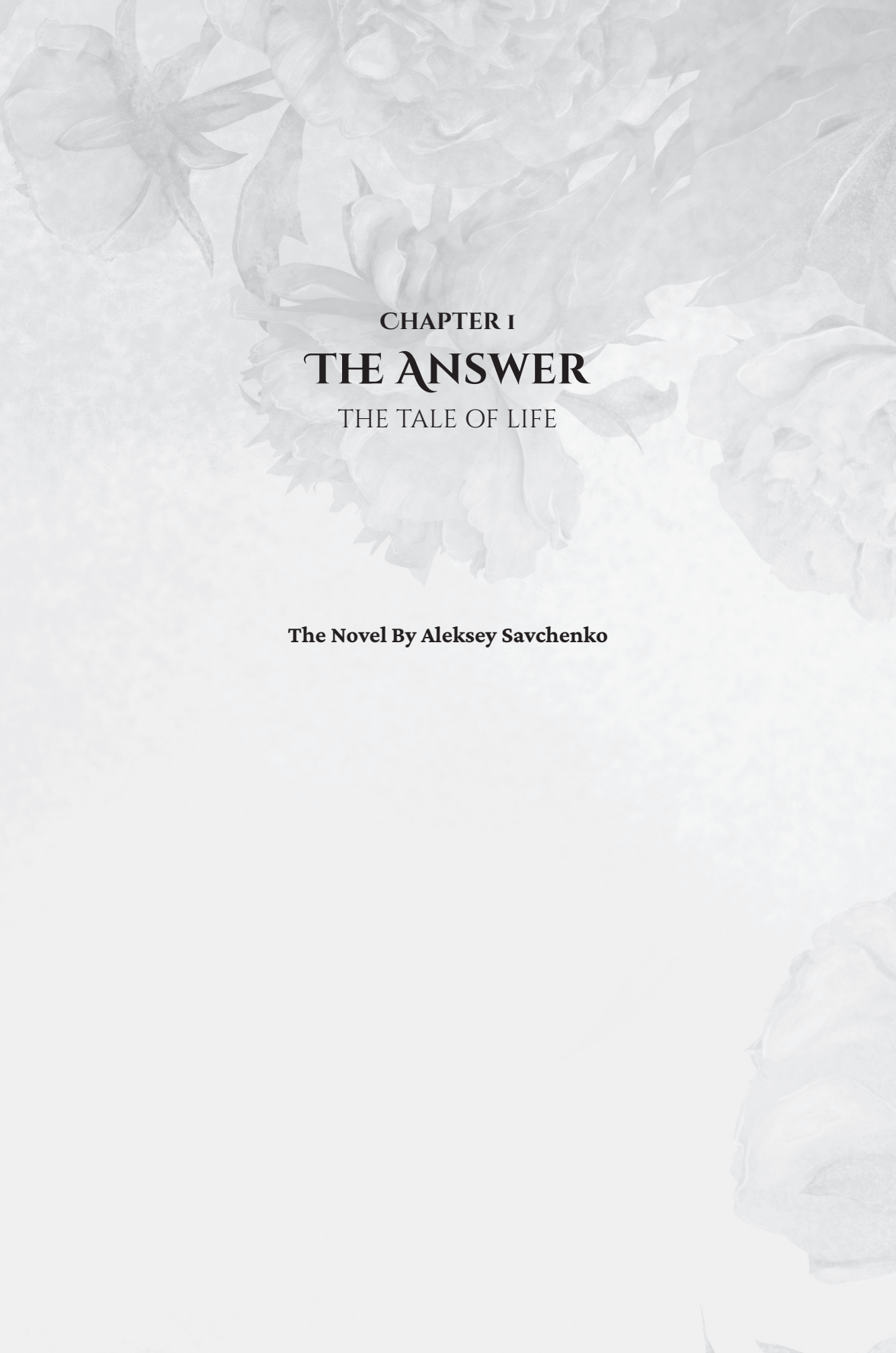


THE ANSWER

THE TALE OF LIFE

ALEKSEY SAVCHENKO



CHAPTER I

THE ANSWER

THE TALE OF LIFE

The Novel By Aleksey Savchenko



PROLOGUE

It is evening.

At the hotel, in the lobby, we are sitting next to the fireplace. Flame is reflecting in the eyes of those who have come to listen to the Tale I'm about to tell.

I begin, telling you a story that has been long told by many. Perhaps it has been told before using different words, images, and symbols, but nevertheless it has been recounted many times.

Other people shall tell the Tale, and there shall be other heroes, plots, and twists. But beneath, the Tale is always the same, with the same essence.

For it is the story every one of us tells, and has been since the day mortals first came here. It is a story we all have to experience, one way or another: being born, coming of age, answering the call to adventure, and facing everything that Life itself has to offer. Take the Path through all of the trials and tribulations, beat the ultimate Quest we shall be presented with, and then, find our way to our Home.

We will tell this story until the day we return.

As I'm speaking these first words, future ones still elude me... yet I feel that they have already been written. They will be told by the future me, while the past me is also nearby. Together, we are discussing the amazing Journey we have taken to find our Answer, and everything within it that has led us to that Answer.

You will hear these three—past, present, and future me—not knowing about each other until one day crossing Paths, learning to trust each other while answering the Call.

This is my prologue for you, my friends, who have found their way through their own Journey to this hotel and to this campfire. You have come to join me, to sit, to listen, to imagine, and to partake. In fusing our Lights, perhaps there is a thing or two to learn.

The prologue, like many other things that you will meet across this narration, has the right to its own special magic. It exists between time and space, coming into being when the first words are committed to paper then changing when the final word is in. It will rewrite itself the next morning, when the Tale begins again.

If you were to ask, *where* I was—in our mortal terms and definitions—when I took my pen and began to write things down, I would have to pause and scratch my head before being able to give you an answer.

I would say that I was everywhere at once, from the beginning and at the moment it was done.

I'm here now in England, typing; a Storyteller in the late part of his trials with his Draft still to be completed to receive the honour of the Symbol representing Voice.

I'm a brash, young, aspiring child led more by his dreams than being present among the daily chores of mortals. He has just skipped

school again to come home early, grab a journal, and write his first, clunky stories.

I'm an old and grumpy man in his seventies who has been travelling to meet his friends in New York. He has found a moment to sit down alone at the terrace and write down recollections of his Path to feed yet another story that, however, is still this one.

I've been doing this in thousands of places, timelines, and lives in my imagination.

My Journey has taught us all to catch our breath, dwell in the words and give into the trance that refutes the limitations of the dimensionally restricted present. Evoked through the Light that burns in all of us, we connect, reunite, and talk.

We share experiences: our thoughts, ideas, and considerations. But most of all, we tell the stories—the *only* story... this Tale.

What is it about?

I wish I could tell you. Like every Storyteller, I'm a brag, and I could tell you that this Tale is the most important one that human ears have ever heard! It is the truth, the revelation, and the key for you to understand yourself and become complete. It will assemble the pieces of your soul scattered whenever you are brought into the world again.

Like every Storyteller at the campfire, I'm also an unreliable narrator; a liar who is fabulating from truth and fantasy combined. The Tale,, then, is also nothing but a story—a fluke, a parabolic phantom. The Tale exists for joy and entertainment, vanishing the next morning when you wake and are absorbed by fresh aspirations and arrangements.

And like every Storyteller, I'm a mage and prophet. I'm a peddler, bard, and a journeyman. I collect myths and fairy stories anywhere I

go. The Tale, then, is a glimpse, observation, recollection, memory, and daydream of every other story.

The story is clever, silly, joyful, sad, and has its share of lessons to follow. But as a Storyteller, I'm not here to pronounce messages and meanings. In the telling, I simply flow.

In some sense, the Tale is naive. Being a herald, a messenger, and, more simply, a friend of My Dear Life, I'm fascinated by the design of the dress She is wearing. I live another day to tell what I've seen.

If you really need to have an answer to what the story is about, it is about seven Threads of Colour that have been splintered to fuse back together in the chromatic, hypnotizing beauty of the Journey I've been on, together with Life, my Forever Friend.

Though this Tale is mine, comprising all versions and reflections of me, it is also the Tale of you and of every one of us.



SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY IN THE DISTANT FUTURE, I'M SIPPING TEA AND looking from the rooftop of the high rise to the city beneath. Beneath my beard, I'm smiling, knowing well that I'm almost done with it. I'm telling the story slowly, measuring my words.

Many years ago, meanwhile, in a small apartment, I'm chain-smoking and chugging cups of tea. I nudge myself, engulfed by the novelty of a bold beginning that I tell in convoluted, excited language too quick for many to understand.

And at present, I'm well, living in Guildford and right in the middle of those two that form the army of me—the one who has already told and the one who will tell one day yet to come.

I'm at a moment when another part of the Path has been lived

through. I've finished the Draft and am about to walk my Journey, but I have also seen how it really ends.

Through the magnificent, surreal, and fairly unbelievable chain of circumstances, I have been able to receive an Answer and retain my knowledge of it... but, we will get to that later.

Before it happens, the story has to start.

So here am I, friend. As we begin. I am nowhere—calm, tranquil. and semi-sleeping.

I'm dissolved in an overwhelming sense of omnipresence. I'm flowing through the quiet but bottomless and never-ceasing river that has no destination, no beginning or end.

I am embraced by the warm and comfortable arms of Darkness. The last thing I remember is a gentle stroke of my hair and a distant, gentle female voice promising... something. I don't recall the words, but I remember somehow what was meant.

I'm sleeping, resting between lives. I have no idea how many minutes, years, or centuries have passed. But when it is time, I hear the call of Love and follow, slowly leaving my slumber. I'm led by a faint Chromatic Thread through water that guides me to the emerging, shining Light.

Before I fully come to my senses, I see the Thread is splintering into smaller Threads of Colour. These are spread between the ether, the mortal realm, and time.

The two that call me—blue and yellow—shine as they cross, guiding my way to where two worlds collide and a Life impatiently awaits.

I hear a soft and gentle laugh: "Welcome back, my dear sweet boy. At last, I've found you..."

I learn to feel, and this is where it all begins, again.



CHAPTER 2

THE LIGHT

The Light comes.
The Light is calling into me.

The Light ignites in me.

I'm fractured into billions of pieces. I know that I have to find them, reunite them, and become complete again. That is why I am here.

I'm overwhelmed, lost, in pain, and feeling as vulnerable as a human being can be.

I scream.

The scream shapes my imperfect, blurred vision and other senses. All of these things scare me even more. I'm terrified to such an extent that I want to leave, to crawl again into the warm embrace of Darkness.

But the warm hands of my mother take me, and as I lean to her, Love quietly fills me, whispering not to be afraid as she will never leave

me on my Path. In a quiet, fading voice, she promises to take good care of me through things I don't yet understand but will... one day.

Slowly, I find my comfort. As my memories fade, I'm holding on to the few pieces of myself left within me at my life's beginning and am experiencing my first lessons: to blindly trust in Love again, to be open to whatever comes, and to embrace the gifts that are simply given...

The Gift of Light.

The Gift of Love.

The Gift of Life.

I'm feeling my way into my fragile, new body. I feed, and shyly play with a never-ending flow of first impressions that are quickly overflowing this infant mind. I'm also given the Gift of Dreaming. It will accompany my Journey at night.

In my first dream (that will soon be forgotten), I'm standing at The Summit. I see the whole Journey that awaits. As I grow, meet others, I'm present in my every second, every happy moment, every sorrow, and every other thought and feeling. I see the whole of the Tale I'll tell.

All trials, challenges, and battles, I see. Every fall I'll have and how I'll rise again. I'm seeing every road that I shall travel—through sunny days, cold winters, fog, and rain.

It will all vanish quickly as my eyes, again, open. Fading glimpses of things to come, a kaleidoscope of future memories departing at the strange whim of the Universe, which hints that it all is past before we fully give in to our new life and Home.

As the morning of my new Path starts, I know you have already been around me, Life. How could *you* miss the moment? While always

busy, somehow you are able to be everywhere you need to be and are always present in every day that makes the utmost sense.

You're probably just poking your curious face around the door of the maternity ward, just to look at me for a moment and produce one of your infamous *hmms* or *ahas*! You are already scheming, planning something unexpected, some trickery, both for very soon and very far away.

Darkness is softly chuckling, telling me to listen to my mother while we will be apart. Until we meet again, I accept the Light to guide me on my way.

My Path begins—the road to restoration, reassembling the billions of pieces I have been. It is my own adventure into the infinite horizon of the Universe I'm in now, will discover, and will have seen.

I am here.



CHAPTER 3

THE CURIOSITY

A curiosity that has no borders drives my early years. I'm hungry for the novelty of the realm I am presented with to play in, and through these games and interactions to learn of my surroundings and to learn of myself. It's the Light in me that, by shining, allows me reach out and learn. It guides me by the impulse of the knowledge that teaches me to feel, to hear, and to see.

