahlavar, and Tavask, you three can stay the night tonight along with the human girl, but I want the girl out of here by morning. Zula you can probably take the girl to your place for the time being.” Saskiaya screwed the cap back on the bottle and stood up. “I’m going to grab a wet cloth and a few blankets for him, but he should be better by morning. That dark magic is dangerous. If you hadn’t gotten here in time he probably would have died on the couch. We can thank Malan for that.” She said. I nodded and smiled.

“All of you get some rest. I’ll take care of Havask and everything else from here.” She said.

“Goodnight, fancy pants,” Zula said as she went down the hallway to one of the rooms on the right. I waved goodnight before turning my attention back to Tavask. I walked over to him and knelt down by his side. His cheeks were stained red from his salty tears. I rested my hand on his hand and leaned in closer.

“He’ll be alright, Tavask.” I said. “Havask is very strong. He won’t leave you. He loves you too much to do that to you. I’ll grab you a blanket if you want to sleep on the other couch.” I walked over to the closet and pulled out a fuzzy blue blanket, but when I turned back around, Tavask was already fast asleep. I smiled and laid the blanket over him. I ruffled my fingers through his hair and turned to go down the hallway when a voice caught my off guard.

“Kahlavar,” I turned around to find Saskaiya standing by the kitchen table. One of small circled lights above the sink still remained on illuminating her pink nightgown and cheekbones. Her yellow eyes shimmered in the dark.

“Y…yes, Saskaiya?” I stammered. I had an idea what she going to say, but I kept my mouth shut and waited for her to finish.

“The last time I saw that kind of a wound was seven years ago when those vile creatures called humans invaded our planet.” she began. “How did Havask get that mark on his arm?” she asked.

“In the woods,” I replied.

“What were you all doing in the woods at this time of day?” she asked her voice stern and serious.

“Oh…not…nothing…we were just…” I paused to collect my thoughts, “playing games…that’s all,” I let out a nervous look but by the sharp look in her eyes and the twitch in her tail I knew she could tell that I was lying. “Okay,” I sighed, “we were playing Kalakami, but…”

“You know that’s illegal,” she said.

“I know, but then we heard these voices…and…” I paused as I tried to push the words out of my mouth, but instead of coming out lightly it all came out in a sudden burst. “We saw Jason and his men and they were going to kill her and get Katlyn and Milo for some reason, and then they had this necklace thing that…nevermind…and then there was this human girl they were going to kill, so we saved her. Havask got hit with a curse and we went back to Maska with the girl only to find out she wasn’t real…” I paused realizing I had said too much. Saskaiaya’s tail flailed back in forth as her yellow eyes glowed with great intensity. “Please don’t tell my mom. I said.

“What were you thinking? Those creatures are dangerous. Havask is lucky to be alive. What if I didn’t have the antidote on me?” Saskaiya continued to rant, but my mind drifted back to the amulet that Jason held. I still couldn’t let go of those feelings I had felt. I was so scared, but so drawn to its power. It wanted me to save it. Why? Oh…what did he call it? What was its name?

I gasped and turned my attention back to Sakaiya who was still lecturing me on the dangers of sorcerer’s and Jason Salazar.

“Saskaiaya,” I said my voice quiet and almost inaudible.

“What?” Saskaiya snapped as she pulled a loose hair back behind her ear.

“What is,” I paused, “the amulet of Ra?” I asked. Saskaiya’s eyes widended in fear and disbelief.

“Where did you hear that name?” She asked.

“It’s just a question,” I said avoiding the details of Jason and the effects the amulet had on me and the voice.

“It’s none of your concern. If you really want to know it’s an ancient gem. It’s very dangerous, and a person such as yourself should never ever go near it, do you understand me?” she said.

“Then why did it ask me to save it?” I muttered under my breath.

“What did you say?” she asked.

“It was nothing,” I lied.

“Tavask…don’t…eat my sandwich…” Havask snorted and fell back to sleep.

“Is he going to alright, Saskaiya?” I asked.

“He should be. The mark is gone, and his breathing has returned to normal. His temperature is still high but that too should fade by morning.” She replied.

“Alright,” I sighed and walked towards the hallway entrance, “goodnight, Saskaiya,”

“Goodnight,” she replied back as the light behind me turned off and the world around me faded into darkness.

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By morning Havask was walking around as excited as ever. The blotch had vanished completely and he appeared in perfect health.

“Good morning, Havask, how are you feeling?” I yawned as sleeked my tangled hair back.

“I feel great,” he said with food in his mouth as he took another bite of fruit. “Although I have to admit I don’t remember much after my asthma attack.” Havask paused and reflected on the situation. “Honestly I don’t really remember falling asleep either. I just remember waking up with a bunch of snot and drool all over my arms.” He said. “Thanks a lot, Tavask.” He snickered at his brother who was watching some science show on TV to which I had no idea what was going or how they managed to figure that three was the answer to the equation, but honestly I didn’t really care either.

“Is Zula awake?” I asked Havask.

“Yes, but she’s still getting ready,” Tavask said. “They have to be perfect and pristine before they step out into the real world,” Tavask chuckled just as a Kalakami boot came flying at his head. “OW!” he cried.

“I can hear you, short stuff!” Zula’s echoed from down the hallway,” and no I’m not trying to look good. I’m changing out of my Kalakami suit, and into my work clothes because I actually have a job, remember. The company I work for does street song and dance, so I dance my butt off every day so I have enough money to pay off my bills, and on my days off I go hunting in exchange for other food and clothing for Hatka and Ano.” Zula continued to rant on about her life as she stormed out of the hallway in a beautiful white papyrus gown, layers of blue, red, yellow and orange caplet sleeves with fine silk drapes that she used to dance with. Golden ankle were strapped around her ankles and a fine gold headpiece draped across her headline. She had on a full coat of makeup and bright red lipstick.

“Dang, Zula,” I said. “You look good.”

“Oh shut it, fancy pants,” she rolled her eyes as she carried here bag of Kalakami clothes. She picked up her boot and stuffed it in as well. “I don’t know what the plan is, but I need to drop this stuff off and head to work. I start in an less than an hour.” She said.

“Well I have to head into work, and take Tavask home so he can work on his stuff, so I suppose we could all head to palace. You have to head down there anyway,” Havask suggested.

“Then let’s go,” Zula pushed us all towards the door.

“Thank you for everything, Saskaiya,” I said bowing to her in respect. She nodded her head in return and waved us all goodbye as we walked out the door. Zula closed the door behind her.

“Your majesty,” I jumped and turned around to see one of the servants of the palace racing towards me. “I knew I would find you here. We have been searching all over for you, your highness,” he bowed. Sweat streamed his face.

“I left for a reason. I will be back home by noon tomorrow, but for now I have business to attend to.” I said.

“But the ceremony takes place in the morning. You can’t be late!” he exclaimed.

“What ceremony?” I asked. “My parents never said anything about a ceremony.” My friends and I all looked at each other and then back at the servants.

“Pharoka Suko has called the three kings together for your coronation, your majesty.” He said.

“My what,” I asked.

“Your father is excepting you as his heir. You are to be crowd once again as the rightful heir to the Ra’Kozan thrown.” He knelt down on his knees and bowed his head in respect. I looked back at my friends, but they had all done the same.

“Hail, Prince Kahlavar Ra Natashka, the future heir to the Ra’Kozan throne!”

14

Kahlavar

The servants gestured for me to follow, and the others went off on their own. We were all a bit stunned and taken back by the announcement.

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My mother wrapped her arms around me and kissed me multiple times on the fore head. Tears streamed down her gentle face.

“I can’t believe this is real. I dreamed of this day since your banishment. I only wish your sister was here to see this.” She cried. My father walked into the room. He was wearing his usual long white tunic with the gold belt with small red toga, purple cape and golden crown.

I slithered away from my mother and stomped over to my father. I was in rage. He had something planned. He wasn’t proclaiming me as his heir because he loved me and wanted to protect me. It was a trick; a lie.

“What do you think you are doing?” I snapped.

“Nothing,” he said, “The three kings and I have agreed to free you of your banishment and anoint you as the heir to the Ra’Kozan throne. There is nothing scandalous about it.”

“You’re lying!” I hissed.

“Kahlavar,” My mother pulled me away and looked at me with stern red eyes as her pink tail twitched in announce. “Be grateful. You’re father has given us the opportunity to be a family again.”

“If he cared so much about family he would have never allowed my banishment.” I said. I hissed and spat on the marble floor in front of him. My father narrowed his eyes as he sat down on his throne. I snarled and marched upstairs to the third floor and into my room slamming the door hard behind me. I curled up on my large king’s size bed and cried.

*Kahlavar, why are you crying? You should be happy! This is what you wanted isn’t it?*

*Yes, but it’s not real. He only wants me back to use me.*

*No he doesn’t. Kahlavar, did it ever occur to you that your father actually cares about you and not only that, but that he loves you?*

*Why should I consider that? He’s never done anything to prove to me that he actually loves me. We were so close when I a kid and now he’s just a monster. Then I find out he’s been lying to me since birth about some dark secret. If he thinks this will fix anything it won’t.*

*Kahlavar, sometimes people shut us out because they’re trying to protect us.*

*From what, everyone keeps saying that are trying to protect me from something, but what is it?!*

*You’ll know soon enough, but in the meantime whip away those tears and take your sorry kakooshka back downstairs and apologize to your parents.*

*I hate you.*

*Kahlavar, please, just calm down, if you would just listen...*

I growled and pushed Fooshka back into the depths of my thoughts and walked back downstairs to the throne room. My father was sitting on his throne with my mother seated in the chair next to him. I couldn’t tell what he was going on in his head. His expression was plain and stern like always. I walked up to him and knelt down before his throne.

“Father, I’m sorry for my behavior earlier. I am truly grateful that you have chosen me as the heir to the Ra’Kozan throne and accepted me back into the royal family.” I said. My father arose from his chair and grabbed his staff and tapped it twice on the ground. I arose and looked straight into his cold blue eyes.

“I forgive you, but I don’t ever want to see a disruption like that again. If you are to be king one day you must keep a level head. You can’t let your emotions control you. You must appear strong and fearless at all times, do you understand.” He said.

“Yes, Pharoka,” I replied bowing my head in respect.

“Laveria, take our son upstairs. We need to do the anointing in preparation for the ceremony tomorrow. I want his clothes changed and his hair groomed before we anoint his head.” With a flick of his hand my mother grabbed hold of me and took me upstairs to the main bathroom.

She dressed me up in a simple white top that grasped at my wrists. A tan skirt with large maroon stripes that flowed down to my knee’s rested on top of a long white skirt u that flowed down to my feet. She brushed my hair back and put a section at the top into a small bun. She washed my face and gave me a small red cape with a gold center piece. She even gave me gold bracelets and put the green leaf bracelets worn by the king and prince around my ankles.

“You look stunning!” she said turning me around so I could see myself in the mirror. Fooshka appeared by my side and smiled in delight at my reflection. It was odd seeing myself in such fine clothes and gold jewels. I had lived in old raggedy clothes in the Salvetka forest for the past seven years. As a kid I had dreamed of my coronation on my twenty-first birthday. I’m not twenty-one yet, but I am still being coroneted tomorrow and I’ll be a prince again, and a soon to be king.

“Let’s go downstairs. Your father and the leaders of the church and all of Anoka are waiting.” My mother said.

We headed downstairs to the throne and sure enough the leaders of the church in their white robes and tan and purple colored capes with the word, Ӎaxaп, éɉ Savaszѫ o□ ѫàɉжu, Malan, the Savior of Kàtzu. A long red carpet lead to my father’s throne where he sat proudly. Twenty priests, ten on each side of the carpet, stood firm and silent as my mother lead me to the end of the red carpet. From there I had to walk the red carpet to my father as the priests resisted a line from the Kamaraka, the Holy Scriptures of Kàtzu.

My heart beat heavy in my chest. I was so nervous I was afraid I was going to wet my pants in front of all the priests, and this was only the anointing ceremony that real to prepare for my coronation tomorrow, but I held it in and walked towards my father with dignity. When I reached my father the priests fell silent as my father arose from his throne. The priests dropped to their knees as my father stepped forward.

I knelt down on my knees as he poured a few drops of oil over my head. He summoned the priests and they all laid their hands down upon my head. They spoke in Kamra, the language of the ancient kings of old. I didn’t understand what they were saying. As the prince I was supposed to understand this kind of thing, but I was banished before I could learn enough to speak it.

The anointing ceremony was over within a few minutes. Peace rained through the throne room and everything fell silent. The priests and my father lifted their hands and I stood up. The priests and I bowed respectfully to my father. I gave him a quick smile not expecting anything back, but in the corner of his mouth I could the slight curve forming on the right side of his thin chapped lips.

The rest of the day was spent preparing for the ceremony. The ceremony would take place in the throne room and a grand party would be held outside in my honor. My mother sent invitations out to all corners of Ra’Koza as well as the royal families of Itamotosakeiya and Anotato. All of Ra’Koza would be attending this grand festival. The ceremony and party wasn’t until tomorrow, but the palace was clustered with people.

After the second sunset most of the people in the palace had dispersed leaving only me, my parents, our many servants and my uncle Masko left in the palace. My father granted me freedom from the dungeons and I was allowed to sleep in my own bed, but in all honesty it wasn’t like I slept in those cells half the time anyway.

I headed upstairs to the third floor and down the west hall to my room. I closed the door behind me and quickly got dressed into something more comfortable, a pair of blue shorts and a white tank-top, and curled up into bed turning the lights off on the way. I let out a sigh of relief and smiled. I couldn’t believe today was actually real. I was going to be the prince of Ra’Koza again, and nothing was going to get in the way of that.

That night my dreams were filled with Jason Salazar and the amulet. His words pierced through my very essence. When I woke up that morning I had a feeling I would be seeing him again before the second sun set over the North Mountains.

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Trumpets echoed through the throne room as three kings, Maltan of Itamotsakeya , Henrok of Anotato, and my father, Pharoka Suko stood by my father’s throne and stood side by side with the priests lined up on either side of the red carpet as they had done yesterday during the anointing ceremony.

King Maltan was a short man of only five foot seven, but it was true for all Itamotosakeiyan . Itamotosakeiyans were a rather short people with pale pasty skin, orient eyes with dark shades of purple, blue, green and black hair. The Itamotosakeiyan people were very traditional just as us Ra’Kozan’s, but were far more fierce in battle. They believed that obedience and discipline were the key to a good people and a fine army. His black hair was sleeked back behind his ears and his fierce black eyes pierced through the crowd.

King Henrok was an averaged height man with very dark skin, unlike Ra’Kozan’s olive skin, as it was for all Anotatoans. Anotatoans were an averaged sized race of kahaizans with dark sun touched skin and various eye colors much like our own. The country itself was mostly desert and grassland. They had once been a very traditional country like Ra’Koza and Itamotasakeiya, but had recently, in the last two hundred years, transferred over to a more modern society. Even his clothes were very modern, almost human in a way. His long black hair was braided behind his back as his bright blue eyes scanned the throne room.

Above in the balcony overlooking the throne room kahaizans sang chorus’s in ancient Kamra. The great doors were opened and crowds of people both side the throne stretching as far as the deserts of Maska were lined up to witness the crowing of a prince.

I stood next to my mother in a white tunic with a red, blue, yellow and orange stripped belt, the sacred colors of Ra’Koza. A long red cape that flowed a few inches behind me was strapped over my shoulders. Fine gold jewels were laid across my chest as Ra’Koza leaf bracelets laced around my ankles and my wrists. The top part of my hair was pulled back into a bun while the rest flowed down to my shoulders.

Zenif, and Zaidra, the son and daughter of king Maltan stood by my side. A smile spread across Zenif’s face. Zenif looked very similar to Havask, but his fiery red hair was sleeked back, and his skin was pasty white and his red eyes were slanted. They were both fairly tall, but it was understandable since their mother, the queen, was of Ra’Kozan blood. Zaidra, his sister, was a tall woman with long purple braided hair, and pale skin. Her dark eyes were stern and serious, the complete opposite of her brother.

“Kahlavar,” Zenif raced towards me and picked me up. “I haven’t seen you in forever,” Zenif put me down and looked up at me. “You’ve gotten tall, my malan,” he said.

“I think you’ve just gotten shorter,” I said as his sister, Zaidra walked by. “Hello, Zaidra,” she glared at me and turned the other cheek.

“Good old Zaidra,” Zenif chuckled. “Just be glad you don’t live with her.” Zenif paused and looked up at me as I readjusted my clothing and whipped my brow. “Smile,” Zenif bumped me in the shoulder. I jumped and sighed. “You’re about to be crowned the prince of your Ra’Koza.”

“I’m nervous,” I said.

“Don’t be,” he began, “There’s not much to it. All you have to do is walk down the aisle, have them set the crown on your head and have you hold the Holy Scriptures as they resist the verse of kings, and that’s it. You don’t even have to say anything.” Zenif tried to reassure me, but that didn’t seem to stop the pounding heart in my chest. Sweat beat down my brow as the three kings raised their hands and the room fell silent. My mother clutched my arm and squealed with joy. The high priest who stood in front of the three kings raised his hands up to the heavens.

“This is a glorious day, the crowing of a lost prince. Malan, may you remember this day forever and all through eternity.” The priest paused and gestured out a hand for me to start walking down the red carpet towards him and the three kings. Zenif gave me a quick shove and I began walking down the aisle. My heat beat faster than a humming bird’s wing in flight. The anointing ceremony was hard enough, but now there were tens of thousands of people watching me including my friends and my family. I looked around the area as I walked closer to the three kings and the high priest. Zula waved at me from a distance with a smile spread across her beautiful face. I smiled back and continued walking.

The priests resisted a line from the Kamrashka in Kamra each adding a new line as I passed by. I stopped in front of my father, king Maltan and king Henrok. My uncle Masko stood to the right of the three kings along with my mother. The only one who didn’t appear to be present was Azàk, but being a sky guard I presumed he was out keeping watch during the ceremony. Camera’s flashed as news reporters recorded the whole thing for the whole world to see. The music stopped and the throne room fell silent. The high priest walked up to me and put his hand on my shoulder and smiled.

“Bring me the crown,” the high priest said with delight as one of the priest stepped forward holding a small pillow where the crown of the prince, a small golden crown shaped as a sunrise encrusted with ancient Kamrian text, rested. The crown sparkled in the light of the sun through the stained glass windows above. The high priest grabbed the crown and took a step towards me. I knelt down on both knees’ as he gently put the bottom tip of the crown in front of my bun. I arose and faced the crowd. My mother was jumping for joy. Zula smiled as light sparked in her purple eyes, and out of the corner of my eyes standing next to the east hallway hidden by the shadows stood Katlyn and her friend Milo.

