The Sacred Sickness

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Quick Basic Plot Guide

Genesis

Chapters order fixed.

Anywhere it reads “Cuts” just skip, gloss, or ignore. I plan to cut most of it out and keep some ideas.

I will quickly run through the plot since the chapters are all fugged up.

Impossible Heroism→playful ideas on destiny, choice, good, evil, metaphysics. Duty.

On the Cliffs→ A poem Hamil unconsciously reads out of the edge of a cliff.

Here we go again→ Hamil finds himself trapped after falling off a cliff. He wakes up to an elderly man who treats him like a patient.

Tea of Truth → Hamil and the old man have a philosophical discussion over a potent tea.

On Nightmares→ Hamil reveals his motives for becoming a doctor.

Pilgrimage→ Hamil and Alil Plan their Holy Journey.

The River→ Hamil and Alil share a rusty canoe and head towards tripoli.

Into the Mediterranean→ Alil and Hamil swim from Tripoli to Isla Varen sharing another deep spiritual experience.

Princess Lisandra→ Alil and Hamil successfully reach the shore of Cyprus only to be met by police for illegal immigration. After being released they head towards Princess Lisandra who lives in a giant castle.

The incident on Mount Hermon→ Alil reveals all to Lisandra.

Adopted from the Middle of the Sea & Tragedy of Adeline, —> Lisandra has a long conversation with Hamil introducing herself and learning about Hamil’s tragic relationship with his wife and daughter.

Storm with No clouds→ Hamil sees a storm coming no one else can see.

Grace lost on the flower Garden→ After suffering a vision, Hamil wakes up in the middle of the night, and walks over to a rose garden that caught his eye earlier in the day.

Marvelous Maledictions→ Alil and Lisandra learn Lucian Morcaria, an old acquaintance, wrote the definitive book on the Sacred Sickness, but when they attempt to order the book they find that only ½ of it was published.

New York City → Hamil and Lisandra head to NYC to visit Lucian Morcaria to learn about the Sacred Sickness. Afterwards they plan to visit Father Catalano at a Baptistry in New Jersey.

Luca the Blood Artist→ Hamil and Lisandra meet the eccentric Luca Morcaria to learn about his unpublished book.

The Walk of Truth→ Luca shares thoughts on his spiritual transformations and sneakily uncovers the mystery of the Sacred Sickness dwelling in Hamil.

The Divine Staff→ Luca provides a framework for finding a cure for the sacred sickness. Telling the story of Asclepius the God of Medicine and a Drug made to send Cronos to the underworld.

Gluck→ Hamil, Lisandra, and Luca head over to visit Catalano at the Baptistry in Jersey City. On the ride there the Captain tells them the story of the church later becoming the Baptistry.

The New Religion→ Once arriving at the baptistry, Catalano tells Hamil, Lisandra and Luca his plans to create a new Religion. A great syncretic to unite religious and non religious under one belief system.

The Scondimon→ The crew learn about a race of people with wings like the ancient Sumerian Anunakki.

The Reaper→ The Scondimon created their own society after being forced into the mountains by the ancient egyptians. Their alleged extinction was the result of Ipzil DalCaver.

Ipzil & Cyra→ Ipzil runs into a beautiful girl.

Woozy with Hygea→ Luca feels sick after hearing the macabre story of the Scondimon. He is ready to go home. Captain Meinhardt drops them off at the Jersey City Docs. They head back to New York.

Motives→Luca suffers after finding all of his artistic endeavors shallow compared to the depth of the baptistry. He researches and finds Alil, Catalano, and Lavarenti are all descendants of Roman Empire royalty. He concludes with the help of Hamil and Lisandra they plan to reestablish the Roman Empire starting with America. The Ancient Egyptians were right to trap Scondimon in the mountains.

University Files→ Hamil finds himself slowly falling in love with Lisandra but flashbacks to his love life. \*\*I might cut the University scenes out, but I feel like they’ll eventually find a place\*\*.

Key ideas

Character guide

Alil descendant of

\*\*Hamil is a descendant of Doriana and Asclepius. He is half god, half man.

63.3 % man, 33.3% god. 1.3% unknown.

Isla Varen is where the Scondimon live. The island belongs to Lavarenti. Thus the name Isla Varen is a clue that Alil kept secret so only Hamil and Lisandra know by mouth.

Lavarenti is still under construction.

End:

Luca continues to succumb to his madness, killing Damyan the same way Ipzil killed Senazul and Jenina to “Feel” Ipzil’s pleasure as he felt Lisandra’s pain. He connects with the crew and follows them as they all set sail towards Isla Varen.

Gluck crashes en route to Isla Varen. Killing Captain Meinhardt. \*At Last\*

-Under Construction.

Impossible Heroism

On Destiny and the Tache Noir

I obscure my face with the presence of a beard as a means of hiding from flashbacks of my father on his deathbed. Even a poorly cloaked reflection in the mirror can summon a fleshy phantom of him gazing at me with dead eyes. What will be sanity without hiding? The answer lies somewhere in another question: How long can someone see themselves as a lurching sag of doom before becoming one?

But things could be a million times worse. Thankfully I inherited my mother’s eyes, nose, and lips. This makes confronting the mirror much less painful as I have never witnessed my father donning a beard. Surely, he could grow an elegant Verdi as I often imagined by his late 19th century flair, but he kept his face clean-shaven. Thus, with a full beard, I mostly see my mother’s eyes peeking out of a lush primal thicket. Vitality and bloom dwell in this bush despite its sprouting white weeds of old age.

“And it all seems cowardly. Why not just overcome my sorrow like most humanity? Coarsen into something braver. The frailest children seem better equipped to overcome a broken heart.”

“To them I say, the reason is in the blood. For many the loss of a loved one is part of the circle of life. To others, it is intrinsically unjust with a head like Medusa meant to be chopped off. Against my will, I stand here like Perseus in the face of pure death. My destiny is to suffer impossible heroism on earth while the almighty creator of death laughs in the heavens.”

“Is that not the root of the problem too? Will it not be better to submit to divine injustice than stand opposed like the holy books claim?”

“If it were only a choice and not a destiny, I’d fall to my knees like the orthodox do, but woefully I was born a non-believer. I have told many I am a non-believer without saying against my own wishes, contrary to my wishes . To see jubilation of the heart spawned by religious belief is a miraculous thing. No one would dare forgo the joys of spiritual bliss once blessed with the gift. I have even attempted to walk the pious road, but always falter where one must say: I believe. To say I believe would be an evil lie, and all juice spilling from the fruit of my faith would be the dew of hypocrisy.”

“I am not the most damned of my kind. I deserve no pity. There are others who endure my curse and have seen the Tache Noir. These damned souls suffer a dual damnation. They will become vengeance by necessity and tread the path of a martyr—not by choice, but by fate.”

On the Cliffs

Undone poem

On the cliffs of Mount Hermon, in the holy land, they say,

Lie remedies for the spirit in perilous decay.

But how far the journey in this faithful trance,

My heart yearns to know

What my head fails to show.

For senselessness to make sense, I bravely strive,

With paradox guiding my will and drive.

So here, on the edge of a deadly plateau,

How far on ledge am I willing to go?

For a theory of my broken soul

Of hope and healing, I’ve long paid the toll.

But with echoes of wisdom and echoes of fear,

I wander this landscape, still hoping to hear.

For the answers that lie in the whispers of stone,

Where silence speaks loudest, and faith walks alone.

In the breath of the wind, in the sky’s endless scroll,

I seek the lost pieces that might make me whole.

A pilgrimage written in starlight’s embrace,

A quest for redemption, a trial of grace.

Will these cliffs bear witness as shadows unfurl,

And mend the mosaic of a fragmented world?

For even as darkness and dawn intertwine,

I climb with a heart that still dares to define—

The truth of my spirit, the depth of my role,

And the mystery cradled in my fractured soul.

Here We Go Again

Alil The Wise

Damn it. When the voice in my head is the first sense to greet me, I know it’s because I suffered a vicious blow to the head. One of those brutal knocks that leaves the mind and body in a twisted paralysis. What trauma will scar me for the rest of my life when I awaken? —that is, if I wake up.

Damn it again! I forbade myself questions in this dark chasm for the millionth time. What good can come of chit-chat with a floating voice in pitch-black nothing?

Damn it once more! Just shut it. The answer to your next question is inevitable, no further musings are required. When the fluttering pixies appear and disappear, I will know without a desire to gurgle wicked thoughts. Wicked. Sick. Thoughts.

Sit back and enjoy this ballet of glitter, then onward to the exit doors l go.

But what if I’d rather stay here? Might it be safer to float here until the end of my life with the voice in this dark chamber. How many times has this voice mutilated and scarred me? None that I remember–then again, I can’t remember. If I did remember I’d promise never to do whatever it is I did. But I don’t remember, so surely I’ll do it again, thus, promising myself anything is a foolish thing. A foolish. Stupid. Thing.

“Note that you…”

Hamil coughs.

“…Because.”

“Ptooey.” Hamil spits out thick bloody phlegm.

“Fuck…”

“Good Morning” murmurs a worn, raspy voice in a fog of smoke.

“What happened?” Hamil groans in pain as a slippery bubbly red drool spills out of the side of Hamil’s mouth.

“I would like to know too,” says the apparition wiping Hamil’s mouth with the sleeve of his robe.”

“Where am I?” Asks Hamil.

“You are in a small shack not far from the mountains. Not far from the beginning.”

Hamil stretches his arms out fingering the silky bearded blur hanging above his face.

“Flesh and puffy fur.” Hamil says, sighing in relief, dropping his hands onto his chest.

A faint voice whispers to Hamil.

“Conjure a lie quickly now.” Says a voice deep in his thoughts. He quickly recognizes that it is his own.

“Why?” Hamil asks himself.

“To hide the truth of course.” Another voice whispers deep from within Hamil.

“Oh, right.” Says Hamil.

Alil looks into Hamil’s dilated eyes.

“Are you talking to yourself?” Alil asks confusedly.

“Hunger!” Hamil blurts out.

“Hunger?” Alil asks.

“Yes. That’s it. Hunger.” Hamil winces while rubbing his gut.

“Blood Sugar, you know, I can’t remember eating anything for days.” Says Hamil.

“Or is it weeks?” The bearded blur replies, pointing to Hamil’s protruding ribs and sunken gut.

Hamil turns his eyes down to his thinning body and drags his fingers over old scars, bruises, lamenting new cuts and gashes as he reaches his belly.

“Unfortunate isn’t it.” He gently presses down on his torso checking for a broken rib.

Scrambling drunkenly to his feet, he pauses to stare out the window.

“I… I’ve got to go,” he mumbles while dusting off his blouse and pants.

The room clears the apparition slowly trickles together revealing an elderly man wearing a fall-themed orange and red rose-patterned robe.

“And who are you?” Asks Hamil.

“I am An-Alilos Roma, but everyone calls me Alil.”

“I thank you Alil, but time is in the essence of, um…Hamil pauses lost in speech. “Um, damn it, it was something catchy…” Hamil clears his throat.

Shuffling around drunkenly, he

Hamil stumbles over blankets and pillows strewn across the floor. Desperate to regain balance, he reaches out and clings onto a small wooden table falling face to face with a mirror dangling above.

“Holy…Shit,” Hamil whispers to himself, tracing the jagged bruises across with his fingers.

A large, crudely stitched laceration sits above his left eye. The hills and valleys of his face are covered in blisters and bruises revealing a sloppy

“This is a beauty. A Picasso of gruesome deformity this time.

A drop of blood scurries past the keffiyeh tied around his head.

“I haven’t seen myself this busted up since…”

Hamil shuts himself then stares at himself.

“Since what says Alil?” interrupting Hamil.

Hamil holds his tongue then turns to Alil. Inspecting him closer he notices Alil’s arms, hands, and hair are covered in blood.

The red rose pattern robe is really a plain white sheep’s wool thawb, soaked with blood.

“Shit!” Hamil cries out louder after being hit with a deeper realization of the damage.

He punches the wall.

Hamil’s eyes dart back to mirror, then back to Alil, and back to mirror once more.

“I know this looks suspicious, but I took no devilish pleasure here if that’s what you’re thinking.” Alil says.

“No. Please. I am well aware of why you’re here, and I…I’m sorry” Says Hamil with a look of disappointment on his face.

“Sorry for what.” Asks Alil

“Sorry for all of this. I promise I’ll fix it.”

Hamil slaps his pockets around looking for his smartphone. As he dips in to pull it out of his pocket, he finds it shattered.

“Fuck!” He slams his phone to the floor, breaking it further.

Hamil turns to Alil.

“ I need a phone.”

“For what?” Alil asks.

“What do you mean for what? It looks like I got hit by a truck covered in blades and thorns.”

Alil laughs,

“You will be fine.”

“Really? I’ll be fine. I don’t know where the fuck I am. This could be a severe concussion.”

“Calm down and trust me.” Says Alil.

“Trust you? Hamil laughs.

“I don’t even know you. As a matter of fact, I don’t even know myself.”

Hamil starts hyperventilating.

“Calm down,” says Alil.

“Just please get me a phone.” Hamil says nervously.

Alil sighs.

“You assume I have a phone?

“This is the twenty first century.”

“Well, assuming I do. Who would you call?

“The police? An ambulance?”

Hamil dumbfoundedly stares into Alil’s eyes.

“Do you really think an American emergency will come to your rescue somewhere between mountains and desert slightly past twilight?” Says Alil.

Hamil’s glares at Alil. Tears form in his eyes. He wipes them off with his forearm.

“And, if you lived here as long as I you’d know only the wealthy are entitled to emergencies.”

Hamil feels a stinging dejavu whirl inside his gut. He faints to the floor landing on his hands and knees. A goopy bile quickly rushes into his chest, then to the throat, letting a flush of vomit spill beneath him.

Rolling onto his back, he stares at the rotting wood panel ceiling tiles of a small room. Hamil crawls over struggling to open his satchel

“You know, I can pay you for this horrible mess, Alil. There is no need for policemen, security, appraisers. Litigation.”

“For god’s sake. I refuse your help. Instead, I prefer you rest, and once healed, you can help me clean up. That’s the best you can offer now, and the least I’ll accept for my troubles.”

Hamil’s eyelids heavy as Alil’s soft assuring voice calms him.

“Is that a deal?” Asks Alil.

Hamil remains silent, weighing in. He nods. Hamil drags himself back across the bloodied floor, inching closer towards the bed and falls asleep.

Alil whispers,

“Something dangerous possesses you.”

Alil continues dabbing Hamil with a hand towel and disinfectant.

Tea of Truth

Answers Lying Within

Morning breaks. The cling, clang, clatter of a breakfast melody stirs Hamil awake. The bubbling kettle and its screeching whistle coax his eyes open. The ticklish sandy tongue of a motley cat teases him to slither up slowly. Drawn to the pet the creature, he apologetically runs his dirty, crusted bloody fingers over the cat’s neatly groomed fur.

Alil turns to Hamil as he wakes up.

“Bom-baba-bom! He rises from the dead again.” Alil cheers while munching on some buttered and baked pita bread slices.

Hamil carefully turns his sore neck to smile, instead his eyes gravitate towards a trail of blood leading from the door to his bed.

“My-Oh-My. Look what the cat dragged in.” Hamil sighs in disappointment.

Alil laughs. “Not even a mountain lion could drag you so far.”

Hamil looks outside the window

“So far?…” Hamil wonders.

“How far, How did I get here he asks Alil.

“You don’t remember? Alil nods over to the window.

Alil clears his throat,

“On the cliffs of Mount Hermon, la da dee dum…”

“Alil laughs.

“Does that song ring a tempo?”

“Hamil squints at the mountain through the window and repeats,

“On the cliffs of Mount Hermon?” Asks Hamil confusedly.

“I guess you don’t remember.” Says Alil.

Alil pulls his sleeve up, curls his arm and slaps his thin bicep.

“From the rubbles of the mountains I carried you here.”

“You alone.” Laughs Hamil.

“Well, with the might of Ol’Samson whose blood runs through these old veins. Surely that’s how. ”

Hamil smiles.

“If you wanna call that alone.”

“Right.” Hamil smiles.

“Remind me never to cut my hair or beard again.” Alil laughs.

“Tell me the story. How did this all happen?”

Alil pauses to think.

“Considering we are both confused about the event, maybe it’s best to talk about it later, once things are clearer for the both of us.”

Hamil turns his eyes across the disheveled room again, the sight of blood makes him whimper and sniffle in remorse.

“Again, I’ll fix all of this. I promise I’ll fix it.” Says Hamil.

“My boy, none of this is your fault.”

Hamil interrupts

“But,” Says Hamil

Alil interrupts.

None of it. You don’t even know what happened. Why condemn yourself over and over again?” Says Alil.

“I know by experience, if ever a catastrophe, a cyclone of demolition, all eyes fall upon me–and rightly so. Also, I’m sure you played a significant role in saving my life. This is not the first time someone has saved my life by the way.”

Hamil stands up and limps towards his backpack.

“Where are you hobbling to?” asks Alil.”

“Hamil pulls out a small tin metal box.” As he opens it, the sun beams and reflects a rainbow onto the wall. Hamil turns to Alil, handing him a large diamond.

“For you, sparkling remuneration” Sir Alil.”

Alil shakes his head.

“Young man, I still don’t know your name, and I refuse a diamond for my troubles.” Says Alil.

“But please give me your name.”

“My name is Hamil Elsy.”

Alil takes a sip of tea.

“Doctor Hamil Elsy.”

“Yes. How’d you know?” Asks Hamil.

“You carry professional medical equipment in your satchel.”

Alil lifts a stitching kit.”

“Not too many carry these medical trinkets.”

“My hands aren’t as sturdy as they were half a century ago.”

Hamil glances at the mirror.

“I’ve seen worse,” says Hamil, frowning at the mirror.”

“But all should heal perfectly, including all the fractures. Lucky enough to be fractures from the cliffs, “says Alil.

Hamil nods.

“Let’s hope so.”

“Come now, have some tea and pita. I know you’ll love it,”says Alil ducking the pita into his mug.

Hamil grumbles as a new pain inches up his leg. He limps over to a crooked little stool.

“What kind of tea you got here?” Says Hamil.

“It’s a rare mystical tea made from the extinct plant called Silphium. It was stolen from Emperor Nero’s garden, preserved in a few hands.”

Hamil’s pauses to examine the tea, his eyes widen.

“I was expecting Earl Gray or Green, but when in Rome I guess.”

Alil smirks and pours some tea from a small kettle into Hamil’s cup. He watches him carefully raise it to his lips. They sip and smile at each other.

Hamil’s eyes dilate.

“Oof, bitter.” Hamil cringes.

“Only the first time. After the second sip you’ll taste a chamomile rose and mint. So go ahead, Drink again. Let the steam pour into your lungs too.”

Hamil circles the tea around his face like he’s tasting wine with his nose.

“Earthy, Sweet. Magnifique.”

Alil laughs.

“May I.” Hamil points to the food on the table.

“Of course.”

Hamil grabs a slice of pita, dips it into the tea then nibbles lightly, careful not to irritate the bruises on his face and in his mouth.

“So, what brings you to this side of the world?” asks Alil.

“I’m looking for something.” Says Hamil.

Hamil feels a shock to his gut.

“Gold and Jewels? Asks Alil.

“No,” says Hamil.

“Agent of the wars in the Levant?” Says Alil

“Not at all.” Says Hamil.

“Something personal.” Hamil stares at the window and feels his gut churn.

“Yes,” says Alil.

“How personal?” Alil presses.

“Private personal.” Hamil smiles but feels another spark to his gut. He nervously taps the table with his fingers.

“You can tell me.” Says Alil. Hamil starts curling a fist. His foot shakes nervously.”

“I…”

“Oh, come on. I saved your life and still have your blood splattered on me.“You should consider us blood brothers.” Alil folds his sleeves up, showing Hamil, the bruises sustained while dragging Hamil from the mountains.”

“I don’t know.” Says Hamil. He feels the sharpness stick his gut like a dagger.

Hamil takes a deep breath.

“Okay fine. To be specific, I’m looking for a cure.”

“Are you looking for a cure On Mount Hermon?” Alil asks.

Hamil pauses for a second. “I don’t know, maybe.” He admits.

“Interesting. Maybe I can help you find it?” Says Alil.

Hamil chuckles.

“Doubtful.”

“Why Not? I am old and wise. My nose has smelled all. Ears have heard all. Eyes have seen all too. In a way, I seek something too.

Alil turns to the window.

“It’s a shame that only recently I could see the question. No. Its not a question, it is the riddle.”

“I wonder now is it a cure? Alil says.

“Yes, maybe a cure too.” Says Alil staring off into the mountains.

Alil takes a sip of the tea.

“I have big dreams and little time. Either I accomplish them or die trying. Dying in my case is easier done than anything else right now.

Alil lets out a sigh.

“And so, you see, an anvil hangs on my neck.Unfortunate, that it was only at this late stage in life that I was able to add the sum of all existence together and unlock a full view of the riddle. The saying is, one must walk the path to find the solution, but the truth is, one must sprint down the path once you find the riddle. At old age no matter how fast my scrawny withered legs dash, the chase feels impossible.”

Alil takes a sip of tea and stares at Misha as she hops onto the table caressing her bony cheeks against Alil’s hand.

“You say it’s impossible, then why try. Says Hamil”

“Because I realize that it may not up to me, but for someone who perhaps will need me.”

“Maybe I stand here holding the torch for the next runner who should pass onto the finish line is not so far away. I can see it. Feel it too.”

“In my case, one would say we hit a roadblock, but instead there is a mountain. Says Hamil.”

“Maybe that’s why I’m here,” says Alil. The mountain is something of a roadblock for me too.”

“To remind us of what must be overcome.”

Hamil plays with his beard, takes a sip of the tea.

Alil notices Hamil’s eyes widening.

“Hamil starts whispering to himself.”

“what are you saying says Alil.

“Oh sorry, whenever I head towards an obscure in thought, I whisper to the voice in my head. Quietly it keeps my thoughts stored in a place where madness doesn’t offend anyone.”

“Why not have that conversation with me,” says Alil.”

“I guess, I never had obscure conversations with anyone.”

“Why not have someone try to speak to you?”

“Does this all make sense to you?” Says Hamil. Usually when I start talking like a mystic, people lose interest and question my sanity, it becomes something vulgar. But it’s not madness.”

“I hear truth attempting to unravel itself, often in a place where only time and the wisdom of time can help.”

“Alil sips tea.”

“It is a complicated thing for me, but I feel a wisdom dripping from your mouth, one I’ve been craving these past few year.” Says Hamil.”

“It’s the same for you, isn’t it? We are at a crossroads of seemingly nothing and everything.”

“Two doctors digging for a cure on a mountain.”

Foolish no?

“First to dig into stone. With what our bare hands?”

“It should make more sense to squint through a microscope in a lab–that is our art after all.” Says Alil

“We are either stupendously lost, or closer than we think.” Alil whispers to Hamil.

Hamil pauses to think.

“Or maybe it could be that we are crazy, says Hamil, staring at Alil’s fingers painted with blood.

“Yes, but even if that was the case, helping each other seems like a good idea. Don’t you think?”

Alil points to Hamil’s stitched eyebrow.

“Also, might it be possible that we are looking for the same answers?”

Hamil laughs.

“The illness is bound to me like the skin on my arms. A plague for most of my life. They say there is no cure or treatment, nothing has ever controlled this thing.”

“Cancer?” asks Alil.

“No. Something much more elusive.” Hamil.

“And what is that” asks Alil.”

“Hallucinations, narcolepsy, cataplexy, epilepsy, attached to a surreal violence on the flesh. Pain everywhere. You feel it but you can’t see it. I am lucky to survive with only scars.

“I take it medicine dosen’t work.” Alli said.

“I’ve tried them. All of them. Many at once. None of them work.” Says hamil.

“I am sorry to hear that.” Says Alil.

Hamil grinds his teeth and curls his fist.

Hamil’s shameful revelation now overwhelms him. He taps the table nervously.

Alil grabs Hamil by the hand,“ Calm now” He says softly.

Hamil starts sweating nervously, he feels the blood rush to his head.

“I’ve been here too long. I need to go.” Says Hamil as a tear forms in his eye.

Hamil jumps up, but before getting away, Alil snatches him by the wrist and holds it to the table.”

“There is a temple in Hama that whispers to me a truth. It was once a place of worship for the Roman god Jupiter, then a Christian church during the Byzantine Era, and today a mosque once under the rule of Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah—one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. In this unity, I know a mystical element will unearth itself as the substance I seek– a collision of centuries. A collision all at once. I’m sure your cure Is made of a similar substance.”

Hamil calms down, and takes another sip of tea.

“And why are you so anxious to run away.” Says Alil

“I just need to keep moving. Follow my heart. Nothing from the head.”

Hamil jumps up again, Alil pulls him back again.

“Notice, your heart is pulling you to the top of the mountains and hurling you to the bottom. Do you think you’ll eventually come down with the answers like Zarathustra?” Or will the Angel Gabriel whisper into your ear like he did the Prophets.”

“It just feels like I’m wasting time if I linger.” Says Hamil.

“Nonsense,” Says Alil.

“I am slightly over 100 years old and stopped counting a long time ago. To say slightly might be an underestimation.”

Hamil lets out a sigh then sits back down.

“Be calm.”

“Let that voice no longer be the sole master of your thoughts. The voice within is wise, but there are voices not just your own. Their mouths belong to wisdom.”