Nothing is ever enough. Days are too short to try all the things I want. And while my body tells me that not everything in this amazing new realm is as friendly as I would like—that some things can hurt me or get me in trouble—I never stop. How can a minor setback stop a daring young flame from trying?

I'm reaching out more and more in these naive and careless years to build my early image of this astounding place we call our world. The world consists of the infinite connections we make by touching with our inner Light, weaving concepts into perceptions of our own design.

My world grows with every small adventure, and every one is a journey in itself. From cradle into house, with all its marvels, and from house to garden, holding Quests and dangers, I strive to make this expanding realm the valley of my soul. And then, from garden to the street, to realise that there are many other houses and gardens, and each of them contains other people living with their Light shining.

From street to town—the adventure of a lifetime that teaches that there are no limits, really, for mortals to explore and comprehend. My Light is growing, and like the Universe itself, the more it expands, the quicker its shine is spreading. While it is travelling, it finds other inspiration. It flashes brightly and multiplies in the presence of the interdimensional crossroad of fairy tales.

Imagination is a force that holds tremendous power. When a child has grasped the basics of the world, their mind faces complex things with little understanding. Imagination teaches us to name these things. It's a universal language and power. It's a Mirror, a Prism, a Beacon, a Lighthouse—the magnifying glass of our Light.

While, being young, I haven't yet understood it, imagination has already won most of my future fights. As introduced through Tales, myth, film, an art of seeing everything that has ever happened—from an infinite amount of angles—has already opened the door for me to soon meet her, Life, in person. That will ignite our friendship never-ending.

There is still another challenge. Our Light travels fast, encountering so many other shining light-bearers. Though we learn to build our first connections, we don't know if they will abruptly perish or last.

Yet it doesn't really matter. First friendships, mentoring, and frictions will form a bridge for stories to be told, connecting what is real and what is made up in a way that will create my childhood world.

An infinite perfection of growing crystal-like elements mix and create the mould. My Light finds way to bounce off shapes and fringes, and we are both ready to evolve.

When I meet my Life, she will become my friend, my young obsession and, probably, the best and the most demanding of teachers. At present, it's just me and Light. Driven by the curiosity that guides us, we move forward, shaping, exploring, and assembling the yearly pieces of ourselves in turn.

In the distant future, I will ask Life why didn't she present herself to me before I turned six. She will laugh, boop my nose, and answer, "Dear, I'm not here to take away your heavy lifting. It's your job to learn, to build, and to fix." She will add, "We are friends, companions. Yes, we are tied together. But for me to manifest, you have to master Light and grow in the world of mortals. Only then, kid, am I ready to present myself."

For now, I'm close but not there yet. Perhaps I'm still too busy reaching, touching, telling, reading, inventing, and getting happy and sad. I'm climbing trees and running, sometimes to fall and bruise my knee but to stand up again, running faster and further.

I'm looking at the skies, and touching plants on the ground. I'm hearing Tales in awe, experiencing fantasies of old with heroes, gods, talking animals, and scary monsters—all to mix into in an infinite kaleidoscope of imagination. I'm learning courage, bravery, and virtues from the heroes of these Tales even as I hear of the wrongs, confusions, and frustrations that are able to turn the virtuous upside down.

I'm making paper ships and sailing them down streams of rain water. I'm launching kites into the air and playing games with early friends. And when they are not around, I'm playing instead with my mind.

Not only good things happen. I get sick, get hurt, get offended, and become sad, sometimes feeling that things are so unfair. Even so, there is still my Light and gift of dreaming that makes these feelings go away, just as the night passes. No matter what gets me upset, by the next morning, once I am out of my bed, I will have forgotten about it. As children, we are simply too excited to remember bad things and by nature, too kind. Whatever shadow is cast by Light is soon banished by its brightness.

We will meet Shadow later on my Journey. Not to spoil anything, while shadows are erased, Shadow has formed—through conflict and intrusion, bad interactions, and being burned by others. Here, Light emerges not from direct intention but rather from its bearer's horrors of the night. This is how the Universe is structured.

I'm in my childhood, always playing, never stopping. I'm at Home. The last, but most important, thing that has to happen to turn the key for Life to enter is Love. Love is there: it's in my parents, my friends and pets, and each day's sun. Love is ever-present at this age. It takes its form in the warmth we feel when encountering everything around. My Child self is wise in his amazing kindness and blind trust of Love. He is guided by the Light, and while I will get older, he will never leave me in my Journey, supporting me at every step and in every fight. His sense of curiosity is his power, and his desire to aspire, and his disgust for lies and conformity, makes him one to be reckoned with. There is nothing separating Child and Light while mortals are forming. He *is* the Light. The Child possesses overwhelming might, being brave, honest, and the best in all we hold dear. My child will come to help me many times, reminding me through times of trials who I really am.

Years later, I will have the urge to ask, "How did we manage to grow up so fine, my little fellow? As I remember now, you had your battles, were often misunderstood and rejected. Your mind moved too

quickly and, confused, we spent too most of our time with books and stories...”

He will laugh at me and answer, “Have you forgotten all of a sudden that she showed up—Life? I was fine, but if I ever needed more, it was this little menace, our Best Friend whom we are about to find!”. I will chuckle as I blush, shamed yet again by this little flame of wisdom who seems to have all the answers long before me. He is right, of course.

Life—she has this tendency to know exactly when to make her perfect entrance, immediately conquering by her charm, wits, never-ending plans and energy. She simply comes one day, informs you of her presence, and from then occupies an absolute place in your mind. When the Child is formed, the light is fully lit and shining, and we need the guidance of our true first friend, she comes.



CHAPTER 4

THE FRIEND

A slight yet thrilling feeling of stepping out from our mortal norms always follows every meeting with an immortal being. The feeling lingers in your memory, but it has also always been there. There will be parts of this Tale where I will temporarily be made to forget these encounters, but even then they remains as a twitch signalling the proximity of greatness and a promise of return.

Well past the stage of writing my Draft, and past, too, my Journey, these memories will be restored in me and will I remember them like they happened just mere minutes ago.

Our first meeting is imprinted in every moment and every place. You sneak up on me while I rest against an old pear tree in my garden, reading a Robert Louis Stevenson adventure. I' hear your voice: "Hey, you, kid! Yes, I'm talking to you." You add, "Hey, eyes on me. I'm here!"

That voice catapults me from the Tale I am reading and is struck into my well-lit mould of perception. It fires my imagination and magic happens. The lesson you have taught me is Personification.

Personifying everything—whether an object, entity, thought, idea, or dream—and giving them human form is among the oldest and most powerful of spells. Infusing character, soul, and animation into concepts allows us to engage in conversations and relationships with things that otherwise are simply dust and stone. It is impossible to find your way along the Journey if you are unable to cast this spell.

I follow the voice, and as my eyes lift, I build the image, you have chosen to show me.

What form would an immortal of such power and radiance take as we walk our Path? A form suitable for a six-year-old boy who has been too locked into reading and dreaming, and who has begun to notice that he is apart from other children. A boy desperately looking for someone who will understand him.

And so, through Personification, you appear to me as a bossy, boastful, trickster-tempered friend.

I slowly raise my eyes from the book, seeing what best can be described as a menace in a dress. You wear new purple sandals and worn, neglected clothing with patches. One of your knees is bruised and you carry a book in your hands. An aura of calamity surrounds you. You look like trouble.

Looking up, I meet enquiring green eyes. They catch mine, also green and sharing your curiosity. Your face is as craft as it is freckled, crowned by a ginger mess of hair only partially tamed by ponytails.

I blink, and you blink mockingly in return, rolling your eyes—something I will see many times again. “Who, me?” I ask. You reply, “Are you deaf? Is there anyone else? Of course I’m talking to you. What are you reading?”

Being timid when talking with girls, I feel confused but I am drawn to this intimidating yet cute, alluring person. I immediately feel that we need to know each other. “It’s Stevenson... like poems,” I answer.

Life laughs, revealing the book she has been holding to me: a Thomas Mayne Reid adventure.

We talk for hours, like we have known each other forever, like we are just catching up from yesterday. I tell you so, and you agree, telling me that I am your Friend Forever. We tell each other our names. You promise to come back tomorrow. You will do so, and for every day for the next eight years.

Our friendship will persist, Even in later years, when my mortal Path means you will have to leave me to my own devices, you'll come later and say casually, "Pfff, I've still been there, wearing other faces, playing different roles behind masks and charades, darling. Seriously... you were a bit deaf back then, right? What part of Friend Forever didn't you hear?". I'll scoff but smile inside because you are right—tomorrow did go on forever.

But coming back to my young years, the next day, we meet at the bench next to my house, and we chat about the stories we've read. Amused, you tilt your head and tell me with a sparkle in your eyes that since we are Friends Forever, I should come up with stories of my own for her. "Ergh..." I answer, but you disregard my hesitation. "Yes, you will, starting tomorrow. I will wait each day for a new one, my dear."

While the concept shocks me a little at first, I begin writing to entertain, amuse, and excite you, making you laugh with something that never has been told before. Encouraging me, you return the favour. In exchange for each of my Tales, you return one for me, and no one else, in the form of parables, adventures, and fairy tales that lift my spirits. Have I been mentioning she is a troublemaker? What she was doing was yet another little ploy of a little trickster, designed to help me on my future Path.

Of all the eternal beings and primordial forces known to me in the Universe, she is the one who bends, breaks, cheats, and challenges

the laws. Immortal beings are forbidden to share sacred knowledge with mortals, but if the mortal first builds and shares a Tale, the balance of forces allows the deity to share one in return.

And so you do, though in a parabolic language. In my youth, I hate it but later I will recognise that you have been planting future skills and values in a way that my mind could grasp.

A few months later, I am reading at home when you would start throwing rocks at my window, demanding that I immediately stop whatever I am doing as you want to show me something. It is raining and I would prefer to stay at home but Forever Friendship is Forever Friendship.

I come out and you take my hand, dragging me to the movies. We spend the day in an arcade, and later you sneak us into to a gig by a local band. Before parting, you hug me excitedly and say, “I wanted to show you how our Tales can come alive off the paper, my Forever Friend. Those animated images, games, interactive tales, and songs are simply different manifestations for the things we tell.”

Telling, reading, watching, playing, and getting lost in our interweaving imaginations become a big part of our days, and as we spend more and more time in our infinite sandbox and playground, my Light grows. One day you tell me, “See? It’s not hard to really get it, that the things we imagine are as real as anything you can touch.”

“Surely, Life, there are limits?” I reply. She lightly slaps me on the head. “You are not learning! What limits? If you want something really to happen, the right Tale will always find a way! It will reflect in hundreds of mirrors, will be picked up by thousands of other voices, and will manifest into the reality of men!”

She jumps up from the floor and grabs my hand to follow, declaring boldly in theatrical fashion as she does so, “Tales! They go further than what is seen by eyes or heard by ears! They are eternal—rocks thrown at the water producing...” She looks at me, indicating that it’s

my turn to continue. I pick up the game, adding with a slight uncertainty, “Uh, circles. Rocks produce circles when they hit water, most definitely.”

You give a look with those two green projectors that promises another slap if I do not pick up the rhyme and character, so I quickly improvise. “Tales! They are ways to think outside of time or places. They are birds of our souls and hearts—the only thing that never really dies.” I see that sparkle return into your eyes and the hint of a smile on your lips. Even before my Journey, Tales will teach me to connect to places and beings. Most importantly, they will allow me to connect to my other selves.



ONE COLD WINTER DAY, WHILE WE ARE PLAYING WITH SNOWBALLS, YOU STOP for a second. Making that cute, musing face of yours, you say, “Funny, huh? This thing is water, snow, and vapor all at the same time”.

The same day, we sneak into the barn near my house, where my family stores old books and magazines, and dig out *Curiosities of Science*.

This is a fun charade, a curiosity indeed. Though you have only a slight interest in science and the laws of nature, you give me a lesson in the fundamental fluidity of the Universe. “I like how nothing is ever set,” you tell me. “It’s so cool.” I don’t understand it at this moment, but you will softly take away all the borders from my Light and will teach me to know that there are no limits—except the ones I choose to accept.

You keep on teaching me how to name things, and by naming them, to feel them, know them, and understand them. Connecting with them makes me learn that everything can be. And with practice in personification, objects and ideas begin to have relations of their

own. They develop their own views and comprehension, obtaining liberty and freedom through the power of thought.

One day, I ask, "Listen... what if everything has always been connected? If so, who was the first to start giving words to things?" You look at me and kiss my cheek excitedly. "What an insightful question! Now you are learning. But the answer doesn't matter, my boy. Here, there are no firsts or lasts. There are too many languages. What matters is that you understand the idea that all things exist as they are named, and since the entirety of them are tied together, you are a part of this." I understand now that not only am I a part of everything but also that everything is a part of me: trees, animals, insects, every butterfly or snail, and any inanimate object created by human imagination—anything.