One of the priests handed me a copy of the Kamrashka. The priests, the high priests and the three kings resisted the verse of kings. When they were finished I handed the Kamrashka back to the priest and stood proudly in front of my father as the people cheered and clapped their hands saying;

“Hail Kahlavar Ra Natashka, Prince of Ra’Koza!”

The high priest raised his hand and the crowd fell silent.

“We have crowed this young man as the prince and the future heir to the Ra’Kozan throne please raise your hands in support of his divine rule. Everyone raised their hands in favor of my crowning. I grinned at the sight of their hands. I had been treated by trash by these people, but now they were all here to support me. It was a strange, but happy feeling. “If you object to this divine order please state your reason before the priest corm. Are there any objections\_”

“I object!” We all turned are heads to doors. Jason Salazar stood between the great doors in a white dress shirt and black dress pants. A dark and malicious smile was spread across his pale face. His black rimmed glasses shimmered in the light of the sun. Everyone gasped and took a few steps back.

My father grabbed me from behind and shoved me behind him.

“You can’t honestly believe that you could have a party and not invite me,” Jason grinned and walked forward with his golden staff in hand.

“You’re not welcome here, Jason,” my father hissed.

“Not welcome,” Jason gasped sarcastically. “I just wanted to witness first-hand the crowing of a prince. You don’t see things like that too often back at home.” He said. People cleared a path as Jason continued walking closer to the royal throne. “Look,” Jason pulled out a small box and opened it and pulled out a large amulet with a large red gem at its center. It was the same amulet from earlier; the amulet of Ra. “I even brought him a gift.”

“He will accept no gifts from you,” my father spit on the ground and snarled at Jason.

I knew my father was right, but I couldn’t help it. I felt like I had seen that amulet before and not only seen it, but it had once been mine. I felt attached to it as if the amulet and I were one with the amulet but had been separated into two objects trying to get back to the other. I clutched onto my father’s purple cape trying to resist the urge to run out and grab hold of the amulet.

The amulet flickered in the light and a vision flashed into my mind. I saw a man…no…an Egyptian Pharaoh, but he was a kahaizan, a child of darkness and death like me. The amulet rested around his neck as he sat in his mighty throne. I gasped and was pulled back into reality. I whimpered and kept my mouth shut as Jason stood only ten feet away from my father and the two other kings.

“It’s been a long time, Suko, you’ve really grown up since my father last visited your family, speaking of which how are your mother and father?” Jason asked.

My father hissed and his pale face turned bright red as he clutched his fists and spread out his wings in rage. My uncle’s face went pale as his eyes widended in fear.

“Sukie,” he whimpered clutching onto my father’s cape as well.

“It’s alright, Masko,” my father reassured him. “I won’t let him hurt you.”

“Is that, Masko? My goodness,” Jason gasped. “I really should have paid a visit last time I was here. It’s just so nice to see the family again. Too bad Katya has to miss it.” He said. My father snarled. I could feel his tail beat against my leg as his blue eyes glowed with great intensity.

*That sick and vile monster is the son of that cruel and heartless sorcerer. He has no place here.*

“Get out!” my father screamed, “GET OUT!” my father summoned a small ball of blue energy and blasted it at Jason. Jason deflected it with his staff, and sighed.

“I didn’t want to fight you filthy creatures, but I brought some friends in case your stubbornness got in the way of our plan!” Jason slammed his staff on the ground creating a sonic boom knocking everyone behind him over. People screamed and I looked over at the door to see at least a hundred wizards with ready wands marching into the throne room. People screamed and clustered into groups. The guards stood around them and aimed their weapons and prepared their powers for a fight. “You know, Suko, I was originally intending on just coming into the city and searching for the foretold twins of darkness, but yesterday I actually ran into one of them, by accident of course, and I realized,” Jason chuckled as he took a step forward, “that you’ve hiding them under your wing this whole time,” Jason shook his head as he tried to regain himself. “You should be proud of yourself. You’ve tricked two very powerful sorcerers for twenty long years. Now that is impressive.”

I widened my eyes in fear and looked up at my father. His cold blue eyes were filled with fear. His hands shook as sweat beat down his brow.

“Father,” I said. My voice came out as a childish whisper. “What’s he talking about? Who are the twins of darkness?” I awaited my father’s reply, but he just stood their frozen with eyes locked on Jason. “Father, answer me,” I pleaded.

“Kahlavar I promise I’ll tell you everything, but right now just stay behind me, okay,” my said. I nodded as my uncle searched the area.

“Where’s Azàk,” my uncle mumbled to himself.

“Havask,” my father ordered. Havask stepped forward and bowed in respect. “Get the sky guards, now.” Havask nodded and out the door. Jason laughed as Havask flew out the door.

“Why are you laughing?” Suko hissed. “My sky guards are skilled warriors. They will tear your apart in seconds. Why do you think you never got into the city last time?”

“How do you think I got into the city this time, Suko?” Jason said. Havask’s loud cry echoed through the throw room. I watched as the sky guards came into the throne room lead by my cousin, Azàk. Azàk threw Havask towards the crowd and landed by Jason’s side.

“Azàk,” my uncle shrieked. “Get away from him. He’s dangerous.” My uncle gestured Azàk to come forward, but Azàk took his place by Jason’s right hand.

“No father,” he said. My uncle Masko’s eyes widened in surprise. “You don’t understand anything. Jason and Julius are only trying to bring peace and build a new empire where humans and kahaizans alike can live in peace. With the twins of darkness they can finally bring that peace.” Tears streamed down my uncle’s face as Azàk continued his speech. I still couldn’t believe it myself.

“Azàk, please,” my uncle cried. “Listen to what you are saying!”

“No, father, you listen to me!” Azàk roared. “Now the only thing standing in their way is selfish people like you and uncle Suko.”

“How dare you speak to him like that!’ my father snarled. “That man is your father.”

“Not anymore,” Azàk turned away and ordered the other sky guards to take a post around the citizens in the throne room. I tried to make eye contact with Azàk but he darted me at every turn.

“Now,” Jason stepped forward. “Suko, hand over the twins, and my men and I will leave you and your kind in peace. I need them both, Suko, now where are they?” Jason snarled.

“NEVER!” my father roared sending a blast of energy at Jason sending him flying across the throne room. Jason harnessed the wind with his magic and landed upright on his feet.

“You brought this upon yourself, Suko Natashka,” Jason snarled as he brushed a loose hair behind his ear. Jason snapped his fingers and the wizards at front struck innocent kahaizans to the ground some even proceeded to take away their powers by magic.

“Get the Kings and their families out here, now! Everyone else evacuate through the exit!” One of the guards ordered. One by one they took king Maltan and his family and King Henrok and his two children. My family was the only royal family who had not yet been evacuated yet.

I watched as three wizards swarmed around Zula. She tried to cut them off with her lighting whip, but their magic overpowered her and she fell into their hands. She kicked and screamed as they tied a magical rope around her wrists and ankles.

In the distance I could see my uncle Masko take Katlyn and her friend back into the East hall. He shoved them inside and locked the door and fled out of the building with the other royal families and guards.

I cried and tried to control my breathing, but everyone around me was dying. I was scared. I wanted to go back to way things were before. Fooshka was right, my family was only trying to protect me from this. I still had no idea what exactly was going on, but I knew Jason was here for me. He and his father had a plan for me. What exactly that plan was I didn’t know, but I was afraid for my people and for my family. This was all my fault. Jason never would have come if I wasn’t here, and no one would have gotten hurt.

*Kahlavar, run! Get out of here!*

*But my father!*

*He can take care of himself. I’ve seen him use his powers. He’s powerful and intelligent. He can stop Jason, now go!*

I jumped up from behind my father and took off running.

“Sir, he’s getting away!” one of the wizards yelled from affair. I looked back to see Jason sprinting after me with my father not far behind.

Jason pointed his staff at the large columns above. A flare of light burst from it and hit the top of top of the column. I watched as the column fell from above. I ran faster and faster in hope that I would miss the column, but upon the sound of it hitting the ground the sound of bones crushing echoed through the halls as immense pain pierced through my skin as the column consumed my right root underneath’s it’s stone grasp

“KAHLAVAR!” my father cried out. I screamed out in agony. My foot throbbed with pain. My entire foot and ankle was crushed under the weight of the marble pillar, but I couldn’t pull myself away from it. I was stuck.

“Help me!” I bellowed.

“I can help,” I looked up to see Jason crawl over the large column to my side.

I cried as I watched him kneel down by my side. He tapped his staff on the column and lifted it up off my foot and moved it a few feet away. I looked back at my foot. It was bent in the opposite direction and my toes were curled and bleeding from the pressure of the column.

I hissed and spat at Jason as he came closer. I tried my best to move as far away from him as possible. I felt as if ten thousands knifes were stabbing my injured foot while fiery darts hooked onto it. The farther I moved the closer Jason got.

“Stay away,” I attempted to snarl, but my voice cracked under pressure. Instead of a fierce roar I sounded more like a terrified kitten drowning in water. Jason knelt down by my side and smiled. He looked so calm and collected as if we were just taking a casually stroll through the friendly neighborhood park.

Jason pulled out that amulet from behind and waved it in front of me. Time slowed and all the colors around me faded to black and white except for one thing; the amulet. The amulet was brighter than before and swung back and forth in Jason’s hands. The images of the child of darkness with the amulet secured around his neck flashed before my eyes. The more the amulet swung the more I saw. The amulet soon came to a halt, but by then it was already too late. I was trapped inside this world in which the amulet contained. An ancient world, a world I had only seen in the painting within the temple walls. A world so far away yet I felt so attached to it as if I had once been a part of it.

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*I saw everything; over three thousand years of two planets history flashed before my very eyes. I saw the Great War on Kàtzu over three millennia ago, the migration of worlds, the rise and fall of Pharaoh Ra and the passing of the amulet, which contained his very spirit, from man to man, creature to creature each believing the amulet to hold God given power.*

*Time slowed and the amulet was in the hands of Jason Salazar as he swung the amulet back before my eyes. The amulet flickered between the simplicity of its golden chain and red jewel and the Pharaoh Ra himself. Ra walked closer and stood tall and powerful over my frail body. His red eyes peered down at me as his olive skin glistened in the light of our sun. His body continued to flicker between himself and the swaying amulet in Jason’s hands. He took his head piece and held it tightly in his grasp. The flickering stopped and Ra stood tall and proud before me. I could see the power in his red eyes.*

*I looked up at my ancestor in fear as he opened his mouth to speak spouting out the words to an ancient prophecy written in the days of King Kalvran and the ancient sorcerer Akmen, the divine ancestor of Jason Salazar.*

*The ancient power shall be born into the Twins of Darkness in the light of day*

*Light shall fall and return at the seventh hour, masked by the ones who have fallen away*

*The foretold King shall unite his armies and siege the ancient power*

*He shall rule with an iron first in his glorious hour*

*Time will tick on the stroke of midnight*

*Light shall break through the veil and return at the final hour*

*The Eldest will decided the fate of us all*

*Whether it be in light or in ruins*

*Ra disintegrated and two kahaizans appeared by his side; identical twin brothers. I was confused and struck dumb by their appearance both because the youngest twin, the one on the right hand side, was alive and well just as the eldest, which hadn’t occurred in over three thousand years due to the impenetrable curse laid upon our people by the sorcerer Akmen of old, but that was not what struck me dump with disbelief. Their faces were none other than my own, the same black hair, tails, wings, olive skin, tall stature and blood red eyes that I knew so well.*

*The twins opened their mouths to speak as they reached out their hands for mine.*

*“Welcome home, brother,”*

*\*\*\**

I screamed as I flowed back into my own world and Jason as well the others around me came back to life.

“What are you screaming for?” Jason gasped. “I haven’t even done anything, now hold still.” Jason shook his head as grabbed my hair and tried to keep my still so he could put the amulet around my neck. I tried everything to pull myself free from his grasp, clawing, biting, hitting him with my wings and even spitting on him, but none of it appeared to faze him. “My god, will you just hold still for one second. You’re worse than my youngest son when I try to get him in bed.” Jason waved his hand over my head and my body went limp. I felt as if someone had injected me a heavy dose of Diphenhydramine. I could barely keep my eyes open as my world spun round and round. Jason shook his head and chuckled as he reached in his pocket for the amulet, but something stopped him, and it wasn’t the kahaizan I could see running towards us.

“Get away from him,” I heard a familiar voice scream from afar.

“Kill him,” Jason ordered. He pointed his staff over my head to a place behind me. I heard a loud screams and the hysterically laughter of my uncle in the background. I smiled and let out a slight chuckle. “What the heck is wrong with this thing?” Jason eyed the amulet and shook his head in annoyance. “Whatever,” he shrugged his shoulders and pulled the remained of the amulet out of his pocket and put it over my neck. I gasped as that same power from earlier over took me, but this time it felt stronger. I tried my best to resist, but if my uncle didn’t get here sooner I was positive it would overtake entirely. I groaned in agony as the amulet glowed against my chest. “Now,” Jason brushed my hair out of my face. “Where’s the other one?” he asked.

“What…other one?” I gasped through breaths.

“Your brother,” Jason grasped my shoulders. “Where is he?”

“My…what…I don’t have a brother,” I replied. Jason’s eyes widened in rage. He snarled and turned his head towards the throne room.

“SUKO!” He bellowed just a dark shadow flew over my head and slammed Jason square in the chest slamming him against the stone wall. Jason fell unconscious as the dark figure on top of him came into focus. It was a small round boulder.

I smiled as my uncle Masko came around the corner and threw me over his shoulder leaving the amulet on the ground.

The world around me drifted out of focus as the minutes passed by. My heartbeat slowed and all my muscles went numb. I watched as two blurry figures snatched up the amulet and locked it in a small box. One of the them vanished into the confines of space while the other waited in silence for Jason to awake.

I don’t know what happened next or why I was sprawled across Zula’s small couch with twelve eyes staring down at me, but everything went black before I had a chance to ask.

15

Katlyn

The noise outside soon died out and the palace walls fell silent as I sat curled up on my bed with Milo by my side.

“Are they gone?” I whimpered.

“Stay here,” Milo jumped up from my bed and walked over to the door and into the hallway leaving me behind. I did the same and followed him to the bolted doors at the entrance to the hallway.

“I don’t hear anything,” I whispered. Milo jumped.

“Katlyn, I said stay in the room. It’s dangerous out there. I don’t want you getting hurt.” Milo exclaimed as he pushed open the door and into the throne room.

The area was a disaster. Dead humans and kahaizans alike littered the blood stained marble floors. Giant columns, large pieces of glass were scattered throughout. I whimpered and took a step out. Milo tried to grab hold of me, but I shoved him away.

“Don’t touch me,” I said.

“We need to get out of here. We can’t stay here. It’s too dangerous, Katlyn,” Milo said.

“We need to find Masko,” I said. If anyone could help us it would be Masko. He has come down and visited us and given us fresh food and water for the fast few days. If we could find him everything would be alright.

“You ruined everything!” a man’s voice echoed through the room. It was coming from the left near the giant column that had crashed to the ground.

“Milo, let’s get out here. We can’t stay here.” I said.

“You’re right.” Milo said in a rather monotone voice as if he were still in a daze. He kept his head turned towards the column where the voice had come from as I grabbed his hand and ran out of the palace doors.

Milo and I walked down the grand staircase and through the gate. I scanned the city. The once crowded streets were now empty with nothing more than scraps of paper and small burning flames left.

Milo and I walked to Maska and knocked on a random door. I had forgotten the house Kahlavar had taken us when we first arrived and I didn’t know anyone else here. I felt so alone. At least I had Milo. I felt so safe with him.

The doors opened and a tall and extremely beautiful kahaizan woman with short purple hair and bright purple eyes wearing a simple white top with black leggings answered the door.

Terror filled her purple eyes as surges of electricity zapped through her purple hair. I could see the stains of blood under her nose and on her hands.

“You must Katlyn, and Milo,” she said. Her accent was much softer than Kahlavar or Laveria’s for that matter, but it still had that Arab flavor to it with that deep guttural and ‘kuh’ sounds on certain words and phrases. It was very beautiful and elegant actually. “I have heard much about you, please, come in,” she said quickly pulling us inside and locking the door. The house was small, but comfortable. She must not have a lot of money, but I assumed that was case living in the town that she was.

“My name is Zula,” Zula stretched out her hand to shake ours. In all the time we’d been here I’d never met a kahaizan who was willing to shake hands. I paused and looked at her hand for a moment before shaking it. “I hear shaking hands is a custom on Earth,” she said.

“In America it is,” I said softly. I turned around to go and sit on the couch, but ended up screaming and squeezing Milo’s hand at the site of Kahlavar sitting on the couch. He looked terrible. His foot looked like it had been attacked by wolves and his face was scared and he had a large wound on his arm and forehead.

“He got trapped under a one of the columns. He was trying to run away. He was nearly killed by Jason. Havask, Tavask and I took him to my place. Saskaiya wasn’t home and his parents haven’t returned yet. We’re just waiting till someone showed up.” Zula said. I could hear the worry in her voice. She obviously cared a lot about Kahlavar and by the sound it she viewed him as someone more important than just a friend.

“Is he going to be okay?” I asked.

“I hope so. His father carried him out to the forest where his mother and the boys and I were hiding. He blanked out as soon we picked him up to carry him back to my place. He’s been out since then.” She said.

“What happened to Jason,” Milo asked. I looked at Milo with a confused expression. That Jason guy had killed a bunch of people and almost killed Kahlavar and his family to. I hated him.

“I don’t know. Pharoka Suko and Pharako-nai Laveria went back to get rid of him and wizards, but they haven’t returned.” Zula replied as she grabbed two pillows and set them on the ground for us to sit on.

“Thank you,” I said as we both sat down.

“Takta, wé nar kó?” Kahlavar mumbled.

“Kahlavar,” Zula rushed to his side and put her hand on his forehead and gently shook his shoulder. Kahlavar’s eyes fluttered open. He gasped and cried out in agony.

“Ika!” He cried as tears streamed down his face. I had never seen Kahlavar cry. It pained me to see him in pain. He appeared so brave and strong to me despite being a self-conceded jerk to Milo and I.

“Kó nar safra. Ko maka ao takta nar noa ha, bàk ka aim ha.” Zula said as she brushed her fingers through Kahlavar’s wavy black hair. Kahlavar looked at Zula and smiled as he closed his eyes and fell back to sleep. Zula waited till Kahlavar was deep in sleep before giving him a quick kiss on the cheek.

“You love him, don’t you?” I said.