On Nightmares

Friend or Foe

Alil pours Hamil another cup of tea. Slowly letting go of Hamil’s wrist.

So, Why did you become a doctor?”

Hamil winces in pain as he turns his neck.

“Hold that thought.”

Alil walks up next to Hamil.

“Look at Misha.”

“Why?”

“She has something to say.”

“Interesting.”

Hamil shrugs his shoulders then turns to Misha who is licking her bloodied paw. Alil jumps at Hamil, quickly wrapping his arms around Hamil’s head and neck, chokes him until a loud snapping pop echoes throughout the room, shocking Misha and Hamil.

“Oh fucking hell.”

Alil walks up behind Hamil.

“Feel better?” Asks Alil.

Hamil twists and turns his neck.

“Wow. Yes actually. Thanks.” Says Hamil.

“Bravo. Then as we were.”

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Hamil massages his neck.

“I guess, at a young age, it’s all impulse, absence of clarity, absence of direction. A shrug of the shoulder. Something along those lines.”

Hamil feels a shock in his gut.

“It sounds like you’re trying to convince us of something false. Why not simply the truth?” Alil shrugs.

Hamil feels a spasm of nausea churn in his gut. He takes a sip of the tea and lets out a weary sigh.

“Because.”

Hamil lets out another sigh.

“Because what,”asks Alil

“Because the truth can be dangerous to others including myself.”

“Alil takes another sip.”

“Memories can hurt.” Says Alil.

“But not like mine. To go so far back is like filling a tub with your own blood then gagging beneath.”

“There is truth in memories. Every truth is a key to some lock. Unlocking the truth of memories is a step towards life.”

“Well then the truth is that my life’s aspirations, dreams, were the doing of a nightmare.”

Hamil stares at the tea cups.

“Yes, A nightmare compelled me, and not in the way you might be imagining.”

“Certainly a dangerous way to begin a journey in life.” Says Alil.

“Do you spook easy Alil?” Hamil asks.

“Only when I look in the mirror.” Alil nods.

“Well then, It goes as follows.” Hamil closes his eyes.

“I recall falling asleep on a small cliff close to my home overlooking the Manhattan skyline by the Hudson River in New Jersey.”

“Do you know where New Jersey is?”

“Of course, of course. I am a traveler. I have slipped in and out of every crack and crevice on this planet.” Says Alil.

“Well then, you know it is mostly city, soot, and exhaust. The song that comes with the breeze is blaring truck horns and screeching tires followed by the ricochet of cars as they drunkenly smash into each other killing innocents and guilty alike. New Jersey is like a dirty harmony of good and evil, now that I think about it.”

“Difficult to thrive under those conditions says, truly a nightmare.” Says Alil.

Hamil laughs.

“I agree, but that’s not the nightmare I lament. The nightmare is the complete transmutation of the city to its complete opposite. Instead of honks and sirens came the sound of crash and fizz. Buzzing generators turned into the soothing sound of beach waves. The usual scent of petrol and sulfur blowing from the polluted Hudson instead came misty fresh air. At that time, I never saw palm trees and sand, and no level of imagination could have conjured the beauty of this beach, especially after spending most of my life overlooking the Hudson. Yet, there I stood, mesmerized until a warm candlelight flickered in a window of a small decrepit house, seemingly built of mud and stone. Curiously, I tiptoed over to peek inside. Where I saw a woman rolling around, squirming and writhing in pain, and by her side a young girl, quite likely her helpless daughter. I gazed on in horror as her mother thrashed about in agony.

“As I pounded on the window to get their attention, I noted they couldn’t hear me, I couldn’t hear me. But I could hear them. I could feel them, I could see the bedridden woman’s pain pulsing in her body like it was a beating heart.”

Hamil starts fidgeting. His leg and arm were shaking nervously. A quiet, overcomes him.

“Is everything ok?” Says Alil, waving at Hamil’s eyes.

Hamil shakes his sweaty head.

“Breathe and drink Hamil.”

“Fuck.” Hamil starts hyperventilating a tear forms in his eye.

“It’s a dark thing to see women and children suffering. Be it so clear and vivid in my memories too. I couldn’t bear to look for long, so I turned back to the calm sea, until I felt the ground rumble and shake. A towering, grotesque hybrid of man and beast—part equine, part man—burst into the front door snarling and snorting like a wild animal. Its glowing red eyes, long silver hair, and twitching tail made it seem as though it was one of those demons in movies.

With its long powerful arms, the creature lifted the woman from the floor, gently laid her on the bed. It leaned in, and whispered into her ear. Whatever that thing hissed, the sound seemed to paralyze her.”

“Lowering its large strong jaw, the creature bit into her neck like a vampire, drawing blood, but instead of swallowing, the thing swished the blood around in its mouth. While doing so he used his sharp index finger to unbutton the woman’s shirt.

Hamil took a deep gulp.

“As she lay there, bare from the neck down, the demon spat the blood onto her chest as if it were some lotion or pre op gel. With its needle-sharp index finger, it carved a vertical incision from her neck to her upper pelvis. As he slices her chest open, a grotesque swarm of maggots erupts from within.”

“As soon as the little blobs gushed out, the monster quickly ran its forked tongue across the woman’s gaping wound, savoring the dark globules oozing out. When all the muck was done spilling out, the creature knit her back together with a strand of hair plucked from its head.”

I remember my heart pounding nearly paralyzed just before he left, the creature turned his eyes on the young girl, sniffing her with a feral curiosity before vanishing out the front door.”

“After a moment of silence. The girl in the window locked eyes with me. In her face, I saw a heart-warming peace and gratitude.”

“All had blurred to nothing.

Morning came, and I lay encircled by EMTs at the bottom of the cliff. My face and arms were covered in shards of broken glass and pebbles sticking out of my skin like Christmas ornaments.

“Are you ok kid,” The EMTs asked, crouched before staring into my eyes.

“Yeah, I must’ve fallen off the cliff. I told him.”

“To which they laughed. “If you fell from up there kid, you’d be dead.”

“I guess I got lucky. I told the EMT.”

“Hella Lucky said the EMT.”

The other EMT snickered.

“I silently rose, limping off faster and faster to get away from the crowd.”

“Tired and still nicked with pieces of glass, I fell onto the bed with a smile on my face. Like I did something by pounding on the window.”

“You drank from the wine of heroism.” Said Alil smiling.

“Intoxicated. Since then I’ve always craved a type of heroism. Money, power, nothing is more gratifying than feeling like I saved a life. ”

“So I chose to be a surgeon. I love my career, but how grueling it is to cure others, and be incapable of curing oneself. Agreeing to abandon hope in yourself while never abandoning hope in others.” Said Hamil his voice quivering.

“Since having this curse settled upon me, it’s been my mind’s duty to hurt me–always an attempt to make me suffer. Surely, a defect and cruelty of my condition. On this occasion, my mind did the right thing in the hope of doing the wrong. I chose, at least, the only right path. By that, I guess, I am a doctor who now finds himself bloodied in an old shack with an old man in the Middle East.”

Hamil laughs and takes a sip of tea.

“Excellent life choices. Right?”

Alil stares into Hamil’s eyes trying to grasp the depths of his nightmare.

“In somnis veritas.” Says Alil sipping from his teacup.

“What does that mean?” Asks Hamil.

“Old Latin saying, It means in dreams there is truth.”

“I believe nightmares are a gift reminding us that the world is not as dreadful as we think.”

“I beg to differ.” Says Hamil.

“Think about it, What’s worse, being chained to your nightmares, or for the most part, look both ways before crossing the street. And think about our health. Would you ever leave your bed if all your dreams are of you wandering the rich gardens of Elysium?”

“Good points,” said Hamil.

“You know what else dreams teach us?”

“What?”

“Limitations.” Said Alil.

“If the limitations of the world are also the limitations of your boundless dreams, it means you are not pushing the limits of reality, which is quite easy to do. Dreams are a place the mind goes when it can’t go any further in reality.”

Hamil takes a sip of tea.

Tell me Hamil, Do you have a longing?

“A longing? Besides this obscure mission, I don’t know.”

Where have you longed to travel or where have you traveled thus far?

“Only recently I’ve traveled to Egypt, Hallicarnassus, and now Agbatana.

Alil scratches his head in confusion.

“You know, I haven’t heard this region be called Hallicarnassus and Agbatana since 500 B.C. I think Xerxes ruled the land.” Alil laughs.

Hamil’s cheeks turn red from embarrassment.

“Clumsy me. Sounds like my fall left more damage than I can see.”

“Is there a reason you are lost in time?” Alil laughs.

“Likely because I am transitioning into a doctor fighting plagues with magic.” Hamil laughs.

“Bravo! A superman of doctors reborn, ready to conquer the new world and slay demons and disease, like centuries ago.” Alil and Hamil chuckle.

“But, truly, what is it in Herodutus’s Books that captures you.”

Hamil walks over to his backpack and pulls out pages from Herodotus’s history book.

“The Sacred Sickness.” Alil mumbles to himself.

“Alil’s eyes widen, the heart in his chest pounds.”

“How did you come across this book in the first place?”

“It was taught to me in school. Stuck with me, but it’s louder than all things recently.”

Alil’s face turns white, his hands start shaking.

“What?” Hamil says confusedly.

Alil takes a look at the book. Scanning the map.

Cambyses the Second also known as The King of Kings died here in Hama on his way to defend Persia. He ended up stabbing himself with his sword, not long after gangrene consumed him. He died in Agbatana, or modern Day Hama.”

Alil gasps.

“My god. That might explain your obsession with Agbatana.

“How so asks, Hamil.”

Alil now, stares into Hamil’s eyes and takes a heavy gulp.

“I was wrong. And so this is why you’re here, and maybe why I’m here too.”

“Tell me Hamil, how long have you had these hallucinations?”

“For about 20 years now. Says Hamil

Alil gasps.

“20 years. Alil’s hand trembles.

“All these years and you’ve called your visions hallucinations when they are most likely manifestations.”

“What do you mean manifestations?” Says Hamil.

“Manifestations of the Spirit, Will, and Destiny.”

“Interesting.” Says Hamil.

“When it comes to the sickness these manifestations are not elements of true or false; they are instead a means of guidance, cloaked in a symbolic gown of things beyond.”

Hamil sits speechless.

“A Divine curse” Alil murmurs To himself.

“We need to leave, as soon as possible.”

Alil jumps up from his seat and rushes to a small room in his flat knocking all of his belongings.

Pilgrimage

To Cyprus

Alil returns from a back room, emerging with an old crumpled map. He spreads it across the table using the teapot and cups to hold three of the four corners down. He runs his finger along the roads of the map, leaving a streak with his long yellow fingernail.

“We will trek by foot until we reach the emerald green Orontes River, from there we float to the Old Osmanli city of Homs, then journey past the sharp caverns of the Anti-Lebanon mountains. Once we reach Tripoli, we will swim to Cyprus from the nearest beach.”

Alil’s eyes remain frozen as his finger stops in between the Mediterranean sea and Isla Varen.

Alil sticks his head outside the window, a cool breeze blows his hair back, His eyes remain closed.

“Perfect weather.” Says Alil.

Hamil laughs.

“This is all a joke, isn’t it.”

“Alil you seem just as possessed as I yesterday. Maybe you should have some of that soothing tea from the emperor’s garden.” Hamil laughs. “Or is it that you’ve had too much?”

Alil shakes head.

“No, no. In all my travels the scenic route is always the best of them. It’s also the most dangerous. Even among snakes, the vibrant colorful ones are the most poisonous.”

“Is that supposed to persuade me?” Says Hamil.

Hamil looks at Alil in the eyes, that feeling that yearning to rush out now seems to have a direction.

“I’m willing to voyage up until Tripoli, but to swim across the Mediterranean is slight madness. Don’t you think?”

“Do not fear the water, it will only suck you in if you disrespect the rule of the water.”

“What is the rule of the water?” Hamil asks.

“To never fear the water.” Says Alil.

“Just like ravenous creatures with sharp teeth and long claws, water has its own teeth and feeds on anxiety. This principle applies to our nerves as well. They can strangle us from within if we become floundering prey to the predator inside us.”

“I don’t want to die trying to swim across the Mediterranean Sea.” Hamil protests.

“Ah, but Fear not. This is a sacred quest. I assure you, no one ever dies on a sacred quest. To die on a sacred quest is an injustice most irredeemable to the standards of the equilibrium of luck.”

“Hamil falls back in the chair and starts laughing.”

“The equilibrium of luck? Hamil laughs.

“How far into madness have we descended.”

Alil rushes around snatching up small trinkets, a traveling bag, and a large golden dagger on a harness.

“What a knife.” Says Hamil blinded by the gold.

“It’s a jambiya, a traditional Arabian dagger. It was given to me by some passing visitor.”

“Beautiful.”

“Makes me look dashing, you know.”

“But look at us, Alil! We haven’t even washed ourselves.”

“That’s why God gave us the Orontes River,” Alil replies.

“What about food?” Hamil asks, voice edged with concern.

“That’s why God gave us the Orontes River,” Alil repeats with a smile.

Hamil looks at the map from Tripoli to Cyprus. “That’s more than 300 kilometers across the Mediterranean, Alil. Madness yet again.”

“Yet I can see the same yearning for this adventure in your eyes as you see in mine.”

Hamil hesitates, the weight of Alil’s words settles into his heart. The journey ahead seems impossible, yet something in Alil’s confidence presses him to follow.

“On the way to Cyprus, there is a small island called Isla Varen. We will stop and swim the rest of the way the next morning.”

Hamil sits back on the chair, his head spins as he finds it difficult enough to walk from one side of the flat to the other.

“I’ve read many swimmers swim from Tripoli to Cyprus without stopping,”

Hamil laughs.

“Unless you’re lying to me. Those are likely athlete swimmers. Look at us for God’s sake. “We are a pair of gaunty malnourished walking skeletons. We can barely function on land, imagine our journey just sticking our feet in the waters.”

Hamil laughs.

“Ha! What the hell are we doing?”

“Now that I think about it, it’s time we should just head home.”

“Home? Where is home for you?” Asks Alil.

Hamil opens his mouth to talk but draws a blank in speech.

“You’re here because home is no longer home.” Said Alil

“Do you want to find yourself on the edge of some mountain again?”

“Is pain your home.”

Hamil stares at his bruised and scarred fingers.

“The cure to your illness lies over the Mediterranean, to Isla Varen, and then Princess Lisandra in Cyprus. So, will you brave the sea, or will you be content with letting the foam drag you by the ankles with stone and shell scraping your feet. I sense some destiny here. I believe we are bound to each other.” Says Alil.

“Bound by each other’s madness.” Hamil replies.

“Who is this Princess Lisandra?”

Alil’s long furry eyebrows once blanketing his lids shoot up like spiky quills of a hedgehog preparing for a ferocious battle.

“You won’t find out unless you follow me to Cyprus.”

“Fine. Let’s do it, but I’ll blame you if I die.” Says Hamil.

“Deal.” Says Alil

The River

Sail to Distant Shores

Hamil and Alil buy a small rusty canoe from a group of fisherboys who just finished a days of crabbing.

“An emerald for a rotting canoe seems overpriced.” Said Hamil.

“We aren’t paying for the canoe, we are paying for the journey. No! This is a hajj.

Hamil and Alil sail down the river.

“Sublime Earth. A reminder of our corpusculence on this skin of this planet. You’d think humility be a simple task with all of the mountains and oceans, but for many it takes the entire universe to dwarf our egos.” Says Alil.

Alil turns to Hamil and notices him staring at the water.

“Deep in thought or sick and distraught.” Says Alil.

Hamil lets out a sigh,

“Did you know more than 80 percent of the ocean floor remains unexplored?” Said Hamil.

“Is that what sickens you?”

“No.” says Hamil.

“It actually makes me feel hopeful.”

“Hopeful that there is something out there that I can’t see.”

Hamil pauses.

“Hope. And yet…” Hamil frowns.

Alil settles his hands on the side of the boat.

I want you to sing this old Norse song, Ísland Farsælda Frón, it brought infinite strength to the jelly bellies of the old Norse sailors centuries ago. So Repeat after me:

“My mother told me

Someday I would buy,

Galleys with good oars,

Sail to distant shores.

Stand up high on the prow.

Noble barque I steer,

Steady course to the haven

Hew many foe-men.

Hew many foe-men.”

Alil starts pounding on the canoe with his hand like a drum.

“Jump in now.”

Hamil clears his throat. Sings along with Alil’s thumping. Hamil feels his heart synchronize with the relaxing beat.

It's working! says Hamil.

While singing, sand shoots out from the bottom of the river. A tremor and a rippling of the river, shakes the small canoe. It twists and turns, as the water rises and shoots them both quicker down the river.

“Shit, what the hell did we do Alil.” Hamil latches onto the sides of the canoe.

“Alil starts laughing.

“It’s an earthquake.”

“An Earthquake!” Hamil shouts we need to get the fuck out of this river really fucking fast.”

“No, no we’ll be fine. Alil sticks his hand in the bubbling water.

“It doesn’t seem to be causing much damage, and we’re getting downstream quicker now.”

Hamil starts trembling again.

“Relax Hamil, come on, sing with me.”

“Hamil nervously sings along with Alil. The river calms and the earthquake halts.”

“I love earthquakes says Alil”

“Why?” Hamil furrows his eyebrow.

“Is there no better reminder that the earth belongs to no one but itself?”

Hamil let’s out a sigh the further they float away from Mount Hermon.

“Jesus Christ” Hamil lets out a sigh .

“I feel like we might have left the Holy Land too early, Alil.

“Oh nonsense. All of these lands are carved with sword and drawn with blood. Millions have died from imaginary lines. The true holy lands are those of peace, abundance, and beauty.”

“Where is that asks Hamil?”

“It is our life’s duty to find out, but worry not. As I said earlier, we are on sail. Nothing can stop us. Not even an earthquake as you can see.”

Into the Mediterranean

Baptism

The powerful wind of the Mediterranean blows Alil and Hamil’s long hair back. The sound of the wind roars.

“What if we get lost at sea. Says Hamil.

“I have a compass.” Alil taps his head with his finger twice, then starts running over to the ocean, diving in once the wave hits his thigh. Hamil reluctantly follows behind, but the closer he approaches the heavier the wind feels. By the time he reaches the shore he comes to a complete stop.

“Alil, I can’t.” Hamil shouts out. Alil gestures to his ear that he can’t hear.

Hamil zips up his satchel. Locks it tight.

“Don’t think. Just do.” Says Alil.

Hamil gives out a loud roar then dives into a large incoming wave.

As he jumps out from the wave, he takes a deep breath, panting from the cold rush of the water, a surge strikes his stomach, the Mediterranean water turns a deeper blue, and the sun seems to glow much brighter than before.

Hamil dunks his head backwards to clear his hair then swims towards Alil.

Hamil laughs.

Alil remains afloat waiting for Hamil to approach.

Hamil’s heart pounds harder the further out he swims.

“This is crazy.” Says Hamil.

“But Hamil doesn’t look back, and finally reaches Alil.”

“How does it feel?” Says Alil smiling at Hamil.

“How does what feel?”

“To baptize yourself.” Says Alil spitting some water out of his mouth.

“What do you mean baptize myself.”

“You are someone new. Somewhere new. Your spirit has met a new boundary. Dreams will now reach greater heights.”

Hamil smirks then spits out water at Alil.

“What if a shark comes out of nowhere, and tries to take a nibble out of my foot.”

“Then take a nibble of its fin. Sharks fear us more than we fear them.”

Hamil and Alil, slowly swim closer and closer to Isla Varen, spending hours at sea, ducking their heads every once to cool their faces from the hot sunlight.

Isla Varen

Unknown Treasure

As Hamil and Alil, reach the shores of Isla Varen, a group of fins encircle them.

“there it is. Our time is up.”

“ Hah. These are dolphins, not sharks.”

The dolphins start nudging them from behind.

“What the hell are they doing.”

“They are nudging us towards the island, helping us reach the shore. By their estimation we seem a bunch of graceless cousins…And we are drowning” says Alil.

Not only are we getting some help, but we are extremely close.

The dolphins continue to nudge Hamil and Alil until the shore becomes visible.

Hamil and Alil rush towards the shore of Isla Varen from the Mediterranean. The weight of the water squeezes their lungs.

“We’re almost there.” Hamil laughs and spits water out.”

Alil’s paddling now quickens as he sees the sandy white beach. Large palm trees scatter about.

“There it is, Alil yells.”

“Come on, let’s hurry to the shore.”

Alil quickens his strokes.

Hamil struggles to catch up.

Alil jumps out of the water.

He tumbles out spinning and twirling, laughing triumphantly,

“Vendi Vidi Vici! He yells out.

Hamil laughs, finally rushing in to embrace Alil. Hamil reaches out to embrace Alil, out of breath he says,

“I can’t fucking believe we made it.”

Alil yells out in victory once more, “ Vendi Vidi Vici.”

Hamil laughs.

What does Vendi Vidi Vici mean?”

“It means “I came, I saw, and won.” Said Alil.

“Brilliant,” said Hamil.”

“So, How do you feel now?”

“Tired.”

“But the spirit. What about the spirit” Alil presses.

“Fantastic. Alil. Fantastic. I feel like a chained Andalusian broke free from his master.

“Bravo.” Says Alil.

“And guess what.”

“What?”

“We do it again tomorrow.”

Hamil’s heart drops, “Now we’re playing with that equilibrium of luck you mentioned before.”

“Fortuna favet fortibus” Says Alil.

“What does that mean?” Asks Hamil.

“It means, fortune favors the brave.”

“Also, How else will we get off?” Alil laughs.

Hamil lets out a sigh

“Trust me, you’ll feel better in the morning.”

“Let’s get a fire going and then some sleep,” Alil jumps up to get firewood, while Hamil follows to help.”

Alil walks over to a large palm tree with a hole. He sticks his hand in and pulls out a tin box containing rope, oil, and matches.

“You’ve been to this island before I take it.” Asks Hamil.

“Many times.” Alil smiles.

“Let’s start a fire. Grab us some coconuts and dry our bones for tomorrow’s swim.”

Hamil laughs.

“Sure, why not.”

As night falls Hamil and Alil rest by a small fire set by the sea. A pile of Coconuts and Berries rest by their side.

“I love the crackle of flame, says Alil, yawning loudly.”

“I agree. Quite soothing.” Says Hamil.

“Hamil, there is a story to this Island. I need to tell you the story of Isla Varen, in case this is the last time my wrinkly old toes wiggle in sand.

Alil clears his throat, “Isla Varen holds a treasure that will save the world.”

“What a bold statement Alil.

“What is this treasure.”

“You will find out soon enough.”

“So long as you stick to songs of your visions.”

“Hamil gazes at the crackling flame.”

“The song of my vision” Hamil whispers to himself.

“More puzzling thought,” Hamil sighs.

“Nothing puzzling at all. Each person is whispered a song. Either by themselves, or by the divine. What matters is listening.”

“Ominous words Alil.” Said Hamil staring at the moon

“You got me a little nervous.” Says Hamil.

“Do I?”

“Do you feel like running away like you did back at the shack?”

“Yes, but…”

“But you’re too tired to try.” Your spirit has felt adventure.

“Alil the Wise, is what you should be called.”

“The only thing that is still getting me a little bit nervous is how dark it is out here.”

“It’s perfect. And look. Even a full moon. Is there ever a more nurturing light to guide than the moon?

“I prefer the day.” Says Hamil.

“You know, the sun and moon are perhaps our first mother and father.”

“How so.” Asks Hamil.

“Father sun illuminates the land and prepares us for rigor, vision, but burns us harshly as he is meant. While mother moon provides a gentle light so that we tread carefully and sleep with soothing fluorescence.”As the first night light bathes the surroundings in its gentle glow, we find ourselves guided along a path where illumination is just enough to navigate, yet, not overbearing. It is a delicate balance, reminiscent of nature’s teachings, reminding us to tread carefully in the shadows. For in the depths of the night, the Earth, the true creator of humanity, imparts its wisdom with the sun and the moon, offering lessons on how to govern ourselves.”

The first wisdom.

As Hamil’s eyelids droop to sleep, he wakes up to the sound of Alil weeping.

Hamil turns to Alil and lays closer.

“Are you ok.” Says Hamil.

“Yes.”

“I lied.

“About what?”

I know this is the last time.”

“Tonight might be the end If I am dead, or Tomorrow will be the end If I am still alive.” Says Alil.

“Not tonight. As you said before we are bound to each other. I don’t plan on dying anytime soon. My blood brother.”

Princess Lisandra

From Isla Varen

Upon arriving on the shores of Cyprus after another long-distance swimming victory, Alil and Hamil yearn to celebrate and embrace as they did on Isla Varen, but, lifesavers, beachgoers, and policemen watch on in horror as the two men drift in from the Mediterranean.

“This is embarrassing,” says Hamil, as he waddles out of the sea.

“Oh nonsense, You’ll be embarrassed tomorrow that you were embarrassed today.”

As Hamil and Alil climb out of the beach, a large crew of police men. Holding walkie talkies gesture both to stop.”

“They begin to cuff Alil and Hamil.”

“Both look at each other confused.”

“Two illegal immigrants Drifted in from the the easter shores.”

Hamil starts talking, but is quickly shoved to the ground.

“Unbelievable.”

It’s him. It’s An-Alilos Roma. An officer.” Laughs.