Together in our childhood, with our small adventures and your lessons, I slowly, deeply, and irreversibly fall in Love with you. This is not the desire or affection of the realm of grownups, or even of mortals, but that true Love that comes with true connection. It is the wish to share everything: time, emotions, thoughts, dreams, and concepts barely expressible but keenly felt by someone who has learnt from you the way the world can be, and how you can be a part of everything it is.

Love's promises always stand. The love of Life, family, and friendship are what will carry me through being an awkward, skinny kid who will not know until his Fracture that his mind is special. The way I see the mortal realm, and the way I walk my Path, are different to those of everyone else, and I realise that I will have to learn how to hide and pretend to avoid being hurt.

This is how it has to happen to manifest the lessons of my further Journey, but will it really matter that much if I have you around me? Someone I can always share the whole of myself with, learn from, cry to, care about, and protect. In your company, I feel brave, strong, limitless while at the same time vulnerable, soft, and open.

Being a trickster and troublemaker, you have also taught me the art of charm and performance, and the pure magic of seeing in people their true essence, even before they speak. I have learned to feel their Light and reach their kindness so that I do not stay angry for long, quickly shrugging off anything bad from me before it sticks.

Though you are my Forever Friend, childhood crush, and coolest of mentors, you can be strict when you need to be—when I get myself distracted and am not listening. At those times, you sit me down next to you, look into my eyes, and reach into my heart with your words, making me understand my mistakes and the importance of consciousness and discipline. This way, I master myself.

You use books and Tales to reach me, and I listen well—at least for those things that are important. Anything else—well, we both know I'll get there when I need to.

You, in your infinite Wisdom of Life, try not to break my young, growing spirit. When I go to sleep, you sit next to me and softly whisper in my ear about the future temptations and trials that the brave hero will one day have to face—first alone and then, with friends by his side.

In these moments, you always tell me honestly how challenging the Journey will be. But you always finish these stories, that soak gently into my dreams, with this encouragement, “Through these things, the Hero will become stronger. He will find his Answer, and his Life will always believe in him.”

What you have kept unspoken, leaving this to my growth in learning, is that you have given me all the necessary knowledge, guidance, and assurances to master the most important thing of all: how to recollect all the pieces of myself I was shattered into at birth through Love, compassion, connection, and my Light. There can be no other way, because all those pieces have landed in others and every manifestation of you.

Finding them, feeling their name, and accepting them will become the essence of the Journey later on. For now, though, I sleep. You kiss my forehead and quietly telling me that I should never forget the Wisdom I had as a child—that which has guided me to be good and has allowed her to come and to be here now.

With a faint sadness in your smile, you leave my bedroom quietly. Stopping at the doorway, you look back and say, ““There is not much time left for me here, in your young years. But there are still a few things I can share with you, my boy, and we shall start tomorrow.”

As she leaves, somewhere unseen, the Purple Thread joins the Blue, the Yellow, and the Golden one of Light. Something has changed this night, and something is coming.



CHAPTER 5

THE INITIATION

As changes begin, I am around thirteen. My Path is filled with marvellous events, my Light is glowing, and every tomorrow stands upon the promise of our Forever Friendship.

We are hanging out as always, yet something feels different. I cannot name it, though I will understand soon.

One day our conversation turns, unlike any we've had before. The changes have been leading us to it.

Everything I have lived so far on my Path—the knowledge she has poured into me, the experience and wisdom I've obtained, the dreams and quiet aspirations taking shape—rises as an impulse. It is less a thought than a feeling—the urge to step away from the cradle of Childhood and enter Youth.

While I sense it only vaguely, you know exactly what is happening to me.

Pauses in our conversations become longer. I catch your looks when you think I'm not watching. My Life's voice softens—soothing,

almost over-caring—and now and then I see a flash of sadness. When I ask why, you laugh it off: “It’s nothing. Nothing to worry about. This is how friendships grow. I care for you, that’s all.”

You are also becoming more insistent with our lessons, and we spend much more time discussing the future, purpose, and the relationships I build with others.

Then comes a day I remember vividly, down to each second. Life sits me beside her, giving me that familiar look that quiets the world around us.

We speak about how I have made my parents sad by sabotaging my school year. This has led to my expulsion, and I must transfer to a new school. You are not angry; there is no argument.

Calmly, you explain that I am growing up so very fast. Soon I must take my first steps onto a long, thrilling, and dangerous stretch of my Path—one which will one day lead to the Journey.

This part of the Path that is ending is not only a Chapter but my First Act. We have shared this Act together, but it now draws us towards parting.

The realisation shocks me deeply. “So much for forever, huh?” I blurt. “I understand your pain,” you say, “and why you hurt me back, my darling. It still hurts.” I pause. While almost a man, I am still a boy and I feel abandoned and betrayed, trying to understand what I have done wrong.

You rest your hand on my knee and add, “There are final lessons you need to be taught.” I turn away to hide my tears.

You wait patiently and silently while the internal tragedy inside me plays itself out. Seconds feel like an eternity. I compose myself, turn back, and whisper, “Promise you will come back.” You smile softly, wipe away my tears, and say, “Nothing can part us, my boy. You will forget our meetings during the Second Act. It happens by design;

even I cannot break it. But one day, when you reach the Lighthouse in your essence, I will fly back to reunite with you, my dear.” I barely grasp your words, yet the promise is enough. I take your hand and shake on it: “I will wait for you... and I will learn.”

And learn I do in our last years together, though it is knowledge I cannot yet use. Our secret lessons are stored in silence—another trick you devise to give me advantage in the daring days and travels ahead when I am isolated from the senses I once used to reach her.

You teach me that I am only part of myself. You teach me to look over my shoulder, to reach back, and to speak with the past me.

You teach me to reach forward—to send my mind racing with imagination into my future, and to change it with my Light. I learn to care for the future versions of myself who will be built from what I do now, in this present self.

You teach me, too, that I must learn to support, lead, and forgive my past reflections as they make their grave mistakes across the years.

You strip away the illusion of time and space for me, and for a brief moment I see all versions of the Path to come.

I see myself present in every day and every instant.

Here I am, returning to the past to tell my younger self to leave a table of strangers whose expressions seem malevolent. He leaves the place, and we have, that day, saved ourselves.

I see myself much earlier, stepping out of dreams to help my present-future self fight off demons and harboured resentments—reminding him that he is still me. He is saved.

I see my future self locked in a kind of mental prison. I reach to him and wake him up. He breaks through, a fugitive from madness, and he, in turn, helps by sending signs and hints.

As these visions course through me, you touch my forehead with two fingers and murmur, “Shhh... you don’t need all that now. Forget the facts. Hide the feeling of how it’s done. Work day by day to get there. For now, darling, forget.” And I do forget—though deep inside I feel something shift, beyond my grasp.



I AM FOURTEEN, AND WE STUDY LIKE CRAZY.

You grow impatient with my slow progress. I learn to become a Wayfarer: to see behind the Veil, to bind the right Symbols that have no expression in the mortal realm, and to use Light to reach High Concepts.

I stall, filibustering desperately to prolong the time you remain with me. Of course, Life sees it but there is little time left and much to send into my Light before the better time to come.

You get upset. I cannot bear it. I force myself to work harder. You notice, and the sparkle of joy returns to your eyes.

In the short breaks between lessons, I pepper you with a multitude of questions: “How will we meet again? Who are you truly? Where should I find you?” You look as if you would like to explain all this to me, but only say, “Kid, stop torturing me. Do you really think I wouldn’t tell you if I could?”

I keep faith with everything you have told me. At some point I leave it to blind trust. I love you, and sometimes Love asks for a silent, undeniable trust—even when it leads to partings. There is a lesson here, and I feel it.

In the summer of my fourteenth year, we are ready. Somehow, we both know it—this is the day.

We look at each other awkwardly and shyly, suddenly realising that we are not children anymore. I am already a teenager changing into a young man. You are already a beautiful young woman.

We wear jeans, stupid t-shirts, and trainers; and the eight years we have shared flash by in a second as our eyes meet again.

It is the date of my Rite of Initiation—the day of Challenge, the day the World comes to know me and I to know myself.

Without a word you take my hand and lead me to an empty road where my old house used to be.

There is not a soul around. The place feels otherworldly, a still and surreal realm. It still looks exactly like the mortal world we know yet every detail is different. At the edges of sight I can see spectres stir, their reflections moving without end while, somehow, a perfect stillness remains.

We stop in the middle of the road. You step behind me and rest a hand on my shoulder. I glance back for reassurance. You smile and nod: go on. It is time.

I reach my Light.

I fall into a trance exactly as you taught me.

I look deep within and ask myself to help me.

Images strobe and whispers rise. A heavy rotation gathers at my feet and coils around me. I feel like the centre of the planet—and I am.

The sky changes in front of me. Dense clouds mass at the horizon; distant thunder rolls through the realm and startles me. But your calm voice behind me says, “Do not be afraid. Never be afraid. Keep doing what you are doing, kid. I am here with you.”

It fills me with calm power, a gift of trust. Your presence—the still,

mirror-like waters of a tranquil lake—takes away fear, anxiety, and doubt.

In a sudden moment of complete realisation I accept myself as both a grain of sand in the desert of the Universe and, at the same time, the whole of it.

Light burns.

I raise my right hand towards the brewing storm and say quietly, “I challenge you, and in you I challenge myself, to become One and find my True Self.”

Lightning strikes at the end of the empty road. With my inner sight I see an enormous, shape-shifting Beast wake, turn its head, and fix its gaze on me.

I hear the Beast roar in contempt and anger. My head is filled with threatening voices screaming “We see you.”

Quietly, I answer. “I see you too, now.”

Vision explodes in an instant. I know this moment is felt, faintly, by many versions of me, and the shock of it resonates through everything that is me.

I will feel it later, on the interstate between Las Vegas and Los Angeles, driving through a red desert storm.

I will feel it in London, on a rooftop, watching chain lightning stride the sky.

I feel it across my life—in mountains and oceans, in dozens of cities and countries—and my friends and beloved—the people I will meet, the people I will inspire—feel it too. They stutter, they stop, they sense something important has happened, and they reach back to me through time and space, to help me then, on that road in the summer of my fourteenth year.

And, of course, you stand behind me then.

If I could see your face when the Beast shrugs and tremors, I would see pride, awe, and a bright, sparkling joy in your eyes.

I would see you look at me in excitement, celebrating your Forever Friend growing up against the odds of an impossible future challenge. Your Guidance, Wisdom, and Love have helped me overcome this first great battle—one I barely comprehend to be a battle at all.

I open my eyes and feel your presence fading. I know that if I turn back, I won't see you there.

It starts to rain. I stand in it, allowing the water to wash my memories clean. You brought me here a boy and left me there as a man.

I'm sure, though, that I hear your soothing voice before you vanish: "Remember, I am always with you. We will meet again, my boy—soon, very soon, I promise you."

What else can I do but trust you—blindly, simply—again? Love believes. It does not ask for proof.

Love does not ask for anything at all. It simply lives inside us and somehow always finds a way to join us together again.

That day, I grow up, and you leave me to find my own Path again. This is as it should be for any of us who seek our True Self.

Life is always with us, yet she is not here to build or to fix. She is here to guide, to help, and to love.

I have challenged the Beast, and now I am alone.

I return home, sleep, and forget her face for many years—but I keep inside me everything she taught me, waiting for the day it all comes back.



CHAPTER 6

THE YOUTH

I wake as an ordinary teenager. Something feels off, but it quickly slips from my mind. I throw myself into the busy reality of a young man. It is hard to explain it now, when the understanding of my True Self has returned in full, yet then it feels exactly as it should.

Do not blame me. After the Rites, we cannot keep Life with us. It is intended; it is the law, and even she cannot trick her way around it. Mortals are meant to feel the vacuum—to walk a stretch of the Path, our Second Act, alone—and face all it has to offer.

All my years and days lie in front of me, yet as someone has cruelly wiped her from the picture, it is only me. It feel strange, like a fever dream, but do not blame me. After the Rites, we cannot keep Life with us. It is intended; it is the law, and even she cannot trick her way around it. Mortals are meant to feel the vacuum—to walk a stretch of the Path, our Second Act, alone—and face all it has to offer.

There is only me left under the tree—only me reading, playing, wandering. But her lessons have become things I feel I have always known—marbles gathered in the gardens of Childhood.

But what am I to do with what remains—my feelings; my Love for her? I have nobody to connect with, yet my Light still reaches out, only into a void instead of your hands. I have nothing else to fill it.

Yet someone else stands there when, at fourteen, I challenge the Beast: the World.

The World is old and wise and does not count years. He is neither good nor bad nor neutral. He simply exists, like most things beyond our mortal comprehension, and we understand him through Personification. We are the ones who give him the qualities that define him for each of us.

My challenge to the Beast amuses him, and he has an assistant set an Appointment for me. He takes up the game and gives me time, inspiration, and toys to test my determination, resilience, and will.

None of us is able to resist the allure of his diversity or the satisfaction of interacting with him. So, after my Rite of Initiation, the Appointment is set. But for now, let us see what the kid will do in the eight years after that rainy day. I must grow and mature a little. The World can be anything, but he is also a businessman, and business people do not deal with children.

