You stand on a beach. Water laps against your ankles. The stars above are bright and glad, blinded by their own light to the darkness around them. It is night, but the soft blue moon guides you forward, into the trees now in front of you. You walk under their canopy in impossibly soft grass. The plants around you are strange: they glimmer and shine incandescent colors in the darkness. You feel something, now. Someone is pulling you by the wrist. They have been, you suppose, all your life. They turn. You recognize them from somewhere...where? Ah! The butterfly. Golden. Soft.

You step into a pool of water impossibly clear. Ripples of impossible patterns emanate from your foot. They shine and reflect your face in the water. You are young. No… this is how you always are. Right? Always have been. No… not a child anymore. A strange voice, “This place exists in all places. My home. Salvation.” You look up.

A burning city falls below you, though there is no movement. No flames lick skyward, no sounds reverberate. You look from a mountainous temple. Stairs leading low in front of you. A streak of blood stains the center of the stairs. Above you a red moon is eclipsed by the wings of a great dragon entangled with a great serpent. Behind you, a great rotunda. A horned woman, beautiful above all things, stands in front of a portal as black as the pits of Hell. A horned man stands with his back to her, his face a painting of hate and pain as he stares upwards at the red moon. His hand glows in a light that rivals the darkness of the portal. You blink as you look into it. A strange voice, “These were my people, whose doom I wrote in my own arrogance. Their doom shall be yours, Swift Feet, should you fail.”

The sound of your boots echoed in the massive marble hall. Swords rang around you. The blood of the royal guards slashed down. You must not stop. You can not stop. Guards charge you, but are slain by the swords of your soldiers. The throne is close. Thirty feet. Twenty-five. Ten. He sits there, unstirring. A thought in your head… “He is more stupid than I thought. At least more arrogant. It is your time to fall, Kalma, King of Men.” You reach up, your strong arms pulling the long black sword from your back. You speak, but your voice is not yours… “Kalma, I come to claim what is mine. I shall claim it with your death upon my sword!”

You sit in a meadow, now. The night sky still expansive above you. The blue light of the moon mingles with that of a golden butterfly like swirling oils in the air. A strange voice, “That sword is what you know as the Thief Blade, the most dreaded creation of the monster Vash Bash. Khas did not slay Kalma that day, though, and Kalma took the Blade and carried it until his banishment. Kalma’s hands were not the first to wield the Blade, and they were not the last. Now, the Blade resides with a pitiful being, cursed and haunted by his failures. The Blade must not fall into the hands of The State, and thus the Chalice must also stay hidden, for within the silvery waters can be divined the location of this being.

“Swift Feet. Your vow is one of freedom. Should you fail, chains will imprison the souls of all. The freedom towards which you strive cannot only be freedom of self, for that would leave yourself alone in the end of all things. Think on these words.”

You awake.