“What a pity.”

“What about your friend here?”

We know you aren’t an immigrant, but what about him Alil.

He is American, says Alil.

Alil grows angry and turns to Hamil.

“I left for years leaving political handbooks, and works of philosophy so that this country does not become like yours blaming people for the problems of their poor governance.”

Hamil looks onto Alil with confusion.

“Once the world starts blaming people for society’s problems, there is no other solution but to exterminate the problem rather than fix.”

“What needs to be done is resolve the meditate on the problem like philosophers do. Perhaps this is where the cowardice of the philosopher rears his ugly head. Those most cerebral, with the most knowledge, hide in comfort. Leaving the old never to retire from.

This is what I have called the cowardly silence of philosophers.

“Those who sit in silence will think themselves clever for keeping silent, that it will befit them to deny their conscience, and so, they trick themselves into believing it is prudence, all but the truth, that it is all”

“We are left with those who are not cowardly, but lazy. Their cowardice lies in thought. This is what happens when leaders are not philosophically inclined. They sit on the porch of knowledge and relax.”

“Even out of fear?”

There are those who are naturally disinclined to do the right thing and there are those who require deceiving themselves to deny one’s duties and conscience. This is the true evil.

Still wet, they drip along the winding dirt road until reaching a long winding road attached to a massive 17th-century Baroque castle.

“Jesus Christ, Alil. Is this a castle?”

“You were serious about this princess.” Says Hamil.

A soft sweet voice echoes out as they approach. “Alil! I’ll be right there!” Princess Lisandra cries out over the balcony window. She rushes down the grand staircase, and swings open the heavy oak door, her curly mesh of golden and brown curls bounces as she sprints down the long cobblestone path leading to the entrance. In haste she slams into the ornate crest of the steel gate, forgetting to unlock the password-protected lock.

“Ouch. Shoot. Wait here. She stops to get a quick breath. Lisandra enters the pin on the security lock, runs back, and lunges at Alil as soon as the gate falls open.”

Lisandra takes a vice grip hold of Alil.

“Oopa. I’m still an old man Lisandra, these bones.” He laughs.”

“Alil it’s all in your head. You stubborn, stubborn…melodramatic, elder-child.” Tears stream down her eyes and her cheeks. She pecks his face with kisses. Lipstick staining Alil’s cheeks…

“How could I be so careless, so witless to hear that final farewell in your voice? Oh! And when, at last I realized, I might never see you again. How I suffered in Cora’s arms.” Lisandra rests her head on Alil’s chest.”

“I should be furious, but how, and where in my nature?” Lisandra sighs.

Alil kisses Lisandra on the head.

“I’m sorry my beautiful girl, but I felt it was the end for me. I felt death deep in the marrow, and I had to follow my heart, as you once did. Besides, what more can this dried-up old man bring but trouble? Soon my brain will be mush, and I’ll be a burden to all.”

“You will never be a burden Alil.” Lisandra sniffles as tears drip down her eyes.

“Did you return for me? “Yes. I returned for all of us. I returned for the world.” He said.

“On that again? I thought you quit” Lisandra lets out a sigh.”

“I did until I met him.” Alil pats Hamil’s back and gestures him to get closer to Lisandra.

“Allow me to introduce you to Doctor Hamil Elsy.”

Lisandra scans Hamil from head to toe, noticing the healing bruises still on his face, ripped-up suit, dirty shirt, and dusty wet boots.

“Doctor? He looks more like a patient who lost his way.” Lisandra grins.

Hamil blushes with embarrassment and dusts off his jacket.

“Pleasure is all mine, Doctor Elsy.” Lisandra bows her head.

“You can call me Hamil. I’d prefer it.” Hamil responds.

Lisandra slowly steps closer to Hamil, her eyes fixate unto his, he blushes captivated by her sparkling aquamarine-colored eyes.

“Well then, it’s my pleasure again, Hamil.”

Lisandra hops over to Hamil and hugs him.

Hamil flinches.

“Oh, jumpy, I’m sorry,” Lisandra apologizes. Might I have crossed a barrier of etiquette. I’m touchy.”

“No, I’m sorry. I just have some deeper bruises inside.”

“Deeper than imaginable,” Alil says.

“Lisandra wipes her teary eyes with her sleeve, and her black mascara stains her shirt.

“I bet I look like the Joker, and you both a pair of drifters from the Eastern docs. I’m sure Cora is inside with the 112 on the tip of her fingers.”

Lisandra laughs.

“What’s 112 asks Hamil?”

“It is the emergency services number in Cyprus.”

“911 in America.”

“I see.” Says Hamil.

“Feel free to wash or clean up sirs and we can continue to get to know each other.”

As they walk back to the large castle, Alil whispers to her.

“Lisandra, I’d like to talk to you in private.”

“Talk puts this lightly.” Says Lisandra.

Cora the housemaid stands at the front door.

“It’s good to see you again Sir Alil, she says bowing.”

“It’s great to see you too, Cora dear.”

Lisandra “Cora, this is Hamil, please show him around and make him feel at home.”

“Hamil watches Lisandra and Alil, walk up a large staircase.”

“Is there anything I can help you with sir?”

“I’m quite alright thank you.”

“Let me take your jacket.”

Hamil pulls off his jacket and hands it over to Cora checking its pockets before handing it over.

“Excellent sir, follow me.”

Cora takes Hamil to a large bathroom overlooking another great palace view of an enormous garden.

“Stunning.” Hamil watches in awe.

The Incident on Mount Hermon

The Divine Curses

“Where did you find him, and why is his tuxedo covered in seaweed, or maybe the better question is why is he wearing a tuxedo in the first place?”

“It all begins with my farewell to life, transforming into a farewell to death.”

“Oh Lord.” Says Lisandra.

“I was paying my respect to the mountains before death, when a powerful gust of wind compelled me towards a cliff on Mount Hermon in Syria. There I saw Hamil, chanting some prayer or poem. As I inched towards him, he spread his arms, took one step forward, and leaped off. I didn’t see him land, but I rushed to the bottom and found him lying on his stomach.”

“Seeing this atrocity, I cried out for help with the might of my old lungs. I heard my voice ricochet off of every crack of the mountain, but no one else did. Limping down towards him, I went over to check his pocket for a telephone, but it was broken. I sat by his body as long as possible in hope someone might take him before the wolves. Still no one passed. I prayed that in my frail, old, skin and bones, I’d be able to drag him somewhere safe.”

Alil starts eyes start to tear.

“And I did. I dragged him miles Lisandra! Imagine, I who could barely walk or lift a cup. Now, I can sprint up and down the steps.”

“Alil starts tearing up as he imagines himself a dead man walking.”

“It was all in my head Lisandra.” A tear forms on the side of his eye.

“He healed me, and I healed him. We are bound together. With this fellowship.

I traveled all the way from Mount Hermon down the Orontes. From Tripoli I swam to Isla Varen, then here.”

Lisandra takes a deep breath, “Well, it all makes perfect sense now she says sarcastically.

“Lisandra dear, the number of miracles I’ve seen and felt this past week is unfathomable.”

“Surely, It must be a sign.”

“At first all I saw was a helpless young soul.”

“Alil, I’m glad you were inspired to finally realize that all you needed to do was stretch your muscles.” Said Lisandra.

“It’s not so sinple, a simple stretch is not enough. I didn’t need to stretch, I needed to sacrifice my body. To the point of death.”

“I’m glad he fixed you but he could be mentally ill, or even dangerous.”

Alil gasps, “no no no. “Never think that. About anyone. Ever.”

“You can’t see madness or sanity.”

“Oh yes you can. Lisandra laughs. Judging by your own account, I’d call you both crazy.”

Alil smirks with sarcasm.

Anyway What makes this man so special, asks lisandra.”

“Hamil suffers, what I believe is The Sacred Sickness”

Lisandra looks back at Hamil through the window.

“One of the divine curses?” She replies.

“Precisely Lissy. Precisely.”

“But, maybe his most dangerous affliction is that he suffers a broken heart. Elderly wisdom can open the mind, but not the heart. Not even with Nero’s tea.” Says Alil.

“I need you to talk to him while I clean up and do research. Please, Speak to him. Unravel the heart that mourns. You are the only person who understands.”

“In the meantime, I will revisit the chamber library, see what I can find something.”

“please don’t leave it a mess. As you always did.”

“It took Cora and I weeks to fix this library so that it doesn’t look like a crumbling city of books.”

“All dirty and covered in seaweed?” Said Lisandra in disgust.

“Who knows how much time I have left? Alil rushes off to the library leaving tracks of sand behind.”

“Gross.” Says Lisandra.

Adopted From The Middle of The Sea

The Story of Princess Lisandra

Lisandra walks over to the patio where Hamil sits. She approaches carefully, carrying a small kettle and two porcelain cups adorned with rosebuds printed on them.

Hamil stares at the cups as she settles them on the table. The aroma of Nero’s tea emanates from the pot. It was the same tea Alil offered at breakfast a few days ago.

As Lisandra attempts to pour some tea into Hamil’s cup, he quickly covers the top with his hand. “No thank you. I’m not too thirsty.

“Is everything ok? Lisandra asks.

“I’m sorry. Just not too thirsty.” Hamil blushes with embarrassment.

“No worries, you are the guest of honor. Hamil’s left leg starts shaking uncontrollably.”

“So, How do you like this place?” Asks Lisandra smiling.

“It’s beautiful. Reminds me of those fairytale castles. Never thought I’d see one. Never thought I’d meet a princess either. I feel the need to bow. Hamil smiles.

“Oh goodness gracious, has Alil told you I am a princess?”

“He has.” Says Hamil.

Lisandra laughs.

“Oh Alil, how embarrassing.”

Lisandra smiles as Hamil compliments her home design. He watches her intently as she sips the tea.

“I am not a princess and quite the opposite.”

“This is all a huge difference from my first home.” Says Lisandra.

“Oh?” You’re not from here?” Asks Hamil.

“As magical as it would have been. No. Alil adopted me from “The Middle of the Sea.” Lisandra snickers.

Hamil stops to think, he squints into the sky.

“I don’t know if I heard right,” says Hamil, staring blankly at Lisandra’s eyes.

“Did you say, you were adopted from the Middle of The Sea?”

“That’s exactly what I said.” Lisandra blushes and snickers again.

“Like on an Island in the Middle of the Sea?”

“No.” She blushes, holding her laughter. The dimples on her face deepen.

“From the water?”

“Yes.” Lisandra snickers.

“Like a mermaid?” Hamil, asks confusedly.

“Yes.” She covers her mouth, as her cheeks flush even redder.

“Do you believe me?”

Hamil laughs, the infectious smile in her face, keeps him bewitched.

“I don’t, but I want to, but go on.” Says Hamil.

“Well then, here’s how it happened.” Said Lisandra,

“I was born in Gaza, barely nine at the start of that massacre. I don’t know if you recall, more than forty thousand people massacred. My own family among those first to perish.”

“That’s horrendous, I’m so sorry.” Hamil’s heart drops.”

“I remember standing outside of my home waiting for my brother and mother to finish packing for a picnic on the beach.”

“I was furious because they were taking too long. I mean, how long does it take to slip on a bathing suit? We’ll all just get dirty and wet again. And the toilet? Well, that's what the sea is for.”

Hamil laughs.

“Gross. I know.” Lisandra giggles.

“No, no it just sounds like a familiar joke.” Hamil and Lisandra both laugh.

Lisandra sighs, her smile quickly descends.

“My mother and brother were killed instantly. The explosion hurled me into the street like a ragdoll. The neighborhood erupted in panic. People began rushing out in a frenzied herd, fleeing southward toward Rafa.”

“As I rose up from the dirt road, I looked on in horror at all the bruises, cuts and scrapes. I cried unlike ever before then ran back home to check on my brother and mother. Scanning around, I saw my blood splattered on the walls, It was my mother’s. her legs blown to bits. My brother’s body lay in same mangled form.”

Lisandra pauses, her eyes staring blankly at the tea kettle.

“I knew staying would mean either facing another bomb or being trampled in the chaos. I kissed my mother and brother then rushed out to find a way out. To avoid the crowd, I decided to head toward the beach, as originally planned. Upon arrival, I settled by the shore, letting the waves painfully lap over my scraped feet and ankles. Worn and tender from bruises and cuts, I hesitated to wade into the salty water. Even the smallest abrasions stung sharply, but my heart urged me forward. I swam further out agonizing pain as the salt seared my wounds. The pain was unlike anything I had ever experienced, but it served to numb the deeper pain within me.

“At some point, my muscles failed. Leaving me bobbing like an apple. I believe it was only my fluttering toes keeping me above water. I kept hearing the voice of my brother telling me to flutter on. Hallucination from the salt water kept seeping into my mouth and bloodstream. Surely I was doomed, but I didn’t care.

Alil said to me there is a huge difference between hallucination and manifestation. Manifestation, he says, is the mind’s way of telling you that you’ve not met your purpose yet. Maybe he was right, because this manifestation kept me afloat longer than my reptilian reflex would ever dare. Even the body at some point decides it's not worth it, but then the spirit kicks in to override our weak bodies.”

Lisandra shakes her head. “This world is much better suited for dinosaurs than humans. How dare those praise the earth as perfectly made by a perfect creator.”

Hamil laughs.

“And then.” Lisandra rubs her hands together and falls back. Her eyes widen, she stands up and makes the sign of a triangle with her arms above her head.

“And then in the distance, a Great White approaches.”

Hamil’s face turns red, he interrupts “A great white shark now?” his heart begins pounding as he imagines himself splashing around to escape the shark.

“Oh. No sir, it was a great white yacht.” Lisandra laughs, tricking him again.”

“Oh goodness, gracious.” Hamil lets out a sigh of relief.

“It was Alil’s yacht. He’d somehow spotted me bobbing in the water. Alil dove in and scooped me up seconds before drowning.”

“Do you and Alil always play these cryptic games when telling tales?”

“Always.” Lisandra laughs.

Hamil shakes his head.

“Alil says I swam halfway to Cyprus.”

“Alil said I had broken the equilibrium between fortune and misfortune. Such that waves of his boat dragged me to him in an impossible feat.”

Since being adopted by Alil he’s been my mentor. My father. My professor. He taught me English, Latin, Spanish, Greek, Arabic, and Italian, medicine, psychology, art, philosophy, religion, and his favorite mythology. Now I sit by you, whom he says is something magical.

“Magical?” Hamil laughs.

“Yes.” Says Lisandra blushing.

“He might be senile, he might not be, but I wish I knew more about you. If you’re willing to tell me. By that, I can see what Alil sees, and we can make life a little better for each other.”

The Tragedy of Adeline

Of Annabelle

“Has Alil told you anything about my sickness?

“He has only told me you mentioned Sacred Sickness.”

“Have you heard of it?”

“Yes, only as much as you know and from what I understand, it is a hereditary illness, with Greco- Persian origins.

“I sorta know that part, I’m interested in Alil’s diagnosis.”

“To Alil, all is mysticism and magic.” Says Lisandra turning her eyes up.

“I’ve been down the path of science in finding a solution for this god forsaken illness. What interests me instead is Alil’s vision.

According to the myth, Sacred Sickness is a divine curse.”

Hamil’s heart starts pounding,

“A Divine Curse?”

“According to the ancients, it’s one of the curses handed down by the gods. Punishment for what, I’m not sure. Neither is Alil. You saw him run out precisely to learn.”

“Do you think he’s crazy, Lisandra?”

“No. He’s brilliant, and much of what he’s accomplished in life I ascribe to the calculus of his mystical neurosis. Still, I am more cautious of his mysticism. Ten years ago he left in vaguery.

Hundreds of pages of wills and transfers of ownership he left settled atop his librar. He transferred ownership of all his wealth including this castle just to run off to the desert. What this seemed to me is that whatever he planned to do, would take his life. ”

Hamil grabs the teapot, his hands shaking as he pours the tea into the cup.

“Lisandra, I know what this tea does. It forces you to speak without censorship.I didn’t want to drink because I’m scared of what you might think of me. Of what I am. There is not one person who sees me other than a monster. So pardon my tongue, Hamil sips the tea from the cup.

“Monster? Trust me, I know what a real monster looks like. They usually wears a suit and claims to hold power.”

Hamil lets the cup down.

“It all began with visions. Some of the most violent, sadistic, gore imaginable in the form of hallucinations. All beginning in my teenage years. Scenes of unimaginable suffering played before my eyes as if I were trapped in a horrifying movie. Children, men, and women are all subject to unspeakable torment, haunting me relentlessly. As if this wasn’t enough, I could feel the pain of their suffering on my body and in my head. The hair on my arms turn to thorns pricking my skin, anything from a gust of wind to a raindrop can feel like a lashing by barbed wire, rays of the sun burn my skin like fire, and the sound of pain plays like a song. Sometimes at the grand finale of this brutality, there is a loud cacophony of thunder booming so loud it overcomes all my senses. If lucky, I only lay heaving like a tired dog.”

“My god, that’s terrible.” Says Lisandra, her arm shaking.

“Precisely why I keep my mouth shut.”

“When I say this, people shake and shiver in fear. All before me, find me a repulsive monster who should be locked in a room with white walls. A liability, mentally, physically, spiritually ill.”

“I’m not like others.” Says Lisandra

“Do you have a wife or kids?”

“I did.” Said Hamil taking a sip of tea.

“May I ask what happened?” Says Lisandra.

“My daughter Adeline passed away, and my wife Annabelle left me.”

“I’m so sorry.” Lisandra’s face pales.

“Annabelle.” He shivers saying her name again.

“I haven’t said her name in years.” Hamil turns a gaze over to the rose flower garden.

Hamil sips another glass of tea.

“I met Annabelle towards the beginning of the end of medical school. We were on the brink of graduation. Our relationship was limited to brief smiles in the hallway or chit-chat on homework. She followed me around one day as I was heading towards the dorms. I didn’t realize how slippery the ice was. I fell backward and cracked my skull on the sharp university hospital steps. Depending on the length of my collapse, death by frostbite, or blood loss would have been my doom, but with a strength she says, she scarcely comprehended, she pulled me up and stopped the bleeding. She saved my life.”

“Almost like Alil, when I woke up, I saw her covered in my blood. She saved me, and I fell in love with my savior. There is a special type of love that is unlike other forms of love. A divine gratitude that many experience after experiencing a life saving moment.”

“Hamil pauses, briefly remembering the eyes of the girl on the cliff.

Yes. Hamil mumbled to himself.

Lisandra waves her hand in front of Hamil’s face.

“Is everything okay?” She says,

“Yea sorry.”

“We had our first daughter Adeline a year after marriage. Her beautiful dark hair made the green of her eyes seem like emerald gems on a porcelain doll. For the first two years of her life. She loved laughing, hugs, and kisses. She rarely made a fuss. She was the perfect child for a couple of young overworked doctors trying to hatch a family.”

Hamil smiles, but it slowly turns into a frown.

“it was all well until the fourth year of her life — the beginning of her illness.”

Hamil curls his hand into a fist.

“The first time we noticed something strange was when Adeline started gazing at the ceiling, her tiny hands reaching out to grasp something. My heart sank, recognizing instantly that Adeline had inherited my disease, and it struck me like a dagger. I foresaw the challenges and battles that lay ahead for her. The echoes of torment, it pained me deeply to witness her take on a path of misery. Shamefully, I kept the dark secret to myself. If Annabelle discovered the truth, it would shatter her heart. Hearing sinister voices is a hallmark of violent madness—ones that might cause self-harm and certainly harm to others. The burden of this secret was mine to bear alone. To hide within.”

“At the age of five Adeline spoke out in a language I call Vox Doloris. The voice of agony. Unfortunately, those words rising from her chest were more haunting than anything I ever spoke. I never told my wife about the voices because I didn’t need to. I learned to control them after years of suffering, but I was 16, not a child when my evil evinced.

“When I saw Annabelle looking at Adeline with horror, is when, at last, I confessed my illness, and that it was inherited all in hopes of changing that look of terror in her eyes. I couldn't bear that look of disgust in Annabelle’s eyes when she looked at Adeline. She’s suffered me all these years. I thought by telling her, she’d have a change of heart.

But I was wrong. When I explained the voices, Anabelle developed some horrible anxiety and depression. When I held her hand, I could feel her soul shaking. Eventually, it became that we all suffered from invisible illnesses living deep within us.”

“As Adeline aged, so did her frailty. She needed help moving around the house, holding herself with any ledge in our small home. She hobbled like a frail old woman at the age of six. It seems the older she grew, the more difficult it was for her to walk without her small cane. I believe she loved her cane more than her toy dolls. Imagine, a walking cane for a child. Those were never meant for children.”

“Annabelle abandoned her position at the hospital. She ran off with spiritual folk, intoxicating herself with illegal drugs and leaving for weeks and months, to which I said nothing. I never scolded her. I mean How could I? I owed her my life.”

“One day, Annabelle met a pastor who convinced her that Adeline and I were demons, damned to our last breath and thereafter. By helping us she was nourishing evil. Annabelle would be doomed if she continued helping us. The solution, she told me, was to move to the holy land. A few days later, she went off with the minister and left Adeline in my care alone.”

Lisandra nodded sweetly, reaching out to hold Hamil’s trembling hands.

“Years flew by. It was beyond Adeline’s age to attend school. She passionately wanted to learn and play with other children but I dread the thought. I suspected her horrific contortions and unholy babble would haunt the students and teachers. By today’s standards, you’d think tolerance and empathy had become an active virtue in all humanity, but no. I was right…”

The world turned Intolerant and stupid, obsessed with horoscopes and demons, ghosts, and goblins. No school accepted her. They dismissed Adeline as either a nuisance or some demonic creature. To some, she was acting out her pain for attention. To others, she was possessed by the devil. I can assure you, that no one can act out the torture of this sickness, and no evil could ever possess a girl with the perfect soul.”

I was lucky to be referred by a colleague at work to a young girl named Zara to help raise Adeline. She was a saint. She would say Adeline was a precious gift from Allah. Something she thought sweet to say, but to me a painful reminder that we are definitely not in God’s good graces. The age-old question that turns any man into an atheist: If a God exists, how could he allow so much suffering upon a child? I had to bite my tongue as fury would lead me to snap at Zara, but she deserved nothing but praise.

“Were it anyone else, perhaps, I might have blown into an Atheist of the most rabid type. Hamil sighs.”

Hamil’s voice cracks as images of Adeline dragging herself around the house still haunt his memories.

“I tried treating her with medications, both herbal and chemically engineered. Nothing helped. The drugs worsened the better parts of her thoughts, and thus, gave more reign to the illness. Eventually, Adeline’s illness worsened. She learned to control the voices like me, but the pain was visible in her eyes and a horrid repression could be heard in her voice.”

“As time passed, Adeline found herself mostly in bed, her days filled with incessant cries of pain.”

“Then on the worst day of my life, I remember the weather was perfect, the scent of fresh-cut lawns and sweet flowers blooming sprinkled the winds like potpourri. The children were free from school, their laughter echoing through the neighborhood. Adeline sat perched on the windowsill watching them prance and play, then I heard glass shatter and a loud hollow thump and crunch rippled throughout the block. My heart seized, my face turned cherry red, and I rushed outside. Panic surged through my veins as I raced towards the ring of children staring at Adeline’s motionless body.”

“I dropped to my knees beside her, my hands trembling as they waved over her face. No breath. I yelled to the kids to call 911. As the children ran off, CPR did nothing to revive her.”

“The fall broke her neck. It was instant death.”

“I don’t know how long I sat by her corpse. I recall staring at her chest waiting for the slightest breath, hoping for one last breath to say I love you one last time.

Hamil shakes his head. His eyes grow lachrymose.

I recall that week, I hadn’t said I loved her enough. Maybe it’s why she went out looking for something endearing.”

Zara and I were mourning Adeline’s death, and when we were searching through the room, I noticed a small piece of paper. Under her pillow.

Hamil, pulls out a small paper from his necklace and hands it to Lisandra.

Lisandra reads the note in arabic. As tears run down her eyes.

كلنا نعيش لعنة، لكن والدي سوف يعالجك، والدي سوف يعالجني. أبي سوف يشفي العالم.

“We all live a curse, but my father will cure you, my father will cure me, my Father will cure the world.”

Lisandra’s eyes tear up.

Upon finishing the words, I turned to Zara to ask about her illness,” She said, whenever Adeline suffered a brutal episode, she’d choke in speech and sprint to the restroom, excusing herself for allergies.

I believe Adeline was clever enough to know Zara didn’t suffer seasonal allergies year-round. Adeline knew it was pain coming from Zara’s heart–that was her sickness. I can’t imagine the remorse she felt. My poor girl, guilt and this illness– a double-headed snake.”

A tear fills Hamil's eye.

“My will is to complete Adeline’s wishes, to cure everyone’s pain. Up until then I called our illness a disorder, but I refuse to call it anything other than a curse. Because Adeline was right. It is a curse, and nothing less.”

Storm With No Clouds

Rain of Spears

“I’m sorry all of this happened to you. I don’t know what to say, I usually only cry once a day. But now thrice, my heart won’t let my mind speak, Says Lisandra wiping her tears.”

Anabelle and Hamil start talking about clearing their thoughts…

“It’s ok.” Says Hamil. “It sounds like we both have crippling tragedies.”

“How do we begin to fix ourselves?” says Hamil.”

“Go back in time.” Says Lisandra

“Hamil,” It doesn’t matter how far back I go, this is destiny. To be assigned to me. But how to undo old age and start a child. I feel like I’ve aged centuries these past twenty years.”