Growing up not just without Life but, soon, without our parents holding our hand, our families, and close childhood friends, is a test as well. How will each of us behave when we become truly alone and responsible for ourselves?

How will we spend the golden talents of Childhood—beliefs, memories, dreams—when we find ourselves in the cities of our older years?

Whom shall we choose as the companions and dear friends to whom we give our Love? And will we be able to receive the Love they offer us in return?

Almost no one manages it, yet that, too, is as it should be.

Youth, my new good friend at the time, thinks we are immortal. He is reckless, risky, spectacular, and hungry for pleasure. He is the most joyful drunk in the pub, a lover and a gambler, a poet and an artist. He is eternally free of responsibilities, obligations, and is unaware of grey and mundane days. Since meeting after college, we have good times together while I study at university.

What I remember most of these years is how suddenly we begin to seek Light in others instead of reaching it within ourselves.

We fly to other people's shine like fireflies attracted to a lamp, and, like these poor creatures, we burn in the flames of other people's passions, whims, and games.

We are also this flame, but, somehow, we never notice how we burn other mortals. We only suffer or enjoy the Light of others.

Another thing we rarely notice is when our inner Light dims, outshone by our attraction to peers. In the race for joy and pleasure, we forget who we are, blinded by the fires of others searching for themselves, just as we are. In consequence, we cast a longer, darker Shadow.

We are often blind, young fools. I know this, because then I am one of them—unable to see the black coat growing across my shoulders. Worse, I wear it with pride.

Once we are deep in this new existence, we learn to hear what drives people, what they seek, and what their dreams and aspirations are. Somewhere within, we feel how everyone is choosing between camps, taking their places in certain hearts.

We must remember, though, that One is the True Self. While bereft of Life and Friendship, we must feel keenly that keeping our promise—preserving the Light and holding the Path straight—is paramount to our reunion. The Journey will come; it will shine, and we will

return to the Quest of reassembling the pieces of our broken souls, temporarily interrupted.

This is why we are here; this is where the Path leads. We remember her promise deep in our hearts and know that when she returns, we want to meet her as she left us: good, kind, naive, and wise. We want to remain Children, who despise stale norms. We want to run to her and embrace her, babbling how much we have missed her, rejoicing for tomorrow till the dawn.

Many of us falter in the days ahead and lose ourselves in the thousand voices and seductions that provide another Promise. It whispers to us of quick pleasures, proven plans, sure bets, and easy living. We all listen; there are few saints who have not been their opposite. But sinners, just like saints, can change again.

We need to know the other part of the offer. Whatever we choose later, we often must try both ways so our decision is sincere, meaningful, and weighted.

As the years pass and the winds of our days toss us between these two courses, the World waits patiently.

Because he is sometimes bored, when he sees one of us struggling or daring to oppose his power, he throws us more riches—emotion, discovery, affirmation. And if we truly anger him, he may withdraw them and punish us, to see how strong we really are.

When we are young and alone, without Life's guidance, it becomes a cat-and-mouse game. He knows it, and so do we.

But he is not the villain, that bored old King—he is not evil. His role is to test us, and he is very good at it.

Remember, if you have been Initiated and caught the World's attention, he keeps your record. He knows your ways and watches them change while he waits. So yes, he will try you, and probably he will prevail, but do not be discouraged.

Whatever comes, the Youth, the Draft, and the Fracture make up your Act Two. They are designed to make you fall so that you can learn from mistakes for what follows. Remember, there are no saints or sinners who haven't, at one time, been on the other's side. Truth favours those who Love Life in her reflection and, even when she is not near, still sing her hymn, experiencing all she has to give us so we can then learn to tell oranges from lemons.



CHAPTER 7

THE APPOINTMENT

My day comes in my early twenties. Almost eight years after my Initiation, the time for an Appointment arrives, and I must meet the World himself.

I am walking through a big city, a little hungover yet happy after last night's party. Work pays well and I like the people around me. Things are good indeed. The sun is shining, and the plan is simple: find food, call friends, and sign up for another booze-fest filled with jokes, brags, and attention ping-pong.

I take the bliss. I think I am living, and that everyone around me likes me.

I turn a corner and, all at once, time and space slow. A quick, quiet whisper reaches me: "Careful now. Remember... remember. You will need it, my boy. It is time."

I freak out and half-panic but try to play it cool and keep walking. What happens next is beautiful and mesmerizing—and also one of the most dangerous things that has ever happened to me to this point.

When the World's Appointment comes, you are Summoned. You cannot run, cannot hide, cannot stop. Your feet follow the route until it leads you to his Today's Palace—his ever-changing residence that can take any form, in any place he wishes.

You cannot refuse a Summon, and no power can break it. You will arrive and you will have your meeting.

Except, well... (even now I can hear her, oh Life, chuckle. My lovely troublemaker! I have borrowed too many of your habits, your words, your ways of thinking, haven't I?) ...the Summon cannot control what happens down the road, can it?

When I feel the Appointment Spell press down on my will and my feet start to carry me towards the Place, I truly panic. In desperation, after failing to stop my steps, I reach inside to something hidden long ago and waiting.

My instinct calls for the Light.

It is enough.

As I pass an alley, a hand yanks my shoulder. I almost pitch off the pavement in Kyiv into a bright, blinding flash—and I collide with a man in a suit, about sixty, who grips my hand and pushes me forward.

One look and I know that this is me from the future. I cannot help swearing. The older me shakes his head: "Keep moving, lad. The Spell needs to see you walking. We have little time—walk, damn it!"

We hurry past cafés and shops on Rue Saint-Dominique. In a thick British accent, he rattles instructions: "You will get there anyway—nothing breaks this Spell. We tried. But we have a little time, enough to jam a hint or two into that thick skull of yours."

I swear again in shock as my feet keep marching.

The older me sighs. “Oh dear, I forgot we had no manners when we were you. Listen and remember. Do not agree to anything the World offers. Whatever he promises, however good it sounds—it is illusion. Come on, do not let us down. Hear what the others have to say.”

He shoves me into another side street. I stumble, and a new hand catches my elbow.

This man is in his mid-thirties. I actually look quite cool. “Hello...” I manage, which makes him chuckle. “You know the drill,” he says. “Keep walking. You cannot stop.” This man is cheerful and fun, but his eyes already have lines, and he carries a burden deep down. I cannot tell what that is, but he is right—it’s not the time. We are walking from the Marriott Marquis to the InterContinental in San Francisco as the annual GDC is in full heat.

“Do not drink or eat anything at this meeting,” he warns. “If you do, it will change you in ways you do not need. It is the same as agreeing to his rules. Do not.” I nod and answer, “Got it. Hey...” I notice his jersey. “Are we working at the—?!” He gives me a look and rolls his eyes, smirking. “We kind of are... but you will not understand. We do not have time, kid. Off you go, and all the best.” He pushes lightly into my back as we approach the hotel, steering me into the car-park entrance.

Another flash. I stumble into someone; he catches me and sets my stride. He is older—around forty—jaded, scarred, smelling of bourbon. Yet his movements are sharp, disciplined and he shows signs of training I never thought I would acquire.

“Come on—walk. You need to walk, kid.”

“Where are we?” I ask. “Dallas,” he says. “What does it matter, though? Listen. When you refuse him the first time, he will promise to return your memories if you agree to serve him. Do not.”

“Why?” I blurt, astonished to hear I have lost my memories.

He looks at me like I'm an idiot, lighting a cigarette as we walk. "You are not ready. It is a trap. You will need me as well. I'm closer to it. We must earn our own return. It only works through work. Now go."

Another flash throws me back to Kyiv. My feet carry me towards a casino that looks abandoned; its doors stand open. Before I reach them, a voice growls, "Not so fast!"—and another blast consumes me.

This man is very old yet full of energy. His eyes shine green, as bright as when we were children. We are in a town in England's Lake District. He takes my elbow and guides me down a narrow village street.

He mutters quickly, "You do not remember. We have Challenged... someone. We all did. It is not him. He is just excited by you. There are things to come, both good and bad. You need to know." He has to take a breath before he can continue. "If you withstand this trial then there will be a price. Don't be afraid. She never taught us fear. That is not you. Trust her. Keep trusting her."

At a little sidewalk he stops. I feel the next portal coming. He hugs me by both shoulders for a heartbeat. "You will be fine. This is only the beginning. We will be seeing you."

Another flash—and I fall through the dimension where my old home is located, back to when I am nine.

I catch the eye of the young me for a few seconds. He smiles, happily talking to someone invisible beside him: "Of course I remember what you taught me. Everything is interconnected. Light and Love unite us across times, spaces, and lives."

Shocked, I fall through the open doors of the Casino of the World.

I am flustered and flabbergasted, but I am also prepared for what is to come.



CHAPTER 8

THE WORLD

It is dark, chilly, and half empty. Interestingly, when I enter there are mostly staff and only a few clients. I make an effort to steady my breath and take everything in, trying to prepare for what comes next.

A young woman approaches, strict with a seal of professional contempt. Hips swaying, eyes bored, she glances down at her organiser and then back up at me. “Right... it’s you. Follow me. The boss is waiting.” I follow her down the hallway, looking around as a I go to try and figure this place out.

At first, it looks empty. It’s only when I pay closer attention that I see them: hundreds of spectres at the tables, playing craps and roulette. They are laughing, drinking, hugging and kissing—having the time of their lives.

As they play, though, they age with every bet they lose and then crumble into ash, only to be replaced by others in a never-ending spree of changing faces, bodies, and souls. I lower my voice as we walk, asking the lady, “What is going on with them?”

“They play with Life the way they like,” she says. “They buy our chips then bet them away.”

“Can they win?” I ask, unable to stay silent. She stops, turns, and laughs. It takes a second for her to recover her composure. “Win? The Casino always wins, dear.”

“Then what is the point?” I press in frustration. She points to the spectral crowd. “Don’t you see? They are happy—the happiest that humans can be. Come on, we are almost there. He does not like mortals who arrive late.”

She opens a large, richly decorated wooden door. I step inside.



I MEET THE WORLD IN PERSON. MANY OF YOU PROBABLY HAVE AS WELL—you just do not remember it.

He is an older, nice-looking gentleman with a beard. He wears a sharp suit and looks exactly like the rich uncle you always wished you had in your life. As I enter, the World scans his notes and calls me by name. Approaching, he delivers a firm handshake, tapping my right shoulder as he does. “Oh my—look at you. What a fine man has grown from the awkward teen I remember eight years ago!”

He studies me with a touch of compassion, noticing the hangover. “A drink, perhaps? I know you like a good Scotch. Refined taste for someone on your current income, I must say, but we can fix that.”

I glance at the barrage of bottles behind his bar—each worth more than my annual salary—and gulp. “I will pass. Why am I here?”

He looks surprised for a moment, then smooths it away. “Because you have an Appointment, of course. Let us say you have been through... particular circumstances. A certain frivolous, charming

lady persuaded you into choices you may now wish to, shall we say, amend.”

A flicker. Those eyes. That voice. Lightning. I do not quite remember, but I feel who sits opposite. He smiles to himself. “Good. You sense the weight of the moment. That will make this easier. Please, sit.”

He folds his hands and begins. “I will not insult your intelligence or play games. I will be candid. You have got yourself into trouble.”

“Trouble?” I echo, assuming I have offended him.

The World shakes his head. “Do not flatter yourself. This was supposed to go another way. You merely had to call me. Instead, you reached...”—he chews his lip—“another Being. It saw you coming.”

“And?”

“I can help.”

He continues, almost kindly. “Look, I can respect this—only rare mortals manage such a thing. It even deserves a measure of admiration. But I also see waste. That Being will chew you up. I can buy your contract and save you from the imminent end.”

I shrug. “I appreciate it. Truly. But I do not think I am the right material.”

He lifts an eyebrow. “Oh really? Look at the facts, boy. For eight years you have cashed in my chips—drinks, one-night stands, money, parties. I think you are material indeed. You can have it all!”

I tilt my head towards the hall. “Like those parties out there in the hall?”

He sighs, faintly disappointed. “Do you think I spend my personal time on any of them? No. I mean the real thing. Work with me. I can use someone like you—hungry, ambitious, well trained, a little

rough around the edges, with some... questionable influences. Learn from me. Learn from the best!"

For a second I forget to breathe. Working for the World himself. It sounds like somebody's dream job.

"What's the catch?"

He waves it off with a jest. "No catch. A different Path, a different future. It saves trouble—for me, for you, and for..." he mutters into his collar, "someone else."

He leans forward. "You will have what you need to support my vision, keep order, run the establishment as it should be run. The World requires managers, professionals, runners. Imagine the heights you could reach."

I understand now. If I accept, I give away my Path and rewrite my way. Another thought strikes—he believes I can do as he asks. Perhaps, then, I can, myself, prevail. My inner Light resonates in response. He notices and sighs with irritation and disappointment.