“I don’t know. He’s my friend, and I really care about him, and besides even if I did he’s a prince. He’d never want to be with a peasant like me.” She smiled, but I could tell she was lying, but I tried to forget about it and go to sleep. “I’ll go and grab some pillows for you two. You might as well just stay here for the night. It’s not safe outside. Zula opened a small closet and pulled out two small brown blankets and handed them to Milo and I. We curled up on the floor and rested out heads against the pillows and tried to fall asleep. I listened to the sound of Kahlavar’s wheezing breath and Milo’s snoring as I dozed off into a dreamless sleep.

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We spent most of the day with Zula watching Kahlavar and tending to his wounds. Later that evening Zula received a call from one of the palace servants informing her that Kahlavar was to be brought back to the palace immediately for urgent care. Milo and I helped her carry Kahlavar back to the palace in Anoka. It took us about three and a half hours to reach the stairs on foot, and another twenty minutes to climb up the stairs, but thankfully five servants were waiting at the top and took Kahlavar back and tended to his wounds.

“Thank you for everything,” Zula said as she followed the servants carrying Kahlavar down the west hallway.

“Bye,” I said as she walked away into the darkness. I smiled and turned around to head back down the stairs, but Suko stood at the foot of the doors. A few small bandages were spread across his face and a large bandage was wrapped around his left thigh. His face was red with rage. Laveria stood by his side. She appeared to be in shock at the sight of Milo and I standing amongst the dead in the throne room.

“Katlyn, Milo,” Laveria finally managed to say.

“I thought Masko had taken you two to the captain of the guard. You should have already been well on your way to Anotato by now.” Suko snarled stopping over to my side. I tried to back away, but he grabbed hold of my hair and pulled me back.

“Leave her alone!” Milo snapped. Suko shoved Milo to the ground

“Where have you been hiding, you filthy brat!” he exclaimed.

“Masko…Masko took us to the East wing. He said you would never find us.” I whimpered.

“I should have known my brother would have done something like that. He is much too soft and gentle. He was never fit to be king.” Suko snarled and shoved me to the ground. “You led him here didn’t you?” Suko snapped.

“What?” I asked. “We led who here?”

“Jason Salazar. He used you and your friend as a tracking device and found exactly where Kahlavar was hiding. My son was nearly killed because of you!” Suko growled.

“No, I haven’t done anything wrong and neither has Milo. We’re sorry Kahlavar was hurt because of it, but please don’t blame us. We had nothing to do with this,” I tried to explain, but Suko wouldn’t have it.

“I knew I should have disposed of you myself. I never should have allowed you into my home. I put all of Ra’Koza in danger by letting you stay here. I should have done this from the start!” Suko pulled Milo and I up and grasped us in his arms.

“Suko, please, stop,” Laveria pleaded. “Thank about what you are doing,”

“Laveria, I love you, so please, do not follow me,” he said as he dragged us out of the palace to the edge of the large pool. He whispered something in Kalvetna under his breath. Blue smoke swirled around us and for a minute time stopped and everything stood still. I felt a sensation as if I was being pulled through a tube but the tube wasn’t quite big enough, but it only lasted for a few seconds and we landed on cold snow. I looked down to see the city of Anoka and Maska in the distance. We were high up in the mountains. It was cold and the two suns blared high above. The light reflected off the snow causing it to appear brighter and much harder to see as the wind blew through my hair.

Suko let go of Milo and I and shoved us into the snow. I quickly got up and took a few steps back, but still kept my ground and watched Suko carefully. Milo got up a few moments later and reached out his hand to feel my arm. He latched onto it and pulled himself up and wrapped his arms around me. Milo was warm. I felt safe in his arms, but even he couldn’t take away the fear I felt from the look in Suko’s eyes. His blue eyes were cold and worn down, but I could see the determination and ferocity in them.I gently pushed Milo away and walked a few steps closer to Suko.

“Please, don’t hurt us. We had nothing to do with any of this!” I exclaimed through the sound of the rushing wind.

“I should have disposed of you the moment Kahlavar and Laveria brought you into my palace. I only let you live because of your appearance, but I will not be fooled this time!” Suko unsheathed a long silver blade and walked over to me.

“NO!” Milo rammed into Suko sending his sword flying.

“Get out of my way, you little brat!” Suko spat as he snatched he tightended his grip around his sword.

“I won’t let you hurt her,” Milo snarled.

“Get out of my way,” Suko snatched Milo by his collar and chucked him a good few yards back. Milo lay motionless in the snow as Suko turned his attention back to me. I gasped and tried to scurry, but the snow was heavy and weighed down on my clothes. I tripped and fell fast first into the cold snow. I cried and tried to crawl away, but Suko grabbed my ankle and pulled me back.

“You’re not going anywhere,” he snarled as he lifted his sword high up in the air ready to strike me down. I screamed as Milo came from the side me and shoved me behind him and reached his hand up to the sky. I don’t know exactly what happened next. It all happened so fast. Milo raised his hands up into the air and a stick of light formed above him and a blast of air propelled Suko a few meters away. Suko laid there motionless for a few seconds before he began to stir. Milo turned his head back to face me. His once pale green eyes were electric green and glowed in the light of the snow. The light in his hands faded and a small golden staff rapped in golden twine with golden petals at the top. An electric green sphere rested on top of the golden petals. The sphere appeared to flow with magic and emotion as did Milo’s eyes as if they were one in the same.

“Milo,” I took a few steps back.

“Katlyn, please it’s not what it looks like.” Milo tried to reassure with me, but I couldn’t look at him the same. What was that thing he did and what was that thing in his hands and where did it come from? More questions came to my mind and I had no logical explanation for any of them other than that Milo wasn’t who he said he was\_ or what he was for that matter.

“I know what you are, boy.” Suko staggered back onto his feet and whipped the blood from his nose. “I knew it was you. He wouldn’t have just sent a shape-shifter along without a magical companion. It will be fun to watch you suffer!” Suko picked up his sword and ran towards Milo. Milo pushed me back and put his golden staff in front of him to defend himself from Suko’s attack.

“You’re right I am her ‘magical companion’, but Katlyn is not a shape shifter or a just some human for that matter and I am not just some wizard!” Milo swung his golden staff above him in an oval shape above his head. Green lightning clashed and spiraled around him. The mountains rumbled in the distance. I felt a strange power radiating around Milo as if he were the one responsible for the lightning and the rumbling of the mountains. Milo aimed his staff at Suko’s as if ready to strike him down. Milo waved his hand and the lighting surrounding him diminished. The moon that rose above the mountains vanished leaving the world around me to fall into utter darkness. I could still make out Suko’s fear full eyes and Milo’s electric green eyes that seemed to flow with magic, magic that I had once known, and that last time I had seen them I remember the feeling of pure terror that had zapped through my body.

“If you do not let Katlyn and I leave I swear that I will kill you with the same spell that my grandfather killed your parents with,” Milo snarled and the green orb in front of his staff sparked with green electricity as it’s light grew and faded in the darkness.

I gasped and fell backwards into the snow in an attempt to get as far away from Milo as possible. That story Masko had told us about him and Suko when they were young when that sorcerer had killed his parents, that sorcerer was Milo’s grandfather. It was true that I had known very little about Milo’s past, but to think that he was a sorcerer and non the less the grand child of the monster it made me sick.

“Who do you think you are, boy?” Suko snarled.

“My name is Milo Salazar, son of Jason Salazar and grandson of Julius Salazar, now stand down or I will do everything in my power to make you do as I command.” Milo said. I was already in shock that Milo was Julius grandfather, but I’d never thought that Jason was Julius son, Milo’s father. Jason Salazar was the same man who had destroyed the palace and attempted to kill Kahlavar. I didn’t want to believe for one second that Milo, my best friend, was related to those murders.

Suko’s blue eyes widened and he appeared to vanish in the darkness that surrounded us. All I could see was Milo’s green orb and his electric green eyes.

“You’re just as my pathetic as my grandfather said you were,” Milo waved his hand and the moon appeared above the mountains. Its light cast down on the mountains above and the two people standing before me.

Suko had fallen to his knees with his face buried in his hands. I could hear his sheepish cries through the howling wind. Milo took in a deep breath and the staff in his hands vanished. His electric green eyes faded back to the familiar pale green I once knew.

Milo turned around and reached out his hand for mine. I wasn’t sure whether I should grab it or run. I didn’t know who that man standing before just moments ago was. What made the one standing before me know so different? The man standing before me was not Milo, the foster boy, and my best friend, this was Milo Salazar, the son Jason Salazar, a man who killed a thousand people just for one. Who said he wasn’t a blood thirsty murder like his father.

Suko hadn’t budged from his fetal position after Milo struck him down. His blue eyes wide open as he mumbled words that I could neither hear nor understand. I felt empathy for him. His parents had been murdered by none other than my best friend’s grandfather and his only daughter had been taken by Jason Salazar, Milo’s murderous father.

“Where is she?” Suko hissed. Milo turned his attention back to Suko as I remained still and quiet in the cold wet snow. Suko arose risen to his feet. His blue eyes were wild with rage. His long silver sword dangled loosely in his hand.

“Katlyn, stay behind me,” Milo ordered. I watched as Milo took a step closer to Suko with his hands raised as if trying to calm him down, but it didn’t appear to be working.

“Where is she,” Suko screamed and swung his sword in front of him catching Milo’s left eye. A thick streak of blood ran down Milo’s left eye and across his nose. Milo snarled, but stood his ground.

“Milo,” I shrieked reaching out my hand although I knew that there was nothing I could do to stop this.

“Where is my daughter, you pathetic human!” Suko cried. “Where is she?” tears streamed down Suko’s face as he barred his fangs at Milo. Suko tripped and fell to his knees in front of Milo. “Where is my Katya,” he whimpered.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t give her back to you, not yet.” Milo tried to explain. Milo knew Katya and not only that; Milo had been involved in her capture that Kahlavar was so unrightfully banished for.

Suko’s eyes filled with rage. He jumped back onto his feet and spread out his wing’s. His tail fluffed up as well as his hair making him appear bigger than he actually was. Suko hissed baring his long vampire like fangs. A ball of blue light formed in Suko’s hands.

“Fine then I’ll just take something of Jason’s.” Suko grabbed Milo by his hair and pulled him in and angled his sword against Milo’s neck as the ball of blue light in his hands flowed along the ridges of the sword. The blue light encased Milo’s body as if it were made entirely of glue. Milo tried to break free, but Suko had him under a spell of his own. It was as if Milo’s body was frozen in time.

“Stop it,” I picked up a nearby rock and threw it at Suko’s head. Suko hissed at me and loosened his grip on Milo.

Suko pulled the sword closer to Milo’s throat, but it was too late. Milo had regained movement in his body and blasted Suko with a ball of electric green light sending him flying across the cold white snow.

“I may be a sorcerer and the grandson of Julius Salazar, but at least I didn’t try and kill the one person I loved the most!” Milo kicked snow towards Suko as he began to stir. “Katlyn, let’s go before he sees us.” Milo reached out his hand towards me, but I didn’t budge. “Katlyn, everything’s going to be alright, I promise.” His words faded as Milo’s words from last night flowed through my mind; *Promise me that if you ever find Jason, Julius, or any of his children that you run as far away as you can. I don’t care how nice they are, their dangerous. I don’t want you to get hurt, Katlyn.* Milo, the Milo I knew, was right. Milo Salazar was nice, he was kind and gentle, and tried to protect me from Suko’s rage, but that didn’t change that he was Jason’s son, and that he was dangerous, so I did exactly as he instructed and ran down the mountain as fast as I could.

“Katlyn, wait,” Milo ran after me. “Stop, please,” I ran in silence, hearing only the howling of the harsh wind and the beat of my hammering heart. I caught sight of the Anoka wall and spotted a small crack and ran towards it.

“Stay away from me,” I screamed as I crawled through a hole in the wall and into the sleepless city of Anoka.

“Katlyn,” Milo called out my name as I raced to the Ra’Kozan palace. “Katlyn, stop!” Milo grabbed hold of my arm just as I reached the staircase and spun me around. I kicked and screamed and tried my best to make him let go. “Katlyn, why did you run? I’m not going to hurt him. I would never hurt, now please, just stop…”

“You lied to me!” I finally managed to say. “You’re that monsters son! You’re his flesh and blood!” I shrieked.

“I am not my father!” Milo exclaimed.

“How would I know that?” I asked. Milo’s eyes widened in disbelief. “I’ve only known Milo, the foster kid, my best friend. I don’t know Milo Salazar.” I said. “You said it yourself. If I ever met Julius, or Jason or any of their children that I should run because their dangerous, and Milo was right. Milo Salazar is dangerous and a lying, two-faced, freak!” I stopped on his foot and snarled. Milo jumped and took a step back.

“Katlyn, calm down,” Milo tried to reason with me, but I shoved him aside.

“No,” I snapped.

“I get it,” Milo sat down on the base of the staircase. “You’re right. I am dangerous. I come from a family of high class sorcerer’s.” he shrugged his shoulders and sighed. I shook my head and paced back and forth. Milo sighed and rubbed his temples. “Katlyn, what’s wrong now?” he asked.

“What’s wrong, are you serious?” I snapped. I couldn’t take it anymore. Yes, Milo had saved me, but that didn’t make up for the lies. I was beginning to wondering what else he was hiding from me. “You turned into this psychotic wizard…”

“Sorcerer,” Milo corrected me.

“Whatever,” I exclaimed. “The truth is I don’t know who you are anymore. You lied to me, Milo. I just want to know the truth, Miles.”

“What would you like to know?” Milo asked.

“Alright, if you’re going to do it that way, then tell me what you meant when you told Suko that he had attempted to kill the one he loved the most? You made it sound as if he had tried to kill Katya while we were up the up the mountains, and that doesn’t make any sense, because you and I were the only ones up the mountains with him, right?” I asked.

Milo tensed up. He clenched his jaw and sighed.

“Katlyn, I’m sorry, but I can’t answer a question that I don’t know the answer to,” Milo said. He was lying. He knew the answer. He knew the truth. He knew everything. I just hadn’t asked the right question yet.

“Fine, then answer me this,” I began. “What do you know about me?” I asked.

“Everything?” Milo asked.

“Everything,” I confirmed.

“Alright,” Milo began, “You’re name is Katlyn Marie Caldwell. You’re one of Cindy Caldwell’s many adopted children. You were brought into the foster care in 2007 and after years of foster parents Cindy finally adopted you as her own in 2010. You have no memory of your life before you were seven years old and there isn’t much to back you up, so no one actually knows your birth parents and whether they even excited. You currently live in Sequim, Washington with your thirteen brother and sisters, including me, and you mother, Cindy Caldwell. You crashed on a plane and haven’t been heard from since and are considered to be dead along with me as far as America is concerned.” He was lying. He knew who I was. He knew my name, my *real* name.

“Milo, you seem to know so much, tell me, what’s my real name?” I asked. Milo didn’t answer. I snarled. Milo used to be my best friend, we did everything together. I told him everything. Why can’t he just do the same? “Answer me, you idiot,” I snapped. Milo still remained silent as he stood tall at the foot of the stairs. “Tell me, what is my real name?” I asked. Milo was still giving me the silent treatment. I was losing my patience. He knew my real name and I knew it. “Tell me,” I demanded.

Milo pulled out his staff and tapped it against the ground. Clouds of dark purplish smoke spiraled around.

“I’m sorry, Katlyn,” with that he vanished in the dark purple clouds along with his golden staff leaving me stranded in front of the palace stairs. In rage I quickly ran up the stairs before the guard’s regained consciousness. I looked behind me to make sure that no one had followed me. I sighed and looked back up the staircase towards the palace just I slammed into a body of metal. I screamed and fell on my butt, and tumbled down the stairs, but something caught my arm.

“Where do you think you’re going, human?” I looked up to see a pair of black eyes peering down at me through the dark. The kahaizans golden metal and double-edged sword shimmered in the light of the sleeping city. I cried for help as he pulled me off the ground towards him. “Pharoka Suko never should have allowed a human like you into the city walls. I don’t know what you’re doing out this late, but I’m going to do what the king couldn’t do for himself,” I cried for help as he swung me over his shoulders. Five other men came through the shadows of the palace walls and appeared by his side.

“Just let me go!” I cried. “I’m innocent,” I kicked and slammed his back, but nothing fazed him as he and his men unfolded their wings and flew outside the Ra’Kozan palace.

“I’m Captain Kavan, human, and you’re not going anywhere,” he said. I rembered that name. It was the name of that kahaizan Suko was going to send me to after the dinner, but Masko hid Milo and I in the Eastern hallway,”

“What do you want with me?” I asked. “You’re under King Suko’s order,” I said. I paused realizing that Suko had just tried to kill me only moments ago and that he may be involved in this as well. “King Suko sent you to this, didn’t he?”

“No,” he replied. “Pharoka Suko informed me to stay guard and if I ever found any humans I was to kill them on the spot, but for you I will make an exception. Instead I will take you to Anotato to an execution camp out in the desert,”

My eyes widended in fear as he dropped down into the woods. He thrust me against a tree and tied a rope around my hands. I cried for help as he and his men dragged me into the depths of the forest. Why does this always happen to me? I just want go home.

18

Katlyn

We had been traveling all night. My legs were tired and I was ready to collapse out of exhaustion. I needed a break. I had no idea where they taking me or how much farther, but I don’t think we were anywhere close to our final destination.

I had to get away. I needed to get away, but I was stuck in their grasp and it was obvious that they weren’t going to let me go anytime soon. I had to do something, something to distract them, so I did the only logical thing a girl in the forest would do.

“Excuse me, but I need to go the bathroom,” I pleaded. The guard with his hand latched around my thin pale arm snarled.

“We cannot let you go, human. You might try and escape, and don’t worry you will be dead soon, and that desire will soon be gone.” He said. That’s what I thought he would say. I had to approach the situation another way. I couldn’t be gentle with them. It was obvious they weren’t easy to break. I had to try something far more serious and stern.

“Fine, then I’ll just go right now.” I bent down and grabbed my dress and pulled it upwards making them think I was going to pull down my pants and do exactly as I had said; go to the bathroom.

The guards shrieked and shoved me away towards a tree.

“Fine, you may go and perform the necessary bodily functions, but you must be in our sight at all times.” One of the guards stated.

I gasped in exaggeration.

“No, you can’t look. That’s disgusting. You have to turn around or I can just stand here and wait till you do,” I tapped my foot on the hard root underneath me.

“Silence, human. I won’t let you out our sights, now go. We must hurry. We need to reach the camp before nightfall,” he said. I watched as the blue sun set over the mountains lighting up the sky with various shades of blues and purples.

“I don’t care what you say, a woman needs her privacy. You of all people should know that. You’re wives would be very disappointed in you,” I shook my head.

The guards looked at each other and whispered amongst themselves. I coughed and they diverted their attention back to me.

“Alright, fine, but make it quick.” The guards took the handcuffs off my wrist and tied a rope around my waist to ensure that I wouldn’t run away. I thought Kahlavar was the only stupid kahaizan around here, but I guess it runs in the family.