“I believe, If ever there is a desire to return to a jolly childlike state of mind, the first step is to find a face in the clouds.”

“A face in the clouds. What kind of face?” Asks Hamil.

Any type of face.” Says Lisandra.

Hamil looks up at the skies and smiles, squints, but his smile fades as he notices waves of dark clouds building in the sky.

“There seems to be a storm forming,” he says with a slightly nervous tone. “Should we go in? We don’t want to get caught in the rain, right?”

Lisandra squints far looks up at the sky. Hamil’s heart beats anxiously, hoping she agrees.

“What do you mean. No storm clouds are gathering. How can there be a storm with no clouds?” Lisandra laughs.

Hamil closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and lets out a sigh of disappointment.

“It happens when the storm comes for me alone.”

Hamil stands up, takes his shirt off, and throws it aside, his eyes remaining vigilant on the clouds.

Lisandra watches him with growing concern, her eyes wide with worry.

“Hamil, is everything okay?” She asks, her voice trembling slightly. He says nothing, dropping to his knees and covering his head with his hands. He whispers to himself, the words incoherent and desperate, as if praying.

When the imaginary storm clouds finally settle over his head, he begins to shiver.

“Alil!” Lisandra cries out anxiously to the Library.

“Alil, help!”

Alil rushes out to the balcony of the library glances out the window Lisandra crouched by Hamil.

Alil rushes knocking over a tower of books, tumbling over his feet, shuffles over to the window, knocking stacks of books on the way. He skips the steps and lunges over the rails onto the floor. And sprints towards Hamil’s body.

Hamil is curled up, writhing in pain as if being lashed by an invisible whip.

A giant panic overcomes Lisandra, and she tries to call for help, but Alil stops her, by gripping her wrist. His body seems lifeless, his eyes rolled back into his head.

“Alil, we have to call for help,” Lisandra pleads. Alil stops her.

“No,” he says firmly, holding her wrist to keep her from calling emergency services.

What are you doing Alil? Distressed and horrified, Lisandra watches as it seems Hamil is tortured by an invisible force. She starts to cry, her tears of helplessness falling onto Hamil’s cold skin. Alil continues to hold her hand, keeping her grounded as they watch.

With frantic desperation, Alil and Lisandra attempt to revive him, but hope fades as Hamil’s body turns cold and motionless.

Oh goodness, he’s dead Alil.

“Calma dear. Just wait. Lisandra, just wait.”

Lisandra kneels by Hamil, stroking his frozen cold cheeks.

Hamil’s eyes shoot open. He sucks in a breath of air, like he’d been holding his breath for hours.

“I don’t know,” Hamil says, stretching his limbs as if waking from deep slumber.

“Let’s get you into a bed,” Lisandra says softly, helping him to his feet.

“I’ll be fine. I swear,” Hamil insists, though his voice is weak.”

Lisandra and Alil, Carry him to a bedroom.

“My god,” Cora looks on.

“As Hamil drops onto the bed painfully. Lisandra walks in with a bottle of water. By the time she returns, Hamil is left resting

Lisandra’s eyes are drooping.

“I think I might retire to bed. It’s been an emotional roller coaster today. Who knows what the consequences will be in my dreams, or will they be nightmares.”

“Yes, get some rest, Lisandra.”

“I’ll stay here and watch him a little longer.” Says Alil.

Alil looks at Hamil, grabs his hand and says.

“To nearly die a million times is no random misfortune in the story of life.”

Grace Lost On the Flower Garden

Adeline

Hamil wakes up in the middle of the night, sees Alil snoring on a rocking chair overlooking Hamil’s bed. The full moon reflects the sparkling cobblestone directing a path towards the rose garden. Hamil tippy toes out to the patio careful not to waken Alil. He stands before the rose garden usher forth memories of Adeline.”

…”The wind is so cold, and the fall is barely here,” Adeline complains.

“Should I bring you in Adee?” says Hamil.

“No, but, can you pass me my jacket? The velvety purple one please.”

Hamil rushes over to the closet and shuffles through a mess of coats and jackets.

As he reaches for the purple jacket, a robust fragrance of Rose, and Bergamot powders the coat room.

Hamil coughs.

He tugs on the jacket again and the scent blurs his thoughts.

From the inside of the closet steps out Annabelle wearing lace lingerie, a web of shimmering gemstone barely covering her body.

Annabelle pulls herself close to Hamil. He falls back a step. Why are you running away from me Doctor Elsy? Annabelle steps closer and lets out a soft moan as she runs her nails over Hamil’s chest.

Hamil snaps back. She looks up at him, with her enchanting sparkling onyx black eyes.

“My chest is…”

“I know love.” Says Annabelle

“About the scars?”

Hamil closes his eyes. His heart races as she unbuttons his shirt.

Hamil shutters.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” Annabelle’s warm breath hisses on his neck.

Hamil feels a kiss peck chest.

Another one less comfortable, as it causes him to jolt back. He opens his eyes. Standing before him is Annabelle, slowly digging her nails deep into Hamil’s rib puncturing his skin. As she digs her other nail into his rib, more blood spills out. Hamil watches on with horror as Annabelle digs deeper and deeper, but instead of pushing her away, he stands still.

“Ouch!” Adeline shrieks in pain, knocking Hamil out of his trance and onto the rack of coats in the closet. He snatches the jacket and stumbles back to Adeline, his heart pounding fiercely.

Breathless and pale-faced he asks,

“Is everything okay Adee.”

“It’s ok Dad. I just pricked my finger on this thorn. It’s nothing” She smiles.

“Oh god, Hamil, grabs his chest holding his pounding heart. Limping, he rushes back into the kitchen cabinets looking for disinfectants and a band-aid.

“Dad, It’s just a prick, no need for all of the medical gunk.”

Hamil returns with an antiseptic, cleaning her wound, and then helps her into the purple coat.

“It smells like you’ve been spritzing your mother’s perfume.”

“It’s an expensive fragrance my love.” He rubs Adeline’s arms for warmth.

“But it’s not like she wears it anymore.” Said Adeline smirking.”

“When she comes back and asks about her expensive French perfume. What do we say?”

Adeline scratches her chin.

“I’m sure we’ll have enough time to find an excuse,” She replies.

A cold wind quickly turns her smile into a pout as the cold causes a great shiver.

“Maybe it is too cold to be outside. Adeline raises her arms out to be picked up.”

“Hamil bends to lift her..”

“Oopa, You are getting heavy.”

“Are you hungry my love?” Says Hamil as he kisses her on the head.”

“Very.” Says Adeline.

“What do you want to eat.”

“Zuppa De Pesche.”

“You want Italiano?”

“I’m kidding.” I know it’s your favorite dad, but I think chicken fingers would be magnifique.”

Just as he lifts Adeline from the grass, he hears a loud cawing in the distance, rousing Hamil to snap his head toward the sound.

“Daddy?” Adeline brushes her fingers across Hamil’s cold and stiff face. His arms frozen stiff like a statue, holding Adeline immobile in his arms.

Adeline gently taps her father’s face, but continues to stand like a statue.

“In the Horizon, as the sun drops, Hamil sees three vultures, flapping in slowly, chasing an old man, and a young boy towards him.”

“Dad!” Adeline screams into her father’s ears but all he hears is “Tashghil baba” The echo of a child blares into Hamil’s ears like a horn.

The vultures encircle the boy and his elder father and caw at the limping old man.

With every failing limp, the birds hop closer. Until at last they swoop down onto the old man’s body, ripping his chest apart with their sharp talons.

“Eajal.” The old man yells out until his throat is pecked out with the sharp beak.

The bird’s squawking loudens.

“Baba!” He yells out. The veins on the kid’s neck pop out until his throat hoarsens.

Seeing his father mauled to death, the young boy rushes to hide behind Hamil’s legs as he stands in paralysis with Adeline in his hands.

Hamil’s limbs loosen. He drops Adeline onto the grass.

In a moment of pure terror, Hamil emits a piercing scream, causing the birds to momentarily retreat. He collapses to the ground, his body crashing onto the rose garden below, His face and hair tangling in bushes and thorn.

Adeline crawls on Hamil attempting to awaken him, but he makes no sound. She drags herself over and tries to pull him out of the garden.

Knowing her strength won’t suffice she begins untangling the thorns from her father’s face. With no luck, she instead lays on her father’s chest, attempting to warm him in his paralysis.

A mist from the heavens awakens Hamil’s deeply nested head within the thorny rose garden. The yellowish-red sunset became twilight. Adeline lay on her face pale and cold, her nose and cheeks cherry red from the cold. Her hands knicked everywhere from her failing to dethorn her father’s face.

Hamil feels Adeline lying on his chest. She slowly wakes from her brief slumber. Hamil quickly lifts her, ripping the skin off his face in the process.

Walking into the hospital, the crowd surrounding stare on the emergency room with cuts and thorns stuck to face.

Hamil calls the ambulance from his hospital, and only finds himself covered in more blood.

“Did you pass out?

“ Yes.”

“Blood Sugar again?”

“I’m not sure.” Says Hamil.

Hamil rests by Adeline as the doctors examine her for pneumonia.

“Everything looks normal,” said the doctors. She’s just fatigued.

“I know it’s been difficult with Annabelle leaving.” Said Doctor Shah.

Maybe you should find someone to help you care for Adeline. Not just Adeline, but you as well. Hamil takes a deep breath, and sighs.

“It’s not that easy, Doctor Shah.”

“Yeah, finding someone to care for Adeline. Who would care for her, if her mother won’t?”

Doctor Shah reaches into his pocket, pulls out his prescription pad and writes a phone number. He rips it out, and hands it over to Hamil.

“Her name is Zara.”

“Give her a call. She can help you.”

“Thanks doctor shah.”

As Hamil returns with Adeline in a cab, taps the translator app on his smartphone, he whispers the sound of the boy into his translation app as he recalls it. “Tashjeel baba. Tashjeel.

“Hurry Dad. Hurry in Arabic.”

A tear rolls down Hamil’s cheek as he runs his fingers through Adeline’s hair.

“Shit! What the Fuck do you. Hurry for what?” Hamil whimpers to himself.

Marvelous Maledictions

Lucian, Captain, And Catalano

“I can’t find anything. Alil says with frustration in his voice.

“Can you read it, my eyes are sore from reading.”

“I think it might just be best to stay out of the library, and search the internet.

“I’m sure we’ll find something in an online book store.”

Lisandra browses through the internet for the divine curses.

“Oh look,” Says Lisandra.

“What am I looking at?” Asks Alil.

“Scholar Lucian Morcaria creates the greatest compendium of curses, miracles, and occult magic.”

“Our old friend Lucian wrote a book on divine illnesses.

“Let me take a look.” Lisandra opens up Amazon bookstore, reads a book description.

“Lucian!” Lisandra’s eyes widen.

“It’s Lucian works, Alil.”

“Where can we get the book.”

“We can buy it online at the webstore.”

“Lisandra clicks onward.”

“Where is the webstore.” Alil asks.

“You can order it from the webstore. So they ship it here.”

“I see” says Alil.

Lisandra.

“Here is a list of Lucian’s publications.” Says Lisandra She clicks Arrange by Date.

“Obliterari,” September, 2014

“Autophagy of the Spirit, November 2019

“Marvelous Maledictions” October 2023.

“Marvelous Maledictions.” That has to be it, right? There are two separate books.”

“Book One A-K Published October, 2023

“Book 2 of 2 is L-Z Published TBD”

Lisandra squints TBD.

“To be determined.” Says Lisandra confused.

“It doesn’t look like we can order these books. Only A-K. But maybe we can get the digital version. ” Says Lisandra.

“Maybe we can get an epub.”

“What is that,” asks Alil.

“One you can read it on your computer, phone, e-reader.”

“To print it out ourselves?” Alil’s eyes wide.

“Yes We Can.” Says Lisandra.

“That’s extraordinary.” Alil smiles.

“Though it would be a waste of paper.”

“You can just read it on your electronic book reader or phone.”

“Alil, looks confused. What is an electronic book reader.”

“Smartphones, Kindle, Nook. Doesn’t it ring a bell?”

“I have neither of these things.”

“I gave you a phone call, Alil.”

“I threw it away.”

“Why would you throw it away?” Says Lisandra

“Why would I need a phone if I’m dead?”

“And yet you are not.”

“It died many, many times.” Says Alil.

“You have to recharge it. Like when Humans sleep.” Said Lisandra.

“For it to die again at the end of the day. Sorry. Not only do I have to worry about myself dying, but also my phone.”

“I never spoke on the phone.”

“That’s why I called you a million times, and never heard from you for years.”

“I prefer handwritten letters.”

“How precious is it to see everyone’s individual spirit squiggle around a piece of paper, to tell you that they are in your thoughts.”

“Society will continue to lose personality without writing.”

“Anyway, how quickly can you get this book, Lisandra.”

“With one click.”

“Incredible. Lisandra.”

Lisandra clicks on “Buy Digital Version.

“Again, Only A-K are available Alil.

“Odd.”

“Darn it.” Lisandra says.

“What now asks, Alil?”

“I don’t think he ever published the digital versions for Curses L-Z.”

“There are no paperback or hardcover copies either.”

“Might it be banned, asks Alil.”

Lisandra, pauses to think.

“I doubt it,” says Lisandra. Maybe we can contact Lucian or his publisher.”

Lisandra quickly glosses through the publisher information.

“Looks like Lucian is his own publisher.”

“Maybe we can contact Lucian over the phone.”

“Where does Lucian live?” Alil asks.

Lisandra googles Publishers of Lucian Morcaria.

It says, “La Sangre Belle Publications.”

“Let me look him up.” Says Lisandra

“He has a studio in New York.”

“No telephone number.”

“No email.”

“I guess he doesn’t really want people contacting him.”

“Sounds like someone I know. Said Lisandra raising her eyebrow.

Lisandra looks outside the window, checking on Hamil, as he rests at the sea drive.

Alil catches Lisandra staring at Hamil

“It’s always important to have someone in tune with the era. Children are important to this.” Alil, smiles.

“Lisandra turns to the window, and looks at Hamil,

“Right,” says Lisandra, her cheeks blushing.

“I do worry Lisandra.” Alil whispers to himself.

“Worry about what?” Lisandra asks.

Alil takes a note out and writes his name on it. Alil rushes to a vault in the Library.

“This is it, Alil” says

“I’ve forgotten the pin, can you open the safe box? Lisandra

“Sure”

Lisandra inputs the password.

“Perfect.”

Alil pulls out a golden box covered in rubies.

“I’ve never seen you take that box out. What’s the special occasion.”

“Give this to him. When the time is right?”

Lisandra laughs,

“When the time is right for what.”

“Do you want me to marry him.”

“You said it. Not me.” Laughs Alil

Lisandra rolls her eyes

“Anyways.”

“Maybe we can contact him.”

“Where does he live?”

“He lives in New York.”

“You need to get to New York.” Says Alil

“Something jumps at me and says, You must go to New York, and yet, I feel slightly scared.”

“As you often say, “What does your heart say Lisandra?”

“I say we are all due a vacation.”

“I think you’re right. Lisandra.” Says Alil.

“You both need to go to New York. Find Luca and ask him what he knows about the Sacred Sickness, but try not to say much. Learn as much as you can and share less than need be.”

“You won’t be joining us?” Lisandra pouts.

“I can’t.” Said Alil.

“Why not?” Asks Lisandra

Alil pulls out his passport.

Shows it to Lisandra.

“Expired.”

Lisandra shakes her head, “Oh goodness, Alil”

“Why not swim Lisandra laughs

“I don’t doubt my abilities to swim. “I doubt my ability to dodge the bullet.”

“In America, you’ll be shot in the head without proper travel documentation. They will shoot you just to get rid of an overstock of bullets. Illegal immigration is a simple pretext.”

“But both of you. After seeing Luca, visit Padre Catalano, he’ll be so happy to see you both. I need you to get to the baptistry in New Jersey as soon as possible. Then at nightfall go to the docs on the Hudson. Look for a man on a boat called Captain Meinhardt.

“Got it.”

“I will need you to meet an elderly boat captain. Captain Gernot Meinhardt. He lives in his boat in the docs of Liberty Landing Marina In Jersey City, New Jersey. He will then take you and Hamil to a part of the baptistry.”

New York City Lights

Divine Separation

Hamil gazes through the airplane porthole, as it descends onto Laguardia Airport. The sparkling city comes into view.

Lisandra peers out of the window.

“You know what

“What”

“ I don’t understand how people can live in the heart of the city. How does one find that often crucial solitude and peace? You also can’t see the stars as they were meant to be seen. The light of inspiration comes from blinking stars. Meditating with the right flicker feeds thought. The wrong one sickens—especially those of the city. “

“I don’t think the people in NY are interested in quiet or meditation. I believe they seek a distraction. A deep distraction.

“Ladies and Gentlemen Sen-Flight Airlines Welcomes you to Laguardia Airport, the time is 9:45 PM. For your safety and the safety of those around you, please remain seated with your seat belt fastened and keep the aisles clear until we are parked at the gate. Thanks for Flying with SEN Airlines.”

The lights turn on, in the cabin, and Lisandra wakes up resting on Hamil’s shoulder.

Lisandra, exhausted from jet lag, drags her suitcase onto the closest bed to the entry of their Manhattan hotel room.

Hamil limps over to his room, looking for a place to keep his things. He returns to check on Lisandra and finds her snoring in bed with her long curly hair and left arm dangling off of the bed. Watching her sleep reminds him of Annabelle after a strenuous day of carrying their daughter around the house. Hamil gently raises her arm onto the bed and curls her hair over her ear.

“Caught in the dangerous waves of another sea.” He whispers to her.

Hamil moves into the other hotel bedroom, and starts undressing, but stops halfway. Instead, he steps out of the hotel towards the subway.

The scent below the ground was worse than he remembered. Just as he steps on the platform, a large rat he mistook for a cat, scurries past him with another in its mouth.

Hamil cringes with disgust.

“Cannibalism.”

Usually it’s warmer in the subway, but the poor maintenance gives it an abandoned look. Cold in its own way.

“Even slums of the third world don’t feel so lonely.” Hamil says to himself.

More homeless bodies sway like drunken ghosts. The eyes of the sickly stray men, both young and old, bulge with inflammation and fresh infection. The sound of the train’s locomotion is just as loud as the hacking accompanied by a loud gurgle phlegm.

As the subway train chugs into place jumping onto the A train towards the port authority, he stands alone on sticky train ground.

Only two stops onto the port authority. To take the bus, another twenty minutes.

Stepping off the train, a familiar scent floats in from the hudson.

Sitting there with his legs dangling off the top, he imagines the beast of his nightmare twenty years ago, but nothing comes to mind. Instead, he hears an ambulance passing by and a memory of Adeline possesses him. doctor Richter rushes out of the room and into the next patient’s room.

“Let’s go to our favorite spot by the river.”

“Hamil holds Anabelle’s cold trembling hands.

“You once told me you loved this river.”

“I only love it because you love it.”

“Yes, the peaceful trickle, over the limestone. What you hear is not what I hear.”

“Were I to focus on the stream without you, it is only the stream,”

“Sound of the trickle without you is is the sound of drowning and suffocation.”

“Of people? Groans of suffering hit my ears like they scrape of leaves on a windy fall day.”

“When I stare, they try to get out. When I hold your hand tight, I see an invisible creature reaching out to take me. Of course, I know they don’t exist, but like a horror film, it doesn’t end and hasn’t done so for years.

“That’s why you keep staring back blankly. All this time, a daydream is a nightmare.”

“What about music?”

“Depending on the purity of the songs, it too may move me to feel anguish.”

“Those suffering in the hospital, I know their pain. I feel the pain of their blood run through my own. What I am today is years of coarsening from pain, but a double tragedy, has made me a little better equipped to suffer.

“My soul has become so coarsened by an hourly tragedy and trauma that I no longer feel the pain that should shatter a person.”

“Is this what Adeline sees?”

“I can’t be sure, but if she inherited my illness, the likelihood of this psychosis is highly probable.”

Hamil takes a deep breath, stands up from the ledge, picks up a rock, and beams it out into the Hudson.

Adeline’s Room

Exorcism

Hamil stumbles over a plush toy on the way back from work leading to his porch. In the corner, Adeline huddles, her body wrapped in rosaries, trembling with terror. Across the room, Annabelle rips pages from the Bible, pasting them onto the walls like décor.

“What is going on?” Hamil stands in shock as Annabelle prepares the room for a ritual, candles bunched up around Adeline.

“The minister says we need to cleanse her, Adeline must only be surrounded by the purity of the religious text. Away from all evil. Away from white walls. Especially white walls, they are a perfect canvas for the devil’s paint.”

Adeline’s voice trembles as she fearfully begs for safety from her father. Disbelief and horror churn in Hamil’s stomach as he rushes toward Adeline, sweeping her into his arms.

“What’s wrong with you, Annie?” Hamil cries out, his heart pounding in fear.

Annabelle’s gaze remains fixed on sticking biblical verses to the walls.

“The minister insists it’s crucial for the divine separation,” she explains. “To cleanse Adeline of evil.”

“For you, well… For you, it’s too late. She taunts.

“You’ll see after separation, she’ll be reborn.”

Hamil shakes his head.

“I can’t believe this shit. Don’t you see what this minister is doing Annabelle?”

Annabelle, silently continues, sticking pages of verses onto the wall.

“We’re leaving,” he declares, his chest burning with fury.

“Come on Adee, let’s get some ice cream.”

As he shuffles past Annabelle, she brushes his leg with her hand.

“You can’t run from evil. Once Adeline has been cleansed, she’ll be reborn as an angel on earth.”

Hamil shakes Annabelle’s hand off and rushes out of the door.

The Hospital Room

Neurolab

Adeline sits curled up next to her father at NYU Research Hospital. Her head is poorly attached to old, tangled electroencephalogram wires. In the adjacent room, a patient shrieks twisted gibberish echoing throughout the halls.

“Gahah! Yaha! Fuckarn! Dough! Shitmak! Grawaaaaar!” The voice babbles out.”

Hamil and Lisandra look at each other confusedly.

“What the hell was that she said, Hamil shakes his head in disbelief at the noise coming from the room.”

Annabelle turns red with fury, “completely unacceptable.”

“Mom, Dad, can we go home?” Adeline softly begs her voice quivering with fear.”

“It depends on Doctor Richter sweetheart,” Hamil, tightens his embrace as she rests her head between his arm and chest.

Adeline’s Neurologist, Mark Richter steps into the room holding a stack of documents.”Hey guys, how’s it going today?”

“Bad. Really, Really, Bad. Our daughter is moving to another room where she doesn’t have to listen to the profane ramblings of a madman. We left her alone here for two nights, and I pray, I fucking pray, she hasn’t had to listen to that twisted babble for the past two nights.”

“This is the best observation room in the building. She won’t do any bett…”

Annabelle curls her fist and her body stiffens.

“…err but I’ll take care of it.”

Annabelle scratches her neck nervously, her foot tapping the floor to the tune of her thumping aggravation.

“Well go ahead Doctor Richter. What’s going on.”

“Oh yea sorry, Umm. Well, The MRI shows no abnormalities… Annabelle interrupts.… Ok, great, moving on, what about her EEG?

“We’re not seeing any abnormalities in her EEG either. Not uncommon. She did have an episode on the first day, but no specific part of her brain. Seemed like she was just a bit scared or confused.

“Gee, I wonder why,” said Annabelle, with a thick sarcastic tone.

Doctor Richter taps his pen on the folder. If I were to throw something out there I’d say “JME.”

Annabelle’s heart drops.

“We can start her on a low dose of medications.”

Annabelle shakes her head.

“What should she take?” Annabelle pulls out her prescription pad, and starts writing.”

“Well, we want to try and keep a level of emotional harmony in her brain, if this is some type of temporal lobe issue, the best thing is likely sedatives. If you see any abnormal episodes, you could give her a spray of Valtoco, one burst should soothe her.”

Anabelle writes down, “Valtoco. One Spray PRN.”

“Is there nothing in her metabolic data or blood results that I can juggle with? This can’t be some allergy or gut health, deficiency of some sort?”

She has low levels of iron, but I know Hamil has Thalassemia. As you know, a hereditary illness. You can go ahead and try adding more Iron to her diet. Lamb liver or supplements might help.”

“Any surgical. Options?”

Nothing that we can do for her now, especially since we can’t pinpoint a problem.

“Doctor Richter, We tried…”

“Fuck, Fuck, Fuck, Fuck, Fuck Fuck Fuck” The patient in the next room ticks out again almost robotic tone, with a hint of a perverse moaning, it echoes into the room like it was coming in from a speaker.”

“Alright Doctor Richter, we’re done here,” said Annabelle angrily.

“You want to stop the observation Now! She only has one more day, then she can go,” implores Doctor Richter.

“I don’t fucking care. She’s a little girl. It’s scary enough being here alone, but to be cradled next to that menace in the next room. No Thank you.”

“Sorry, Annabelle, One second.”

Doctor Richter heads out the door, towards a nursing station. She follows him by sticking her ear out, trying to listen closely to Doctor Richter’s private conversation.

Doctor Richter walks back into the room, before entering he asks, “Hey Tina, What do you want to eat for lunch.”

“Olive Garden is good.” Says Tina as she walks back to the room.

Hamil sits still thinking up a means to treat Adeline at home without running back and forth to this medical facility.