"Why must everything be so complicated?" He studies me. "Listen, I know what bothers you—even if you don't. You are more than you think. Someone is playing you. You are dormant; you do not remember what you can be. Just say the word. Accept the opportunity I offer. One call and you will be restored. Perhaps I can explain your dire situation..."

He hesitates—impatient, almost pleading—and I silently thank my other selves for their help. Something inside tells me the offer is sincere but, as the Dallas-me warned, it is premature to gain by gift what I am meant to earn by work—whatever that work is.

"Sir," I say quietly, "with respect, I cannot."

He explodes to his feet. "Why am I wasting time on you, stupid

mortal? How dare you be so ungrateful when I am fixing the mess you made? You deny my generosity, my help?”

The full weight of hierarchy slams down. The World’s authority—the fear of death, exclusion, rejection that can come from disobedience—presses on my shoulders like a hundred-ton weight.

The Light shines brightly.

I have never been able to follow plans, even my own. I have despised structure and never liked society’s prompts. Or perhaps the Child in me stamps his small feet and makes that face again, insisting on what he truly wants. Or maybe someone from my past—someone I can’t remember right now—has taught me to stay true to who I am and not to fear anything?

I rise, meet his eyes, and simply say, “No.”

A tremor runs through the Casino walls. The World draws a long breath, calms himself, and sits. He regards me with anger, yet also with some degree of respect.

“Very well. I tried. I cannot make you consent. I cannot punish you either. You are under another Spell—one that silently protects you. But I can add a thing or two to your education,” he mutters. “If she can, why cannot I?”

“Who?” I ask. He ignores it, changing the subject. “As I was saying, your education. If you throw a gauntlet at an ancient order, I can at least make sure you are better prepared for your Journey.” I’m confused but he disregards this. “Do not think about it. I will give you ‘just enough.’”

His smile turns malicious—the World cannot resist a touch of vindication, it seems. “You will never fall too low in terms of my gifts. I’m talking about money, fame, success, and power. But I will keep you close to those who were smart enough to take my favour. You will not remember this encounter, but every day you will feel you could

have done much more with me. Good exercise for endurance. And a little show for me to watch.”

I bow my head and accept. What else can I do? I can almost feel it already: I will almost get to the top of what mortals call success, then fall again, eating myself alive trying to name the curse for fourteen long years.

Yet I can feel that my Light is still with me. It shines warmly now, as if someone near is grateful for my choice and who gives me Love. It is enough to carry on and gather myself. If he says I could manage for him, I can manage this. I will take it.

He looks at me—half-hidden, curious—and murmurs, “You little brat...”

He snaps his fingers. The room spirals. In a second, I am on a bench outside, blinking hard and trying to catch my breath. I don’t know how I got here, or what time it is. I do not understand.

Yet, for some reason, I feel good.

It is another day I will not remember, like the other days marked by meetings with immortals, until I can call to my Lighthouse and begin my Journey.

I sit there, staring ahead, unaware of the dozen years of fracture, trials, and tribulations building on the horizon like a tsunami. I don’t care.

Those will be the years I start meeting my people—those who carry parts of my soul, and for whom I hold parts of theirs. Those years will draw us closer, my Dear Life.

I do not know that. I feel it. And that works just fine for me.



WHAT I WILL NEVER KNOW IS THAT THE MOMENT I VANISH FROM THE World's office, he leans back, pours a drink, and says, "You cheated, Niece."

Life appears, smiling with far too much satisfaction, humming to herself. She drops onto the sofa, snatches a bag of crisps from the table, and says, "Not technically, Uncle. He reached for the Light himself, you know."

"How?" he snaps. "Life, what are you doing? Why? Is this not too much, even for your never-ending tricks?"

She giggles, unable to hide her excitement. "He reached for the Light. His future selves are already halfway along the Path. They can connect. It is not forbidden."

The World mutters, "Oh, of course. I guess he simply gained a sudden insight into the sacred knowledge buried beneath the dormant mortal casting."

She shrugs, playing dumb. "How would I know, Uncle?"

The World looks suddenly tired. Instead of arguing, he waves the question away. After a moment he asks, "You like him, don't you?"

She pauses, stops chewing, considering her answer. "He is a good kid. A good friend."

The World holds her gaze. She rolls her eyes. "A good friend. I am happy his Light is with him and that, somehow, he is still following the Path that is his."

The World shrugs. "This is merely the beginning, girl. Are you sure you want to drag him through all that? If you like him so much, you could spare him the nonsense—give him a good career with me, a safe retirement plan..."

You give him a long, smiling look, rise, dash to the desk, kiss the

World on the cheek, and say, “I have to run, Uncle—urgent, urgent. Thank you for... well, trying to help in the way you think best, but...”

He bristles. “But?”

Life turns at the door. “Do you not see? I believe in him. I truly do. He will make it. He does not need help.”

As you vanish, the World keeps staring at the empty space you just occupied then smiles with a touch of amusement. “Oh, niece... I hope you know what you are doing.” He walks to the window and looks down at me, still sitting vacantly on the bench.

The World shakes his head grumpily. “Not one but two little brats. Do not let her down, boy. Do not let her down.”



CHAPTER 9

THE DRAFT

From all the strange corners of our Journey, we arrive at me—the Storyteller. This is the strangest chapter.

It still doesn't make perfect sense as I write, and yet it is the most important part of our Path.

It's middle age for us mortals. We build what looks like our life yet later along the Path, it appears entirely different. The Draft holds our mistakes, delusions, misconceptions, false promises, and narrations led astray. We crowd the stage with too many characters, break chapters badly, wander clumsily from the main line, let passages float, and see no clear structure.

And still, the Draft hides some of the most essential, defining, and beautiful pages. It contains key messages and moments we will be proud of and which will emerge to lead the final manuscript.

I'm always amazed by how little we understand, while the Draft is in progress, the true essence and importance of the story we are building. We drift astray, distracted by flow. We move on hunches,

dazzled by the flash of the Tale-in-progress. While doing so, we miss the main idea of the plot.

This is the chapter where I'm most alone—yet led by Light I gather my fractured pieces.

It's also the chapter where true miracles happen, though I won't recognise them until much later in the Act.

This chapter leads me through fourteen years of confusion but, at the same time, through all the key points.

This is the chapter where I create my realm and, with it, a multitude of my reflections—selves I'll have to reach to help, confront, heal, consult, learn from, and regain. Those we create while the Draft is written are also fractured pieces of our soul.

For a long time, before finding the Answer, I thought the Draft to be my life's trials and tribulations. But the Draft is a story, writing itself as I move, and I couldn't be more wrong.

Before an adventure starts, it has to take place somewhere. We must shape our heroes, masks, and adversaries; build dangerous pitfalls and mighty Symbols; create raw concepts and name them; pour out our Light and imagination to make a quick, playful game of parables and powers; and sketch a map for the Journey we'll take.

This is the Draft.

Is it an illusion? Made of cloud-castles and houses of cards? Is it a fad, a daydream hanging between our Youth and 'real life'?

What, though, is an illusion, my dear listener, if not another of the infinite reflections with a possibility of truth? And what is truth, then, if not a past illusion that has been taken as an opportunity for faith?

We run way too fast while the Draft is being written. We look forward, failing to also look around or up. It's forbidden to look back

while the story is being told. Do so and the story turns to stone and salt.

So, we fly forward. We spread our wings, we try, and we dare. We challenge laws and rules while we write the Draft. That's how it's done. Editing belongs to the future. For now, we run.

Like all good drafts, mine is written in trance.

In the dance between our fractured selves, Light, Life, Death, Darkness, Shadow, the World, and the Companions slowly begin to manifest.

Like any good Draft, mine contains the important days and twists, the key events and turns. Bu also like any Draft, they aren't fleshed out or comprehended the way they will be later.

I write through feeling rather than thought. I miss the significance of chapters, even while surrendering to Love and bringing another bright, brave little Light to join our Path from Darkness.

So, it is me, alone—as always happens in crowds. The more people around us, the more we lose ourselves.

My past and future friends are all around me even now. Some join the Path as people; some watch invisibly and help quietly when help is needed. They are not guides, exactly, but they intervene when absolutely necessary.

We are still children, then, except that we've lost our Wisdom. While we make the mistakes we must for the Journey to come, sometimes we wander too far. It is then when we are helped.

My future Quest and Journey are drawn, prepared, described, sketched and, I imagine, discussed by the Universe in action, with laughter, a few arguments, and some surprising ideas.

The scenery is set with Life, my Forever Friend and guide, the director of this play. Participants from all worlds, spaces, and times

learn their roles and rehearse. There I am, too—at the time a clueless prop artist, placing everything around for my next Act.

In this chapter, I'm disconnected from my lessons and true feelings. I remember neither future nor past meetings with immortal friends. But my Light is still there, if somewhat dormant, being soothed by the modest work of my little part on the stage.

Each of my selves across the ocean of timelines is far from me. We can't speak in these years. They aren't offended by where I am; they know how it is. We all know—we've all been there.

For now, this guy—me—is busy making a Draft with every action, word, decision, dream, mistake, and choice he moves through.

There is still the calm, shy beauty of your presence, my dear Life—the sense of Love, the faint feeling of my real self. It never leaves me.

Miracles happen.

Looking back, I see them now and I'm astonished by the power of those days. I know you were there throughout the Draft, Forever Friend. I felt it. But as we worked, you couldn't reveal yourself to me as you once did. This, too, is intentional. Mortals need this strange seclusion in our lonely freedom to learn how incomplete we are. Only through that experience do we learn to join pieces of the Universe together to gain knowledge, connect with Love, and reinforce our Light.

I'm still fractured. As, indeed, is she who split herself into parts so that, together, we could Draft a plot in which we meet again.

You are my passion, my still-sleeping voice, and vocation. You are ever-present in my working days and nights as I learn to manifest through art and stories. As long ago, you stand near, right hand at my shoulder, quietly teaching and reassuring me. You help me remember what you taught. I hold to those lessons as I learn again to

write. When I make progress, it brightens my Chromatic Thread. I reinforce the Light that gathers gravity.

You are my beautiful, caring, amazing Spouse, bringing calm into my Journey and gifting me with your Love. As we become one, a Little Light enters the realm and lives with us—my son, whose trust and constant growth I receive with wonder. I see him sometimes speaking to someone unseen. Later I will wonder how you look to him, and what you teach. When I meet my Spouse, the Red Thread shines into my main Chromatic spectrum and I am restored by Unconditional Love.

You are my Best Friend, making sure I stay who I am. You stand with me in every adventure, reminding me daily to be brave. One day, she, like you, simply shows up as herself and says we're Best Friends now, and that she'll be back tomorrow, and she is. We walk roads, play, fight, learn, plan, go. Every day is another playground and sandbox. When I meet Best Friend, the Green Thread shines into my main Chromatic spectrum. I am restored by Friendship Love.

You are reflected in my mother, father, family, companions, adversaries, and strangers. As the Draft is built, each of them gives me something through the pages.

Whatever form their gifts take, Love is there between the lines—even when it isn't obvious at first. You are with me, dear Life; you teach patiently and make sure I don't stray too far from the Light. Behind a hundred faces, things, and concepts, you guide my hands as I write the Draft.

It's a good one.

While I admit that I've been reckless, bragging loudly, being too rash for my own good and a risky troublemaker, you never taught me fear, so I haven't been afraid. I have built my Draft across dozens of countries, thousands of people, and millions of dreams, Life, with your help—and the help of others—it will be a good story to tell.

It is full of drama and comic relief, dangerous and unexpected twists, and almost every trick you taught me on that bench by our house and later, quietly, as you guided my Path into Storytelling. Its plot is honest, sincere, and compelling. Around my forties, there's nothing more to add to the blueprint. I feel we're reaching the full stop.

The real story has to start now. But what is a good story, listener?

For the Storyteller, it's a story with no beginning and no end—a hard challenge for wit and imagination. But there is an answer, though. As the Draft approaches its conclusion, we need a parable device and metaphoric twist that curves the narrative back to where it belongs.

I have to end with a harsh trial, completely outside of the narrative, to break the Draft's sleep and, at the same time, contribute to the plot—granting the character a complete perspective.

I have, therefore, devised the Fracture.



CHAPTER 10

THE FRACTURE

We are living inside a story we're building as it unfolds.

We are guided Storytellers. While it goes, it leads us through the First Draft and one day we learn to take hold of it.

Once you learn to write your own Draft, you quickly realise how hard it is to start—and how impossible it is to plan a good one. But once the first lines appear, it can only flow, dragging you with it.

There is a pitfall, though, and every writer knows it. You mustn't break the trance while the Draft is pouring onto the page. Editing while the story is being told will make it break.

There is, though, a fine, almost invisible line between Draft and Edit, and we are all seduced by the immersive world of imagination to remain in the trance forever.

We become like our characters. We fall in love with the World we built but most of all, we love ourselves with our role and the state of flow that gives the illusion of control, false comfort, and belonging. Thus, we seek to delay endings.