I quickly ran behind a tree and knelt down. I grabbed a rock and rubbed it against the rope in an attempt to free myself. Sweat beat down my brow as I pushed down harder on the thick rope.

“We do not have all day, human.” One of the guards snarled. His tail slammed hard against the forest floor. The sound echoed through the trees. My heart hammered in my chest as the guards footsteps came closer, but horrific cries echoed through the tree’s as a dark figure appeared through the bushes and knocked the guards down. I shrieked as the last string of rope that connected me to the kahaizan guards snapped. The dark figure vanished and I jumped to my feet and ran. Whoever that dark figure was they had given me a few extra seconds and saved me.

“No more silly games, human,” the guards pulled on the loose rope only to discover nothing was attached at the other end. I laughed at the sight of Captain Kavan’s face in the distance.

“Kaka! Ét manà es fàn! Fína màs!” one of the guards bellowed. I heard the flapping of kahaizan wings in the distance, but I didn’t dare look back. I only had one goal in mind. I had to find a way back to Anoka and if possible find a way back home.

The cold wind whistled through my long white blonde hair. I had no idea where I was going or where Anoka was from here. Knowing me I was probably heading straight for a cliff and I would probably trip right at the edge and fall to my death. The second sun set over the mountains and the red moon rose high in the sky.

I shivered in the cold and wrapped my arms around me and continued walking hoping that I was heading towards Anoka rather than away from it, but knowing myself I was most likely heading in the opposite direction.

“Way to go Katlyn,” I grumbled as I continued walking through the thick trees. A twig snapped and leaves crackled in the distance. I stopped hoping that they were mine, but the noise continued, but much softer and at a slower pace. I jumped at the sight of a dark figure run across my path just five meters away from where I stood. I tried to control my breathing and slowly walk away as the figure drew closer.

*CRUNCH!*

A small twig snapped a few feet away from me and I took off running in attempt to escape whatever creature had passed me by. I tried to run faster, but my lungs were pleading for air. I unintentional slowed down my pace just as something cold latched onto my shoulder. I screamed and swung my fist around. A ball of pure light formed at the tip of my fist and knocked the figure down and threw him a few meters back.

I had no idea how I had managed to bend light or non the less punch someone in the face with it, but whatever it was it had kept me alive and right now that was all that mattered. I took a few steps closer and peered down at my attacker. It was a human. I couldn’t see this face and his eyes were closed. I must have knocked the life out of him, but that’s what happens when you chase a little girl through the woods, you get punched.

“I bet you didn’t expect I could bend light now did you,” I snickered down at the man lying helpless on the ground. “Well guess what, I didn’t know either, so ha!” I said as I took a step forward; not the best idea I have made. My foot got caught on a small branch. I swung my arms around in a ridiculous fashion, but despite my efforts I still managed to fall face first onto my attacker. I screamed and tried to get up, but now that I was closer I could see his face better in the dark.

He had dark skin and a mask covering his face leaving a small space open for his eyes and mouth. I reached out my hand to pull down his mask when the man gasped and his eyes flashed open. His eyes were a pale green milky color. I only knew one person with eyes like that. He pulled off his mask and took in a deep breath and sighed.

I didn’t know whether to kiss him or punch him in the face, so I did what every teenage girl would do in a situation like this; I grabbed his color and kissed him passionately on the lips before slamming my knee hard into his groin.

Milo cried out in agony as he cupped his hands over his throbbing private area.

“I missed you to,” he groaned as he grabbed hold of a nearby tree truck and pulled himself up. Know that I wasn’t terrified out of my mind I could see him more clearly. It had been eight months since I had last seen him, and a lot had changed since then.

“What were you trying to do?” I lowered my brow as I raised my fists in front of my face. I took a few steps back keeping my eye on Milo as he mumbled something under his breath.

“Do all girls hit that hard,” Milo groaned.

“Did your father send you? Does he want to murder me to just like he murdered all those innocent people?” I snarled and shoved him back. “Tell your father that I will not give up so easily. I will not be some piece in his twisted game, and I won’t let you make me one!” I screamed as a ball of light formed at the tip of my fist just as I had done before. I aimed my fist right at Milo’s face, but before I made contact Milo reached out his hand and extinguished the light as he latched his hand around my fist.

“Why are you so mad?” he asked. “I saved you from the hands of those kahaizan soldiers back there,” he said. I gasped and took a step back. That was Milo? I shook the idea out of my head and shoved him back.

“Why should I believe you? You’re Jason’s son, and plus you lied to me, Milo or should I say Milo Salazar.” I said.

“Katlyn,” he said. “I’m your friend, not your enemy,”

“What do you want, Milo,” I grumbled.

“I didn’t come here to hurt you, Katlyn.” He said as he pulled his golden staff and planted it in the moss covered soil to our right. Its bright green sphere illuminated the area around us as Milo sat down on the cold mossy soil gesturing for me to do the same. I narrowed my eyes and growled as I planted myself a good few feet from him and his staff.

“Thank you for clearing that up because obviously I feel so much safer now that you’re here,” I grumbled as I narrowed my eyes and growled planting myself a good few feet from Milo and his golden staff.

I really hadn’t meant what I had said. In all honesty I really did feel safe with him around. Despite everything he had done I still cared about him. I still loved him. I narrowed my eyes at him as I continued to speak. “I’m not your friend anymore, Milo. I cared about you, Miles. You meant something to me, but obviously I meant nothing to you.”

Milo’s pale green eyes widened. I had hurt him, well good for me because he deserved every minute of it. I may have still loved him, but that didn’t change the fact that I wanted to strangle him till he pleaded for mercy. I closed my eyes and took in a deep breath and slowly released it in attempt to calm my troubled nerves. “How did you even know where to find me?” I asked. “You just disappeared there’s no way that you could have known where or what I was doing out in this forest, so tell me how.” I demanded.

“After I lost my sight as a boy I learned to use my magic to see. I can’t physically see, which is obvious by know, but my magic acts as radar. In a way it’s like echo location. My magic grasps the image and sends it back to me. I knew where you were before you even stepped into these savage woods, so you see although I’m blind hypothetically speaking I can see everything around me just not the way you and other’s see things. Does that make sense?” Milo tried his best to explain, but in all honesty all I heard was blah, blah, blah, blah.

“You’re magic words don’t make any sense, but I guess I can’t call you out as a liar, well not with that at least.” I grumbled. “Do all you wizardry people have weird radar powers or are you the unlucky freak gifted with dolphin communication?” Milo paused and grinned at my comment as he shook his head in dismay. His sighed and cleared his throat.

“Well…to answer your question, no, not all wizards are gifted with ‘dolphin communication’,” Milo air quoted the two words before continuing on. “There are three different types of wizards, metamorphic, elemental and darks. Metamorphic wizards can take the form of anything or anyone, but their magic is basic and weak compared to the others. Elemental wizards use magic found in nature, my father is an elemental wizard. They are powerful, but can easily be between by a dark. Dark wizards use ancient magic, very powerful magic. They are the most dangerous and feared among the wizardry community.”

“And I care because,” I folded my arms across my chest.

“Katlyn, I’m trying to help you,” he said.

“Fine then which one are you, dolphin boy,” I sneered.

“I’m what they call a tri-wizard, born with all three. The last wizard born with such power was the great sorcerer Akmen over three thousand years ago.” He said. I frowned and rested my head against the tree trunk a few inches away.

“Of course you are,” I rolled my eyes. “You’re such a show off.” Milo laughed and continued talking.

“I’m considered the most powerful wizard in the world even more so than my father or grandfather, but I still have to obey them. They are my elders, my family, and blood is everything to a wizard, do you understand,” he said.

“Gloating much,” I snickered. Milo smiled and rested his head against his golden staff and green sphere.

“Don’t worry,” he began, “I may be a powerful sorcerer back at home, but here I am just Milo Salazar, the blind friend of the lovely Katlyn Caldwell,” Milo bowed his head down in respect. I snarled.

“Don’t bow to me, and who are you calling friend,” I snapped. “You’ll never be my friend and I will never forgive you, Milo. You lied to me about everything and there are still secrets you’re keeping from me that I wish you would tell me, and I don’t understand why you can’t, and I never will.”

“I thought so, but I came here to be with you one last time,” Milo rose to his feet as he pulled his staff out of the ground gripping it tight in his hands.

“Good riddance,” I snapped, but I really didn’t mean it. I didn’t want Milo to go. Despite everything that had happened this past week I couldn’t get myself to wish anything bad upon him. Yes it was true that I hated him for what he did but I loved him to and I wished for only the best to come upon him and his family despite everything they had done. Why does love have to be so complicated? Why can’t it just be like how it is in the movies? But happily ever after wasn’t an option when the one you loved was a powerful sorcerer whose father and grand-father wanted you dead.

“Wait, what did you mean, that this would be the last time I would ever see? Why couldn’t I see again, not like I really care, but if I did, why couldn’t I? Tell me.” I asked.

“My father wants me to focus solely on my magic, but it’s not just that,” Milo paused and took in a shaky breath. “He wants me to keep my distance from you. I made a mistake, Katlyn,” he took a step back as he gripped both hands tightly around his staff.

“Yeah you did,” I said. “You lied to me, Milo Salazar,”

“No,” he said. “I became your friend. I told my dad I would watch over you, but I fell for you, Katlyn. I want to protect you, but I can’t. I’m sorry, Katlyn,” he whimpred.

“Okay,” I gave him a confused look and took a step back. “You’ve said a lot of things today that didn’t make any sense, but this just doesn’t make any sense. What the heck are you talking about, Milo?” I asked. Milo opened his mouth to speak, but the snap of a twig and rustling leaves caught us both off guard.

“Milo, what did I tell you,” Jason came out through the thicket of trees with a scowl on his face as he grasped his hand on Milo’s shoulder. “I told you to never speak to this creature again. She is not your friend. She is the enemy and you will treat her as such. Now put your staff in front of you,”

Milo, with shaky hands, extended his staff out in front of him keeping his pale blind eyes fixed on me.

“Good,” Jason smiled. Jason, with Milo’s hands still clammed to the staff, grabbed hold of his staff and aimed the green orb at my head. “Now kill her,” Milo flinched and tried to take a step back, but his father pulled him back into position. “Milo, you and I have both made mistakes, but this will help correct things, I promise,” Jason said. Tears streamed down Milo’s cheeks, his eyes wide with fear. “Milo, are you listening to me, do it now,” Jason ordered. Milo jumped and looked back at me. He didn’t want to hurt me, and he wouldn’t let Jason win. I stood my ground and took a step forward and raised my head up high.

“Milo, would never hurt me, right, Miles.” I said with pride.

Milo took in a shaky breath. Tears formed at the corner of his eyes.

“Dad’s right, Katlyn,” Milo gulped as he aimed his staff at my head. “I made a grave error when we boarded that plane to Florida. I’m going to make things right again. I’m so sorry, Katlyn,” Milo whimpered as his pale green turned a unnatural shade of electric green just as they had done up in the mountains with Suko. His green orb began to glow as black smoke spiraled around it. I looked back at Milo in terror as three giant green fireballs formed around the green sphere. I looked down at Milo’s lips as he mouthed the simple word; *run*.

I took off running back the way I came. I had no idea where I was going or where I would end up, but I knew three things were certain. One, my best friend was now my enemy, and he was trying to kill me, Milo knew the truth of my past, and third I was about to run right off a cliff.

I slammed my feet hard into the rocky soil inches from the massive canyon that lay before me. I peered down. It must have been at least a thousand foot drop. The sound of rushing water echoed through the depths of the canyon. I looked around my surroundings. There was no way to get around, not unless I wanted to hike a few miles, but I didn’t have time to hike a few miles not with three raging fire balls racing after me thanks to my good old friend, Milo Salazar.

The sound of the fires flames burned in my ears. They were only seconds away from impact. I pondered my options, but there were no options. I couldn’t run or hide, and the jump across was too far. I would never make it not with my short stubby legs. I looked down at the vast canyon below. Ten feet down rested a wide ledge. It wasn’t very long and would only be big enough for one person. If I could catch that ledge I could potentially evade the fireballs as long as I don’t slip and fall to my death first.

I sighed and took a few steps back and ran for the edge of the cliff and jumped just as the green flame flew over my head.

I screamed as my ankle cracked upon making contact with the stone ledge. I gripped my hands against the stone wall. My heart beat painfully against my aching chest as shaky breaths escaped from chapped quivering lips. I pulled myself up onto my feet as a heavy dose of adrenaline raced through my weak body. My ankle was twisted and swollen, but I couldn’t feel any pain.

I sighed with relief and chuckled.

“I’m still alive, take that Milo and Jason Salazar,” I exclaimed with a grin spread across my bruised covered face. I should have shut my mouth when I had the chance because like all things in my life whether it was school, dealing with Milo or falling to my death I had spoken too soon.

The ledge cracked and crumbled beneath me. I tried to grab hold of something, but the closest hold was a good six inches up. Curse my midget height. The ledge snapped and plummeted down to the rushing waters below taking me along with it.

“NO!” I screamed as the wind whistled through my hair and tattered blue dress. I had always known that Kátzu

I curled up into a ball and closed my eyes and waited for the pain to spread. I remember hitting something on my way down, but there was no pain just a pair of bright green eyes peering down at me and the sound of flapping wings.

“T…Tavask,” I stuttered through quivering lips. Tavask smiled with his quirky grin of his as his green eyes lit up with excitement.

“Katlyn,” he shrieked nearly dropping me. “Oh, sorry,” he chuckled. He flew back to the Anoka wall and set me down. “What are you doing out here?” he asked. “Are you hurt?” he asked noticing my ankle.

“I would ask the same of you,” I said. “And my ankle is fine. I just twisted it a bit. It’ll be fine.”

“I was meeting some friends at Lake Saionai. It’s my friend’s birthday today, and he wanted to go to the beach after dark. The creatures in the lake glow at night. It’s quite beautiful, actually.” He said. I smiled and akwadly gave him a hug. He flinched and the hair on his tail stood on end.

“Thank you for saving me,” I said. Tavask smiled and hugged me back.

“You’re welcome,” he blushed gently pushing me away.

“You can go now. I’ll just stay here for the night,” I said.

“Nah,” he said. “It’s not all that great anyway and plus it’s not safe out here at night, not unless you know what you’re doing.” He swooped me back up into his arms and flew to the top of the wall. “I’ll take you back to the palace, alright?” I nodded and rested my head against his chest. A tear trickled from my eye as I listened to the sound of his beating heart.

16

Katlyn

Tavask dropped me off at the doorstep of the palace and we parted ways. I cracked open the great doors and slid inside. The throne room was dark and empty. The only light came through the large stained glass windows creating imprints of the Ra’Kozan creation myth across the cold marble floor. The figures in the marble appeared to dance as the cold desert wind howled outside. I looked towards the boarded door of the Eastern hallway, but remained where I was in the reflection of goddess of Ra’Koza, Malan. In her white robes and multi-colored silk shawls that wrapped around her radiant skin, and white hair she was nothing short of her title. Her rainbow colored eyes appeared to look down upon me as if she were listening to me.

I sighed and sat down on the warm marble floor as I peered into Malan’s rainbow eyes.

“I don’t know if you’re there,” I mumbled as I looked up at Malan, “but I’m far from the only home I’ve ever known. You probably won’t listen to a human like me, but I need some help.” I gulped and looked around me to make sure I was still alone in the throne room. “I don’t who I am. My whole world is falling apart. I’m so scared. I just want to go home,” I whimpered. “I miss Cindy, and the others, but,” sniffled as I tried to whip away my remaining tears, “no matter how many times I miss or how many times I say I hate this place I can’t leave. There’s something here I’m supposed to find, but I don’t know what it is. The longer I’m here the worse things get. I don’t understand “What am I supposed to find? Please, just tell me,” I said. “Answer me!” I cried. My voice echoed through the palace walls. I gasped as the great doors thrashed open. I scurried over to the boarded doors and slipped through and watched from affair as Suko came inside. He slammed the doors behind him. His clothes were soaked from the snow and his blue hair was messy from the harsh winds outside. He slide down onto the marble floor, and cradled his knees. His sheepish cries echoed through the walls.

“Katya,” he whimpered. He arose to his feet and walked under the Malan’s likeness in the window. His blue eyes were swollen with tears. They were soft and gentle and filled with a deep sorrow that I’d never seen in anyone’s eyes before. He spoke in Kalvetna, but I could feel the pain in his voice, and the reoccurring names; Katya, Kahlavar, Kaska and Laveria.

“Suko,” Laveria appeared by Suko’s side and kissed him gently on the cheek. Light shimmered in his eyes at the sight of her. He smiled and wrapped his arms around her.

“Ka aim akí, mei alwa,” she said as she gently brushed her fingers through his hair.

“Stay with me,” he said in English as they casually danced in circles.

“You hate speaking English, Suko,” she noted. “But if that’s what you want then I will speak it to, my love, and of course I’ll stay with you. You’re my husband. No matter what the world may say or how many times people tell me I’m insane for staying with you, you will always be my love. You’re my forever and my always, Suko Raklan Natashka and don’t you ever forget that,” she kissed him on the lips and looked into his eyes. “You let the girl go, didn’t you,” she said. Suko gently pulled himself away from her and walked towards the stained glass window.

“I suppose you could say that.” He replied. I remembered the look on his face as I ran down the mountains. He was like a broken toy, unable to put itself back together without a little help and some glue.

“What happened, Suko?” she asked.

“I tried to kill her Laveria. I felt nothing. I had no mercy. All I felt was rage and all I wanted to do was watch her plead for mercy as I swung my sword.” I gulped and grabbed my neck. I looked over at Laveria expecting her to freak out or at least say something, but she just simply walked over to him and wrapped arms around his waist. Suko smiled and brushed her fingers across her arms, but he eyes quickly darkened and his smiled faded. “Laveria, I’m no different than Julius or Jason Salazar.” He said.

“Suko,” Laveria gasped. “Look at me,” Laveria vanished and appeared in front of Suko. “You’re not Julius or Jason. You’ve made some mistakes, but so have I, and so have many others. No one blames you. Don’t you ever compare yourself to them.”

“I’ve tried all my life to save our children and keep safe from Julius’s grasp, but the years have turned me sour and cold; heartless. I saw it in that human girls eyes. I was a monster, Laveria.” Suko turned back to Laveria with tears in his eyes. “I don’t want to be a monster, Laveria. I want to protect what we still have. I won’t let Jason take Kahlavar to Julius, and I hope and pray they never find Kaska, and that Katya is still alive and well, and I surely won’t let them take you, my love.” Suko kissed Laveria on the lips. He sighed and looked deep into her red eyes. “Laveria, if we’re going to protect our children and Kàtzu we need to get the amulet from Jason before it’s too late.”