“What are you looking at?”

Annabelle scolds Hamil. Are you enjoying the clouds sailing across the vast beautiful blue while our daughter is tangled in red flames of hell?”

“We need to be calm. Read the room, Annie.” Hamil points to Adeline fas asleep on the nook of Hamils arm and chest. .

Annabelle turns to Doctor Richter.

Doctor Richter walks back in.

“You see that. Dead tired, likely from restless nights with Charlie over there.”

Charlie starts moaning again with a tinge of sexual gratification.

Annabelle drops her blue book. She stomps into Charlie’s room, raises her middle finger at him.

“Fuck you very much you monster,” Annabelle angrily chides.

As Charlie, turns to Annabelle with tired sickly jaundiced drooping eyes she notices that his voice has been amplified with a small Bluetooth microphone speaker.

“This is a joke.” Annabelle falls into a trance. Her eyes blank. All of this is a game to these jerks. Playing with lives for a laugh.”

She pulls the microphone off of Charlie’s bed and breaks it by stomping on it.

Annabelle steps back over to Adeline’s bed and starts plucking the glue of EEG wires from her head. Hamil turns to Doctor Richter and apologizes with his lips.

Doctor Richter scratches his head. Slightly nervous of his next words, he says to himself, “Umm, Think, Think, Mike, what is the protocol for this?”

“Oh that’s right.”

The doctor snaps his finger and points at a crucifix on the wall.

“Remember folks, Jesus loves you.”

Dr Richter makes only glancing at Adeline and Hamil, but just glancing over at Hamil and Adeline.

“You can sign out with our CAN Tina.”

Doctor Richter rushes out to the next room.

Luca The Blood Artist

The Unpublished

Hamil and Lisandra reach the doors of the large modern art studio La Sangre Belle, in Lower Manhattan. The scent of cigar smoke, sage, and paint oozes out through the cracks in the wooden door.

Luca rests atop a vintage chaise sofa staring at a human-sized marble carving replica of the Davinci’s Vitruvian Man.

“I think I hate it Damyan.” He grimaces at the partially carved statue.

Lisandra knocks lightly on the studio door.

“Ugh, Get the door, Damyan” demands Luca while playing with his glass of Louis XIII cognac. “Tell them it’s much too early to care about anything. If they fancy one of my paintings, they should wait until tomorrow night’s soirée at Boswar and Wirth. Hurry. Hurry.” Luca cringes, “Atrocious name for a gallery.” He mumbles to himself.

Damyan Swings the door open.

“It’s much too early for…

Damyan pauses and turns his head back.

“Luca! Luca! It’s Lisandra,” he cries out passionately.

Luca mumbles to himself.

“Lisandra? My Aegaen princess swims the sea to visit me?” He drops his Fuente y Padron cigar and expensive cognac and dashes towards the door, shoving Damyan aside. He takes Lisandra’s hand and kisses it over and over.

“My goddess. My love. Lisandra. He turns his head over slowly to Hamil. Luca examines Hamil from head to toe. “Oh my, And Who is this?—No! What is this…”

“This is, Ha…” Luca Interrupts Lisandra. …”Wait. Stop. Don’t say his name yet. It might ruin the essence of this anonymity. This broken torn, bloodied walking paragon of perfection, here he stands in mangled Cravat Noir, wearing precisely the appropriate outfit to greet me, ready at once to be immortalized by my hand. He may quite possibly be my second Dorian Gray.”

Luca gasps, “Or even Better! He could be the face of the Unfinished Caravaggio. No, wait, he is the face of the unfinished Caravaggio!”

Damyan rolls his eyes over slightly jealous of Luca’s obsessive rant.

“Come follow me, both of you,” Luca waves them both to follow him as he dashes to a back office.”

As Hamil and Lisandra enter the room, they find Luca unlocking a large bank-sized vault with a dial.

Luca pulls out a painting locked in the vault, it is covered in a silky red velvety fabric. He faces it towards Hamil and Lisandra.

“Ready?” Hamil and Lisandra stand poised by the piece. He pulls the blanket, This, my darlings, is a faceless outline of what was to be a Narcissus or a Bacchus before Michelango Carravaggio ascended to the heavens of art. Luca says, turning to Lisandra?”

“Luca steps toward Hamil, extending his hands with palms up. “Come,” he says. “Place your hands on mine, and tell me your name.” Hamil hesitates, but Luca’s seductive eyes compel him forward, he gulps,

“My name is Hamil Elsy.”

“Bravo! Bravo!” Luca claps, I never met a Hamil or an Elsy, rarer the both and so perfetto.”

“To introduce myself, I am Lucian Morcaria. Many call me Luca The Blood Artist. I am a painter, writer, and contrarian. My goal in life is to leave a trail of beautiful bloody truth before I turn to fertilizer, and do it as scandalously as possible.”

“Now, although I’d like to think you both came to visit me for the sake of friendship, I sense this is more turgid business. So how can I be of service?”

“We came because you have a wonderful book called Marvelous Maledictions. “ Says Lisandra.

One of my favorite series of any others. Luca smiles.

“Half Published,” said Lisandra.

“Half Published?” Says Luca confusedly.

“Marvelous Maledictions is only half published.”

“How odd. I’ll have to look into that. I do recall it was two parts.”

“Un momento, per piacere.” With

“Remember, remember, September, October, November Decem…That was almost 20 years ago.”

“That it was due in October of 2023 right around the war time.” That’s Right,” Said Luca.

“Yes. Yes. Now I remember.”

“I was watching television. And in the News the first bomb dropped.”

“Yes!”

“A revolution in my art took place.”

“I abandoned the book after discovering my real passion in the blink of an eye.”

I likely have the notes and research in my laptop, maybe a demo copy at home.

Hamil and Lisandra smile at each other.

“You didn’t finish the book?”

“I did, It’s done, just not formally.”

“We need as much information on the illness as we can get. Any type of chemistry, genetics, history.”

“Lisandra dear, what’s most enchanting of the Sacred Sickness is its godly dna. Though, to call it a sickness over a gift is perhaps my greatest criticism of this blessing. Imagine living with a condition created by the gods. Divinity coursing through your veins,” Luca fans himself, “oh goodness gracious sacra benedictio. I fluster just thinking about it.”

“There are ties to Socrates, Julius Caesar, Cambyses, Alexander the Great, Jesus of Nazareth to this day there are those around us who likely also suffer, but remain silent. Given the horrors of the disease I wouldn’t blame them for taking their own lives.”

“By yesteryear’s standards they are also known as oracles, seers, prophets. Today,

What they see is the suffering of the past and the future, and embody all of it in the present. The older folk represent the pain of the past, which still hurts today, the suffering of the children is the suffering of the future, and the pain the accursed suffer is meant to attract apostles, companions in their harrowing journey like those of Jesus.”

Lisandra and Hamil look at each other wide-eyed.

As Luca explains the Sacred Sickness, he notices Hamil’s face flushing.

Are you ok, Hamil? Looks like you can use some water or alcohol.

Luca calls for Damyan.

“Bring some cups, wine and water. Hamil blurts out.”

“Is there a cure Hamil asks nervously.”

“A cure for what? Luca squints. The only cure I can think of is a small drink invented by Abbe Faria, in The Count of Monte Cristo. Luca laughs

“But who would want such a cure? Imagine being an essence of divinity. An oracle cursed and blessed bound to become something revolutionary. Prophetic!”

Hamil lets out a deep sigh.

Lisandra rubs Hamil’s arm to comfort him.

Luca furrows his eyebrows.

“Oh, Why so glum?”

“Did I not answer your question?”

“No. We just have a ton of work ahead of us.” Says Lisandra.

Luca pauses to examine them both closely.

“We should get going.” Says Lisandra

As Lisandra and Hamil turn to leave the studio, an aching suspicion takes hold of Luca.

“But I wonder, Lisandra, you could have just called me over the phone to talk about this. You came to New York for a question? One measly question”

“We have other business here too, nothing too exciting. And you have no phone number. Lisandra smiles.”

“Right.” Says Luca with disappointment.

“Can I invite you to dinner. I own a cozy restaurant not too far from, they make the greatest… “

“no thank you Luca, Lisandra interrupts, but it was nice seeing you.”

“Right.” Says Luca disappointed again.

Hamil and Lisandra further approach the exit.

Just before leaving Luca yells out.

“Wait, wait, wait one minute.

Hamil and Lisandra stop.

“I think I know of a cure!” Luca says.

“I just ignored it to affirm my prejudice.”

“Come visit my home, I have more information than you could ever want.”

“I don’t do much writing anymore. Writing requires a little too much reasoning. A sentence must follow a formula to be sensible. If it makes no sense then people will not read it. I find myself in a quandary. A quandary of logic. True and False is the language of man, not the language of gods. It is by abolishing the language of my creative impulses, that I could spread my wings rise beyond.

Hamil feels a magnetic connection with Luca. Often this desire to undo his mental wiring. “

Lisandra looks on reluctantly, but Hamil coaxes Lisandra to go with his eyes.

Sure, let’s go says Lisandra.

“Perfetto.” Celebrates Luca.

“Damyan, Bello, can you help these young ones while I clean up here.”

“Hamil and Lisandra please have a seat outside on the couch, it’s much more comfortable.”

“As Hamil and Lisandra step out of Luca’s office, he drags the Unfinished Caravaggio back into his vault.”

From his desk, he pulls out two small-frame revolvers and places them into his concealed carry holsters, and a dagger in a knife sleeve right above his boot.

The Walk of Truth.

Luca’s Apartment

Luca, Hamil, and Lisandra step out of the studio building.

“My apartment is a few blocks from here. We can walk through Sherwood Park and be there quicker than a drive.”

As Luca steps closer he spreads his arms out stopping Lisandra and Hamil.

“Wait. Wait. Wait. Should we? Luca says to himself pausing in.

“Should we what?” asks Hamil.

Luca taps the guns settled into his holsters.

“We’ll be fine,” says Luca.

“I feel a bit reluctant to walk with others by my side. A sense of responsibility knaws at me.

As they step into the park, A sweaty, shirtless raggedy old man runs up to Lisandra and knocks her back.

“Can I get a dollar for food?” he begs.

Lisandra sticks her hand in her right pocket.

“No, stop Liss…” Luca cries.

The beggar stares at Lisandra in the eyes,

“Thank you miss. Thank you.”

Luca notices from the corner of his eyes two men rise from a bench not far from them. Their eyes gazing at Lisandra’s pocket like hungry wolves, Luca jumps in front of the thieves, pulls out two guns from his pocket, and shoots up into the sky.

Hamil and Lisandra jump back.

All three of the men run away ducking and weaving in the process.

“Run Filth Run. To rob a beautiful princess like Lisandra thou art shameless”

“Jesus Christ, Luca.” Says Lisandra her heart pounding.

Luca locks his guns and puts them back in his holster.

“The guilty run, the innocent stand.” Says Luca angrily.

Luca spits on the ground.

“All criminals scurry away like rats when they hear a gunshot. They know one day a bullet is meant to take their lives.”

“while the innocent have no fear, for they have nothing to hide from, not even death and the afterlife.”

“I will say, though, they quickly identified a foreigner. Only foreigners believe something can be bought with a dollar in New York. Beautiful theft looks more like the African Bushman salting a baboon’s palate to find a water source in a desert–that is true beautiful theft and cunning.”

“I embrace pure, kindly intelligent beggars who have adjusted for inflation. To them I always pay alms.”

“But these thieves today I can smell their schemes a mile away. I’ve known them since childhood, I could sense a deceiver but never cared much to expose him. Sadly, you are left watching a fool relish in his petty connivance. In cases like these, why pretend to be clever? You’ve insulted the fine art of cunning and poorly mimicked the devil’s hiss. At most, you are a toxic reptile, whose highest honor is to be flung into the swamps for pity of nature.”

“Back there, that elderly bloke who initially sought to rob you is another reminder of worthless humanity. Elders are revered for their wisdom, until they undermine their vintage worth.”

“Violence and theft in New York has multiplied. Living in New York, has mercilessly dissolved any act of meritless respect and charity. One minute, you are strolling down the streets of Manhattan disgusted to see a pregnant woman spat upon, only to find out the next minute that she deserves much worse.”

“That’s terrible, says Lisandra.

“Terribly true.” Luca laughs.

“Whatever Christianity is living inside of me has evaporated. It has become something deeper, something much healthier for the spirit.”

What is that? Asks Lisandra

“Beauty.” Says Luca.

“The only thing really sacred in this world is beauty.

“One would say, beauty is subjective, but I’d argue not for the most part. You can find many beautiful things in the world, otherwise considered an abomination. Surely, Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, usually the work of nature and at the same time objective wherever there is a goal meant for beauty.”

As Luca reaches the end of the park, he hits the walk button on the crosswalk, Right before reaching Luca’s apartment, Luca hears a violin playing.

“Bello! Follow me.”

Luca stops in front of a tattered sy

Street violinist playing in the streets.

“In the rotten, sallow, sandy grime of New York city streets, there is a beautiful creature often confused with a smelly skunk upon first glance.”

Luca, Hamil, and Lisandra walk over to the young artist.

“Brilliant young boy, Let’s hear Adagio for strings.”

“The boy closes his eyes and places his head on the chin rest of the violin, and settles his dirty calloused fingers on the strings. As he plays, a tear forms a few seconds into the song.”

“Artists who weep have, at some point, been tormented, or tormented themselves to elicit the expression of tragedy. A tragedy like adagio for strings is impossible to play without the right amount of trauma.” Says Luca.

A quarter way into the song, Luca pulls out a wad of hundred-dollar bills, and a business card and dumps it all into the violin case sitting in front of the boy.

The violinist holds his eyes closed unbothered by the sound of money trickling into his case.

“That’s more than a thousand dollars, says Lisandra.”

“Never count money. A profane use of the mind to count money especially in the part of the brain meant for creativity. Imagine using you head like a cash register.”

Luca pulls more cash out of his pocket and throws another wad in the violin case.

They take a few steps over to Luca’s large condominium.

Luca’s Apartment

The Haircut of Truth

“To control the ins-and-outs of my life, I hired a group of software engineers to design an app for me and only me, such that only I can access its technology.”

Luca pulls out his smartphone in a golden case, unlocks his phone, and presses down on an app. It instantly opens a scanner in front of the door.

Luca presses his fingerprint down on the scanner illuminating a pad that unlocks a retinal scanner for his eyes. He places another finger on the door. Then completely unlocks the door.

Before he enters, tells to wait right before the door.

“Wait a moment here.” Luca closes the door leaving just a needle-width opening.

“Chopping my fingers off is easy, but not my eyes.”

“I’d never let anyone take my eyes from me.”

“but if someone is willing to kill me, and ri0 my eyes out to steal my work then, I guess I can die satisfied to know my work is to die for.

Luca Laughs.

“All in Jest my brilliant souls.”

“Come in both of you,” says Luca, and be careful.

Hamil and Lisandra tiptoe into Luca’s pitch-black apartment.

“One.

Two.

Three.”

Luca flips the switch, a spotlight illuminates a painting on an easel…

BREAKING NEWS:

CNN Oct 27, 2023

A War Report:

“This is Paula Dowd, reporting from Cape Grecco beach in Cyprus, where fisherman Alil Roma says he found a young girl swimming in from the coast of Gaza.”

Luca jumps up off the couch. Inches toward the television screen.

“Shut your mouth Damyan and turn the volume up quickly,”

“What did I say?”… Damyan replies confusedly.

“Chop, Chop, you elegant slug.” Luca nudges him with his hand. Damyan grabs the remote and increases the volume on the television screen.

“…She was all bruised up and swam miles to sea. Alil the fisherman says he saw her bobbing the water, while fishing off the coast of Isla Varen.”

“By the grace of god, this girl survived, and what unimaginable pain for her.”

“Luca’s eyes begin to swell with tears. He glares at the television screen, pausing onto the image of Alil.

“Damyan, run and get me a bucket of boiling water and salt.

Luca Pauses.

Wait, the powerful type of salt. The ones they use to melt snow. Hurry Now. Go Run. I have a vision.”

“I don’t get it. Why do you need boiled water and snow melt. It’s fall.”

“Just do it.” Luca looks at Damyan angrily.

Damyan stares in confusion.

“Run! Before it’s too late for you!” Luca waves his fist at Damyan furiously.

Damyan sprints down the flight of steps, hopping past two and three at a time.

“Sweaty and tired, he falls upon the building janitor.”

“I need a bucket and some salt.”

“What for?” Asks the Janitor.

Damyan looks at his watch anxiously.

“Oh for fucks sake,”

Damyan pulls out a strap of cash and hands a hundred dollar bill over to the janitor,

“Just get it.”

The Janitor grabs the hundred dollars and rushes to the basement.

As Hamil stares at his watch impatiently, Janitor passes the bucket to Damyan. Damyan snatches the bucket then runs off to the elevator, but it looks to be moving slower.

Damyan anxiously stares at his watch, tapping his feet. He snatches the bucket and salt, and runs over to the studio, out of breath.

“Now Boil the water, and let the salt melt. Let it stand before my feet.” Luca orders.

Damyan hesitates. “For what?” he asks.

“Luca grinds his teeth furiously.”

“To drown you,” Luca snaps

Ask me another question and you’re fired from my life.”

Damyan’s heart pounds in his chest. He could feel the intensity of Luca’s fury.

A few minutes after Damyan melts the salt water into the bucket, he tiptoes back from the stove area towards Luca who is frozen still staring at the paused television screen.

Damyan quietly leaves the bucket on the floor next to Luca.

Luca lifts the bucket and places it on a small desk in his studio.

“Now shush. Damyan.”

“I never said anything… Damayan angrily whispers to himself.

Luca rolls up the sleeve of his right hand, unlocks a drawer and pulls out a large sharp knife, never used before.”

“Damyan’s heart starts pounding.”

“What’s going on” Says Damyan.

Luca grabs the knife, and slashes three lines across his wrist.

Out gushes blood.

“Luca” Damyan wails out, and rushes out of the room to dial emergency.

Luca dips his mutilated wrists into the bucket of melted salt water, the water quickly turns into a pool of red.

Luca moans a pain, as his skin sizzles his nerves give way to a vision. The brightness of the room multiplies, a pain rises from his gut, and a powerful nausea from the sting bites into his heart.

Luca moans in pain then drops to the floor, spilling the bucket of blood on himself.

Luca’s Apartment

Stylish Interrogation

“…When I witnessed Lisandra’s pain and felt her horrendous tragedy coursing through my own veins, I rushed to Cyprus, hoping Alil could capture her essence. I offered him a blank check for the chance to see her, to photograph her, and paint her portrait. Alil said it is more important to share her story and to make sure it becomes a reminder of the horrors in the world. It became an instant Mona Lisa. Nearly all my wealth I owe to Lisandra’s tragedy. It sounds terrible in retrospect, but we all know who the real enemies are.”

“Wait one moment” says, Luca

Luca walks into his bedroom and pulls out a small stool resembling a barber’s chair.

“Come sit here.” Says Luca.

Hamil walks over and sits on the stool.

Luca walks back into his room and returns with two sprays, one full of water, and another full of hair spray.

“Hair serves as a curtain to the stage of your eyes, lips, and nose. They are the Teatro La Fenice or the Palais Garnier. Our graceful drapes hover over a stage, teasing and elegrandizing.”

“Until at last the light bears down on your face. You are now the main attraction, the star, stage, and the actor. Your hair, in its silent eloquence, complements your unique identity, adding to the allure and charm that makes you the showcase.”

Luca starts snipping through Hamil’s hair. With these fingers of mine I will snip your hair into curtain layers and you will become something beautiful.

“I submit that maybe the greatest artists are those capable of expelling the genius of human creativity without committing some horrifying act of violence upon themselves. Vincent Van Gogh would agree with me. He lost an ear to accomplish immortality.”

“No doubt the memory of pain is the key to seeing a world in a way others dare not.”

“Rational thought yields me little in terms of creativity. The accomplishments worth noting I have achieved from stirring passions and desires within my heart. Madness.

“I choose to believe what I want now. Aristotle and the ancient Egyptians believed that the origin of thought was the heart. To that I passionately assent. Any idea that doesn’t make your heart beat is not a thought worth thinking.”

Goethe said in Faust, “That which issues from the heart alone bends the heart of others to your own…” true in everything you do.”

Luca walks over to his bedroom and pulls out a large digital camera and snaps pictures of Hamil, his long hair now well-groomed and layered to perfection.

“Welp, you’re all done. Those scars I noticed are extremely thick and echo pain. I take it from your life’s harsh tumble and fumbles. Must be difficult to suffer the Sacred Sickness running through your veins?” Luca stares into Hamil’s eyes from the mirror.

“Tell me, what is the worst part of the illness? What makes you tear at your hair or weep in despair.”

“Hamil tries to hold his breath, to avoid answering, he looks at Lisandra she also looks flushed from Luca’s comment. Hamil’s face turns blue then blows out but at last, he can’t stand keeping his problem in and submits the truth.”

“It’s the gloomy eyes of the children who wait for punishment— those are the ones that sicken me the most, and theirs are the most memorable too.”

Lisandra is shocked by Luca’s speech.

“Oh come on, you can’t fool me. I knew back at the studio. No essence of tragedy can get past me. And let me guess, you plan to see Catalano.”

“How did you know?”

“I’m sorry to bring it out of you, but does that not feel better? When a powerful truth is suppressed for too long, it erupts a story without much effort. In each of us is a universe waiting to birth. Just as the origins of the universe was once a dot smaller than the dot made from the tip of a pen, immeasurable implosion and explosion birthed. “

“We have to meet with one of Alil’s friends.”

“You’re supposed to meet Catalano, at the Baptistry am I right?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll be happy to act a concierge. Damyan is my driver. I can have him here in a heartbeat.

As I promised, I’ll share with you all the knowledge I own on the Sacred Sickness.

While this thing boots up, can I get you both some wine?

“No thank you.” Says Lissandra.

Hamil.

“It’s an old bottle, one of a kind.”

What about water? Cigarettes?

Hamil and Lisandra refuse again.

“You are both missing out on life.

“I’ll be right back.”

Luca returns with a cup of wine. The laptop screen finally loads. He opens up his Word document An ancient plant stuffed in by they say Asclepios, the god of healing. “Mythical drugs.” “Precisely.”

Have you all heard of Hul Gil.

“No.”

There is an ancient Sumerian drug of divine.

“Fascinating that neither of you have heard of it. We actually still use Hul Gil to this day.

“In 3400 BC the Sumerians cultivated a little something called “Hul Gil.” Said to have divine and godly properties. The Sumerians passed it to the Assyrians and then to the Egyptians. Today the plant is known to us as “Opium” and is used to make all sorts of medical product.

“Trust me, I’ve gone through many types of Hul Gil.”

“Percocet? Doesn’t work on me.”

Luca, shakes his head, and blows and puff at his laptop.

“I don’t believe this is the same drug, though. This is not your typical opium seed.”

“One of the many gifts left for humanity, desecrated by him.”

“Reason. Trust no one who claims to be reasonable. They’ll find reason in their madness, but not in those of another.”

“You are the one who feels this sickness,

“You will always know more of its suffering, but I know the secrets of suffering itself.” Said Luca.”

“Metis the daughter of Oceanos devised a plan to help Zeus overthrow Cronos. She crafted a potent drug, the effects of which were irresistible and overpowering. This concoction, when consumed by Cronos, left him paralytic and vulnerable, which led Zeus and his allies to seize victory.”

Cronos was sent to tartarus.

“Sounds familiar. Ay?”

Luca opens up a panel in his apartment, behind it was a library hidden behind a wall. The abandoned room is full of book dust.

“Ha Choo” Sneezes Luca, then covers his nose with his arm.

“Ugh, I told you I hadn’t written in a while.”

Luca flips the switch on his wall on an air purifier.

“Since being here.”

“I’d like to welcome you to The Blood Artist’s writing bibliotech. Here I have books, scrolls, relics going back centuries.”

Luca walks over to his laptop, which was still open. Look how old this things his, Luca laughs.

“I hope it still works. Might take a while to update.”

Luca turns on the computer and turns over to Marvelous Maledictions book one.

I only published after finding my new passion in painting. I became much more successful as a painter.

“Who knew I had the painter’s touch. The last time I painted was grade school. Up until the end of high school, then college, I pursued writing.”

“You want richness and fame, you should go back to find your childhood passions.”

“Anything taught to you outside of your childhood toybox might not be as fun as it seems.”

“Was my career a waste. I wonder.”

“Here we go”

Luca opens up his word document.

SSicknesas EPUB

L through Z.

Sacred Sickness,

“Luca opens up a program called, digital library, clicks the form: Search in Local Database Only.”

Keyword, “healer, medicine, god, gods, medicine, drugs, divine.”

Search in: Homer’s Iliad, Pindar’s Odes, Pausanias, Hippocratic Corpus, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and Apollodorus.

“Luca’s eyes scans the digital database of his library.”

Luca takes a puff of his cigarette and blows it at his computer screen. Continues to scroll.

“Bingo! There we go. That’s our lead.”

The Divine Staff

Asclepius

Luca googles the image and pulls up the picture of a snake wrapped around a rod.

“Does it look familiar?” Asks Luca.

Hamil stares closely at the symbol,

“Yes! Yes it does. Unless I’m wrong it looks like the symbol doctor’s lab coats, insurance cards, and medical devices.”