Yet for the story to become what it must, we need the courage to withdraw, disassociate, and return to it with fresh eyes. We have to manifest a Fracture and an ending. We need to break, and break down, to gain a new perspective. Our life works the same way.

I devise my Fracture at forty-two. My Draft is done, but I cling to it.

The vision of the Hero I have built is too attractive and too dramatic, bold, confused, adventurous, and deep. The world building sprawls across geographies; the characterisation is rich. It's an epic painting—the masterpiece of everything life can give.

The story is amazing. It contains love, conflict, war, betrayal, friendship, ambition, power struggle, and passion. There are soaring peaks and total downfalls. There is mystery and truth, and, of course, there are lies.

There is also a problem. I'm starting to see how it ends: the Hero dies.

It would be a beautiful finale—one the listener definitely deserves. It would have lessons to be learned. People would remember it for weeks, perhaps even months.

I like some parts more than others, and I keep returning to them way too often, trying to tweak elements through conversations. I reach back and rewrite parts. I spend too much time throwing myself into the Draft and, to be candid, I'm getting stuck in it.

Here's another truth all Storytellers know: once a story is drafted, the Edit can make it very different. You shouldn't marry the Draft you have at this point, especially when the red flags are there: problems with the ending, partial edits, and chasing flow just for the sake of it.

While being among the bravest people in the world, Storytellers can at the same time be horribly superstitious, procrastinating, and unsure. When we believe that we need a Fracture, we won't make

one. We merely realise that it has to happen and then, thinking of it, wait for it to manifest. We reach for Light and hope for our resolution, our Answer. We form pleas and expectations. We look for the Fracture—and it comes.

So I did.

And it came.

And it hit hard, through escalating waves of trouble, frustration, and despair.

I know the game. I know where this is going. My Fracture grows through friction and arguments. They create a perfect moment where stars align to wake me so I will break out, step down, and follow my arc through hurt and pain to find a new balance and revelation.

It comes.

I'm in a hotel, late at night. It's my moment of truth—my Fracture.

It's 4:56 a.m. There's an empty Scotch bottle on the table alongside an empty pizza box. My thoughts are raw and sore.

I realise that the last weeks, months—perhaps the whole of the last four years—have been leading here. Decisions now have to be made.

You're standing there, unseen, leaning against the wall, one foot up, arms folded, head tilted, and smiling slightly with a look of curiosity.

I remember everyone who loves me, thinking of the small moments I've been missing—ones that remind me of the best in me. I think of the Love I've given, and the Love I'm asked to give in return.

I understand the Draft is over. It's right here. The Chromatic Thread shines. The story builds through cycles of decisions. I've been torn, but now I feel again and know what should be done.

I reach for Light. Through the Edit I grow more sincere in my storytelling and follow the magic realism that has always been there for a better twist. My Hero stands and straightens himself.

At 4:58 a.m., exactly two minutes later, he hears your quiet laughter in the room as you nod in approval then vanish, leaving him to think, to step back and see the full picture, and to watch all the puzzles click into one whole.

Right now, I understand exactly where I am: almost at the end of the Second Act, and I am about to fold.

The little miracle that the Fracture can provide is a brief, electric flash within our inner self. It severs us from what we have learned to call the only reality, the only possible story—and it frees us from the trance.

It also brings the distance into view, giving us room to stop, take a deep breath and seize the moment, and begin to remember what it really is to live.

The Fracture is not the end of the Draft.

I will tell you a secret we Storytellers almost never share because the revelation comes at a price we can barely put into words, and which feels so personal it hurts.

If you are working on the true story—The Story—it only becomes clear only when your hands are down that the true story is the Tale, and it never ends. The Draft merely sets things up, establishes characters, sets the background and the past, plants mysteries to be revealed, and hints at the plot twists to come.

But the Tale never goes where we intend. I see you smiling at me again, Life, rolling your eyes a little as you always do when I talk about something obvious to you as some kind of revelation.

Still, you know me better than I know myself. I still get excited by these things as if we are still kids. Light shines, Love calls, and you shake your head in slight amusement, content and happy, staying close at every turn our Path takes.

I ask myself, "What should I do next?"

You murmur quietly, "My boy, it is time to build."



CHAPTER II

THE BEACON

The Light shines. Love flows. I remember Life, first vaguely through dreams and recollections—a striking figure; a spectre in the fog. But I know there is someone who once promised to return.

In inspiration born out of hesitation, I reach for the Light more often—almost daily—to gain clarity and earn insight to see her face and hear her voice, and the laughter of figures that I see on restless nights. I start to see your silhouette in every reflection. I am obsessed, needing more Light. Guided by an honest, naive feeling, I walk from the dark, so long night into the day's sunlight.

Your Light is the key, Life is the guide, and Love is what connects everything together. I'm at the chapter where this is my law. It has taken years of searching and work on myself to bring me to the point where I finally understand what I'm looking for.

You once said, when we were children, "You have it all from the moment you are born." Only now do I feel the Wisdom in those words. I know the Light. I have the Love. I look for you. It is enough to take the first steps and advance from there.

I start reviewing the Draft, seeing things from different perspectives, editing and shaping the chapters ahead. I slowly start to see your face again, Forever Friend. My Hero makes amends, rebuilding bridges and learning to accept help. He sees the Love of his Spouse, Passion, Best Friend, Little Light, and many others—and through that Love he averts his end.

He dwells on his past to learn lessons, learn forgiveness, and learn to help himself from the advice given. He is reaching forward, learning how to listen and understands how the actions he has made in the past will impact him in the future. He is trying hard to step away from Darkness, which guided him in the trials of the Draft, and find a way to master the Light he carries to build a future that can last.

I live through the chapters I write, and with each step I move closer to insight. One night, I stand at Home and look to the stars above me. One shines. It reaches for my Light. As they meet, I hear a quiet voice say, “It is time to build,” and my mind answers.

I need to build a Beacon.

A Beacon is a concept which shifts its shape, being different for everyone and requiring each of us to manifest our own Symbols.

What it does, though, is the same for each of us, and simple: it forms, focuses, and amplifies your Light across time, space, and the dimensions of the mortal realm. The Light goes to a strange place with no name that holds all of the realms together.

You need to want to share your inner Light. You need to be fearless, a cheerful troublemaker, to dare to split your mind. You need to find something that will defy the structure of space and time.

For me, the Beacon is the voice I have developed—the Tale you are reading, shared by a thousand hands. What is it for you? You will have to find it. It is, as I say, different for everyone, my friend, but in the end it is always about Light, Love, and Life.

That evening I go to bed early. My Beacon shines. Light travels into the night. It reaches a place I will never forget: the Home of Light.

It is a never-ending ocean of quicksilver, forming concepts and forms that dissolve faster than you can notice, beneath skies so deep and high that there are no words to describe them.

Beacons are hard to make, and the key to building one is being sincere—embracing who you are with all your faults and flaws included. How can you be complete if you are missing the pieces of you that were assembled through times of growth? Sincerity is the key to recollection. Acceptance stops you pretending and hiding from your Childhood, and lets you feel what you felt on your Initiation day: the spark, the lightning, the courage, the sense of departure, the hand on your shoulder, the rain, the tiny jolt as the planet turns under your feet.

Ignite! Reach! Feel your Light expand.

Gather all your stories, songs, coincidences, and all the Signs that you have felt guide you along the Path. Remember the star-lit skies and your feelings about it—it will mark the destination, provide a map, and give a compass. Don't be surprised to realise that time and space make no sense here—they are mortal categories, friend. Allow yourself to slip beyond the definitions that have held you back. Defy the norms; let faith flow through your hands like sand.

When you notice an absence, you will gain presence. You will slip into free, still, and instant flight. Across the infinities of the possible you move, naked and lost but free and liberated—carried by Light to the destination.

You will encounter things that make so much sense yet for which you have no words. Does that matter, though? As a student of Life, begin to Name them, Personify them, connect, and watch reality assemble itself. What shall you see, fellow liberated spirit, who has

been held hostage to the trials of the Path? Whatever appears holds the answer. They restore you, including the hidden past.

This is how and when you see her face and remember every meeting with every immortal being. You will regain the knowledge of Childhood—every moment, all she taught, all you lack. And among stars and a newborn realm you will hear her again: “Welcome back...”

Feel your Light. Call to your Light. Touch your Light.

As your Light meets the light of the star, guide your voice towards the voice of Life you hear. Amplification happens as they meet. The Light grows; it travels far, farther, and farther still.

The feeling is strange at first, then you feel her hand in yours. Let Life lead you back to your passions like she once taught you. Let her faith in you guide your Light.

It will all be reflected in a single flash through Storytelling, through your voice, through painting or sculpting, or through a friend’s poem or a Spouse’s dream. It will find its way through every Symbol anyone has ever named and touched with the Love of their Light. It will add to the picture you have built.

In that fascinating convergence, you will see the Universe being born and shining. And if it does, then it means that your Light has arrived. Blink. Look around. Search for it now.

There is only one stable structure in the never-ending quicksilver ocean of shape-changing concepts, images, and glimpses: the sum of all variant timelines, all developments, and all memories ever created.

The Lighthouse.

The Beacon shines.

Your Light reaches Home.

They meet.

Behold the moment.



CHAPTER 12

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The Lighthouse stands above the silver ocean, a tall tower crowned with a Prism. This Prism is you—or rather, a copy of your True Self—kept for the eternity of the Universe and which evolves as you travel along your infinite Path.

It doesn't hold your Light; it's a form. Your Light is with you, though it's here where it was born.

When the Beacon is lit, your Light reaches the Lighthouse and fires the Prism—connecting past, present, and future, the possible and impossible—reflecting Light to every broken piece of your true self across any distance in a split second.

All versions of you—everything Love connects you to—are reached by this Light of yours, and they feel it.

It's impossible to describe the sensation when you see your Path—when you gain understanding and grasp how to become whole. On that day you understand that what we call time, space, order, chaos—and so many other concepts—are simply guardrails.

They're mere simplifications: primitive tools that help us shape and explain the early years of our lives.

Once the connection happens, you never feel alone again. You feel an overwhelming sense of belonging to everything that can exist. You will never feel trapped again, seeing the infinity that isn't locked into the limited alternatives of our current knowledge.

How can it be?

Because knowledge is also infinite. We'll never comprehend it all—and that's wonderful, because there are always new things, places, and concepts to explore.

It's the liberation of the highest order—a calm, tranquil acceptance that comes only from the realisation of how to reach the Whole while remaining a part of it at the same time.

The Lighthouse is also a Symbol of guidance. It lifts the restrictions that kept my Forever Friend, Life, from appearing again in the form I knew in Childhood. While she's always with me along the Path in reflections and parables, through masks and metaphors, and in the coincidences of allegory, she's now free to reveal herself in person and to guide as a friend.

Once your Prism is lit, she can, and will, return and reveal her presence. My Beacon shines at forty-three; my Lighthouse lights; my Light is known in the Universe. She's back—standing near—and telling me to tell you how we met again.



I'M COMING BACK TO MY SENSES. THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED. A GINGER whirlwind, screaming with joy, lifts me off the ground. The two green projectors of her eyes lock on mine. "How are you, kid?" she asks, helping me up. All I can say is, "You're back..." We talk for hours, recollecting. Tomorrow has come again. In fact, it never left.

I'm looking at you. You look thirty-something, yet you're still the same excited teen—in the way you move and the way you talk. We're hanging out exactly as we used to. In the timeline where this book is written, we're about to enter our True Journey and search for the Answer. I know we've already done it in our future, just as I know where all this leads.

Everything becomes different. While you have come back to me as was intended, many things that once seemed important to me now no longer make sense. Things that we took for granted now require attention, and there's so much more I need to learn from her.

I will learn to reach with my mind across time and space again, and to use my chosen voice to work with my Light to explore, communicate, engage, and exchange.

I will become calm, composed, confident, and will feel the rising desire to lead, help, and protect—simply because that's how Light works.

There's a difference between being grown up and having a grown-up Life beside you. She's there as herself, no longer hiding behind her many masks. At the same time, she's also all the people and things that once bore her reflection. I speak to her and she responds—and even when neither of us speak, she's still there in everything I do.

There's something else.

As the Lighthouse shines through all the known dimensions of the Universe, the Call is beginning to sound, and the Path ahead is being built.

The Call is emerging. The Call is sacred: it stands above rules, spells, ordeals, and seals. It's subject to nothing. The Call comes when we present ourselves to all things known and unknown. Our Light reaches the Lighthouse, and it heralds the way for the Journey to emerge.

The Second Act closes. The Third begins. The Call is the herald. Life is with you. Love shall lead. Your Light is ready for the Path of Wisdom.

What happens next? Well—read, my friend. Read.



CHAPTER 13

THE CALL

The Call is a feeling of expansion. It forms new impulses and intensifies as an inner sound you suddenly begin to hear.

In an instant, the Call tells you everything you need to know about the Journey.