“Of course,” she replied. “For now let’s get some rest.” She said kissing him on the cheek. They held hands and their tails intertwined as they walked towards the grand staircase and up to the third floor of the palace. I sighed and walked back down the hallway to the room that Masko had taken Milo and I too.

I opened the door and closed it gently behind me. I looked over at the bed where Milo had been. I still couldn’t believe he was gone. I wanted my friend back, but he was right. Milo Salazar was dangerous. He knew the truth about me. I don’t know why or how, but he did. It made me question what else in my life was a lie; an illusion masked by his magic. I had to find out the truth. This wasn’t just about my memories anymore. I had to know why Milo Salazar came to Cindy’s foster care program and why he chose me as his friend, and why I felt so connected to this strange planet.

I yawned and took off my shoes and climbed into bed and fell into a deep sleep. That night my dreams were filled with Milo’s green eyes under a monstrous mask and the a young boy crying out the name, *Katya*.

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I awoke the next morning sore and exhausted from the previous day. I yawned and crawled out the bed. I caught site of my old jeans and my wrinkled blue shirt in the corner of the room. I looked down at the teal gown and white blouse, Laveria, had given for the party. I sighed and took the dress off and put back on my old clothes. They smelled horrendous and were in need of a good cleaning, but they reminded me of home. I slipped on my black converse and walked over to the standing mirror. I still had my old hair tie around my wrist. I’m surprised it was still among the living. Usually I buy a pack of hair ties and end of with one by the end of the week. I dipped forward and grasped my hair into a high ponytail and put my hair up into a messy bun. I smiled at my reflection in the mirror. I put my hand against my chest and felt the rigged curves of my necklace. I smiled and pulled it out and looked at it. I would find the story behind this necklace. I’m going to find my memories again and I’m going to find the truth behind everything, and this time no is holding me back.

8 Months Later

*6th of Darkness, 2015*

*(November 6th)*

17

Kahlavar

I sat on my bed with a large bandage and ice pack wrapped around my injured foot as my ceiling fan spun round and round keeping cool air constantly flowing.

Months had passed since Jason and his men had come to my coronation. My parents had left in search of the amulet that Jason Salazar had on him during my coronation leaving me, my uncle and my father’s many counselors in charge of the country. I had yet to hear of their return.

Anoka had gotten worse since Jason had come. The palace was still in repair and the news was constantly bombarded by new robberies and murders left and right. Anoka and Maska weren’t the only cities that had fallen into turmoil. All of Ra’Koza was on edge. Itamotoskaiya and Anotato had tried to lend help, but nothing seemed to help. Ra’Koza was lost without its king, and in terror of none of than the one he had anointed his heir; me. Today was the month of Darkness, my birth month, and today, the sixth of Darkness, just so happened to be my birthday.

My foot had recovered quickly since Kahaizans have a constant flowing supply of calcium in their bodies, so my bones healed within the month, but I was still unable to walk and my foot was covered in large purple and blue bruises and hatched with various old stitched that had yet to fade away. Saskaiya had instructed me to ice them a few hours every day to decrease the swelling.

I spent most of my days in my room since the incident. I came out for dinner, and occasionally my friends, Havask, Tavask, Katlyn and Zula came to visit me from time to time. Zula and her sister, and Hatka were doing better, but she struggled to get food on the table everyday and keep them all warm at night. Havask had been appointed to the Captain of the army after Captain Kavan had been found dead in the Salvetka forest, a few miles from the Northern wall. The human girl Katlyn spent most of her days now with Saskaiya, healing the wounded. She and Tavask had grown very close these past few months, and from what I heard they are now and girlfriend, although only Havask, Zula and I know. Havask hates it, but Zula loves it. I personally didn’t care.

News had quickly spread about Katlyn’s friend Milo and signs had been posted with his face on it with a million dollar award on it. More signs had been posted with the phrase, *rouge humans or wizards are to be killed on the spot. We will rise against these creatures and save Ra’Koza.* A picture of humans holding a gun at a kahaizan was posted under it.

I for one never left the palace perimeters. It was strange, as a boy I had longed for the days when I could venture out into the city streets, and when I was banished I longed to come back to the palace and make everything right again, but now I feel nothing. It was as if all of my energy had been drained from my very essence and I had yet to find it again. I felt stuck.

I looked up at the ceiling and watched the fan spin around and around in a never-ending rotation catching fragments of light from the large window close to my bedside. I could feel myself drifting back into my mind until I caught onto glimpses of memories I had repressed back into my unconscious; both fond and horrific memories that I could never quiet let go.

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“Daddy, can I go outside?” I asked with my face glued to the window as I watched the people in the vast city below swarming like bees through the busy streets of Anoka.

“Of course, Kahlavar,” he replied.

“Really?” I shrieked with delight as I turned around and grabbed hold of his pant leg. My father looked down at me and smiled. His white tunic was wrinkled from all the times I had tried to get his attention, and his purple cape was still wet from when uncle Masko nearly pushed him into the pool this morning. His blue hair was freshly combed and sleeked back behind his ears. A gentle smile spread across his face. His blue eyes were soft but powerful. I loved him more than anything in the world.

“As long as you stay within the palace walls,” he said. My smile faded and I huntched my shoulders forward. I wrapped my eyes around his legs and cried.

“Takta,” I cried out.

“Kahlavar,” my knelt down my side and gently grabbed hold my hands. “Promise me you won’t go past the palace gates?” I grumbled and looked down at the ground. He grabbed my chin and forced me to look up. “Promise me, my kahai-na,” he said.

“Promise,” I grumbled. My father smiled as he patted me on the back.

“Good boy,” he said giving me a sloppy kiss on the cheek. I flinched and whipped it off as soon as he arose to his feet. “Now, go and play with your sister,”

I ran up the grand staircase to the third floor down the east hall. I came a hult in front of my little sister, Katya’s flower covered door. I sighed as I waited for a reply. A few seconds later, Katya answered the door. She was seven years old and the top of her head barley reached the top of my chest. Her white hair flowed down to her shoulders in graceful waves. Her pale skin glowed in the light of her room, illuminating her rosy cheeks and sky blue eyes. Her blue gown was finely pressed, and a thin silk white belt wrapped around her tiny waist.

“Kahlavar,” she rolled her eyes, “what took you so long? We’ve been waiting for you,” she chuckled and dragged me inside.

“We?” I asked as she slammed the door behind her. A small table and pink folding chairs rested at the center of the room draped with fluffy pink, blue and green scarfs. Most of the chairs were filled with Katya’s stuffed animals, and the table was littered with playful tea cups and plastic teapot. Katya ran to other side of the table and grabbed her large white hat and put it on. She sat down and smiled.

“Kahlavar, is here everyone,” she cheered as I spotted my cousin Azàk across the table. His fluffy hair was tied back in a pink bow. A small apron draped across his chest along with a sparkly scarf around.

“Help me,” he said.

“Sorry, Azàk, you and I are stuck here.” I sat down and grabbed a tea cup. “You know, Katya,” I chuckled. Azàk groaned and slammed his tea cup down on the table.

“No” Katya jumped from her seat and dug though the purple by her bedside. “This will not do,” she said as she pulled out a brush and grabbed a purple bow from off the floor. “This a tea party, Kahlavar.” She said as she walked over to me. Azàk laughed as he pretended to drink his tea. “We have to look out best,” She grabbed my hair and started brushing. My hair barley reached my ears, but it was curly and shaggy. I gasped as she brushed the brush through my thick hair. “Your hair is so bushy,” Katya yanked the brush through my hair. I flinched and spilled my tea, or should I say juice, across the table cloth. “Hold still, Kahlavar,” she said.

“Hey, Katya,” I said as she yanked the brush through hair once again.

“What?” she replied.

“I hope it’s alright with you,” I smiled and looked over at Azàk, “but I brought a friend with me.”

“Really?” she shrieked. “Is it Mr. Snuggles?”

“Actually it’s…oh no,” I said as I hooked my fingers and raised my arms out in front me. “I told him to behave, Katya, but I don’t think I can control him!” I gasped.

“Who,” Katya asked.

“THE CLAW!” I reached behind me and snatched her into my arms and commenced my tickling.

“No, Kahlavar, no!” she laughed as she light traveled to the door.

“I’m gonna get you,” I raced towards the door after her with my arms stretched out in front of me. She squealed and ran out the door down the hallway. Azàk followed closely behind me as I raced after her. She continued to look back at me and laugh as she ran down the hallway. “Azàk, get ahead of her,” I whispered. Azàk grinned and harnessed the wind and jumped in front of Katya. Katya shrieked and tried to run back, but I snatched her up in my arms and tickled her.

“Stop,” she cried, “No more!” she kicked me on the face, and tried to escape, but I snatched her up again and sat down on the floor and set her down in my lap.

“I told you I’d get you!” I ruffled my fingers through her hair. Katya laughed and looked up at me with a tooth filled smile and the sunlight gleaming in her blue yes. Azàk burst into laughter and fell to his side. I burst into laughter as well and fell backwards bringing Katya with me. She chuckled as she wrapped her arms around me.

*BANG!*

Katya screamed and nestled her head against my neck as I pushed myself up. Azàk gasped and scurried over to me side and wrapped his arms around me.

“Kahlavar, what was that?” Katya whimpered as I rested my left arm over Azàk.

“I don’t Katya,” I said. “Let’s go and find father, okay,” I said leading the two of them down the grand staircase to the throne room. My father’s voice rang through the palace walls as I caught site of countless soldiers prepared armed and prepared to battle. My eyes widened in fear as I set Katya down a few meters from his throne. Out father paced back and forth. A look of fear reigned in his eyes as sweat beat down his brow.

“Daddy,” Katya cried as she ran towards my father. Our father turned towards her and knelt down to swoop her up into his arms.

“It’s alright, baby, girl,” he kissed her on the cheek and rocked her back and forth in his arms. “Daddy’s got you,” he said.

“Double the guards,” my father ordered. “Don’t let these filthy humans get past that wall.” He gestured for them to all leave. I watched in fear as the soldiers marched out of the throne room, locking the great doors behind them.

“Father, what’s going on?” I asked.

“Ra’Koza is under attack,” he said. I gasped and Azàk and I ran towards him. “Everything’s going to be alright though. The sky guards will keep us safe. I promise you,” he said. “Kavan,” my father said as Captain Kavan, the head of the Ra’Koza army, stepped into the throne room with five other men off his soldiers. He was dressed in golden armor and fine swords.

“You’re majesty,” he bowed.

“Take my children, to the Southern Wall,” he ordered handing Katya over to him, and pushing me forward. “The Queen and I will meet you and the children there.”

“What about Azàk, father?” I asked.

“Azàk is coming with me and your uncle.” He said kneeling down by my side. He wrapped his fingers around my face and looked into my eyes as tears streamed down my face. “Be brave my, kahai-na,” he said whipping away my tears. “Be strong for your sister. We’ll be together soon,” he said. He arose to his feet and ordered two servants to come forward. They both carried a small black hooded cloak in their arms. They gave it to our father who in turn handed it to Katya and I. “Wear this at all times. It will keep your face hidden in the darkness of the forest, and don’t lose sight of the guards, and Kavan,” my father looked up at Captain Kavan, “don’t you dare lose sight of them, do you understand me?”

Kavan bowed and gestured for the two of us to follow. Katya grabbed hold of my hand as I looked back at me father before he picked up Azàk and fled upstairs to the third floor to find my uncle Masko.

I’d never been outside the palace walls before, but now that the streets were empty, and screams could be heard all around I didn’t like it as much as I thought. I was so terrified, but I tried to stay strong for Katya who hung close to my side as we entered into the Salvetka forest. Within in seconds the world around me became and dark and baren wasteland. Within minutes we attacked by a strange creature. It looked similar to us, but it had no tail, fangs, or wings and it’s pupils were large and rounded like that of a wild beast.

“Run, your majesty, run!” Captain Kavan ordered. I obeyed and ran with Katya’s hand in mine deeper into the forest. It felt as if we were running forever. I had no idea where I was going or where we were supposed to meet our mother, all I knew is Captain Kavan had told us to run, so I did. Soon we came upon a clearing, and to my relief my mother was there. She looked terrified seeing that we had come alone. I kissed Katya on the cheek and gave her a quick hug.

“Mommy’s coming, Katya,” I said. “Just stay right here, okay?” I said. Katya nodded as she whipped tears from her eyes. I ran over to our mother and gave her a hug.

“Your father, is in the woods just behind me with your uncle and cousin. I’ll take Katya from here. There’s a safe haven just a mile from here.” She kissed me on the forward and I ran into the trees towards my father. I couldn’t see him yet, but I prayed he was still there.

“Kahlavar,” my father came around the nearest tree truck and grasped me into his arms. I burst into tears and nestled my head into his warm neck as I wrapped my tail around his left leg. “My brave little boy,” he said. “I’m glad your safe. Where is Captain Kavan and his men. I didn’t see them with you.” He asked.

“We were attacked,” I sniffled. “Captain Kavan told us to run so I took Katya and ran. I don’t know how I found mom or this field, but I did.” I cried. “I’m so scared, daddy,”

“We can thank, Malan, for that,” he said setting me down.

“Suko,” my uncle Masko came around the corner with tears in his eyes.

“Masko, what happened?” my father asked.

“They took him!” he cried. “They took my baby!” My father went to kneel down by my father’s side, but a familiar cry caught his attention.

“LAVERIA!” he jumped up into the tree’s. I couldn’t see anything from here, but through the crack in the tree’s I could Katya’s limp body falling from the sky.

“KATYA!” I ran after her through the trees in hope to find her.

“Kahlavar, no!” my father cried after me, but I didn’t stop. I had to find her. I had to make sure she was safe. I couldn’t let those creatures get to her. They already took my cousin. I wasn’t going to let them take my sister from me.

I came out of the bushes to a small beach. The sky was dark and the ocean smelled of salt and blood. I gasped for air as I scanned the area until Katya’s white hair caught me eye. I roared and tackled the monster that held her to the ground. Katya’s limp body rolled down the beach near the water. The waves crashed by her side, soaking her little blue dress.

“Katya,” I jumped to my feet after her, but the monster behind me pulled me back. I snarled and spun around clawing its face off. I gasped as a small mask flew off to the side and two electric blue eyes glared back at me.

“Jackson, take the girl,” the man ordered. His voice was firm and commanding just like my fathers. I was terrified of him.

“Jason, I will send assistance for you and your son,” Jackson said as he threw my sister over his shoulders as if she were nothing more than a rag doll. I wanted to run and hide, but that creature called Jackson picked her up and carried her away into a portal as the one called Jason held tightly onto me.

“NO!” I cried. “KATYA!” I tried to break free, but it was too late. She was already gone. My eyes widened in disbelief as the portal disappeared into the darkness.

“There’s nothing you can do know,” Jason said pushing me down. That girl is mine now just like all the others, but this girl is a little different. Do you want to know why?” he knelt down by my side and grabbed hold of my collar. I whimpered as he drew closer to me. “She’s special. She’s the light foretold in the prophecy of old; the savior. We have to dispose of her before anything bad happens, do you understand. She’s dangerous and we had to take extra precautions, that’s all,” he patted me on the head and let me go. I snarled and jumped on him, biting down on his shoulder. Jason roared and threw me off as blood stained his white shirt. “Why you little, vermon! This was a new shirt!” he rolled his eyes and came after, but a blast of wind sent him flying a few yards back.

“Azàk,” I said as my cousin stood by my side.

“Leave him alone, you filthy human,” he snarled. Azàk fired another blast at Jason as Jason aroused from his position, but Jason deflected with his staff and sent Azàk flying back into a tree. Azàk hit his head and collapsed into the sand.

“No,” I ran towards, Azàk but Jason pulled me back and shoved to the side.

“You’re a real pain in my ass, you know that, kid,” he said.

“Dad, we found the girl, let’s go home please,” a small boy from behind begged. The boy took off his mask and held it tightly in his arms. He was no older than nine or ten, around Azàk’s age. His skin was much darker than Jason’s and his eyes were an electric green.

“We will, my sweetheart we will,” Jason knelt down by his side and kissed him on the cheek. I roared and jumped on Jason’s back. His son screamed and looked into my eyes. I pulled Jason back with me trying to stay clear of the boy and flipped him over. Jason gasped and grasped his hand on his back.

“DAD!” the boy cried. I looked back at the boy and growled. He cowered in fear and looked down at his father as Jason pushed himself back onto his feet. I growled and stood my ground as Jason whipped the blood from his nose. He raised his staff out in front of him. The gem on top began to glow as a strange blue aurora appeared around him.

“Enough games, kahaizan,” he said. He thrust his staff forward and a green light came towards me. I gasped and turned into a shadow and slithered out of the way. The light hit a nearby tree, rioshaied and hit Jason’s son directly in the face. The boy screamed as Jason dropped his staff and ran to his son.

“NO, NO NO!” Jason exclaimed. “Baby, speak to me. Daddy will fix this. Just hold still…”

“Daddy…DADDY!” The boy cried. “I can’t see, daddy! I CAN’T SEE! I CAN’T SEE!” Jason gasped and pulled his on in close. “I’m so sorry,” he whimpered as he arose to his feet. He walked over to his staff and picked it up. He opened up a nearby portal and left. I materialized and ran to Azàk’s side and threw him over my shoulder. I looked around me, but most of the humans were leaving through portals just as Jason had done. I shook my head and scurried back into the woods in search of my father and uncle Masko.

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I screamed as I came back into reality. I was drenched from head to toe in sweat. I gasped as my foot throbbed in pain. I grabbed my medication from the nearby table and plopped it into my mouth. I clenched my teeth and rested an ice pack over my foot. I whipped the sweat off my face as I ripped the covers off and tried my best to sit up through the pain. I winced in pain as my foot slid across the covers.

I heard a knock at my door and one of the servants came in. He bowed to me and I nodded my head in return.

“The King and Queen have returned, your majesty,” he said. “I’m sure they will be up shortly.”

“Thank you,” I said a bit out of breath. The servant bowed and looked back at me.

“Should I call for Saskaiya,” he asked. I tried to control my breath as my foot throbbed in pain.

“No,” I said. “I’m fine, just go,” I said. The servant bowed and closed the door gently behind him.

17

Kahlavar

I sighed and looked over at my clock that rested by my bedside. It’s time for lunch. My stomach grumbled, but I ignored it and fell back on my pillow.

I sighed and closed my eyes and tried to fall asleep when I heard a knock at my door.

“Come in,” I grumbled. My door gently swung open and my parents walked inside. I snarled and diverted my attention else were. They had been gone for so long, and I should have missed them, but out of all the people in the palace they were the last ones I wanted to see. I didn’t care what they had to say or about the amulet they had retrieved, they had lied to me about everything. My whole life was a lie that they created, for what; because they wanted to protect me, no because they wanted to keep my contained. They were just like everyone else. They were afraid of me. They were afraid of what I am or what I could become. I was some twin of darkness, a child whom everyone feared their arrival.