Luca Laughs

“That’s right. But do you know the story behind the staff?”

Hamil squints at the image, “Actually, No.” Says Hamil,

“Barely,” says Lisandra disappointedly.

“Well then, a quick history lesson in Greek mythology.”

Luca clears his throat.

“This rod belongs to Asclepius, the god of medicine.”

“Asclepius is the love child of the sun god Apollo and Princess Coronis of Thessaly, though “love” might not be the way to describe those two. According to myth, Coronis was unfaithful to Apollo, engaging in an affair with Ischys, a mortal from the line of Eletus and Hippea. When Apollo discovered her betrayal over a human, he sent his twin sister Artemis to strike Coronis dead with divine arrows. At the time of her death, Princess Coronis was pregnant with Apollo’s son, Asclepius. The unborn child was rescued from her womb and entrusted to Chiron the Centaur, who raised him.”

“You both know who Chiron the Centaur is right?”

“I know a Centaur is half-man half horse.” Said Hamil.

“Yes, but Chiron was the centaur of centaurs, who taught the likes of Achilles, Hercules, and Peleus.”

“Recognizing Asclepius’s keen observational skills, Chiron taught him the art of healing. Asclepius learned the art so well that he could raise a centaur from the dead.”

“Asclepius avoided humanity as there was an animosity brewing between centaurs, gods, and humans. Asclepius felt an allegiance to the Centaurs from childbirth for obvious reasons.”

“Every night Asclepius would head out to the shore of the beach on the island of Kos and gaze at the stars in search of inspiration.”

“One night Asclepius heard a moaning while deep in meditation.”

“According to the babylonian oracles, humans without something of depth coming from their voices mostly sound like crickets or snorting pigs. Anything of depth must come from the soul. This time he heard a crying that came directly from the soul.”

“What was this sound Asclepius heard?”

“It was Doriana wife of Hippocrates, screaming in anguish. At the time, Hippocrates’s wife, Doriana was suffering a painful disease known as Tartarus-rot, said to crawled out from the wells of the underworld.

Asclepius followed the sound of the voice leading him into the cottage where Doriana lay suffering on the bed. When at last he stood before her, A vision instantly formed. The vision was his mother dying on the lake Baebia in Thessaly, with one arrow puncturing her heart and another puncturing her head. It was the first time he had a vision.”

As the vision faded, Asclepius quickly stabbed Doriana on her neck to let a stream of blood spill out.

A stream of black globules stream, he quickly rushed outside to find a snake. Once found he quickly brought it back and let it bite her arm. The poison brought her peace.

“When Doriana woke from her deep sleep, she cried in disbelief. Asclepius cured Doriana of Tartarus rot, which had been killing many in the Island of Kos and Greece. It had been unleashed ”

Moved by the miracle he seemingly performed, she slid off the bed and started kissing Asclepius’s feet.

Asclepius, bothered by his vision, left to consult Chiro the Centaur over this vision. Chiro told him what Apollo and Artemis had done.”

Ascelpius spent days brooding on the island of Kos, even mourning, as the vision of his mother’s death was now an eternal part of him.

Asclepius fell in love with Doriana and had a child with her.

Out of Jealousy Hippocrates found a temple of Zeus after turmoil.

He was killed by Zeus for plotting a human for fear that he might reveal the healing secrets of the gods to humanity, including resurrection.

Hippocrates’s Jealousy led him to hide the origin of all the medical language, making

The Origin of The Temple and Church

Bloodline Wealth

“It was in total that Lavarenti, Alil, and Catalano, who founded this church, invested in the plot. This cost them hundreds of millions of dollars or even billions.

“How did those three get all that money?”

“Luca starts researching each of them.”

“All three of those men are descendants of kings. But where did Lavarenti, Alil, and Catalano, get all of this money? Alil, Lavarenti, and Catalano all boast direct genetic ties to kings: Alil descends from the Frankish, tracing his lineage back to Childeric the First. Lavarenti to Lorenzo de’ Medici, and Catalano is a descendant of Alfonso X of Castile.”

“No doubt these all have hereditary wealth beyond our wildest imaginations. Gold, Jewels, and above all land everywhere.”

Gluck

Captain Gernot Meinhardt

Hamil stares at the boat’s chipping paint. As the boat turns on a pop and snap, followed by a strong scent of oil fumes.

“I can’t tell if the scent is coming from the Hudson River or your old boat, says Luca, standing at the bow like a statue letting the wind blow his hair back.”

A small wave splashes on the floor of the boat.

“Glück?” Hamil smiles and shrugs his shoulders.”

The Captain raises his chin.

Another tight swerve of the boat sends a bucket mop and a bag straight overboard and water gushes all over.

“You know, It won’t be long before this small boat meets the bottom of the river.” Says Luca

“The man who built this ship willed her never to sink. One day she will be sent to the scrap yards, her skin and bones torn to shreds, and her name lost forever – this will be her doom, but she will never drown in the river.”

The New Religion

Arrival

Gluck steers into the harbor of the Baptistry.

“It’s an honor to meet all of you,” says Father Catalano standing at the entrance of The Baptistry.

Luca’s eyes, dart around,

“This is the most beautiful religious structure I’ve ever seen, it dwarfs the Basilica of Sacré-Cœur’s soaring arches, marble stones, and courts and all of its and angels and saints. There is so much more here.”

Father Catalano, lights the baptistry, unraveling the statues of goddesses and gods.

“But how odd.” Luca stares.

“These places are usually covered in paintings and carvings of Christ and other catholic religious sculptures. There is something deliciously blasphemous here. What does it all mean, Padre.”

“Alil, Lavarenti and I have a grand vision: to unite humanity under a single religion and nationality for believers and non-believers. A syncretic that weaves together the fabric of the god, gods, and godless creating a matrix of spirituality and science that supersedes the wisdom of all other religions on this planet.

“I’m sure that was a focus too at some point. There is nothing new about religion, and it took the sword to move people once the concept came to light.”

Hamil recalls the conversation about the mosque in Hama.

Catalano, his voice fills with excitement, this is nothing new, said Catalano.

You can see examples of this in the statues of Hermanubis, Constantine’s divine Jesus, Sikhism, Santeria, or Pantheism.

Luca, Lisandra, and Hamil stand in awe. They believe that by creating this colossal religion, all conflicts plaguing the spirit of humanity will cease.

“Among those is a prophet and a godhead. A living embodiment of divinity?”

Catalano read aloud, “Someone who could bridge the gap between science and religion.” His eyes sparkle with the possibilities, envisioning a future. At the same time, something is missing from the equation. This vision requires something more substantial – a unifying figure that everyone could believe in.

Luca replies to Jesus of the 21st century.

“What is most important to a non-believer?

What are chemical substances that unite everyone in the Universe?

“Oxygen, Carbon, Hydrogen, and Nitrogen.”

“Not only does everyone have the same spirit, but also the same body. To be a religious one must hold these substances on earth as they hold a rosary, or tasbihs. A unity of the mind, body, and everything in the world: the spirit, the mind, the body are health within ourselves and in the sum of all the gods. The final syncretic.” Said Catalano.

The Scondimon

Angels

“Holy momma, what the hell is that? Says Luca, brushing his fingers over a 30-foot wing covered in pearly white scales.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the wing of the Scondimon.”

Catalano waves his fingers over them.

Scondimon wings are much like those of falcons and eagles, are designed for efficient flight. They feature specialized feathers: primary feathers at the tips generating thrust, secondary feathers near the body assist with lift, and tertiary feathers close to the base enhance stability. Coverts streamline the wing by concealing the bases of the larger feathers, while the alula facilitates maneuverability. The carpal joint, supported by the humerus, radius, and ulna bones, allows the wing to bend and fold. Collectively, these components ensure the wing’s grace and power in flight.

“Is the Scondimon some type of mythical bird or dinosaur. Luca Laughs”

Catalano smiles.

“The Scondimon is a type of man.”

“A man with wings.”

Lisandra and Hamil look at each other confusedly.

“Luca interrupts, let me just get this cleared up.

“Wings on men who fly, that’s impossible.”

“Is it so impossible, we once had tales.”

“You’ve seen these things over and over again just not in the flesh. They are a race of men similar to the Babylonian Anunnaki.”

Have you all heard of the “Anunnaki.”

“Yea, mythical creatures like nephilim only in religious fiction.

Catalano points at an old large carving of the Anunnaki.”

“Luca holds his chest, his heart pounds. He looks at his digital watch checking his heart rate tracker.”

“Why haven’t we heard of them father Catalano?” Asks Hamil.

“The knowledge of the Scondimon has been kept a secret.”

“Why?” Says Luca. If these are what you say they are, then fuck the lot of you for hiding it.

“For God’s sake,” unbelievable. With all the genetic testing, and marvels of science to understand this extinct creature. What if Lavarenti died and never shared this knowledge with anyone? The crime of withholding historical knowledge is as bad as murder in my opinion, says Luca hyperventilating.”

“Someone as wise as Lavarenti thinks far ahead of the implications of sharing knowledge. He believes some knowledge should be forbidden, Said Catalano.”

“Oh goodness, gracious, If there were ever a time to withhold knowledge for fear of people caring, this century would not be it,” said Luca.

“It still isn’t for many years, but Alil believes now is the time. He trusts all enough to be here, and so we move forward. This is for you two. Lisandra, and Hamil.”

“Lavarenti’s role was to be a Baptist priest of the new religion. Since he has gone missing, Alil is to absorb the role, but the difficulty for Alil is beyond his physical and mental capacity. It makes sense to take on his role, or what would have been his role, had he not left.

Hamil recalls Alil talking about the church of Hama, the connection between all the religions in one temple. Centuries of unity to be adopted into one man, and then onto the centuries of humanity’s beliefs.

“I think I get it,” Hamil says.

“Get what said Catalano.”

“Just a conversation I had with Alil in Syria of a Mosque of Hama.”

“It’s where we met.”

“Incredible coincidence.” Says Catalano, smiling at Hamil.

“Can we get back to the Winged men. Stories for want of returning to that childhood sandbox are best left for a therapist.” Says Luca hyperventilating.

Father Catalano unlocks a golden tabernacle sitting below the wing of the Scondimon and pulls out ancient papyrus scrolls and two notebooks.

“These ancient scrolls made their way to the Lavarenti bloodline after Alexander the Great invaded Egypt in 332 BC. When Alexander took power he was proclaimed Pharaoh and Amun Rah. The oracle who coronated Alexander, warned him that if he wanted to remain a god, he must be wary of the Ba, or winged beasts as they were known.”

“The history of these people living together isn’t mentioned, but according to Lavarenti, they lived peacefully together for centuries. There was peace among the Ba and the Egyptians until it became a general practice for the Egyptians to identify as a god or progeny of a god.”

“Lavarenti of course, chose to change the name of Ba to The Scondimon. To call them Ba, was to resurrect the degradation of these beings. Become an ancient Egyptian. Perhaps inherited trauma might lead to sinister consequences.

“A New History?” Said Luca?

“That’s right.” Said Catalano.”

“You’re plan to rewrite history.”

“To include these beings and their existence.” They indeed affected the world and continue to do so, and will in the future.”

Luca busts out laughing in nervous disbelief. His forehead sweating profusely as he imagines the world’s reaction.

“As the ancient pharaohs and upper classes grew in wealth and status, they sought greater power, the only other power greater than wealth and status all left above divine power, ever. What is above power and wealth? To be a god. Among all creatures of the world, how could humans call themselves gods or beloved by the gods with these beautiful majestic winged humans flying around?”

“Envious of the Scondimon, the Egyptians sought to emulate their extraordinary abilities. They constructed towering pyramids to reach heights beyond the Scondimon flight. They stitched wings together from the skin of bulls, a desperate attempt to soar through the skies, but the most coveted trait of the Scondimon was their power of rejuvenation. The Scondimon possessed the ability to renew their health and vitality, and seemingly never age in beauty. Some showing signs of immortality. With the ancients crafting mummification. They hoped through meticulous preservation, they too could achieve the Scondimon’s superior healing, beauty, long life. While the Ancient Egyptians perpetually failed. The peace between them at last snapped.”

“The Ancient Egyptian army captured a Scondimon one day as it rested high above on its perch seeking to learn about its body, but ultimately led to torture and kill but that was not an easy. Thw Scondimon have thick skin. Made it impossible to harm them with any blunt object made by man. One day, a snake slithered into the dungeon. Noticing the Scondimon’s unease, they seized the opportunity to exploit this newfound fear. They mocked the Scondmion mercilessly. After ending their sadistic taunting they forced the cobra to bite the Scondimon, and almost instantly, its jaw dropped, shriveled up, and died like a flower in fire.”

“When news of the Scondimon’s execution reached the pharaoh. He commanded his army to gather every snake to eradicate the Scondimon.”

“Father Catalano points to a statue of Egyptian royalty wearing the Uraeus or the Yaret. Wearing the snake as a crown brought fear into the heart of the peaceful Scondimon.”

With the help of the cobra, they were forced to fly far into the caves of an island. Ancient Egyptians used guards to chase them far into the sea.

The Pharaoh commanded an army to watch over the caves for eternity.

Descending into the depths of the caves, the Scondimon, who commanded the majority of women and children, discovered a colossal stone. They sealed the entrance with a stone, dubbing it the Vicose Stone. In an attempt to evade the Ancient Egyptians, they accidentally trapped themselves within the cave, surrounded by a myriad of reptiles and beasts. The deadly life forms within the cave by the Vicose Stone. It appeared to repel the creatures, leaving only the occasional hisses and screeches of bats echoing. The stone also provided a shield against the potentially lethal creatures that threatened the Scondimon.

None of the Scondimon would survive a plague if the great Vicose Stone moved an inch.

The Reaper

Ipzil DalCaver

The tragedy of the Scondimon doesn’t end with the bloody cleansing above the soil. After the Scondimon were chased into the caves, the insides were sealed shut. Left among each other to survive without the ability to use their wings as they were meant. The regeneration of their bodies relied heavily on the sunlight, which was the second generation of the scondimon.

The Vicose Stone's importance was deeply ingrained within Scondimon’s culture. From the earliest stages of childhood, The Scondimon were compelled to revere and fear this sacred artifact. Behind this stone was pure plague. The screeching scurrying of beasts was a regular anxiety. All theScondimon knew, one chip or crack meant doom.

“Those children showing apathy and rebellion, were brutalized with what left Vicose stone scars. But by this cruel fashion, these winged creatures meant to fly above survived in the caves.”

“Such was the importance of the Stone that from the earliest moment children could understand language, they were taught to both revere and fear it above all else.”

“Ipzil, son of Senazul Dal Caver, was a Scondimon who ignored the playful banter of his mother and father. Born a mute, he never spoke. His childhood was that of an aimless cloud floating from one room to the other. What interested him most were the torches and the sharp rocks at the highest parts of the cave.”

When at last it seemed ripe to understand the language, though he spoke none – Senazul prepared to tell him the story of the Vicose stone doing all in his power to scare Ipzil into reverence.

“If Ipzil did not feel the pain, then the lashings should be harder; But if he felt it, then this was suffering to another part of Ipzil’s body. The pain would be reaching his soul.”

“When it was time for Senazul to visit Ilrazeem and demonstrate the child’s deep reverence, he knew the severe consequences awaiting them if Ipzil failed. Not only would Ipzil be punished but so would Senazul and his wife. Ilrazeem’s judgment was harsh, often resulting in a brutal punishment of the entire family.”

Desperate to protect his family, Senazul concocted a lie. He told the priests that Ipzil revered the stone so much that even a glimpse of the stone struck him to silence.

The Ilrazeem decided to test Senazul’s claim by Ipzil before the shimmering stone. As he stood glaring, one of the high priests struck his face with a powerful blow that echoed in the caves.

Ipzil passed the test with a sigh of relief Senazul and his son traveled back home to celebrate with Ipzil’s mother Jenina.

For the following years, Ipzil did as any other Scondimon. There was no school, education was up to both Father and Mother.

Ipzil never enjoyed eating the fish instead he preferred worms and bugs crawling out of the walls. A sense of disgust lingered around him, by the Scondimon who knew him.

As Ipzil aged, Senazul caught Ipzil staring into nothing as though possessed. How insidious was this trance? Was Ipzil developing a deep religious connection with the Vicose Stone like the rest of the Scondimon, or was there something more sinister under this new obsession?

Senazul remained extra vigilant, keeping a close watch than ever before. Something told him that Ipzil was looking to destroy the stone. One day, Senazul caught Ipzil forging a sharp mining cleaver, the closer he got to finishing, the more he drooled in obsession.

Just before Ipzil rushed off the stone, Senazul tripped his son, grabbed the weapon, and broke it with his hands, then with his great wings, hovered to the top of the cave and burned him with a torch.

This brutal punishment, quickly sickened Senazul, as he felt remorse for the attack, but the burn had the opposite effect. It took a perverse form of pleasure. The touch of fire upon Ipzil’s skin evoked a peculiar sensation like tickling. Ipzil snatched the torch from his father and ran his hands over the flame, as though he were dipping it into a refreshing sprinkle of rain.

A sadomasochistic pleasure possessed Ipzil. Soon after Ipzil embarked on an exploration of his body seeking a means to inflict the type of pain of flame on himself.

“One day, Ipzil fell upon Eriah, a child sobbing over his father’s dead body in the Scondimon’s graveyard. He was praying for a resurrection. The Scondimon believed that the body could resurrect after three days by the grace of the Vicose Stone. If not, the body was incinerated and poured into a stream flowing into parts of the cave unknown.

“Tears shed for resurrection are not the same as those pouring over death. Somewhere in these tears of suffering, Ipzil knew it was the key to his ultimate pleasure. As much as he tried to skewer himself, the act seemed impossible. Eriah’s suffering was the suffering Ipzil craved. It was the key to Ipzil’s ultimate inner pleasure. And so he concocted a terrible idea.”

After years living in the cave alone, Ipzil returned home to find his mother resting in front of the home arranging

“Ipzil’s mother looked unto him heartbroken by the sight of his swollen and scarred face. His body was a canvas of self-inflicted wounds. A once handsome child, now a grotesque shedding creature, covered in ash and scars.

In his first gesture of love Ipzil sought to hold his mother for the first time, in what he saw from the boy who held his brother before he was sent to the bottoms of the caves.

Shocked by his wanting embrace she too spread her arms in what seemed their first true loving embrace. As Ipzil’s mother’s tears dried, the sound of weeping ended, Ipzil took his mother by the throat and choked her unto death.

Ipzil satiated his spiritual thirst for pleasure, finding an indescribable satisfaction that surpassed any physical burn mark. The pleasure leaving Ipzil with a sense of fulfillment that went beyond the realm of flesh.

When Senazul returned home from his duties, he was greeted by a foul odor. The odor emanated from the family temple. With a light foot, he tiptoed into the home, falling upon the gruesome image of Ipzil kneeling over his wife’s bloody and dissected body.

“Fury possessed Senazul. He toppled and struck Ipzil with all his might. However, Ipzil’s body and strength was impossible to overcome. Pain, again, brought him more pleasure than harm.

With the last bit of energy Senazul could muster, he dragged himself over to his wife and kissed her bloody lips until Ipzil crawled on top of his fatigued defeated father and took Senazul’s life in the same brutal manner.

With a new passion, Ipzil found the depth of purpose in murder and concluded that the key to a fulfilling life was now to kill in as morbid fashion as he could conjure, this was his new flame. Alas, Ipzil knew no amount of pleasure from a slaughter would ever compare to the violence he just committed towards his father and mother. He realized that killing them one by one was more work than fun. But were he to kill all the Scondimon, might that give him a similar thrill?"

Ipzil’s father Senazul was, perhaps, the only one who had the strength to no longer protect the Stone, he knew precisely how to answer the gruesome question. It was a great genocide. Genocide is the thrill. The priests who guarded the Stone had no chance to fend off Ipzil. Perhaps, among all the Scondimon, he was the strongest. When Ipzil reached the temple the Ilrazeem guardians were easily conquered.

With no challenges to his cruelty, Ipzil reached the holiest and most vulnerable port of the stone and with a great pick ax he swung into the stone with great force. Upon shattering the sound of bats and hisses squealed in from the gaping hole, then came tumbling the reptiles and insects.

The Scondimon villagers rushed out in horror to witness Ipzil relentlessly pounding the Vicose stone. Like a giant drum, it resonated in the caves, and when at last it fractured, the sickness unleashed a plague of grotesque beasts upon them. The descended upon the helpless villagers, their insatiable hunger for flesh evident as they tore into the scondimon, leaving a trail of carnage and terror in their wake.

Ipzil & Cyra

Love at First Sight

“Tragic story like that of Ipzil against all odds, survived the relentless attack. The epitome of injustice for a people who suffered enough at their own hands.

“If there were ever a creature who deserves to die, this Ipzil is certainly the first on the list, said Luca shaking his head in disbelief, but justice doesn’t work that way? Lisandra turns to Hamil with horror filled eyes.

Ipzil ended up surviving on the vilest life forms in the cave. He roamed alone, hunting rats, rodents, and bugs—any life form to quell his hunger. Through this relentless pursuit, he became the first Scondimon to venture out of the cave since the Ancient Egyptians had driven his kind into hiding.

For the first few months, Ipzil marveled at the sands of the beach, watching the sun rise and set. Even in the rain and thunder, he remained hypnotized by the elements. The memories of his life in the caves faded as every minute passed, and his face, once covered with bruises and burns, healed under the sun’s warmth. All of it changed his life. The pleasure of self-immolation and mutilation ended. Wanting to fly up into the clouds burned his spirit, but Ipzil cut off his wings in the caves.

One day, he heard a singing in the distance. Clutching a sharp rock, he prepared for a potential encounter with one of his own. But instead of seeing a long-winged Scondimon he detested, he saw Cyra, who radiated a healthy bronze tan from the warm sunlight. Auburn freckles sprinkled her cheeks, and her long, thick hair fell like soft, glossy silk. In contrast to the pale Scondimon, Cyra glowed with vitality, her soft skin kissed by the golden rays of the sun. She was the human form of this paradise.

Cyra was a young Persian woman who found her way onto the Island. After escaping the

After a few months, Ipzil knew that Cyra was to have children. He felt proud and eager to be a father. When the time came, Ipzil took Cyra to the beach where they first met and sat by her womb, awaiting the Infants' arrival. To his surprise, they weren’t having just one child, but three at once. His pride multiplied as he pulled each from Cyra’s womb.

Once the first cry struck, Ipzil cradled the newborn tenderly and placed him on a soft bed of fragrant flowers and leaves. The baby’s cries were a symphony of life, filling Ipzil’s heart. Beside the firstborn, a baby girl entered the world, her cries even more spirited than her siblings, further delighting Ipzil. He gently laid her next to her brother, marveling at the sweetness of their voices, reminiscent of their mother Cyra. Their skin sparkled with a tan like hers.

Cyra lay on her back, her gaze fixated on Ipzil. Feeling an inexplicable draw, she inched closer to him. Yet, as she approached, an unsettling feeling washed over her. Instinctively, she backed away from Ipzil, her fear growing as she watched him. The third child, lying still, seemed disaffected by the world around them.

However, before turning to welcome the final child, Ipzil noticed something unsettling. The third child had jet-black hair like him, and bore a striking resemblance to his father, Senazul—one eye blue in color and larger than the other.

A haunting déjà struck when the third child finally let out a cry. Ipzil’s eyes filled with love and tenderness. Yet, a terrible idea took hold of him. In a disturbing twist of imagination, he imagined that by consuming his children, he could somehow reach the depths of his womb.

Ipzil, consumed by his madness, took the newborn and bit the child, starting at the throat, draining it of life. He then turned to the young girl and did the same, still feeling no change within himself, he continued his horrific feast on his children.

Woozy With Hygeia

Time to go Home

Luca’s grumbling stomach marks the end of the history of the Scondimon. Each of them continues staring at the wings with awe.

“Humph.” Luca feels a reflex trying to spill out of his gut.

Hamil, Lisandra and Catalano, turn to Luca.

“Is there a toilet nearby?” Asks Luca, his face sweaty and pale. “I need to freshen up.”

“Yes, of course, said Catalano.”

“Right over there, at the door.”

“Thank you.”

Luca dashes down the corridor towards the restroom.

Hamil, Lisandra, and Catalano watch Luca run over dizzies.

Just as he opens the door, he lunges himself head over the toilet.

“Deep from Luca’s belly rose a stew of human bile and half-digested food. The vomit exploded and splattered making the toilet bubble like smoldering lava. A loud yell echoes through the hollow chambers.

“I hope he’s ok, says Lisandra.”

Luca sat on the floor of the large, lavish bathroom, polished in marble and gold.

Water trickles from running water spilling out the hands of Hygeia the goddess of health. Luca takes a sip and swishes the water then spits it back into the toilet.

Luca grows lachrymose as he stares into her mythical eyes. I’ve never felt so sick in the gut.

“I am so sorry Hygieia” Luca, kisses the perfectly carved marble of the statue.

Luca shakes his head then heads back to the group.

“I don’t know if I can stay here any longer. Maybe Lavarenti is right. Some stories should be forbidden. I feel my innards slithering around like a Yaret.For someone like me that is a rare thing.”

“Welcome to stay. Welcome to go.

As you please. Says Catalano.

“The convent of this place is underground.” Said Catalano.

“I’m definitely going back, said Luca. I need some dramamine or pepto, or both. I”

“We need to go back to the hotel. Wait for Alil. I fear someone might get a little too curious.”