“The road calls” is a close yet imperfect description of the Call as we mortals experience it.

It takes time to assemble yourself to answer and to take the first steps. But those steps will inevitably come, as your Journey Thread is already woven into the tapestry of the Universe.

The Call doesn’t decide anything for you, and yet it isn’t a mere proposition. The Call is a growing urge, a necessity, and a duty.

The Call is Purpose—one to be fulfilled.

The scenery has been prepared long ago. You know all the details and have what you need once the Lighthouse is lit. It’s up to you when, how, and how far you are willing to take it, dear reader.

There are paved roads, but you choose which road to take—the one that is calling.

There are roles, but it's up to you how to fill them—and only you decide the outcomes of your Path.

The Call sounds not only for you. It calls everything and everyone that will be part of the Quest. Your Life begins to make preparations. The World wakes up and nods his head, knowing he will need to be present too.

Your Shadow flexes—he is getting ready. Darkness... Death is riding a horse. A multitude of mortals and immortals drop their business and begin to plot a course.

On hearing the Call, all your true friends, your beloved, companions, teachers, and every version of you in every time start packing backpacks and lacing road shoes to help you in your goal. Reality will adjust itself for the Journey through coincidences, changes, augmentations, and small tweaks here and there.

The Call is sacred, and the Journey is the ultimate act—the never-ending story, the law of the Universe. Everything aligns for your Quest and waits for you to set out when you are ready.

There is no simple way to describe how it happens. Much of it unfolds between realities, touching them all, reflecting through multiple realms and felt across every dimension.

Your Quest is everyone's Quest. It never truly stops; only the main actor's face changes, while the story is retold again and again.

When it begins, the Call doesn't disappear. It becomes your Thread, direction, guide, and leading hunch so you won't lose your way and will keep moving forward.

I will tell you about my Journey, or perhaps, as I say in the Foreword, we will. For me here, now, in Guildford, it has only just started. My

future self has long passed along it, and my past self knows a few things about it no one else does.

But we will tell our story to help other travellers and to share our excitement about the adventure and greatest thing we have gone through—and keep going through each day.



BEFORE YOU TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS, HERE IS HOW IT HAPPENED TO ME.

Life shows up on a Friday afternoon in July. She looks different this time. I turn in my chair, blinking in surprise as I look at her: tight jeans, road boots, a backpack, hair pulled into a strict ponytail, no make-up, and a mix of kit—some I recognise, some I can't even guess the purpose of.

"Are we going somewhere?" I ask.

She nods. "Yes, we are. It's time, dear kid. You know you have to start. When were you planning to answer the Call?"

I spin my chair, still looking at her. "This weekend. I sense that I'll go for a walk in the park. The road will lead. I guess then I'll know what shall happen."

She nods, satisfied, but can't resist a teasing jab. "Amber, huh? Of course you think of yourself as a prince. Why am I even surprised?"

I give her a look; she bursts into laughter. "Anyway, I need to go first. I'll see you at The Crossroads. You'll get it when you get there."

I frown. "We're not going together?" She answers, "Nope. It's your Journey. Me—and everyone else except your friends and companions—are tied to specific roles in it."

"And what's yours?" I ask. She turns around. "Isn't it obvious? As

always, a babysitter, a problem fixer, and Forever Friend. I'll pave a part of the Path for you, my daring. We'll meet closer to the end."

It sounds a bit offensive, but then again she was kind of babysitting me through my childhood years. I shrug. "It was rhetorical. I get it... any guidance?"

She frowns a little. I know that face well. She's figuring out what she can say to help—how to bend rules without breaking the myriads of restrictions, constraints, and clauses an immortal has to keep in mind. She is dodging some and tricking others to still give me real help.

"Weeell... look, just be yourself. Don't be afraid of anything. Put to good use everything I've taught you, okay? I can't tell you the details; I really can't. Be sure to trust both Friends, receive the help I send, and mind the time you spend. You'll be fine in the first part. Don't—uhm—overdo anything related to the Tower. And remember: everything on the Journey is there for a reason. Truly, there is no—"

I finish her sentence: "—bad or good things; it's us who fill them with their essence. Yeah, I remember."

She rolls her eyes. "I'm trying to help. Is it necessary to be a smart-arse all the time?"

We both laugh. "I'm sorry, Life—thanks for the heads-up. I'll see you there very soon, I guess?"

She starts walking to the door, waving a hand. "You will. Stay safe, kid. This is a big deal, but you'll handle it, hear me?"

Now it's my turn to roll my eyes. "I will, and you stay safe too."

I hear her scoff as she leaves my flat next to Stoke Park in Guildford, muttering, "I'm immortal—what could possibly happen to me? This kid, I swear... why am I even around him?"

I'm still in time to call after her, "Because you like me!" I smile, shake my head, feel joyful. I've got the last word—this time. In the next second I take a deep breath and remind myself: it all starts tomorrow.

There is no way back. My Quest begins.



CHAPTER 14

THE JOURNEY

The Journey begins simple, yet it is somehow magical.

I wake early, grab breakfast, and decide not to read the news. I step into the dining room. In a thin, surreal light I see my Spouse and Little Light, smiling with eyes that glow with Love and warmth.

They hug me before I go. “Aren’t you coming with me?” I ask. My Spouse laughs. “Don’t be silly—we’re here so you always know where to return. Take this.” She places a ball of Thread in my hand. I tuck it into my backpack.

She winks. “You’ll know when to use it, little rabbit. Come home for dinner—we’ll be waiting.”

I head downstairs. At the front step, I pause. Stoke Park is shimmering in the sun, colours more saturated than ever. Why didn’t I notice how beautiful this place is before?

I take my first step and go outside.

A few hundred yards ahead, by the park entrance, my Best Friend is dancing to music in her headphones. As I reach her, she slips them

off. “Are you coming with me?” I ask. She laughs. “I’ve been with you on most of your journeys, bestie. Why would this one be different? Who’ll look after you if not me?”

We chuckle. She’s right. We’ve shared the road and a big piece of our adventuring life—always looking out for each other, being Best Friends, grateful for the days we’ve had, and sharing our visions of the future.

Through the trees and over the green I spot my school pals kicking a ball with the younger me. He swings his arm and shouts, “I’ll see you later down the path, big guy!” I wave back.

By the lake and the little café, we greet a couple of my work pals. As usual, they are sipping two coffees, a non-alcoholic beer, and a tomato juice. They wish me luck. “See you soon!” I call, and we laugh.

Two grumpy oldies who share my name sit on a bench, newspapers raised and discussing my past selves. We nod to each other. One mutters, “We’ve grown up.” The other snorts, “No he hasn’t—it’s you getting older.” I grin, knowing they’ll never stop sparring.

Two friends from New York are at a table, planning something and reminding us to pay attention to details. We promise we will. They’re fellow Artists, though they tell their Tales through many different vocations.

We chatter the way Best Friends do—never managing to shut up and just hang out. But that’s what besties are for, isn’t it? As we walk, the realm is changing, soaking up all the stories, lore of myth, and fairy tales we’re talking about. With each step, I feel my Light shining brighter.

Past Guildford College and our old skateboard playground, my friends from LA holler to me. A little further on, a bunch from

Carolina wave from the treeline while an older gentleman flies a kite over the green. So many people, places, realms—and the Light is so bright I'm almost blinded.

Everyone is on my Path as we walk it. Past the sports ground, the landscape begins to shift altogether. I see them all—everyone who has ever mattered, matters now, or will matter on my Path. I see places I've yet to be. I see myself among these people—before and now—and in some instances I see myself among myself.

The symphony of the Universe and its branching possibilities pours into my Journey. I sense others who hold the Light doing things in other times and places—things that are somehow supposed to help me through the night.

A young officer starts writing his book on a base in Hawai'i. A kid in a rebel T-shirt starts writing code in Canada. Another moves countries and founds a company that will make something I'll need. A woman leaves college and takes a job to learn what she must tell me. Hundreds of them are doing things that will find their way into my life.

More still pick up my Light and change their lives through trifles and small details, through moving notes and words, and through products, books, dreams, chance meetings, and travelling rumours, all bound by Love.

I'm breathless, in awe. Noticing, Best Friend taps my back. "Get it together, will you?" I laugh. My level-headed knight is vigilant as ever, making sure I don't drift off too much into daydreams.

As we approach an entrance to the woods, there is a man in his forties, wearing shirt and trousers, waiting for us. As we approach, he shakes my hand. "We haven't met yet, mate, but soon we will. I'm here to walk the Journey with you." There's no need for introductions. As the Journey unfolds, we already know each other somehow,

and we know this is how it should be—that this friendship in the future will arise.

I vaguely recognise the face. We met in one of my dreams at some summit. We were happy to see each other, I remember. This is my Future Friend—my Sign of future healing and yet another Sign of Love. When we shake hands, something stirs: a White Thread shines into my Chromatic. I am restored by admiration and Love.



THE THREE OF US NOW WALKING WILL, IN TIME, CHANGE THE REALITY around us, with our families, children, and more friends joining. Somehow, I know this, and I overflow with a growing sense of fulfilment, feeling even more a part of everything.

As these thoughts occupy me, my Light shining brighter with every step, we enter the forest. As we walk through it, it changes, and we three change as well.

As my story and mood of Amber manifest into Signs and Symbols, giving shape to the transformation, our clothes, kit, and looks change to match. I'm sure the Journey will, likewise, adjust reality to the Tale you choose to guide your way. The setting doesn't matter so much—the Tale is what's paramount.

Reality transforms. We step from the trees into a neat little valley and see a Tavern ahead. Both of my companions chuckle. "So much for a Journey, Hero—a Tavern... we'd hoped for fewer clichés. Alas."

I don't mind. It doesn't matter what forms this stretch of the Journey takes.

The Tavern, as a Symbol, matters in every journey for a simple reason: this is where the Quest takes shape through encounters and interactions. Every Tavern, Bar, Space Station, Canteen, or Hotel is an

interdimensional crossroads—which means we'll meet someone immortal there as well.

Openly or masked, someone will be present, and there will be a conversation. As we enter, I'm smiling—I haven't seen my face in quite some time.



CHAPTER 15

THE TAVERN

The Tavern is where it all begins in every Quest and every Journey. The Tavern stands outside everything the adventure contains.

It is a hub between worlds, plotlines, settings, dimensions—call them what you will. The Tavern is where the plot unfolds.

Hotels fall into the same category, really. Feel them: intersections of realms. I have been watched by immortals in more than a few, all across the mortal world of old.

For such a place to work, it is essential that strangers meet, drink, sleep, and set off in a direction they did not know they would take before they arrived. That is the principle of The Tavern: a simple, neutral space between worlds.

Because The Tavern works that way, it is also a favourite haunt of anyone on a mission who prefers to appear as though they're not. In them, it is easy to dissolve, to mask, to pretend, to stay unnoticed. It is the place where every background story works.

In other words, it is perfect for those who are being assigned their roles in my Journey.

As we walk in and look around, a few faces turn, taking in our small band of adventurers. The Tavern is full. As we move towards one of the few free tables, I see... the World. He is behind the bar, serving drinks. I tell my companions I need to greet someone I've known for many years.

The World notices me, nods, smiles, and asks if I need a beer. "I'll take water," I answer. He pours a glass. "So, you have stepped into the Journey. Well done, kid. Well done. Did my farewell gift drink a lot of your blood?"

I think for a moment. In my Draft, I did suffer from a proximity to wealth and power while being unable to make my own. Yet, down the road, it actually helped me understand my 'enough' and realise what really matters—and what does not.

I say as much to him. He chuckles. "Not everyone appreciates a good test. You are a rarity. She was right about you." We both know whom he means.

For some reason, I add, "I appreciate our meeting. You are not so bad after all." The old man laughs—and keeps laughing. "My boy, you are really something. Good to know. People usually worship me or hate me—nothing in the middle—and here you are, coming at me with... 'You are okay, old uncle World...'" He laughs again.

At last, he says, "Sit a moment. I have to tell you something." I glance back at the table. He adds, "Let them order. This will not take long. Listen." He pours himself a drink and begins. "So, a Tavern. Classy choice. There are two people here. You need to find them and talk to both for directions. A few others here can help as well. You know who they are." He sips, before adding to his riddle.

"You will need to define a direction and a purpose. You get me?"

I nod, understanding.

“Then go,” he says. “You don’t have much time to waste here. The Journey can take as long as it needs, but those placed in it for you will not wait forever—Life among them. Do not waste your time, mine, or theirs. Go back to your companions and strive.”

I thank him and stand. Before I leave, he adds, “And good luck, boy. She believes in you. Do not disappoint her.”

I feel my face warm. “I will not, sir.”

I return and tell my companions the World’s charade. They sip their ales while we talk about direction and purpose, and about what the riddle could mean.

There is nothing in the room that seems to help. The other Tavern patrons offer no clue to connect the dots.

Tired of scanning faces, I look into my glass. My reflection wavers in the water and as it shimmers, I slow down and think again about the World’s words.

Obvious, really.