“What do you want?” I asked.

“Hello, my kahai-na,” My mother said softly. We’re back,” she cheered and knelt down by my bedside. “Happy Birthday, my kahai-na. We have a present for you,” she held a small blue box in her hand with a silver key tied to her wrist. She wore strange blue pants, and a white blouse. Her eyes were a worn down and a small scar had appeared under her lip. Her brown hair was pulled back into a ponytail. She smelled of smog and humans. She kissed me on the cheek, but I shoved her away just as my father walked into the room. He was dressed in his unusual attire, minus his cape. He presumed he had changed before coming in here because he too had a faint odder of smog and that oily human smell. His blue hair was recently sleeked back behind his ears and his face had been washed.

“You did your bidding, now leave me alone, both of you.” I grumbled. My parents glanced at each other and then back at me.

“Kahlavar,” My mother began.

“I thought I told you both to leave,” I growled.

“We came here to talk to you, about the incident with Jason, and why we’ve gone for so long.” She said.

“Yeah, what about it.” I said.

“Kahlavar, we here to tell you the truth.” My father interceded. My eyes widened in surprise and disbelief. I sat up and gave them both my undivided attention.

“Go on, tell me.” I demanded. My parents looked back at each other. My mother sat down by my side and grasped her hands over mine.

“It’s a long story, are you sure you can handle it?” My mother brushed her fingers through my hair. I nodded and she continued.

“You remember the story of King Fooshka and Queen Raykoo’s death back when your father and uncle were just children, right?” she asked.

“Of course,” I replied. “A human wizard and his wife arrived on Kàtzu claiming to be explorers. Grandfather Fooshka gave them a tour of the palace. It got late and he allowed them to stay in the Eastern hallway for the night. Long story short, his wife died of an illness. The human wizard sought revenge because he believed Fooshka was the one who had killed her. He murdered them both and then vanished without a trance with nothing but a scar across his left eye and nose to remind him of what happened that day. Father, you used to tell me that story many times when I was younger, but what does that have to do with anything?” I asked.

“Kahlavar, the wizard, his name was Julius Salazar, and as far as we know he is still alive. Jason, his son, is the one who took your sister from us and brought the war upon our people. As far as we know Jason and Julius want to create a new empire where supposedly we can live in peace, but when your father and I saw how they used the amulet and how it affected you we knew it couldn’t be for good, despite what they said.”

“I know that, mother, but what does this have to do with me?” I asked. “Why am I so drawn to the amulet? What are these twins of darkness that Jason talked about it, and why was he after me, and why did he ask about my brother.” I said. “I don’t have a brother, mom,” I took in a deep breath and sighed. “Just tell me the truth. Give me a reason as to why you locked me up within the palace grounds all these years, and why I saw those images in the amulet. Better more, tell me what Jason Salazar was doing there on my coronation day. Tell me that.” I said.

“Kahlavar,” my father began. “We were trying to protect you from Julius Salazar, Jason’s father. Jason appears to want to do good, but he appears to also be blinded by his father’s orders, and if Julius has control of Jason than why should we believe Jason is trying to do something for the good of Kàtzu and Earth.”

“I don’t understand,” I said. “Julius was the man who killed Fooshka and grandmother Raykoo, what does he want with me?” I asked. “Jason was the one who came after me, not this Julius guy. I don’t understand.” I stammered.

“Kahlavar,” my father said. “Three thousand years ago, a kahaizan named Ra was born.” I gasped as the vivid image of the kahaizan I had seen in the amulet appeared in my mind. “He along with all our kind were cursed by a sorcerer named Akmen. That’s why the youngest twin always dies and children of similar powers as their parents are still born.” My father paused and sleeked his hair back, “Akmen foretold of a prophecy that two twins would be born in the world; twins of darkness. People have searched countless years for them to use them, but everyone who has tried has failed.”

“That’s who Jason thought I was, right,” I said. “He thinks I’m one of the twins of darkness because of the amulet, but when he found out I didn’t have a brother he was shocked and confused. That’s why uncle Masko was able to strike him down so easily.” I said. “The twins have been born, and Jason thought I was one of them, right” I looked into my parent’s eyes, but their eyes were filled with a deep pain. “Right,” I said again. My parents didn’t reply. My mother burst into tears and walked over to the window. My father tried to comfort her, but she just pushed him away and sat down on the window seal.

“Kahlavar, you’re right,” my father said. “The twins have been born.”

“Mother, Father, what are you trying to tell me?” I asked.

“Twenty years ago, on the sixth of the month Darkness,” My father began.

“Today…my birthday…” I stammered.

“You’re mother gave birth to a pair of twins. The eldest twin was you, and we feared naming the other because the youngest always dies a few hours after birth, but your mother insisted, so we gave him the name, Kaska.” My father said.

“But he’s dead, right? Twins, no matter if they are identical or fraternal, the youngest always dies, just like you said. The curse doesn’t allow them to live. Every kahaizan knows that. Twins or not, children of the same power in a family, the youngest always dies, right father,” I said. “Please say yes,” I pleaded. I jumped to my feet and paced across the floor. I winced in pain with every step, but I had too much adrenaline in my system to sit still. “And the reason you never told me was because you didn’t want me to know about him because it would only cause problems, right?”

“NO!” he exclaimed. I stopped in my tracks and looked back at my father in surprise. “Kahlavar, that’s the thing. Kaska didn’t die. He’s still alive. The prophecy stated that in the month of darkness, twins would be born and break the curse.”

“What?” I exclaimed. I gasped and leaned back against my wall. My eyes open wide in horror and utter disbelief. “What did you do with him?” I stammered. “Where is he then,” I asked. “Mother, father, where is my brother?”

“Julius had the amulet, and was coming for you, both of you. We were afraid, Kahlavar, we didn’t know what to do. My navask suggested that we kill Kaska, and end it, but we couldn’t. We loved both of you so much. You have to understand what we were being asked to endure.” My father tried to explain.

“What did you do with him?” I demanded. “Answer me!” I walked up to my father and snarled. His blue eyes were filled with sorrow and fear.

My mother whipped her tears and handed me the small blue box in her hands that she had been holding delicately in her hands. She untied the key from her around her wrist and handed it to me. I looked at the two of them as I sat down on my bed. I used the key to unlock the latch and pulled open the box. Inside were piles of photographs I had never seen in my life along with toys and a small wooden plank with the name’s Kaska and Kahlavar written in Kalvetna.

I pulled out one of the pictures and looked down at a colored photo of two identical twin boys with black hair, hairless tails, olive skin and red eyes. The one on the left was smiling and pounding his small chubby hands on two pots while the other laughed alongside him. I turned the picture over and read the words written in Kalvetna cursive on the back.

Kahlavar (left) and Kaska (right), Darkness, 6th, 1995(6 months)

“When we found out that we were the parents of the twins your father and I were terrified. We knew that you were in danger if anyone knew of your existence, so we reduced the staff and locked the door to the nursery with you, Kaska, your father, your uncle, my father and I inside.” My mother began. “For the next six months we kept you two hidden from everyone. We tried to keep you two hidden as best as we could, but upon hearing Julius and his men were on hot pursuit for the twins again we knew we had to do something. It was as if your births had set off a wild fire all across the Zún realm. Every creature on all the nine planets seemed to know that the twins had been born. I even felt it. Many sought after you and your brother although most had no idea where to start, but all of them wanted to use you two for themselves. At that moment we realized that the only way to keep you two safe and far from Julius’s grasp was to keep you two separate, permanently.”

I burst into tears and hugged my knees tightly against my chest.

“I took Kaska and traveled to Earth and gave him to a human couple and asked them to keep watch over him, but my pain deepened when I returned home the following morning empty handed.” My mothers voice cracked as tears streamed down her rosey cheeks. “You asked me where Kaska had gone and why he hadn’t come home yet. I’ll never forget your face when I told you that Kaska wasn’t coming home. You were devastated. You were only six months old. You were my baby. I couldn’t allow myself to see you in such pain, not again, so your father and I agreed that the best thing to do was to keep everything of Kaska as far from you as possible including, pictures, drawings and objects. We presented you to the public the following morning as the newest member of the royal family.” My mother cried.

“We had agreed to tell you about your brother on your twenty-first birthday in hopes that Julius and Jason would never have found either of you, but despite our efforts Julius still found where we were hiding you. You’re brother though I don’t believe they have caught onto his trail yet.” My father said. “We wanted you two to live a happy life, free of war and pain.”

“You treated me like I was second to best, and that I could never compare to Katya! If you wanted me to be happy then why did you shut me out?” I snapped. “What about Kaska? You gave him away, and not just to anyone, but to a filthy slimy human! He’s grown up his whole life not knowing what his true potential is. He’s a kahaizan and not only that, a prince. He deserved better!”

“We were trying to protect you two from creatures like Julius” my father snapped. “We couldn’t risk it.” My father tried to explain. “Believe me when I say that I never wanted any of this to happen any of our children.”

“Then why did you banish me?” I asked. “If you really loved us and wanted a better life for us then why did you banish me, treat me like I was second best, allow Jason to take Katya and leave Kaska to be raised by humans? Who knows, maybe his human parents beat him every day and the other humans at his school probably tease him and poke fun at him because it’s obvious that even though he may look like one of them he’ll never be one of them! Answer me that…father” I spat out the word father in English, one of the most disrespectful things a child can do to their parents is to call them using none other than a human dialect.

My father bared his fangs and appeared by my side shoving my mother aside. He grabbed my jaw and pulled me close to his wild blue eyes as his nostrils flared.

“Suko, please,” my mother pleaded. My father waved his hand and my mother sat frozen in time on the floor with her mouth opened and her eyes wide with fear.

“Now listen to me, boy,” he hissed. He raised his hand high as if he were going to strike me down, but tears filled his blue eyes and he fell to his knees. “Everything I have done, every word and every action was for the benefit of my children. I sent Kaska away to protect you both from people like Julius. I tried my best to save, Katya, but Jason took her right beneath my feet, and your banishment,” my father’s voice cracked as he continued on. He let go of my jaw and took a step back. He peered back at me as tears formed at the corner of his eyes. “I never wanted it. When we called the council, the vote was three to one. I couldn’t change the vote. You’re mother managed to reason the terms of your banishment, but believe me when I say I never wanted it any of it. I tried to reason with the council and prove your innocence, but the council and the two kings believed you had given Katya to Jason. I tried, Kahlavar, I tried. I know I’ve treated you harshly, but so much has happened, that I got to a point that I found no life in anything. I hated the world. I couldn’t find my love for anyone, not even you. I still haven’t gotten back on my feet yet, but please, don’t hate me. It only makes things worse.” he whimpered. He jumped back on his feet and walked over to the window and waved his hand and my mother came back to life.

“How dare you use your powers on me,” my mother grabbed a pillow and threw it at my father, but my father stopped it midair and pushed it aside letting it fall amongst onto the wooden floors of my room.

“I hate you,” I snarled. “I hate all of you,” I said as my uncle Masko walked into the room and stood beside my father’s side. My uncle wrapped his arm around my father and rested his head on his. My uncle’s golden eyes refused to meet my gaze as he wrapped his tail around my father’s left leg.

I snarled and threw the blue box on the ground. The picture of Kaska and I fell by my mother’s feet. My mother picked it up and cradled it her arms.

“Kahlavar, please, you have to believe us.” My mother cried.

“You lied to me! All of you.” I snapped. “You lied to be about everything! Everything I’ve known is a lie, and you just want me to believe you and get on with my life like nothing ever happened? I don’t know even know who you are anymore.”

“Kahlavar,” my mother reached out her hand on my shoulder to try and comfort me.

“Please, just go away,” I cried as I curled up into ball pulling my injured foot closer to me. My foot throbbed in pain, but I didn’t care. My parents took one last look at me before closing the door behind them. My uncle Masko still remained in the room by the window. He sat down on the window seal and looked out the window up into the bright blue sky.

“What a beautiful day,” my uncle said. “Malan has certainly blessed this day, and as I recall it is someone’s birthday today.”

I growled lowering my eyebrows as I looked over at my uncle. After a few moments of silence I got tired and decided to join my uncle by the window. It was true that he had lied to me as well, but unlike my mother and father my uncle was someone I could never quite stay mad at no matter what he said or did. Maybe it was because of the fact that he reminded me so much of Fooshka, and although Fooshka was annoying I could never stay mad at him either.

I jumped off my bed and onto the window seal and curled up next to the cold glass. I curled up against my uncle’s chest as he wrapped his arm around me. He opened the window and the cold south winds blew through my hair and across my burning face. My uncle rested his head on top of mine as we looked out the window and up at the bright blue sky and skinning desert mountains affar.

*Kahlavar…*

*They were right, Fooshka! They were right in keeping the truth from me! Why would anyone want to know that about themselves? Not only am I a child of darkness, but I have a twin living somewhere on Earth, and together we have the potential to destroy or create a universe!*

*Kahlavar, they loved you and wanted what was best for the both of you from the beginning.*

*Wait…you knew about this to? You knew about Kaska?*

*Yes.*

*Why didn’t you just tell me! You’ve lived in my head since the day I was born. A navask is never to lie to their host.*

*I’m sorry, but I couldn’t. I wanted to protect you and Kaska to. I loved Kaska. I was his navask to, Kahlavar. You and Kaska shared a special link as twins by sharing a navask. That pain your mother described after she came home to you that night it wasn’t just your pain, it was mine as well. By taking Kaska to Earth I lost my connection with him…forever. I used to love it when you would look in the mirror every day to check how tall you’d gotten as a child. I didn’t just see you, but I saw Kaska, and it filled me joy. I miss that boy. I hope and pray that life has treated him well.*

*Fooshka, I never knew you felt that way. I always saw you as my goofy grandfather who liked to pick jokes on me and play stupid games, but I guess you’re not.*

*I never wanted to tell you because I didn’t want you to share my pain. I wanted to be the one you could talk to too cheer you up when life got hard. I didn’t want to be a burden waiting in the back of your mind. What’s the fun in having a navask when they just sit there all day mopping around? Malan chose us to be guides, and that’s what we are.*

*Thanks, Fooshka.*

“I know you’re upset right now, but do you want to know something really cool?” My uncle said. I remained silent as he brushed his hand across my arm. “If you look up into the sky just past the desert hills of Maska near Pharoka there’s a star and spiraling around that star is a small planet with life where strange creatures called humans reign. Inside the planet among its many islands, vast oceans, and large contents is Kaska.” A tear escaped my eyes as I curled up closer against my uncle’s chest. “I bet that he’s doing the same thing right now as we are. He’s probably looking outside his little window up at the sky wondering where his real family could be not knowing that his twin brother, although galaxies away, is looking right back at him wondering the same thing.” My uncle kissed me on the forehead and gently rocked me back and forth.

“I love you, uncle Masko,” I whimpered.

“I love you to, squirt,” my uncle replied as he rested his head on mine. “I know your scare right, Kahlavar, and have just had a heavy burden laid on your shoulders, but today is a special day, so let’s forget about everything for now and have some, okay,” I nodded and both watched as the second sun arose from behind the distant hills of Maska.

19

Kahlavar

The next day I called Zula and the other’s before I had gone to bed informing them to meet me on the third floor of the palace until further notice. I had to tell them everything my parents had told me. They deserved to know and not only that I wanted them to help me find my brother before Julius and Jason ever find him. I know it will be dangerous not only finding him but bringing us together but it’s the only way to protect him now. The amulet may give us both ultimate power, but we still had powers of our own beyond any normal wizard. If we could find Kaska we could end this war and save the Zún realm…hopefully.

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I heard a knock at my door. I jolted out of bed. My hair was messy and knotted with various curls and my blue comb.

“You’re majesty, the King, Queen and Prince Masko are having breakfast. The Queen has sent out a special request that I drag you out of bed to the dining room table at once.” A servant said through the door.

“I’m up, I’m up…tell her I’ll be there in a couple of minutes,” I grumbled as I rubbed my eye lids and moaned plopping my head back onto my soft feathery pillows pulling he covers up to my chin.

*Kahlavar, you need to get up, your maka is waiting, and we both know what will happen if she marches in here. We’re going to get our kakooshka’s whooped, now get up you lazy kaka brain before the queen has us for breakfast.*

“Just five more minutes, maki,” I yawned as I drifted off to sleep.

*Maka…who do you think I am boy? I am not a woman! You’re as bad as your takta you know that? He was the hardest thing to get him up in the morning. I practically had to drag him out of bed and dress him myself just to get his lazy kakooshka moving, but if you want you can wait for your maka because I’m sure she’d be happy to drag your lazy kakooshka across the palace floors. Are you even listening to me?*

I sighed as Fooshka’s voice drifted off into the back of my mind. I was so tired and wasted from last night. If everyone had just stuck to me and Havask’s plan we would have found her so much faster. We deal with forest fires all the time and it’s not like Havask starting one would have made much difference.

I snorted and opened one eye at the sound of a knock on the door.

*You’re going to get your kakooshka whooped know boy. It was nice knowing you, Kahl.*

*Be quiet, Fooshka, it’s just the guard, go back to sleep. They’ll leave eventually.*

*That’s what your takta used to say to, but guess what happened to him? It turned out to be his maka, and your grandmaka was not a woman to reckon with Kahlavar, now just get up and answer the door…slowly.*

The knocking continued, but I continued to ignore them as I pulled my pillow over my head to block out the noise. They knocked three times and on the third knock the knock turned into a loud bang and my door swung wide open. I let out a high pitch squeal and pulled my covers up over my chest as my mother marched into the room and pulled my covers off.

“I said get up!” my mother shook me a few times and rolled her eyes. “Just get dressed. I want you in the dining room in three minutes or I will drag you out of this bed and into that dining room do you understand,” she said as she left my room leaving the door wide open. One of the servants walked in and bowed his head respectfully.

“I’m sorry, your majesty, but I did try and stop her,” he said.

“Thank you,” I said as the servant left and closed the door behind him. I yawned as I quickly got dressed in my typical black Punjabi pants, grey kimono top and black belt and quickly brushed my hands over my hair to smooth it out taking out the comb in the process and throwing it somewhere on my messy floor. I yawned and walked down the hallway to the dining room and walked in and sat down next to my mother. My father sat at the head of the table with my uncle Masko at his left hand. He looked ashamed as if he had committed a horrific crime. “Why did we have to get up so early?” I asked as I watched my uncle slam his face down on the table and mumbled something under his breath. He must be tired, but quite honestly I was too. I hadn't slept well last night. All I could think about the whole night was what my parents had told me especially the part pertaining to my long lost twins brother, Kaska.