“Right.”

“But if we were to come back alone, is it only through Captain Meinhardt?”

“For now. Yes.”

Lisandra agrees. I think we should come back when Alil arrives.”

Now we head back to New York then.

“Let’s”

“Alright.”

“Let’s get going.”

“It was a pleasure meeting you Father Catalano.”

“Likewise,” Catalan Bows.

“As Hamil, Lisandra, and Luca step back on board of Gluck. Yes, It’s time to return to New York and wait for Alil.”

“Once you come back, again, contact Captain Meinhardt. He’ll bring you over on the boat.”

Luca pulls out a cigarette in a case.

“Would you all like one.”

“Will do.”

“Damyan, I’ll need to go home at once.”

“You are welcome to stay at my studio.”

“If Damyan could just drop us off, at the hotel, we’d be glad to sit around.”

“Or you Luca, if you like, we can leave later. You look a little sick.

“There is something odd going on with that baptistry that doesn’t make sense. It makes all the sense but not.

“So that’s what Lavarenti and Alil did. What those three wanted to do was conquer the world with this syncretic.”

“Not unite the world, but to conquer the world three old men conquering the world. Sure. That’ll happen. Good luck.”

Just then he thinks about Hamil, and Lisandra… oh no.

“Oh no.”

“They have the wealth.”

“They have the Prophet.”

“But the conquerers…”

“Impossible.”

“They want to restart the Roman empire and seize power.”

“What good can come of unity, a religion for believers and nonbelievers? Inevitably they will fight over Somewhere there will be a rift. “Who is the greatest god? One man, one group over another.” Said, Luca.

“They erect a Baptist Temple empty. No one has gone in or out.

“The amount of wealth to build this thing.

“They are a suspicious bunch.

“Abandoned, but why?”

“You see this picture I painted?

“I can’t believe you hadn’t heard of it.”

“I had my war to fight at home.”

Lavarenti, Alil, and Catalano all three of them are descendants of royalty going back as far as the Holy Roman Empire.

“So eager was I to learn about this relationship between the three.

He sold vast wealth to build a Pisa Baptistry in NY. They will only censor… the world. Teach us to besmirch Madame bovary.”

“It’s a beautiful place, a waste of wealth.”

“As if that isn’t bad enough”

“Angels.”

“Luca laughs.”

“Where are these Angels? Supposed to be the guardian?”

“Flying in the clouds?’

“We know there is nothing there.

“Quite the opposite, they are living underground.”

“Holy shit.” Luca appears.

“These Angels, according to Lavarenti, are impossible to kill. Though some are mixed among us.”

“But we don’t know where he was.”

“I was born without the neurosis required for mystical thoughts but somehow bound to some level of destiny. To be born without the ability to believe, as others do, and speak destiny? Hypocrisy! There is nothing beautiful in hypocrisy.

Forbidden For a Reason

Luca Decapitates Damyan

Luca arrives at his apartment.

“Can you help me into the apartment Damyan Bello? I might need some Dramamine and I hate the scent of the cupboard.”

“Of course.” Says Damyan.

“They pull up in front of Luca’s studio apartment. Damyan parks the car in the parking lot of the studio, and helps Luca out of his car like he’d broken his foot.”

As they reach the door, Damyan rests Luca onto the couch.

Luca stands up

“Luca walks past the mirror of his apartment. A feeling of emptiness haunts the room. The lighting dull. The cheap statues he thought elegant, now miserable cheap, ugly. Soulless.

No work of art hanging in his studio joy home.

“The incomparable beauty will never be achieved by any hand. Might quite possibly be the most creative one of the century, or centuries.”

“Absolute Genius.” Says Luca, lying on his couch.

Luca, turns his head over to the painting of Lisandra. Holding his stomach in pain, he limps over to the painting of Lisandra and smiles, but it quickly turns a frown.

Luca kicks the painting knocking the easel over then stomps on it until it is torn and smashed to pieces.

“What have I done?”

He drops to his knees.

“What have I done.” He cries out.

“Cast myself into hellfire.” Says Luca.

“He lays down on the fragments of the painting on the floor.”

“My beautiful Sirene. Lisandra.”

“As rich as I am, I’ll never be able to afford a creation like the Baptistry, to paint it, is impossible.

What hellish stories, I’ve been told Damyan.

“Best if I had stayed in the car.”

Luca rushes to his bathroom, he hears in his head.

“Beware of false prophets who disguise their will as altruism. Those wielding power to manipulate, conquer, and subjugate. What fuels their appetite for conquest? A thirst for tyranny. The good wish to conquer and abolish suffering, an important part of my existence.”

“Friends? Hah! I warn, to a friend who offers nothing but trust–he is a peasant whose only currency is praise. A slight odor of dissent forms the clouds to hail an Insult. Either he will apologize and give alms yet again as one who praises, or he moves to find another friend, one who accepts praise and trust as gold.”

“In many cases, the scar from the lashing has bloodied him to a vulgar darkness. Who needs a bloodied dismembered peasant waving back? This old friend is now scarred or dismembered, praise is less meaningful.”

“What are you talking about?” Damyan replies confusedly.

“I loved you more than anyone else.”

“What are these powerful old men really up to?”

Luca begins to research Alil, Catalano and Lavarenti further.

What do they have in common besides being rich, powerful, and crazy?

The Bloodline. Each of them are related to each other as the Roman Empire.

Are these old men trying to conquer the world starting with America?

“but how.”

“Three old men. Religion… army.”

“They don’t have an army.”

“or do they?”

An army of angels.

“Luca gets flashbacks to his conversation with Catalano.

“Why?” These are fucking real wings of men. For god’s sake, unbelievable. We have genetic testing, and, marvelous science to understand this extinct creature…”

“my god. Those winged indestructible angels.”

“They aren’t extinct are they.”

“How could I be so foolish.”

He starts to remember.

But it has never been open to the public.

No one knows what happened to Lavarenti. I was quite interested in becoming a member of the congregation if there was one, but it is completely abandoned.

Catalano, I don’t know if you realize this but people have been squabbling over whose god is more powerful, logical, or truer for centuries, how is this any different?

“When they all stand before Zeus and Jesus there will a mutiny in the blink of an eye as opposed to centuries of hateful destruction.

“I can’t wait to get back home.”

Can You believe what would happen? One Ruler. One Pope. One Moral King? One religion. How long will that last without some type of tyranny?

You wish to resurrect a world of banned books. Index Librorum Prohibitorum, Who will deny the world of Madame Bovary?

But If I were to believe. And be part of a unity, what level of joy, and yet, what level of misery will change this What dissonance in belief and nonbelief is being concocted here?

Were it a religion for all and none. Does this make sense. It does and does not. It’s beautiful. It is a masterpiece of abomination I understand it. I want to become a part of it, but I know it won’t happen.

What would it be to be blasphemous under this new belief structure by Alil, Lavarenti, and Catalano? To be just as united, in the structure, such that the potency of this unity makes me a wise member of the structure.

The Genius within.

Oh goodness gracious.

What would it take to be cast out into the sea?

Another religion to overtake this one.

What religion? What kind of religion… with no followers?

Every person has their own religious identity. Destroying every god is what it seems to me now, not creating one under many.

These three don’t want to bring people together.

They want to kill god. Create a new one. But

That I cannot let them do.

Researching Luca searches the history of the three men.

They are not trying to do this noble thing. They plan to restart the Roman Empire. Certainly they need

NYU: Annabelle files

Annabelle in the Hall

“I am Professor Laurent Offray de La Mettrie, the great-granddaughter of the brilliant physician Julian Offray de La Mettrie, it is my honor to teach an in-depth course on my great-great grandfather’s work, L’homme Machine. Icons like Hippocrates, William Osler, and yes, even myself, shall be revered as heroes in an epic journey.

“A warning! My class, The Story of the Human Body, might challenge those who cling to comforting falsehoods. We will delve into dangerous truths and intimate questions that might feel like a desecration.”

Professor La Mettrie steps back, clearing the way for the students who wish to leave. Two students nervously rise and exit the classroom.

“Two spirits not yet ready to see the beauty within,” she mumbles.

“For the brave rest of you, please take out a piece of paper and a pen.

“I like to begin this course with a simple quiz. If you answer correctly, you will be on track for a perfect score. If not, your maximum will be 92.”

“It’s true, those with a better childhood education have a better chance of getting an A, but fear not the inequity. I have never had a student with a perfect score, nor one stuck at 92.

“Is everyone ready?”

“Yes,” the class responds in unison.

“Alright then. Once upon a time, it was believed the earth was flat. But we know this is false. Please write words and draw the correct shape of the earth.

“Write your name on the paper, answer the question, and draw the earth’s shape on the second half of the paper. When finished, fold and pass it forward."

“That’s it?” a student blurts out excitedly.

“Shockingly easy, isn’t it?”

The class snickers as they scribble their answers.

“So much confidence in this room,” the professor remarks, causing another round of laughter.

“Pass the papers forward when you’re done. Are all the papers folded and on my desk?” She looks around.

The class looks around and concurs.

“Excellent.”

The professor turns to a student sitting in the front row.

“Mademoiselle, what is your name?”

“My name is Julia”

“Julia, I caught you peeking at your mate’s answer for a question a child should know.”

The professor walks over to and uncovers an anatomical skeleton with shifting eyes.

“Julia, you will be under the strict vigilance of Herman von Helmholtz. He will be my eyes, and if you are suspicious, he will turn his gaze to you. Cheat again, and you will see him in your nightmares."

Julia’s face flushes with embarrassment.

The professor spreads the papers out on the table like playing cards and pulls out a red pen.

“Jonah, please raise your hand.”

Jonah smiles and raises his hand, winking at the professor.

The professor winks back and draws a red X on his paper.

Jonah’s mouth drops and his eyes widen. “What? How?” he exclaims, his face reddening.

A classmate next to him laughs.

“What’s so funny?” the professor asks.

“It’s just funny. I mean, who gets the shape of the earth wrong?”

“And what is your name?”

“I am Jacques, like Jacques Cousteau, the deep-sea diver.”

“Parlez-vous français, Jacques?”

“No, Parlez-vous I don’t.”

“Then you are Jack, not Jacques, and I will mark a big X on your paper.”

“Wait a minute, did I get an X because I laughed at Jonah?”

“No. You got an X because your answer is wrong.”

Jonah laughs at Jacques.

“A perfectly justified mark,” Professor La Mettrie comments.

“And you, you must be Jenaveve. Your pink ink and bubbly hearts complement that lovely dress.”

Jenaveve takes a deep breath, gulps the air, and fans her face with her hand.

“Jenaveve, fear not a wrong X mark. Failure is critical to success, and it’s best to commit the mistake within the first few minutes of any task.”

The professor marks an X on her paper.

“Alejandro, raise your hand.”

“Yes, Professor.”

“Hablas español?”

“Umm, sí, profesora.”

“Es un placer, Alejandro.”

The professor marks an X on his paper.

“Actually, two X’s because you didn’t connect the figure.”

Alejandro drops his head on the desk. “Shit…”

“Please hold your profanity for more challenging moments. The more you use them, the less frustration they can carry out of your soul. “

The professor puts down her red pen. “I can’t believe it,” she says, staring at the papers.

Professor La Mettrie struggles to open a desk drawer. “It’s jammed. I haven’t opened this drawer in a long time.”

She clears the dust from her desk and pulls out a blue pen. She marks a check on one of the papers.

“Perfect. Only one correct answer in the history of this course thus far.”

The entire class looks at each other and turns to the last student.

“Annabelle Sheene, can you please stand up?”

Annabelle stands and bows to her classmates.

“Tell the class the true shape of the earth.”

“The earth is an ellipsoid,” answers Annabelle.

Jonah jumps up from his chair. “It’s pretty much the same thing, or I’m sure the class meant it,” he protests.

“Is Jenaveve’s circle an ellipsoid?”

“No.”

“What about Alejandro’s curl? That which he calls a circle”

“No.”

“Is a triangle a circle?”

“No.”

Well then I’ve proved you all wrong.

Jonah grumbles as he drops back into his chair.

“How did you come to know the earth’s shape?” the professor asks Annabelle.

“It was never taught to me as anything other than an ellipsoid,” she replies.

Professor La Mettrie raises Annabelle’s paper. “Do you see, children, the word you wrote on your paper became the image you drew? From brain to hand to paper can either be true or false. To most of you, it was false and yet, in your mind for most of your life, thought to be true.”

“For the sake of medical education, a digital picture of man’s body is the aim I hope to convey. As close as one can get to a picture-perfect image.

“And that, children, marks the end of our class and the beginning, I hope, I taught you a lesson on precision.”

Just as the students stepped out the door,

Hamil runs into the classroom late. His hair is covered in dust bunnies.

“Am I late for class?”

“Yes. Super Late” Hamil looks at his watch. I thought this class was 75 minutes long.”

“Late is late.”

“Damn it.”

“Can I go over what I missed In another class?”

“We can go over it now.”

“Oh.” Hamil

“Ok.”

Annabelle stares on charmed by the messy, scraggly Hamil, who ran into the room. She slowly makes her way by the door.

“Do you have a pen on you?”

“Hamil rummages through his bag,”

“No, I must have dropped it.”

Hamil gets a flashback to himself in the janitor’s room sitting in an empty IT room.

“I look at you and sense you’ll be the student I unjustly vent my frustrations on. Are you sure you want to be here?”

“Yes, of course.”

Annabelle walks backward into the class.

“He can use my pen.”

“Thank you so much.”

She slowly approaches the doorway, listening to the conversation between Hamil and the professor leaving.

“You also don’t have a piece of paper. Do you?”

“No, I don’t. Sorry.”

“Annabelle steps back and opens up her notebook. You can have a piece of my paper.”

Thank you so much, again. Hamil too stressed by the moment, lacks the

Annabelle sits outside of the classroom, her heart pounding as thoughts of Hamil being in her class make her flutter as love at first sight seems to have possessed her.

As Annabelle stares dumbfounded as she stares at Hamil with eyes of affection.

Professor La Mettrie notices Annabelle’s crush.

“Hamil stop. Come back in the room. Don’t forget to thank Annabelle.”

“Where is that hauntingly beautiful music coming from?”

“It is the monks of our abbey,” Hamil replies, standing at the edge of the auditorium. The soft notes float through the air, wrapping around. “I love hearing them from the top bench—my choice to be a divinity student is the right one. We can listen to them best from the church balcony. Come with me, Cristian.”

As they make their way to the balcony, Hamil marvels at the near-empty hall. “I can’t believe so few come to listen.”

“In this case, none,” Hamil replies with a hint of melancholy. “Quick, quick! They begin Verdi’s ‘Dies Irae’ soon.”

Cristian’s eyes light up with excitement. “It’s at once haunting and peaceful. Everyone carries a tragedy in their heart. Most people run from sorrow, so they always feel exhausted. But if you nurture a mellow heart, it will treat you better. It will impregnate you with a catharsis bearing fruit in all things you do.”

“I haven’t learned Latin yet, but when I do, I’ll sing along with the brothers,” Hamil said his voice.

“I understand Latin. I can translate for you,” Cristiano offered, joining them.

“That would be beautiful. Thank you,” Hamil replies.

Christopher pulled out a pen and paper, handing it to Hamil. Hamil took a page from an old Bible on the pew and rested the notebook on his leg for both him and Cristian to see. Christopher began to translate:

“That day is a day of wrath,

The world will break into ashes.

Witness David and Sybil.”

Hamil stares at the quote, feeling an inexplicable shiver run down his spine.

“How a tremor is to come

All will be overrun.”

Hamil’s face groans pale as the song continues. “Are you okay, Hamil?” Christopher waves his hand in front of Hamil’s face.

“Death and nature will be stunned…

Cum resurget creatura,

Quantus tremor est futurus…”

Hamil drops the pen and notebook. The music drowns out the world around him. Muffled chanting grows louder, seeping through the walls.

“Hamil, what are you looking at?” Cristian whispers, but Hamil’s eyes fixate on the university plaza. Cristian waves his hands in front of Hamil’s face. “Hamil. Can you hear me?”

Hamil shoves Cristian aside. He opens the window, revealing the grand cobblestone rotunda surrounding the church. Shadows of rushing people called his name. He started sweating and panting, his lips moving without sound as the crowd chanted:

“Princeps di la sanguis shed

Princeps di la putris dead

Principes de la fractis head

Princeps di la mortis est”

Hamil wakes up surrounded by students on the green, below the church.

“What the hell happened?”

“You fell off the top balcony.”

“Oh.”

Hamil stands up, wincing in pain.

He dusts of grass from his sweater.

“Oh?”

“Just Oh”

“I’ll be fine.” Says Hamil.

“You literally fell off the tip.”

“You should really go to the hospital.”

“I’m fine. Just back off.”

An group of Emt, rush over to Hamil.”

“Let’s get you over to the Hospital.”

“No.”

“Come on.”

“I said No.”

Hamil winces then heads over to his dormitory.”

Cristian, stands by Hamil,

“Really. I know you are.”

“You were speaking nonsense, Hamil,” Cristian said, concern evident in his voice.

“What happened?” Hamil asked, disoriented.

“You jumped off the cathedral balcony onto the grounds.”

“Jumped off?” Hamil repeated, incredulous. “That’s what everyone is saying. I didn’t jump off. I was pulled.”

“All those who watched you on the ledge saw you jump. Cristian and others below saw it.”

“I can’t believe it. I saw a mob of people. They were screaming. At the window.”

Cristian recounted what happened.

“We were listening to the music when you started staring out of the balcony. You mumbled something odd. Even on the ground, you kept mumbling before collapsing. It seemed like you were talking to people. While translating the monks' song, something went wrong. You lost the words.”

It's nothing brother.

“You suffer from sleepwalking Or something like it.”

“Yea that’s it.”

“I understand.”

Hamil, would you be interested in being roommates for the school year?

I think it’ll be fun.

It doesn’t look like you’ve tumbled off of towers more than once. I see it in you.

Maybe I can be around.

“Watch your back.”

“Make sure you don’t find yourself falling off of roofs.”

“and you can just be there for me.”

“What’s wrong with you.”

“I love man more than they say I should.”

“You love man.”

“Nothing wrong with loving mankind.”

“That’s not a bad thing. I personally hate men. I think men are putrid creatures.” Most of the time, I look in the mirror and hate myself.”

Cristian laughs

“The world needs more love and brotherhood.”

“Precisely.”

“Oh, Hamil

“That’s not something you need to worry about. Well, I mean, You shouldn’t”

“I know but the world isn’t as tolerant as it was.”

“Yea, I mean. Look at you.”

You look like you can knock a couple of foes over, I can never do so, as a man of god.

“I’d never want to see it happen, but even the crucifix can dispel evil.”

“You were bullied growing up.”

“I am still bullied.”

“I am content after talking to god at twilight. It helps, but is lonely when you cry out, and he doesn’t say a word.

Majority of my life, I’ve been alone.

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Don’t be, there are those who suffer more than I do.”

“Hamil pulls out his crucifix.”

“Certainly, look here.” “And here.” Cristiano puts his hands over the large cut on Hamil’s chest.

“I’ve had a ton of problem making friends here.”

“And you are pretty much the only one who has talked to me this long.”

Hamil smiles, I’d live to be your roommate cristian.

Lavarenti

A Poem

“Holiest vicar! A Seraph with golden wings!”

“Greatest Papato on the balcony of kings!”

“Bring forth the savior! Bring forth our leader!”

A chanting so loud it nearly wakened Saint Peter.

Where in his tomb sleeping,

He heard the world cheering.

But in my ear hearing,

Another false prophet

Another king to the people

But no vision or spirit did I ever see,

Love by the people is pure veneration,

My ode to their health is their celebration.

Yet there I submit to the devil’s pride.

To wear the mantle of a wise Pope I stand,

Yet wisdom alone won’t heal our troubled land.

A healer, philosopher, bearing salvation’s keys,

In suffering’s abyss, far deeper than the seas.

The final prophet divine,

Is born in agony’s twine.

Wisdom reigns in my thoughts, yet silence in my speech,

Destiny and art intertwine, a lesson to teach.

Not the holiest Pope, father to the masses grand,

But a father to the abandoned, left in the sand.

By birth forsaken, by my hands let go,

A journey I embark on, a path unknown.

Who am I to claim, never to fully see,

The devil’s whispers, the man I cannot be.

A riddle of destiny, a seed to sow,

No man’s birth, no one bound to know.

Yet now I stand, embracing my fate,

The true king of suffering, hold’s key to the gate

Cuts-NonBelief Lie, How far, Agbatana, Poem AnaSpeech

When the sorrow accumulates, one cannot sleep.

Even in writing, it’s best to wrap your thoughts in a song. Have your words float around with wings than be dumped into a bin, or forgotten like our corpses when we die. We like to believe that our memory will live on, but it will not.

For some among you, it may be perceived as a sacrilege, a desecration of wholesome beliefs, but that is what we all need. Sacrilege of the greatest literary type.

How far I’ve gone to go beyond, and how far I’ve regressed to be both true and false at once.”

“The language puzzles, The metaphysical mind games, and The self-abnegation.” Still no sign of the religious neurosis.”

Just as there are many still waiting for the end of their lives, I am still preparing for birth.

If you truly embody the essence of our epoch, then within the depths of your soul resides the collective suffering of the past, present, and future. Your visions, passed down through generations, carry the weight of ancestral pain. The anguish endured by the children today foretells the struggles that await the generations yet to come. They are your children’s generation. Moreover, the pain you experience in your physical being serves as a reminder of the present-day suffering that exists.

Who knows at that age, but the questions. For someone like me who thought death was on his stoop, why not simply wait to die, then strain my head in the process.”

“I suppose Anabelle had a head start realizing our sickness was invisible to science. But how negligently she fell into the religious route for a solution.

If I were to plunge as Annabelle into the celestial world for an answer, I’d lose my instinct as a doctor and drown in a great puddle of mysticism. But were I to abandon the spiritual path and return to pure science and materialism, well, I’d never be here.

I’d suffer from hopelessness and never be closer to my daughter’s wishes.”

“When I explained the voices, Anabelle knew that this was beyond the passing words we use in our medical community: To accept this, Anabelle suffered great suffering and perhaps regret. When I held her hand, I could feel her soul-shaking. Eventually, it became that we all suffered from invisible illnesses living deep within our hearts.”

Cuts-To the Caves/Masterpiece of abomination

The Notebook

The cave walls are webs of giant diamond chandeliers covered in a spiderweb of sparkling stone and silk. A calm wind sways the magnificent designs of the church. Water gushes and sprays out of chambers. Precious stones and flower reach out, decorating the floor. A small mountain rumbles far with snow gently landing atop its snowy summit, and, yet, no visible sun,

All that seems is an infinite black above. Turning his head below, a tangle of hummingbirds,bees float in harmony, vines,edible plants, olive trees, date palms, gardens of foliage, and herbage, for the small, sweet animals crawl about respecting your feet. Gold, crystal and large glimmering stone and bush are the dress of all corners. From the chirping of a bird, every sound the drip of the water stream, to the buzzing of a bee is an orchestra to this theater of nature playing before him.

Hamil and Lisandra descend to the caves that span the towers, leading them towards the depths. The flickering candlelight cast dancing shadows across the ancient stone, while gentle streams embraced the structure’s arms.

Cuts- Celestial Water

I’ll start unraveling this one over here. ‘Who would I be and who are those like me?

… Those souls who wait on celestial waters for angels to drag them to heaven are just bobbing on Earth’s salty dark seas waiting for some great golden ship to net them unto heaven. And bring them from the sea unto heaven. But who fishes them? Instead are pirates of the soul on a voyage to wicked ends.

But what about the rest of us? We are told to inhale the divine essence, but we lack the organs to smell such fragrances. We are encouraged to savor the truth of the divine, yet we are born without tongues for that taste. We are instructed to see the path towards enlightenment, but we are blind. Thus, we find ourselves disabled or crippled on our journey toward divine enlightenment, encountering a profound sense of humiliation within our spirits.

Cuts-The Blessed Child

Wisdom of Christianity in Children.

To lose a loved one is sorrow. The pain remains until it leaves the body in a long-winded heave from the lungs.There is nothing wrong with religion in Adults, but in Children the consequnces are as malignant to the soul.

Something in your childhood mustve spurred something in you.

All see the tears. All see the horror. The empathy, with which abandonment comes, knows quite well, that there is a certain doom, but no one can see the inside of the child.

But then there is the part of a child, whose lungs are smaller than their imagination. To see death and to hope for a resurrection is a common thing among the religious, but the concept was not meant for children, resurrection truly is one last vestige of hope to anyone who believes in any possibility.

To see the cross, a man dead, but resurrection. There is no time to breathe, when the thought of damage.

A bird dedicates its entire existence soaring through the skies, yet its gaze often fixates on the earth below. As humans, we possess the ability to observe both the vastness of the sky and nature’s feet with equal measure. However, when it comes to matters of the spirit, our focus tends to be reversed. We find ourselves predominantly looking upward, contemplating the heavens, while only sparing glances at the path beneath our feet.

A writer cannot form an idea, without stepping into the corners of the soul. If there is too much positivity then his words are a lie.

“The day isn’t as it might seem. Don’t forget, the sun has killed many people with its cancerous rays and overbearing heat. While the moonlight… has never hurt anyone.”