    "Where is the food?" I asked realizing that no food had been set down on the table. My mama and father looked at each other for a shirt moment and then back at me. My father slapped his hand across the back of my uncle’s head. My uncle snorted and jolted back into position.

      "Kahlavar, when we separated you and Kaska we were only trying to protect you two from Julius and keep you as far from the amulet as possible but Julius, Jason and Milo are much more powerful than we had ever imagined," my mother said.

“I know, mom,” I yawned. “You and dad spilled the beans on me yesterday,” I laid my head down on the table and snored. My mother used her telecines and pulled me back up.

 “Kahlavar,” my mother began once again, “we want nothing more than to keep you two safe, but with Julius and his children it’s becoming harder and harder to protect you. Your father and I want to relocate Kaska, possibly on a different planet within the Zún realm, but we need you to stay here and watch the kingdom while were away.”

“No,” I snapped jumping to my feet. My mother gasped and my father snarled at me and pulled her closer to his side.

“Kahlavar, grow up!” my father growled. “You’re going to rule this kingdom one day as a king, but if you can’t even behave like a prince then I will take away your right to rule and everything will be as it once was.” I looked down at him in disbelief. A week ago he had proclaimed me as his rightful heir and had saved me from Jason’s grasp. I didn’t understand what could have changed between now and then. I thought things would be back to the way they were, but I guess I was wrong.

 “Father, I’m not ready to be king yet.” I exclaimed.

“I became king when I was only twelve years old. I had to run a kingdom and take care of my baby brother. Don’t tell me that you are not ready because I know for a fact that I was!” he yelled.

“I’m not you!” I exclaimed “, and I never will be.” I sighed and tried to walk out but stopped in my tracks as a thought came to my mind.

“Father,” I said.

“What,” he hissed.

“I’ll retrieve Kaska,” I said.

“Oh, no you won’t!” my mother snatched my arm and shoved me back into my seat. “You are staying right here.”

“No,” I stood back up on my feet and looked down at them. “Kaska will be safer with us. We can protect him and me from Julius. Kaska, the amulet and I are extremely powerful but even just Kaska and I alone have more power together than Julius could ever imagine. We could protect Kátzu and all of the Zún realm from destruction.” my mother looked up at me as a tear streamed down her rosy.

“If he finds you he’ll capture you or worse kill you,” she cried.

“Mother, I know what I am doing, and I won’t be doing it alone. I’m going to discuss these matters with Zula, Havask and Tavask.

“Kahlavar, Earth is nothing like Kátzu. None of you even Zula know what you are up against, and how do you expect to even find Kaska? You will get lost, and possibly killed by those humans alone. You’ll never be able to find him. The only way you could even find your way through that planet was with the help of a human and Katlyn…Katlyn is still here,” my mother trailed off and stared off into space.

“Katlyn is has been with Saskaiya. I’ll bring her with us, don’t worry,” I said. “She’s our only hope of finding Kaska.”

“I should have known…fine take the human girl with you, but do not come crying back to me when she betrays you for her own kind because of your weakness,” my father narrowed his eyes at me and sat up straight in his seat I want all of them and Katya to go with me to search for him.” I said.

“No,” my father narrowed his eyes and grabbed Katlyn’s arm to pull her closer. Her long white tail gently grazed her cheek and landed in her mouth. “My daughter has finally returned to us, and I will not lose her because of your weakness!”

“I want to go,” my uncle Masko butted in.

“No,” my father shrieked his voice filled with fear and anxiety. My father pressed his hand gently against my uncle’s cheek. “You and I have lost too much, and I can’t afford to lose you to, do you understand.”

My uncle sighed and nodded in agreement with a shy smile spread across his face.

“I understand,” he replied. My uncle’s golden eyes filled with sorrow as I opened the door and took a step out into the hallway.

“Don’t worry uncle, I’ll be back with Kaska before you can say Kaska,” I said as I closed the door behind me. As the doors came to a close I heard my uncle’s voice whisper from inside.

“Kaska,” he mumbled under his breath as the door slammed hard behind me. “ “Took you long enough, fancy pants,” Zula, Havask and Tavask came around the corner. Havask stood between Katlyn and Tavask. His hair was on fire as he watched the two of them closely. Tavask rolled his eyes and growled as Katlyn yawned and rubbed her eyes to get a better look at me.

“Are you telling me that you three dragged me out of bed just so you could talk to Kahlavar? Don’t you kahaizans know that the morning is evil?” Katlyn yawned. Her white blonde hair was tangled and messy, and sapphire blue eyes were dull from a lack of sleep. She wore her same blue jeans and blue shirt that I had found her in when I had discovered her and Milo over a year ago.

“What now, your majesty?” Tavask asked.

“Zula, Havask and Tavask, you three go on and head to my father’s fountain in central station.” I ordered. Tavask smiled and walked over to Katlyn, but Havask picked him up and threw him over his shoulder.

“Havask, let go of me,” he snarled. Havask grinned and walked down the gran staircase. Katlyn shrugged her shoulders as she wobbled down the staircase.

“What’s this about, fancy pants?” Zula asked.

“You’ll see, just go,” I said. Zula rolled her eyes and walked down the stairs. I flew down the staircase and out the great doors and met them all by my father’s statue at central station.

Within a few minutes we all landed in great central station. Havask set his brother down and pulled him in close. Tavask grumbled and reached for Katlyn’s hand. Katlyn smiled and grabbed just out of Havask’s view.

“Havask, where is Zula?” I asked. Havask pointed to the head of my father’s golden statue at the center of the fountain. Zula was perched on my father’s right shoulder with her legs crossed and a hand pressed against the statues neck.

“What was it that you needed to speak to us about again, your majesty?” Havask asked as thrust his way between Tavask and Katlyn. Katlyn and Tavask rolled their eyes as Havask wrapped his arm around his brother’s neck and took a few steps away from Katlyn. Tavask growled at his brother, but didn’t appear to put up much of a fight. Katlyn mumbled something under her breath and returned her attention back to me.

“I wanted to speak with all about something. I know that it’s early, but please just listen to what I have to say,” I said. “It’s very important to me, so please when I tell you don’t burst into flames.”

“Kahlavar it’s been a long morning I’m sure I can handle whatever you’re about to tell us,” Havask said. I tried to smile as I gestured them to come and sit down next to me. Havask and Tavask sat to my right with Katlyn at my left. Zula jumped down from the statue and sat down by my side.

Sweat beat down my brow and cheek bones. I hadn’t been this nervous since the day I stood in the court room awaiting my father’s response on whether to pass or deny my banishment, but this time was different. This time I was in control.

“What is that you wanted to tell us, your majesty?” Havask asked as everyone turned their heads toward me.

“I want the four of you to come a mission with me to find someone,” I said.

*Good job, Kahl, keep going.*

“Mission?” Zula asked. “For who?”

“Is it Jason?” Havask asked. “Because if it is then count me out,” he raised his arms in surrender. “That human is creepy and dangerous and I don’t even want to look at him,”

“It’s not Jason, I promise,” I reassured him.

“Then who is it?” Tavask asked as Katlyn dozed off on his shoulder.

“His name is Kaska,” I finally managed to say.

“Why do we need to find this said Kaska,” Zula asked as she bit into a piece of fruit.

“He’s my twin brother,” I said. Zula spit out the chuck of fruit in her mouth and looked at me in utter shock and disbelief. Havask and Tavask gasped and looked at me in surprise. Katlyn woke up and looked up at me confused and bit disturbed.

“Twin…brother,” Zula mumbled through the silence. “But that’s not possible, not on Kàtzu.” She said. Havask and Tavask remained silent as they both gave me strange looks.

“So there’s two of you?” Katlyn asked. I nodded as I pulled out a picture of Kaska and I that I had taken from my mother’s blue box, and showed it to them.

“You weren’t joking,” Havask said as he examined the picture.

“Twins are so odd. There’s literally no genetic difference between the two of you,” Tavask observed.

“How come I didn’t know about this brother of your?” Zula demanded. I shrugged as I stuffed the picture back in my pocket.

“I found out yesterday morning, so I’m kind of in the same boat as you guys,” I said.

“How did you find out? Did you just find a picture or did someone tell you?” Zula asked.

“I heard about when my parents returned from Earth. My parents kept it hidden from me.” I said. “They said that they were trying to protect me but it wasn’t until they told me about Jason and gave me my father’s sacred box that I knew the reason why.” I felt a tear cascade down my cheek. I tried to wipe it but the more tears I wiped away the more tears that followed. I took in a deep breath and wiped away the last few tears and told them everything about Jason, Julius and finally about Kaska and I.

I watched as the friends smiling faces transformed into faces of bewilderment and utter disturbance.

“Kahlavar,” Zula said my name as if she didn’t know who it belonged to anymore. I was one of the Twins of Darkness, the foretold twins prophesied to bring forth chaos or be the Savior who freed their people from total annihilation. I looked around at same bewildered faces. I sighed and slowly to feet.

“I understand. I wouldn’t have wanted to leave my family behind to follow a fancy prince who has the potential to set off the balance of nature because he was in a sorrow mood, to find his equally powerful twin brother who together could destroy the whole universe as we know it. I would be afraid to.” I gave them a quirky smile and tried to casually walk away as the feelings of anger and frustration built up inside, but the sound of Zula’s voice stopped me in my tracks.

“I’m not of afraid of you, Kahlavar,” she said. I turned around to face her. Her purple eyes were stern, but just as she had said she didn’t appear to be afraid. “I’m not afraid of Jason, Milo or Julius and I’m especially not afraid of you, and if Kaska is your twin brother, and you truly are one of fated twins of darkness then I have nothing to fear for I will stick to you till the ends of Zún realm.” She said as she looked deep into my eyes.

I couldn’t believe what came out my mouth next. It must have been the amulet. My parents had brought it home. Although I had yet to see it I had felt it’s presence in the palace walls. Ever since the amulet had showed me those images I had felt so connected to Ra, as if he, Kaska and I were the same. I felt all his pain, sorrow and most of all his anger and overwhelming hatred for the humans and the wizards, but sometimes I didn’t know whether the anger I felt was mine or Ra’s maybe it was a mix of both, but no matter how hard I tried I could never stop it from boiling up inside me and bursting through my lips. I wish I knew how.

“You should be!” I snarled. “Can’t you see, Zula, I’m a monster! I’m the monster that parents tell their children about at night! I’m the one the world feared would come. Don’t tell me you’re not afraid. In your heart you know good and well what I am you’re just too afraid to say it!” I exclaimed. I heard the high pitched scream echo through central station which was quickly followed by a crowd. By standers grabbed hold of their children and ran in all directions expect the path that lead to me. Havask had grabbed Tavask and backed away with his arms wrapped around them. Katlyn’s human eyes were filled with fear as she grabbed hold of Tavask and pressed her face against his heaving chest.

I’m not afraid…of you,” Zula’s voice cracked at the last two words, but she didn’t budge.

“You’re afraid of exploiting what I really am, and you know what I am, so just say it!” I snarled. Waves of electricity danced across Zula’s purple hair and body, but just as before she stayed her ground and looked deep into my blood red eyes. “I said, SAY IT!” I bellowed stopping my right foot towards her.

Zula screamed and the electricity faded as fear struck in her purple eyes. I gasped and at the sight of my reflection in Zula’s fear full eyes. My Iris’s had turned gold and the whites of my eyes were blood shot. Thick dark rims wrapped around my eyes. Black smoke spiraled around me as sharp pointed teeth smiled back at me. My hands were curved and turned black at the tips with sharp claws itching their way through my fingers. My hair was spiked up and messy like some kind of wild man. A black crescent moon stretched across my eyelid just below my eyebrow and ran across the arch of my nose.

I screamed in terror and within an instant the creature I had seen moments ago vanished along with all the power that had come with it and once again my own reflection appeared in Zula’s eyes.

“Zula…I...I,” I cried. I looked back at Havask, Tavask and Katltn and saw the same fear filled eyes. “I…I…please…I’m so sorry.” I cried. I turned around and tried to run as far away as I could, but something grabbed hold of me and pulled me back. I felt a pulse of electricity surge through my body as Zula’s purple eyes met my mine, but they were different than before. The fear earlier had been replaced with sympathy and a bit of rebelliousness.

“You sure know how to attract a woman,” Zula sneered. “Don’t you, fancy pants?” Zula grinned and wrapped her arms tightly around me. I gasped and tried to wiggle free, but Zula just electrocuted me till I finally gave in. “I don’t care what you are,” she said. “You mean more to me than all the gold in the world. If you want me to come with you then I’m coming with you. We all are.” Zula gestured to Havask and Tavask and Katya who stood calmly with smiles on their faces by Zula’s side. Zula unraveled her arms around me as Havask clamped his beefy hands down on my shoulders and pulled me into a bear hug. I could feel the air being squeezed out of my lungs. I had to punch him in the back a few times before he finally let go.

“Sorry, your majesty, it’s not my fault you’re as tall as skyscraper and as skinny as toothpick” Havask laughed and patted my shoulder. Tavask gave me a quick hug and ran back to Katlyn only to be separated by Havask who gave his brother a devilish glare.

“No dating for you, not until you’re at least two hundred and fifty-five, at least.” Havask said.

“What,” Tavask exclaimed. “That so unfair!”

“I don’t care what disgusting feelings you share with this human I won’t have it. You’re too young to date and by the time you could Katlyn would have already been dead for at least two hundred years, and I bet you won’t miss her when she’s gone.” Havask shoved his brother aside and walked towards me keeping a close eye on Katlyn and Tavask. Katlyn sighed and sat down by the fountain and folded her arms across her chest. Tavask tried to sit down next to her, but Havask blasted a flame of fire at his rear end setting his tail ablaze. Tavask shrieked and dropped to the floor and rolled back and forth to try and extinguish the flame.

“Don’t worry Havask, there love won’t last. As you said humans live such short lives.” I said.

“So, fancy pants, when are we leaving?” Zula asked. I smiled walked towards the palace.

“We leave at dawn,” I said. Havask, Zula and Tavask stepped forward. Havask shoved Katlyn aside and crossed his arms. Katlyn growled and sat down at the base of the fountain as she waited for us to finish.

“We have to wake up early, again?” Katlyn groaned. “Don’t you kahaizans ever sleep?”

“Who all is coming on this journey surely you can’t allow that filthy human to come with us, right?” He asked as he narrowed his eyes at Katlyn. Katlyn stuck his tongue out at him as she mumbled something under her breath.

“Katlyn will be useful on our journey to Earth. She is a human after all. Earth is her home.” I said.

“You can’t be serious?” Havask growled. “Humans bring nothing but trouble. They are idiotic creatures who believe they know everything about the universe.”

“Like you,” Tavask said. Havask growled and whopped his brother across the back side of the head. Tavask snarled and sat down next to Katlyn and wrapped his arm around her.

“My point is,” Havask continued, “we don’t need a filthy human slowing us down.”

“This human is different, Havask, she has seen magic. I can see it in her eyes. She’s not like the rest. Quite frankly I don’t know whether she is really even human at all, but whatever she is I don’t want to lose her. There’s something special about her that I can’t quite explain.” I said. Havask narrowed his eyes and barred his eyes.

“You have grown too fond of these humans. They are dangerous. You have only taken a liking to this human because she reminds you of Katya. You are my prince and my most trusted friend, but mark my words if this human turns out to be some kind of monster just as Pharoka Suko had suspected I will be the first one to see her go. I don’t care what she has done for our community or how fond my brother may be of her. If she turns out to be a threat I will burn her,” Havask shoved past me as his hair burst into flames.

“Zula,” I sighed. “Do you think Havask is right? Have I really grown too fond of these humans?” I asked as I looked down at the beautiful limestone tiles. Zula smiled and grabbed hold of my chin so I met her beautiful purple eyes.

“I think you shouldn’t worry about Havask thinks. He’s just angry because he doesn’t want Tavask hanging around her that’s all. Now I don’t know whether bringing her along is a good idea or a bad idea, but you’re my prince and my best friend and I will trust you in all that you do, so don’t worry about her. I won’t let anything happen to her. If she is really that important to you I would do anything to protect her, understand.” She said. I smiled and nodded in reply.

Zula turned around and grabbed hold of Katlyn leading her back to her Saskaiay’s home in Maska. I waved goodbye to my friends and unfolded my wings and took off to the skies back to the palace. Zula and I gave each other one last glance before we parted our separate ways.

I returned back to the palace only to be welcomed home by my parents something I hadn’t seen in nearly seven years.

My mother wore a long pink silk robe with her hair in a small braid and a smile spread across her gentle face. My father stood behind her in usual kingly attire. His blue eyes were cold and stern, but I could see the urgency in his eyes.

“Kahlavar, your father and I spoke with each other and we have agreed to let you go. You were right. We have kept you from Kaska for far too long and you deserve to meet your brother, but before you go we have something we want to give you.” my father handed my mother a small golden box with a small compact lock. A reddish glow appeared to be coming from inside the box pulsing to the beat of my steady heart. She walked towards me and unlocked the box and handed it to me gesturing for me to open it.

I looked at my parents and then down at the box unsure whether I should open it or not, but my curiosity got the best of me and did as my mother had instructed. I opened the box and peered down at a familiar red amulet I had seen just a week earlier. I could feel its power surging through my body. I tried to push it away, but the amulet’s power was much stronger when it was physically in front of me. I felt as if the amulet was a part of me, a dark part, that I couldn’t resist or control. I closed the box and the amulet’s power subsided.

“We took the amulet from Jason. That amulet has more power than you could possibly imagine.” My father said. *I know what it is capable of,* I wanted to say, but I kept mouth shut to avoid any future arguments. “The amulet can also track the twins of darkness, so you can use it to track your brother, but I would advise you that head towards Ya’Za tomorrow morning. There is a man in the village by that name of Tùnaka. He is a child of ice and snow and has mastered the art of spells and potions and all forms of basic human magic. He can put a spell on the lock, a seal you might say, to prevent any harm to come to the one who wears the amulet, though I am afraid the seal will break if worn by the same person for more than three days.”

“What will happen if the amulet is worn for more than three days?” I asked.

“I don’t know exactly, but I don’t want any of you to be the one to find out.” My mother said. My mother walked towards me and gave me a hug and kissed me gently on the forehead.

“You be careful my, kahai-na, and please take care of your friends,” she said as a tear slipped down her rosy cheeks. “I don’t want to lose you again, understand?” I nodded and gave her a quick hug as my father walked back into the throne room and flew up to the third and into the king’s corridors slamming the door hard behind him. “Don’t worry about your father. Just give him some space and when you come back I’m sure he will be back to way he was before, I promise.”

“Don’t promise me that,” I said. *You and I both know that promise will be broken in due time*, I kept my last words between Fooshka and I. I didn’t want to upset her before I left on a journey that I don’t know whether or not I will return from.