Cuts-University: Professor Cambell

Unity dwells in in Ice & Fire

“I am Professor Adhamh Cambell, a Doric Scott raised in Aberdeen, sporting a revving engine of a tongue. To each, this may be a bump in the road, as my words tend not to sound like yours, and this class is almost entirely about words. I recommend you somehow prepare your ears for the trill of a lifetime.”

The classroom laughs.

“I would like to begin by letting you all know that I love you all with all my heart and soul.”

“Thank you, I suppose.” One student responds from the front class.

Another student snickers, “Yea, thanks.” Another sarcastically.

The professor scans the room

“Silence by the rest of you–and so many furrowed brows of vexation.”

“Is that all love gets? Is there no one here willing to say they love me?”

The class laughs

“Do you mean something like Jesus-love? Says Daniel.

The professor turns to the student.

From the front of the classroom.”

“Sure, said professor Campbell, like Jesus-love.”

“Sure.” The student shrugs.

Professor Cambell throws his arms behind his back and clasps his hands. Silence fills the room as they wait for the professor to speak.

“We had one frigid thank you there.

One shoogly snicker over there.

And one I manipulated right.

What’s your name?”

“My name is Daniel.”

“Daniel, driven by his religious neurosis, sought repentance with his eyes to the sky. His attempts at inducing love failed, but it wasn’t his fault. Lying is more intimate with the spirit of false claims to love than genuine efforts.”

“I was a bit conscious, replied Daniel, letting out a sigh of relief.”

“Ay, it feels good to confess doesn’t it Daniel,” the professor smirks.

Love is too demanding. Not all men feel love and compassion like their fellows, but other things bring men together.

“Emotions and words are often born from the extremities. Every culture and every person has chosen a word for their pain, some a silent laughter, but it’s undeniable. A sneeze is universal in animals. A fear sidetracked. For all of this man has a unity, and even a unity with animals. And guess what a great bundle of words tied of emotions are tied to the cold of the north and the heat of the desert, words of man are also conditioned by the ice and fire. All of us our tongues the words we say.”

“Now imagine, centuries of conversation, and sharing of emotions, of some people who will never understand how dire a word and important for to say hot in some part of the world Is less burdening than others.”

“It may seem complicated now, but I assure you, all of this will make sense when you think about the aim of this course.”

To find unity in mankind Doctors practice regularly. With their white trenches and love of them, they speak a language of an angelic type.

But some people fall upon a spectrum of pain. Some feel the blessings of pain easily, and so the easily they feel pain or are conscious of pain do see it in another person.

Finding unity in man”

There in is the calculus of reality. Of the mass and the outlier in this course.

Cuts- University: Cristiano

The School of Divinity

“I’ve never seen someone so enchanted with the rush of crowds at the University.”

“I think it’s the determination that captures my attention most. I don’t think I can conjure any word other than miraculous.”

“What’s your name.”

“My name is Hamil.”

“I’m Christopher.”

“A lover of humanity.”

Hamil turns to Christopher.

“No doubt.”

“I am Hamil Elsy.”

“What are you studying.”

“Medicine.”

A healer and lover of humanity, then. Makes sense.

“What about you?”

What have you come to learn.”

“I am a third-year student from the school of divinity.”

“You plan to be a priest.”

I find a dedication to god living a better job than any other.”

“Are you religious, Hamil?”

“No.”

“What about your family.”

“My father never taught us to be religious, but I often saw him talking to himself in a way that might be considered something beyond meditation.

I can’t be sure about whom or what he prayed.”

It is an absolute pleasure to meet you, Hamil.

“There are a ton of classes in this university. Divinity here covers all faiths. A prerequisite is to learn one, but better to learn them all.”

I’ll see you around Hamil.

Cuts–Here we go again

After a million little deaths: But I have felt the pain of soul. Pain of soul lies somewhere in the memory.

Contrary to what the priests say, the soul is not indestructible. It can feel pain.

What else explains, the memory of pain, you only heard as crack and crunch from some deadly plummet you can’t remember, but certainly feel.

Or chasm, the well of fluttering luminaries, that can only be explained as the shadow of of neurons dancing and pirouhetting, that no one can see. They are the shadows of neurons.

That’s what I’ll call these dancers. The shadows of neurons. For nothing else can explain them. Bursting in a form of petite consciousness

A question not worth asking, from delirium I will ask the same question too.

“But Why?” questioned Cardinal Catalano with despair,

The hope of the greatest pope left in the air.

As winds of change carrying bloody rain,

A storm of boos, a hail of words, the storm pain.

Lisandra’s song

Cuts-Grotesque Masterpiece

Bones of a million men

As they approached, Hamil braced himself for what he anticipated would be a grotesque masterpiece, perhaps constructed from the bones of a million men, a monument to humanity’s treachery. Hamil reaches the bridge of the towers that leads to the tomb of the man.

Cuts-Hunt began

Head Start

“As you know, the hunt began with my daughter’s note. Embracing it as truth, every word, was the first step. It meant dispelling my scientific prejudice to understand the world through as Alil does. I had three items as evidence of the supernatural origin of my illness: this tear wrapped around my neck, the self-realization that came with it, and, of course, my visions.

“I suppose Anabelle had a head start in realizing our sickness was invisible to science. But how negligently she fell into the religious route for a solution. The problem with Annabelle is that she chose a route as an end.

“One of the earliest accounts of the sickness as something divine came from the works of Herodotus, where he mentions King Cambyses the Second. It was said to have been sent down by the Greek Olympians as punishment. As the years passed, it changed from a divine to a natural like any other. This again, a consequence of the prejudicial, or perhaps, connivance of Hippocrates.”

“Another old account of the Sacred Sickness comes from a paper book written in 1932 by the Harvard University Press. According to the book, contemporaries of Socrates mentioned incantation and purification as means to dispel illness but provided no hint of where to find them. Still, to find the religious text with the right incantation is impossible. It would be like digging through the sands of the deepest oceans for the oldest scrolls.

“Inevitably, I found myself lost in a circle. From one end of the world to the other, I knew I’d eventually fall into a precipice and die without being one inch closer to the right place. On one occasion, a vision led me to tumble down a steep hill, where I ended up nearly breaking my arm and leg.

“Death to me is a gruesome thing, and before a biography speaks of death, I quickly end that final page.”

“Cambyses died on his way to Persia from Egypt to help squash a rebellion, but on his way there, he cut himself with his sword and gangrene consumed his body. He died in Agbatana, or modern-day Hama, Syria. Right on the border of this.

“I don’t know who you are yet, but I know that everything is going in the right direction and that from the moment I saw you, I felt some destiny.”

The ”octor reached out to the Woman with an open palm to hold her hand.

“And I know why you don’t want me to say your name, by the way.”

“Why is that?” asked the Woman.

“You are who you are, just as I am who I am,” he repeated the Woman’s words from their first meeting.

Cuts-Tea of Truth cuts

Irresponsible, Anything Better,

I prefer to seem an irresponsible drunken fool, than something so broken”

“What an odd thing to say. Yet I know what you mean. I ask then, why anything other than yourself?” says Alil.

“Anything is better than being myself. To be myself is to become that which you see before you.”

Cuts-Genesis

Lavareti’s Notebook.

“From the time of great Eden, when full

Bloom of laburnum and yellow daffodil

Filled all the sight, gentle wings of even

Gentler things blew dew at the celestial

Green, red, and white. No form of

Imagination can ever incite,

Few above too,

Could conjure the sight.”

In dark blight, you forget why my tribe first

Set foot in the night.

On your beauty and digest it for all.

Fertility and simmering stew and boil.

The soil in every settlement abroad. All the

World in all forms are simple and slight.

Your hardened great stones and palace of

Green, great mountains of white, they leave

Nothing for the short willows as he sways by

In fright. For every small creature, restless at

Night, I hold feathered pillows for them to

Rest the night.

As your fog floats about, rain

Pounds in hail violence.

His lighting, fire igniting, little do

You notice,--and doubt even care of the

Blaring and booming filling the air. The play

In constant motion, seas, tundra, poles and

Depths counting; all in despair I tread by

You closely to protect arrogance of all those

Great things that seeks to ensnare. True, the

Great beauty for which you create, shines to

All with full glimmer, but none would last

Long in the sharp teeth of hard bite, as I

Am the hand that produces life. I see your

North pole covered in a freezing of white.

Barely can one walk helm of great white.

Who will enjoy your mountains And

Woodlands of long full of monsters afar,

Seek refuge in gray and black, to massacre

The small, weak. My goal is to protect save

And create a rampart.

Dethroned. A tragic presence you are to me,

Forever and for so long. So you pass by me,

To undermine this, my new, my great—

My long dark wings, once golden in

Hue, my body once chiseled by thunder now

Blackened by infected gardens with covered

With a decaying muddy brown stew. I bid personal beauty

Many years ago adieu. All I do eat is the

Product of my creation, how dare you

Poison . What falls right below us in fright,

Must surrender to our own aesthetic delight.

We are the creators, lovers of nature in tight.

You, pity small

Things, and temporary might.

As each of these foes stood quivering on

Dark stone, an ancient sound funneled

Between the two gods. Both turn to the

Right, in spirit and light, stands there an

Ancient dark essence, pleasant to smell, she

Is an enchantress in flight.

Cuts-Abuses of False Gods

When they release the angels, then there will be peace, and the false prophets will die.

Sometimes dreams for those without worldly experience confuse them with real experiences, and the halluciantioans start. One who sees the world in all its splendor, need not keep dreams as memories, but dreams can also be nightmares

Oh Anabelle, why ever choose a route as an end. Dangerous pirates roam the seas of assent and dissent. ﻿Fall is that she chose a route as an end. The most one can get via religion is a path, but how many dangerous pirates steer men on a passage that never ends—even after death

Hamil followed a woman through the underworld, marveling at the statues and pillars forming the great halls and corridors.

“Asclepios truly believes he can bring her back to life?” Dr. Elsy asked.

Remember, I must not come off as crazy. I know what insanity looks like and I am not that.. pulls out a flask with water in it, and splashes it into his face. now, although, one can doubt all science rebuke it with any other thought —which is why I will pretend not to know. Pretending not to know is a sign of sanity. It is false evidence of doubt, which I have already justified—and, just to be safe I will be wise with my words, and you will note once our conversation begins. There is an essence to science, and if I stray to far I will be ridiculed. For science is the rule of truth. And, so, Just to be safe I won’t be clear. I must be covert and careful with my words. But if this is false then I will end my life, I cannot live without this certainty in my mind, but I am not one to commit to death so quickly, so it makes sense that this is the Truth

You talk as though you’re crazy, but the reality is, that you are too sane. Much too sane. Seeking a vision.

A madman would never use the word crazy. It would be a contradiction. To be crazy and

I are very much sane. You know what insanity looks like. The great sign of sanity is to doubt

Cuts – Shelves of Fiction and Nonfiction

“Where do I hope this book goes? Somewhere breaking the shelves of fiction and nonfiction. Be both at once. – a contradiction and to never be condemned as simply true or false.” True or false is the language of man, not the language of gods. To this day, the creativity of the past inspires the creativity of today. Thus it is true in the sense that somewhere in each great works of a poetic type there is some recognition of nonsense. Is the the origin of the beauty of that masterpiece both in the flesh and on that painting.

Cuts-Luca cuts

“One who is blessed and cursed to suffer until his will is done. But woe the consequences of his destiny abused, or that he or she should know.”

“A writer will always find darkness in all things spewing out of thought. If there is too much positivity then his words are a lie. They are a deception. They want something from you. They beg your attention. What is the darkness that Catalano, Alil, and Lavarenti.”

“Step in the wrong direction. A person is much too broken to be able to think with a true heart. The universe of this nation is a desecration of a writer’s heart.

At some point, you will realize that much of what you have accomplished has been the product of madness. And say I must not come off as crazy. So out of the fog of delirium, all that’s left is right and wrong, a lie becomes the only sensible act.

All who read this passage should now know, that there is a type of person with a destiny and those can already see themselves alive, dead, and beyond. Where to stand now is to find these blessed and cursed and let them speak as they were meant.

You are not someone of typical physiognomy.

“You have this ancient look. Like an Akkadian. The essence of a remnant. Easily forged with stone and bronze.

Yes! You are the face of the past, living in the 21st century.”

“Hamil laughs.”

“I can’t tell if that’s a compliment, or an insult to my genetic evolution.”

“Why don’t you tell me more about yourself.” Says Alil.

Cuts-The Rest of Us Celestial Waters

“No amount of voyages in self-abnegation we undertake, none will ever steer us in the direction of God.”

But what about the rest of us? They say breathe in the god’s vapors but we have no noses. They say, taste divine truth but we are born without tongues. They say to see the path but we are blind. And, so, born disabled or crippled on the way to divine enlightenment, we too feel humiliated by those chosen by God.

For souls like mine, who ourselves adrift upon celestial waters, waiting for angels to guide us towards heaven. Instead, we find ourselves aimlessly bobbing on the vast, salty seas of earthly existence, with pirates steering us towards a never-ending voyage. A pirate will never cast back their spoils into the sea unless it benefits their gain.

Cuts

“I mean, I love the concept. The blasphemy above all things but no wonder this project of yours is taking so long. In need of a prophet. Good luck with those. Been millenia and some people are waiting.”

Cuts- Liberty: The Holland Tunnel

“Do not tally the sum of your fears in one breath.”

Luca opens up his laptop. “Sorry for the wait time.” I haven’t turned this thing on in years.

On February 7th the headlines published, “Governor Athens to Destroy the Great Church of the Hudson”. And here, perhaps, is when Bartholomew had his first calling. It was a tradition of Bartholomew to check for the news online at 6 am. He’d later fall back asleep until 10 am. In between those hours, Bartholomew said he had the most vivid dreams. They were the type of dreams where all the senses manifest. But Bartholomew didn’t fear them. He couldn’t wait to be back. Bartholomew says dreams are revelations. Often they can reveal more about your soul than any level of introspection in the darkest corner of the room and the brightest candle burning can offer. That day, Bartholomew had a dream that he would stop monsters from trampling over a village. He was a hero in his dream. Later that day at about 10 am. He dressed neatly and headed out into the streets by the Hudson to breathe the air along the river.

Bartholomew’s daily walk brought him face-to-face with a heartbreaking sight: his beloved church slated for demolition. Flyers opposing its destruction blew in the wind, a final stand by a dwindling faith. He saw the church as more than a place of worship; its gothic spires and weathered stones were a testament to history. Though his memories of the nearby Catholic school were

Hazy, the church held a unique charm, a stark contrast to Jersey City’s modern sprawl. He couldn’t comprehend why, if deemed unfit for education, it couldn’t stand as a city landmark. Bartholomew envisioned the destruction not just as rubble, but as a permanent scar on the city, replaced by the cold efficiency of a trucking company. It would be a stain, a final blow to a cherished memory.

Yellow tape was wrapped around the church. A giant wrecking ball hung close to a balcony in the church. It was then a nerve in Bartholomew that forced him onto the gate of the church. Just before the first phase of destruction, Bartholomew hurled himself in front of the church.

The constr’c’Ion crew, annoyed by Bartholomew’s defiance, moved to haul him out. As they approached, they couldn’t help but notice his imposing physique. Bartholomew removed his long coat like a cape, revealing a powerful frame that seemed to move with the grace of a falling flower petal. The crew hesitated, daunted by his formidable presence.

Bartholomew was a powerful wall, his strength seemingly divine. He slowly backed towards the church, anticipating their attempt to seize him. When they attacked, he effortlessly hurled them aside, one by one, sometimes two at a time, as if they were feather pillows. This small battle quickly drew a crowd. Commuters along the piers stopped to watch Bartholomew toss the crewmen around like rag dolls.

Soon, a news crew arrived along with the police, surveying the chaotic scene. The majority of onlookers laughed at the spectacle, calling it a bullfight where the bull was triumphantly standing still.

Police swarmed Bartholomew, convinced his protest was over. But a wave of students, fueled by general discontent surged forward. Their reasons came from defiance, a yearning for freedom, and outrage. The protest swelled, drawing activists and citizens alike. Some dug symbolic graves, a chilling foreshadowing. The city pulsed with raw energy.

“The Holland Tunnel is jam-packed and crawling with traffic. You’d think people would be desperate to escape the state, especially with the swelling population emerging from the swamps. Then again, considering the type of leadership, it’s not surprising.”

“I’m from New Jersey,” laughs Hamil.

“Oh, then you must’ve been drawn to the news. During the presidential election. It was a war among politicians like I’d never seen.

“I was gone for a few years.”

“Lisandra, I didn’t see it. Alil definitely did.

“Everyone is. It’s just a source of comedy for those with political inclinations. Especially to those who have seen it tumble from the heights of virtue.”

What brought me to the helm, Gideon and his son Huxley are two unbearably greedy creatures walking on this planet.

They are the consequence of a fetish for more.

“There are two types of people. Those who are I’m willing to work hard and hurt themselves for wealth and then are those willing to hurt others, and see it a noble act.”

“You all don’t remember the elections of four years ago?”

Huxley, the son of the immensely wealthy Gideon Athens, was someone I first met at one of my galleries.

Athens likely inherited his cutthroat financial ethical values from his father Gideon, who from the moment of conception taught him to be a champion coing chaser.

Gideon instilled in his son the belief that the world belonged to the Athens family, dismissing traditional historical truths. Revising history, saying that his blood was tied somehow to the wealthiest in the world. Nothing of which could be proved. Though I’m not saying it’s not possible, we will never know because genetic testing is an affront. The Blood of an Athens remains only within him.

Superstitious, Athens viewed an invisible hand as his divine guide, contrasting sharply with critics who dismissed his beliefs. While he used terms like “faith” to justify his decisions, his opponents never exploited this angle against him, because all things invisible are sacred.

“Typically, at that time liberty was the pinnacle thirst. It is the “ancient lust for liberty,” Luca says, how many centuries have pased with the word liberty being promised? Liberty in society is impossible—a contradiction. “The closer you are to absolute liberty the further you are from society. Voting for liberty or freedom is a contradiction like a dog begging its master to loosen its collar.”

“”You,” he hissed, recognizing him as a wealthy landowner. A ruthless deal unfolded. Athens offered to “save” the church in exchange for Bartholomew’s prime properties – a blatant exploitation of his grief. Bartholomew, emotionally shattered by Emilia’s sacrifice, agreed.

The news trumpeted Athens as the hero, while Bartholomew faded into obscurity. The true cost, however, gnawed at Bartholomew’s soul. He became a haunted man, forever marked by the memory of Emilia’s blood staining the ground.

“Show me a man who works for free and I will show you the wounds of his lashings.”

Emilia’s life with the. Her beauty, her emerald eyes and maple hair, now a horrifying mask of blood and dust. As she was dragged away, a primal scream ripped through Bartholomew, echoing the collective grief of the onlookers.

Bartholomew sought out Emilia’s family. They were poor refugees, living in a small shack. Tears streamed down his face as he stood before them. He poured out his heart, offering them a grand portion of his wealth – a gesture to ease their suffering and a recognition of Emilia’s sacrifice.

He promised to keep her memory alive. In the church cemetery, he vowed to create a memorial unlike any other, a testament to her beauty and spirit. And as he returned to the church, his eyes fell on a lone figure gazing up at the edifice. It was a new chapter, a chance to find purpose amidst the ruins of the past

Cuts – One To Rule Them All

A home for the coexistence where the God of the Monotheists and Polytheists become one. A place where all religions and philosophies coexist seamlessly. To escape it would be a complete desecration of the spirit, akin to denying the essence of one’s soul.

As they pondered this, they realized that Lavarenti’s work had the potential to either usher in a new era of peace or trigger an unprecedented crisis. Without a clear path, their ambitious project risked falling into chaos. Yet, the hope of finding a way to unite all people kept them moving forward, despite the doubts and dangers that lay ahead.This was designed years ago, with Lavarenti’s leadership it was to change the world.

So this is what you were all doing. If we had one religion for all, what inane squabbles would there be to cause so much stupid suffering in the world?

Nationalism, writing a history of the world and its people with rights bestowed upon them by the power of this steeple. Constitutions based on liberty and justice spanning philosophical values over the centuries.

As much as it is, most inspiring to create a religion that will unite the world, it was missing the element that would ultimately make all necessarily change.

God on Earth? The second coming?

What is it, Lisandra and Hamil listen on.

Moshiach, The Second Coming of Christ, The Mehdi.

“Well, Lavarenti kept it here. And just as Di Mirandolla was persecuted for this work,”

What cave he speaks, I can only imagine he speaks the caves of man’s thoughts, but to imagine he speaks of a real cure. One to cure all the problems of humanity is without a doubt a type of madness. All of it I’m sure,

To bring the dead back to life, you need the blood of a being that cannot die. Then infuse it in others.

Those who were meant to rule the world of gods, well, there are, they are just hidden.

He told us, there was one missing piece, the final piece of the Corpus was not a book or document but a creature.

For Lavarenti to bring this all together, he may quite possibly launch an end of times, as opposed to a peace of all times.

Precisely for this vision here.

Without the map, there is no finding anything on the island, One will die without reaching the length of the.

People thought he was losing his mind and finally did. Took all his work to the grave.

The nonbelievers are also believers in the sense that they prefer to stay true to the earth.

In this small so what’s missing here? That was it, a man with wings, a woman, and a temple for all the gods.

The non-believers who are not compelled by anything here, but the art, and not the holiness we feel.

When Lavarenti said, he wanted to unite all people under this religion, he also meant atheists and agnostics on the earth.

What is most important to a non-believer? He is the last person on earth who requires a physical solution.

Here Oxygen, Carbon, Hydrogen, and Nitrogen are, above all the statues of forged thesis, philosophy, and science.

Luca

A prophet. One final to prove in divinity.

That no one can deny because he can be touched.

“Luca, Lisandra, and Hamil stare at the temple, with awe, the large hand-written religious books mixed up together are absolutely genius.

“Holy Shit, This is the most blasphemous place on the planet. I love it and mourn its doom. Christmas, Diwali, Eid, Passover, Vesak in one symphony of knit again, by those. Universal Divinity, Ethical Living, Spiritual practices, Sacred texts, Interfaith, Churches, Temples, and Mosques all under one.

The mother of all temples here in NY.

Luca laughs in disbelief, while I am enthusiastic about this project, it sounds like the most blasphemous idea on the planet.

Where will you find someone as close to divinity as it comes?

He wished to find at last, a creature who fulfilled all of the qualities of a human being and fused it with his own beliefs, such that it created a new creature who could walk the planet as a savior, but he had no one but himself.

The Mehdi, Mosiach, and the Second coming of Christ. It took years. Lavarenti, it was believed.

Please tell me what you see here. Lavarenti and I spent years building and forging together works of philosophers and scientists.

“The greatest thing about me is that I was born an Atheist. I can jump in and out of madness without going overboard. What would it take for someone like me to go overboard? Nearly impossible. Nothing rivals the thrill of descending into an abyss, navigating its depths, and emerging unscathed, chipping a fingernail to show the journey. Diving in and out of darkness. While many individuals harbor a fear of the abyss.”

Emilia The Protester

Emilia, a young woman barely out of her teens. With a defiant glint in her eyes, she snatched the officer’s hat and flung it a few feet from his toes. The crowd cheered her on, but a demon possessed him. His pupils dilated, his face turned maniacal grimace.

The officer lunged at Emilia seizing her and slamming her face-first into the pavement. A sickening crack echoed through the square. Then to slow as blood, the color of death, stained the concrete. The crowd, many witnessing their first act of such brutality, froze in horror.

“In the rich of Greek mythology, there exists a tale of wisdom and strategic cunning that played a pivotal role in the great battle between Zeus and the Mighty Titans. It is the story of Metis, the daughter of Oceanos, whose ingenuity and resourcefulness forever changed the course of history.”

In a world of fear, just like a dead man’s soul is a ghost, time is the haunting ghost of wealth. Thus, we create ghosts for all sorts of matter that exists in our life. To dead matter, there is a ghost. To wealth, it is time.

\*\*\*”When I reflect on Annabelle’s fate, I quickly blame her intelligence for the collapse. She was the perfect student, an outstanding academic, and a scientist. I’d never heard of an obstacle she failed in her career. It was somewhere in that brilliance, that infallibility late in her life, that ultimately conquered her spirit. If she had only failed enough in life, she’d know how to cope with failure. At bottom, I don’t blame Annabelle, I blame the inhumanity of forging a person like a knife. The inhumanity of becoming a purely singular type.”

“As a doctor, the aim has always been to move forward. Leave the past behind. Look to new research. To begin from as far from the end as is possible. But when there is no treatment with all of the modern tools, perhaps, somewhere down the line a fundamental error might be the mistake. This I was taught by a wise professor. We face a corrupt paradigm. How far back can the error be? As far back as the first few pages of recorded history. Yet, with all of this, what moved me, was my daughter who inspired me with only one word: curse.”

“One can only go so far before destroying everything and starting life from scratch.”

“But I did.”

I attempt one last time before I completely quit though if I were to quit would mean the end of me.

“How far back do I feel I should go. As far a time when people believed in ghosts because that’s what this sickness feels. It feels a demon’s curse when ghosts roamed the earth most. Whe they were as real as water.”

“Luckily, I found something written by the father of history. In one of the first books of History.”

“Herodutus” says Alil.

“That’s right. Says Hamil.

“The nearest thing to understanding this damnation is in an old book called Histories. As a man of science I am embarrassed to mention it, but that's the truth.”