My mother let go of me and kissed me on the forehead once more and we parted our ways. I picked up the blue box on the floor and continued with it towards my room and quietly closed the door behind me. I gently set the box down on my dresser and crawled into bed. I clapped my hands twice and the lights went out. As I laid in my bed with my head pressed against my soft pillow I watched the light red glow of the amulet flickered from inside the blue box. Just as it had done earlier I could feel its power surging through my veins. Though I didn’t hear a voice I felt as if the amulet was calling my name begging me to grasp it and take hold of it. I tried to resist, but I couldn’t. I reached out my hand and grabbed the blue box and sat up setting the blue box down on my lap. I quietly opened the latch and looked down at the amulet. The amulet’s power swarmed through the amulet’s bright red gem. I touched the amulet’s golden chain with shaky hands and pulled it up and around my neck.

The power I had felt back at central station was nothing compared to the power I felt know. I grinned and pushed the red box onto the floor and tried to go back to sleep. I clutched the amulet tightly in my hands as I closed my eyes and drifted off into a deep sleep. My father was wrong. The amulet *may* bring harm upon other people, but the amulet was a part of me. The amulet would *never* harm me.

Immediately, as if by some unseen force, I was sucked into a dream and got a glimpse of the amulet’s *true* power and for the first time in my life my parents hadn’t lied to me to *protect me*, but rather told me the truth so I could *protect myself*.

I opened my eyes. It was dark and silence filled the room. Not even the uneasy buzz of nothingness could be heard. I looked ahead of me and watched as dull lights from above flickered on one by one down a narrow hallway. At the end of the hallway stood a long body length mirror similar to the one my mother had in her closet. I slowly and steadily walked down the hallway until I could see my reflection in the mirror. I tilted my head to the right and my reflection did the same. I did the same for my hands and my arms. There didn’t appear to be anything unusual about the mirror that was until I realized Fooshka wasn’t standing next to me. Where was Fooshka? I frantically looked around the edges of the mirror wondering where he could have gone. Navask’s can only appear when their host can see their own reflection. Where could he have gone?

“You’re not going to find him,” I gasped. I looked behind me hoping to find the source of the voice, but the more I thought about it the more I realized the voice had come from I front of me and it wasn’t just any voice it was *my* voice. I slowly turned back around to face my reflection. The kahaizan that gazed back at me resembled me just as before but his eyes were cold and dark. A large grin stretched across his face. The sharp angles of his face appeared frightening in the dull light.

“What did you do to him?” I snarled.

“What do you me by ‘*you*’? I am *you*. We are the same.” He hissed. Immediately his long wavy black hair curled upwards as if a draft of wind had picked up in the room. His hands and feet turned dark and curled as sharp talons poked through his nails. His eyes turned a haunting shade of yellow as the white appeared to be bleeding as if he had been jabbed in the eye several times. Dark circles formed around the edge of his eyes as if he hadn’t had a good night sleep in weeks. A single black crescent moon formed across his right eye up to his brow and across his nose.

I gasped and took a step back. I had seen that face before in the light of Zula’s eyes. I remember the terror in her eyes and her horrified scream.

“You’re not me!” I snapped baring my fangs as I took a few steps back.

“You can’t run from me, Kahlavar!” he exclaimed. “I am a part of you as much as you are a part of me!” the mirror cracked and the lights from above shattered. I screamed and tried to run, but *he* was there. I took a few steps back only to step on pieces of broken glass. “Let me show you!” He grabbed my hand and the scenery changed. We were standing floating in space overlooking Kàtzu.

I looked to my left and watched as smoke swirled around *him*. He lifted up his arms and I could great power being thrust towards us into his hands. He brought his hands together and all that power was released onto Kàtzu. I watched as my home and everyone I loved burst into flames, but they weren’t the only ones. Not only could I see Kàtzu, but I could see all the planet’s within the Zùn realm; Kàtzu, Earth, Embor, Kaldor, Doma, Kith, Dalra and Yazesh. I watched as they, one by one, burst into flames killing all the innocent creatures that had called that planet they’re home.

“How could you do this, you monster,” I cried. *He* laughed and took a step closer.

“I didn’t do this. *You* did,” he vanished and I looked down as the amulet appeared around my neck. I stood in the hallway once more with the mirror in front me, and just as before the creature stood in the mirror gazing back at me, but something was different. His eyes appeared to be softer, but in a way terrified. Curious I reached out my hand ot touch the mirror and he did the same.

“Stop it,” I exclaimed, but the creature did the same. I touched my face and the creature did as well. I titled my head to the right and he followed. I took a step back and he took a step back. I pulled my hands up to my face only to see the same black curved hands that reflected in the mirror. *His* voice rang through my ears; *I’m not the monster, you are.*

I opened my eyes and jolted out of bed. A loud cry echoed through the walls of my room.

“Your majesty!” I heard a loud bang and my door flew open and three servants piled into my room. “Whatever is the matter, your majesty?” one of the servants knelt down and pressed her gentle hands against my forehead which was drenched in sweat. I looked down at my hands and my feet. They looked perfectly fine, no weird talons or curved fingers. I was back to normal.

“What a beautiful amulet, your majesty.” One of the servants smiled as she packed a large backpack with food and water bottles and a change of clothes while the one to her left folded what appeared to be a body length parka and a pair of snow boots, and a brown sleeping bag.

I looked down at the amulet that glowed gently against my chest. In frustration I ripped it off my neck and stuffed it back in the blue box. “Are you alright, your majesty? You look as if you have seen a ghost.” The third servant said as she patted a wet cloth against my cheek.

“I’m fine, please,” I gestured for them to step back as I jumped up from my bed and stretched my back as images from my dream flowed fresh through my mind slowly fading as the seconds passed by.

“I have packed all the things the Queen asked me to pack for your journey to Ya’Za, your majesty.” the servant who sat by my bag grabbed the blue box containing the amulet and shoved it inside the large black backpack and zipped it up while the servent to her left attached the brown sleeping bag to the end of the backpack with a small silver clip.

“Thank you for everything,” I slightly bowed my head and the servants knelt down and pressed their heads against the floor before exiting my room gradually closing the door behind them.

I quickly brushed my fingers through my hair and grabbed the black backpack laying on my floor. I quickly threw on the tan and white parka that flowed down to my ankles and put on a pair of wool socks and my brown snow boots. I un buttoned my parka to allow air to flow in. It was far too hot outside to be wearing a parka, but if I was to survive the mountains of Ya’Za I would have to keep warm or risk freezing to death out in that frozen land of ice and snow.

I sighed and took one last glance at my room before closing my door behind me I walked down the spiral staircase and into the throne room. My mother and father sat on their thrones. They both had stern expression’s on their faces and fear in their eyes. I walked towards them and dropped my bag and knelt down on my knees and bowed my head.

“Good morning, father,” I arose to my feet and looked up at them. My mother stepped down from her small throne and ran towards me wrapping her arms around me.

“Be safe, my kahai-na,” she cried. I kissed her gently on the head. She pulled away from me and smiled as a tear rolled down her rosy cheeks. She snapped her fingers and one of her servants came running with two more parkas and a two pairs of small snow boots.

“Mom, please, I don’t need an extra parka,” I insisted. “I’ll be fine. I can take care of yourself.

“These aren’t for you, my kahai-na,” she said. “These are for Zula and the human girl. I know Zula wouldn’t have the money to buy a parka let alone a pair of snow boots, so please take this to them.” Her eyes were red and swollen with tears as she handed me the two parkas and snow boots. I bowed with respect and grasped my hand around mother’s head and kissed her gently on the forehead.

“Everything is going to be alright, maka. I’ll return home from Earth as soon as I can\_”

“Now, Kahlavar, after you return home from Ya’Za we need you to come straight back to the palace for further instruction do you understand?” my father said.

“I don’t need your help. This is my mission not yours,” I snarled.

“I don’t care whose mission it is all I care about is your safety. Earth is far more dangerous than you could even imagine and not all humans are as friendly as Katlyn. You must learn to blend in, so unless you wish to die on your first not on planet Earth I suggest you and your band of misfits come straight back to the palace once you have returned from Ya’Za with the amulet, do you understand now, boy.” My father said in reply. His voice was stern, yet in a way I could tell he cared, but not as much as I would have hoped.

I turned my attention back to my weeping mother. “Don’t worry I will return to the palace as soon as we seal the amulet, I can promise you that. Please don’t worry too much about us. I won’t let anything happen to my friends and I assure you that they won’t let anything happen to me. I love you, maka” I said.

“Kahlavar,” my father said. I turned my attention to my father.

“Yes…father,” I stuttered as sweat beat down my brow.

“The mountains of Ya’Za are dangerous they are not to be taken so carelessly.” He said. My father’s eyes were cold and stern, yet I could see a glimpse of concern in the corner of his eyes. I smiled and bowed in respect to my parents and walked out of the palace and down the grand staircase where my friends waited just outside the gate. I opened the gate and smiled at the sight of my friends when my mother’s voice rang through the city streets.

“Kahlavar,” I turned my head back to see my mother with tears in her eyes. She jumped into my arms and wept. I wrapped my arms around her and gently brushed my hand over her brown hair. “Please…come back home.” She whimpered as she slowly let go of me and walked back up the steps into the palace.

“I will, mother,” I said. I turned my attention back to my friends. Zula sat perched at the top of the gate with a grin on her face. Katlyn and Tavask stood at opposite ends of Havask with deep scowls on their face. The brothers both wore thick parkas similar to mine a thick wool snow boots and black earmuffs. Havask grinned in delight and walked over to me and patted me on the back nearly knocking the air right out of me.

“I thought you said dawn, but I guess even a prince needs his beauty sleep.” Katlyn snickered. Zula chuckled in reply. I pushed her aside with my shoulder as I rolled my eyes.

“Took you long enough, fancy pants,” Zula sneered. Zula jumped down from the gate and stood by my side. They all raced towards me and walked down the steps of the palace and into Anoka. Zula punched me in the arm and laughed. They all carried large backpacks like mine on their backs with sleeping bags attached. I handed Zula and Katlyn their parkas and snow boots. Katlyn grinned with delight as she slipped into her new snow boots and parka. Zula though appeared to be in shock as I laid the parka and snow boots in her arms.

“A gift from my mother. She knew you didn’t have the money to pay for a parka let alone a pair of snow boots.” I said. Zula smiled and gave me a kick hug before slipping on her snow boots and parka.

“Tell the queen thank you. We’ll be back from out journey to Earth in due time.” Zula said.

“We need to return to the palace once we have returned from the mountains. My father’s orders.” I said. Zula and the other’s nodded in agreement as we walked down the streets of Anoka towards the Northern wall that bordered the Northern Mountains of Ya’Za.

“Are you ready?” Zula looked up at the Northern wall towards the North Mountains beyond.

“Are you?” I asked. Zula and the others including myself took off our parkas and held them tightly in our arms.

“What are you guys doing?” Katlyn asked. “You’re all going to freeze without those things on.” She said. She sounded just like my mother.

“Kahaizans can’t fly in parkas. Our clothes are designed with holes to accompany our wings so we can fly, but parkas and coats are designed to keep our wings concealed so they don’t get to cold.” I said.

“What happens if your wings get too cold?” she asked.

“You’ll find out soon enough, now go and ride with your boyfriend,” I pointed a finger at Tavask. His face lit up as Katlyn walked towards him only to stopped by Havask.

“I think it would be better if she ride with me, don’t you think, your majesty?” Havask narrowed his eyes at Katlyn. Katlyn rolled her eyes as Havask swooped her up into his arms.

“I hate you,” she grumbled. Tavask sighed as we all unfolded our wings and took off to the skies towards the mountains of Ya’Za, the frozen waist land of Ra’Koza.

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We soon had to drop back down into the mountains to prevent our wings from getting too cold. Havask, Tavask, Zula and I all put back on our parkas and buttoned them up tight to keep our wings warm. Now we had to walk.

I pulled my bag over my shoulders and gestured for the other’s to follow. Havask had set Katlyn down and shoved her towards Zula. Zula wrapped her arms around her and smiled. Tavask walked along side Katlyn and Zula while Havask ran up to my other side and draped his arm over my shoulder. I rolled my eyes and continued walking.

“You guys are all doing it, so I thought I would join the party.” Havask said. Zula laughed and together we continued walking up the mountain side.

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Kahlavar

“Kahlavar,” Katlyn yelled through the storm.

“For the last time we’re not there yet!” I barked. She had been asking the same question for the past thirty minutes. If she hadn’t been our human guide I would have pulled her pretty little face right off her pretty little shoulders long ago.

“Actually, I wasn’t going to ask that. It’s not good to assume things, Kahlavar!” she replied. I rolled my eyes and let her continue on. “Why couldn’t we just fly there? Wouldn’t it be faster?”

“Kahaizan’s have very low tolerance for the cold. Our wings are very sensitive to the cold and can easily freeze, and if our wings freeze and we aren’t given the proper medical attention are wings could snap, and there is no cure for a broken wing that has been touched by the cold.”

“What will happen if you break your wing?” she asked.

“We won’t be able to fly anymore.” I said.

“What happens if you can’t fly anymore?” she asked. I rolled my eyes and looked up to the heavens asking Malan to give me strength to press forward. I ignored Katlyn’s question and continued walking.

“Enough with the question human, we’ll get there when we get there!” I snarled. Katlyn gasped at my comment, but quickly fell silent. I smiled. Malan had answered my prayers.

“Kahlavar,” she said.

I stopped in my tracks and unlinked my arms from Havask and Zula and turned around to face Katlyn. This was the last straw. I didn’t care who she was I was going to kill her.

“I thought I told you to keep quiet and stop asking questions! What part of that did you not understand,” I snapped as I reached out my hands for Katlyn’s fragile neck. Katlyn didn’t even flinch as I put my hands on her slender shoulders, but then again neither did any of my friends, not even Zula. Katlyn’s bright blue eyes were wide with fear. “What’s the matter with you guys? What are you staring at” Katlyn opened her mouth and let out a shrilling cry.

“Kahlavar!” Zula cried. I turned and looked into the storm. A large lizard like figure stood off in the distance. It spread out it arms revealing long bat like wings. The monster roared as it ran towards us.

RUN!” I screamed. We all screamed and ran for our lives.

I looked back to see the creature that was coming for us. I had only seen one once in my life. During the war between the kahaizans and wizards Jason had one at his hand. I remember because it was big, scaly and could breathe fire. The humans called them *dragons*, but here we called them *Kaldakora*, devil’s creation. The only difference between this Kaldakora and Jason’s was this one didn’t breathe fire, but rather ice. The Kaldakora was as white as snow with eyes as blue and cold as the glacier ice that rested high up in the mountains. The Kaldakora shot a beam of ice from its narrow mouth revealing rows upon rows of sharp fangs.

“Enough!” Zula screamed. We all stopped in our tracks. Zula took off her parka and through it into the snow.

“Zula, there is no time for this!” I exclaimed running towards her as balls of electricity formed in her hands and around her body.

“Over here, ugly!” she snarled throwing a ball of electricity at the Kaldakora’s face. It stopped and started down at her and roared. “Get away from my friends!” she screamed sending millions of electric bolts toward the Kaldorkora. It cried out in agony and jumped up on its legs. That’s when I noticed the chain around its neck. This Kaldakora wasn’t here by accident. Someone was controlling it. Someone was trying to kill us.

I looked at the chain around the Kaldakora’s neck more closely. It appeared just like any other chain, and if it was like any other chain the chain could be broken.

“Tavask,” I called. Tavask ran up to my side. He was shaking which I assumed was either from the cold or he was terrified and on the verge of peeing his pants. “Do you see the chain around its neck?” I pointed to the chain around the Kaldakora’s neck. Tavask looked at me if I had gone mad, but nodded. “I want you to break it, do you understand? I don’t care how you do it, but you have to break it!” Tavask nodded and gave me a shaky thumbs up and stopped his foot on the ground and set a giant boulder straight for the Kaldakora.

I ran to Havask and Katya.

“I want you guys to distract the Kaldakora while Zula and Tavask try and break the chain, understand?” I said. Havask grinned as fire sparked in his red eyes. Katlyn looked at me with her mouth gapped open in disbelief. She rolled her eyes and followed Havask.

“If I die I’m going to haunt your sorry kahaizan tail until the end of the Earth, do you understand!” Katlyn exclaimed as Havask pulled her back. While my friends were busy I turned into a shadow and ran towards the Kaldakora and climbed up onto its back searching for the puppet master.

“Do you like, my pet, Kahlavar,” a man in a parka and snow boots came out from the blizzard just a few meters from where I stood. I couldn’t see much of his face since he had a black mask covering his mouth and nose and thick dark goggles covering his eyes. By the sound of his voice I depicted that he must be in his sixties or seventies, in human years, and if so he would be easy to take down. I have never been so wrong in my life. Katlyn is right. I really should stop assuming things.

I clenched my hand into a fist and thrust my arm towards his face. He grabbed my hand and twisted it flipping me down onto my side. I cried out in agony. He took a step towards me and reached his hand up into the air and pulled out a long golden staff with a bright turquoise sphere that glowed in the light of the snow. He walked towards me and put his foot down on my chest. I tried to move, but it was as if he had me under a spell. I couldn’t move. I was frozen. I watched in silence as he pushed his staff closer to my face.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “I won’t kill you. I need you alive!” The sphere began to glow with intensity, but before he could strike me down the kaldakora roared and collapsed to the ground. The man lost control and the spell that had bound me was broken. I hissed and pushed him away. I could feel myself falling off the edge of the Kaldakora, but my hand got caught on his goggles. As I fell his googles came with me revealing two sets of cold electric green eyes, and a deadly scar that ran down his left eye and across his pale crooked nose. I knew those eyes through the stories that my father used to tell me every night before I went to bed, but this time they were real. I never would have thought that they were real. As I fell I had a feeling that this wouldn’t be the last time I would see those eyes. The snow cushioned my fall, and I watched groggily as the Kaldakora collapsed to the ground. I saw the man on its spine staring back at me, but when I blinked he was gone leaving the corpse of the Kaldakora left in the white snow.

“Kahlavar,” Zula pulled me back up onto my feet. She had put her parka back on, and appeared unhurt. The same appeared to be true for the other’s.

“We need to keep moving if we plan on reaching Ya’Za by tomorrow night.” I gestured for them to follow me. I was weak, but I could still walk. The electric green eyes of the wizard coursed through my brain. I couldn’t get them out of my head. I tried my best to push him to the back of my mind and tried to focus on the quest at hand. I wondered whether this Tùnaka would be willing to help us in seal the amulet’s power.

I took another step forward through the blizzard as we continued our trek towards Ya’Za in hopes that we would make it there alive.

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