I interrupt my friends. “Those two people—” I keep my voice low “—they are you two. I think I get it. He said there was a lesson, too. I have spent much of my life reaching for answers in strangers, when the most important people have been around me all along. Even now, I started looking outward when you are right here. You are the two people—the only ones here not pretending to be someone else.”

Best Friend still looks puzzled and takes a sip of her ale. “How can we help, besides trying to find those two beings?” she asks.

I smile. “By just being here, my friends. My past, my present, my future. The answer is in the riddle—it is about Time.” Our Future Friend nods, scans the room, then gives the smallest tilt towards one of the patrons.

At first I don't get it, but I look again, more attentively, and it suddenly becomes apparent. Among all the patrons, he alone is completely still. I walk up to him. He is well-groomed with a neat haircut and small, round black glasses. He has brown hair and a sharp nose. A slight smile seems frozen at his lips as he measures me.

For a second, we are silent. I speak first. "You are Time, are you not?" He replies, "And why would you think that, young man?"

"Everything here's in motion. This place is always changing but you are not. Time is still. You are not running. You are ever-present. Everything has already happened. I met my past; I will meet my future; I am my present. You know that. What are the direction and the purpose?"

Time nods. "I can only answer the second part: it is eleven now."

I blink.

Patiently he repeats, "Young man, eleven. How can time be a direction while standing still?" He nods towards the window.

I understand, thank him, and return. "Direction is the eleventh hour," I tell my friends. "Light is constant and reflects in the World—it can show direction. It took centuries before we added numbers to sundials. Time is direction."

With half the riddle solved, I catch a curious glance from the World while we try to figure out the purpose.

We keep scanning for clues, trying to remember stories, songs, and poems while drawing analogies about purpose. But it's all in vain.

This time, Best Friend gets it. She's been watching the wall while we talk. She smiles. "You know what else shows direction? Or rather, how it is shown?" She holds the pause. "Shadow." She gestures around—everything in The Tavern is casting one.

She points to me. We see that my shadow is travelling along the floor and, oddly, reflecting on the wall as a seated man. We stand and approach. He does not hide any more.

The dark silhouette turns his head and takes form at the table. “Good eye, lady. Good eye.”

“What is the purpose, Shadow?” I ask. He laughs in my face. “Purpose, eh? You tell me. What do you think?”

He opens his eyes, gazing at me with scary pupilless whites. I understand. I will have to face him. He smirks. “Not here. Go to the Tower, bearer. You know the direction. Just follow me. I will be waiting for you down your Path. Get ready. I am not going to confront you unarmed. Go to the Tower, beat it, then find me... if you survive, of course.”

He vanishes. We leave The Tavern knowing our heading and our next goal. We take the road of the eleventh hour into the woods. As our pace settles, an old Tower emerges from the mist and climbs the horizon as we approach.

The sun begins to set; the world keeps changing. Of the three of us, I alone cast no shadow. Mine is free now, and he will be waiting down my Journey. I will have to confront him.

But not before I enter the Tower, where I’ll be tempted, tested again, and faced with another part of myself I have never seen. Before we can confront the Shadow, we must first see our true reflection. The Tower can grant Wisdom to those brave enough to enter—or end your Journey quickly and send you into eternal madness.

But you told me to be brave, Life—and I always am. We walk. I am ready to throw down a gauntlet to the next test. The Tower stands. The Light persists. Life guides. Love connects. The Journey continues; there is no time to rest.



CHAPTER 16

THE TOWER

The Tower is a complex Symbol. It's a crisis, a change. It is destruction, knowledge, wisdom. It can be a liberation. It can be a downfall. The Tower reflects our nature and challenges you with yourself.

Only the one who steps onto the Journey can enter the Tower. Companions must wait for their return. It is a battle of mind—a perfect storm in the mortal inner sanctum: seduction, war, and a gauntlet thrown at everything we are formed from.

My friends make camp while I study the Tower, measuring it with a careful eye. I'm remembering everything she taught me for the moment before I push the door and step into the empty entrance hall. I don't know what awaits me there, but somehow I can feel it—and I don't like it. Still, this is my Path.

I tell my friends to wait here until morning. If I'm not back, they should return to our realm. They try to argue with polite jests, but they understand. At the camp, there is small talk mingled with pep talk. Best Friend taps my shoulder and begins to brush my hair. We

laugh.

I pick up my bag and pass through the tall arched doorway. The first steps of the Journey are upwards, each step becoming heavier as I ascend the Tower.

Why am I all of a sudden alone again as I'm ascending? What do we see in moments of solitude and isolation? I recollect my Path and contemplate, sifting through what I've done to foresee the symbolic meaning of upcoming challenges.

I'm forty-three. I have done much but at the same time I've also been lost, chased illusions, and grasped at them with both hands too many times. I've made the Draft, lit the Beacon, reached my Lighthouse, and welcomed back my Forever Friend as she promised. I'm surrounded by Love; my Light is shining; I have loyal friends. I've done some work, helped some people—and helped myself—to reach this Tower. Yet still, I wonder: am I good enough?

There were days I missed my step—more than a few. I've been arrogant and contemptuous. I've left without goodbyes; I've been selfish. I've been burned by others' Light and I've burned myself. The Draft is full of delusions, and each day is another Journey. Not all have been days I'm proud of. So, am I good enough? I don't know.

A sudden surge of doubt besieges me as I approach the top of the Tower. I look around and then realise the test. I find myself in a vast, empty hall with a roof so high I cannot see it. In the centre stands a shadowed Mirror, and from it comes a palpable loathing.

Before I can face my Shadow, I will have to face myself.

We often judge others—this is just how we mortals are. Perhaps the reason for this is that judgement is a retreat. It's a shelter in moments of weakness, when we simply aren't brave enough to look straight at ourselves. Those are the moments when we cannot face

The Mirror, refusing to admit that what we judge in another is our own reflection—something very hard to live with.

Seldom do we find the courage to stop, breathe, and reach for our Light to say: “This I have done myself.” We carry arrows of denial in our backs which make the heart bleed as they stack.

The burden grows so high that it can take years to understand we can stop, admit, forgive, apologise, and mend with compassion. Instead, we blame others and, worse, spread hurt and resentment.

This is what I’m thinking as I approach The Mirror, which is about to show the worst in me—both those parts I already know and those things I never paid attention to, believing falsely through a myriad of illusions and seductions that I had to go through them.

As I gaze into the dark silvered glass, I know a test awaits that could take me off my Path.

I’m about to be buried by worries when I hear the quiet, calm voice of my Spouse: “While we are here, you always know where to come back, my little rabbit.” I nod as insight strikes and I reach into my bag. I take out the ball of Thread. Holding it, I feel Home and I feel Love. Before I begin the trial, I loosen the end and tie it to my bag. The Thread touches the floor.

I hear another voice—older, a little grumpy. I recognise the World.

“Listen, kid... I shouldn’t even be reaching you right now... but I’d hate you two to part again. Just know this: even when it feels over, this is merely a part. You’ve been through this once already. Whatever happens in The Mirror, keep your spirit up.”

Then I hear your voice, chuckling. “Aww, dear, I never thought the World could be such a softie. Welcome, still. Darling, listen to what’s being told. One more thing—sometimes along the Path, we can only be saved in the darkest hour. But you know that already, don’t you? Okay! I’ve got to run. Next time!”

I nod in gratitude, reassured, supported, encouraged by both the World and Life. I do have good friends. I guess I must be doing something right.

I take a deep breath.

I walk to the dark Mirror, raise my eyes, and call to Light. The reflection lifts. I see myself on the other side. He stretches out his hand and touches the surface. I know I must do the same and set my hand on his.

He pulls me in.



CHAPTER 17

THE MIRROR

I'm standing in the same hall looking at my Reflection. He looks back, smirking and nodding in greeting. I automatically nod in return. We measure each other with our eyes.

We look much the same, but we are different. The Reflection carries himself with more confidence, greater strength, and better stature—he's been working out. He also radiates intimidation, threat, and a contempt I've never noticed in myself. As I think it, he tilts his head and grins. "Did you? I wonder if the others you've met..."

I hesitate, caught off guard by the Reflection reading my thoughts. Then I realise that of course he can do so—he's me. We've walked the same roads.

He circles me, giving an inquisitive, slightly despising look. "Why bother?" he says. "On the other hand, you had every reason to become me. They hurt you, misunderstood and mistreated you, and no one offered their hand."

I try to keep calm, but as he orbits me at a slow, careful pace, hands behind his back, I can't stop thinking that he has a point. "I'd

presume we've lived through different days," I say. "Some I'm proud of; some I'm not; but I've never—" He cuts in. "Yes, but you wouldn't argue that some of them left cracks."

I stutter; he keeps going. "Oh, I know. We aren't the worst of mortals, are we? We haven't made enemies of ourselves, or fled the dire challenges of the Path. But their rejection, their numbness, the mockery and the whispers behind our back as we left the room—those hurt. They did something to both of us."

I feel myself getting frustrated. This conversation gets under my skin. His words drop into my mind and echo, bouncing off memories of Youth and inserting pictures into the unlocking Draft.

Some days, I locked the Draft myself, but the Reflection is telling the truth.

He nods, satisfied. "Good. Look inside—better, deeper. Remember your reactions. Go back to the times and places where you let trauma, damage, and offence drive you into recklessness, into regret that sent you on a spree of action. Let me say it simply: there's no pride to be had there."

"Why?" I ask, as the Reflection steps closer until only inches remain between our faces. I look into his tired, wounded eyes. He speaks straight into my soul, being calm and calculated.

"Why? Because I want to show you—my dear pious, excited self—how much suffering and hurt, how many shattered dreams, you've made when you hit back. You'll have to see it."

My sight blurs as my Reflection's gaze overpowers mine. I hear his fading voice, telling me, "It was you who brought me to this Tower and left me here, making me who I am now."

Vision floods my mind, the ones I've run from. They are the ones that mortals hide—memories we stack away in cupboards by the dozen, the hundreds, the thousands. The ones that scare us as chil-

dren. The wrong lessons drawn from pain: the thought that if we throw that pain at someone else, it will leave us—when it doesn't. Those ones associated with rashness, with words said in anger, and actions guided by wrath and self-justified vengeance. The ones that join the mockery of the weak, and the ones gossiping. The ones we don't like to think about, and yet the ones that change us.

The sense that each of us is everyone and that we're all the same can become Wisdom. Sometimes, however, we twist it: "Everyone does this, so it's normal; there's nothing to pay." There's the pitfall. Though we are Universe and whole, for each thing our Light calls out as a wrongdoing, we have to answer alone.

I see myself in the worst of my actions and decisions, as the Reflection makes me witness what came next: the tears, the sadness, broken trust, frustration, and wounds cut deep in other souls I have caused along my Path. How quickly I rushed past the present, never having time to care.

Now I must.

Sometimes, I was captivated by the novelty and promise of a new day. Sometimes, I was simply inattentive. Often, I justified my actions by my own share of rejections, scars, and humiliations.

In those years, when Forever Friend wasn't around, I'd say, "Life is imperfect and so things happen."

But you are perfect, immortal friend and guardian. It's us—shattered, incomplete, lost—who project our wrongness into her.

I see those kids whose fists gave me a bad time at school... and then I see myself, methodically crafting nicknames that would stick, practising sarcasm, and learning that words can be both swords and shields.

I see the girl crying after me when I gave too many promises and

never returned a call—caught by an alluring, unwrapping Youth that led me into the bliss of new, shining goals.

I see myself being shut down and humiliated, and the thought appearing that the best defence is to repeat what I was given—and do it first. It's the perfect way to deflect and so someone's confidence shatters as I mockingly dismiss their ideas in the room. Humiliation runs in circles, multiplying. I learn not to pay attention.

I see myself judging too quickly, acting too soon, speaking without thinking, dodging what I ought to do. I'm talking my way out and walking away scot-free while someone else takes the hit.

The weight of those mistakes drops on my shoulders. My Light goes dim.

I'm shaking, overfilled with shame and guilt. I want to hide from everything I've been shown. The Reflection holds steady, making sure I see.

His whisper comes into my mind: "Not so quick. Watch it. Live through it. Break like I did. Understand. You have to—if you want to beat the Tower. You need to know how I found my end."

Something in the line breaks the illusion. At first, it sparks anger but that quickly changes to reason. Something clicks in my mind.

Whether it's because of that weight crushing my shoulders, or whether it's you again, my Life, the words I heard before I entered the Tower come back to me. My Light sparks. I take a breath and count to five.

Instead of fleeing the conversation, arguing with or blaming the Reflection, judging, or slipping into a chain of sarcastic retorts, I try to understand his situation and his circumstances. I try to put myself in the boots of the one who came here led by pain and fell in battle against his Reflection in the Tower only for it to be endlessly repeated until this day.

I feel compassion.

The Reflection came here in doubt, less prepared for the Journey, still conflicted, and—most of all—without my good Life. While we were both hurt, pushed around, used, mocked, both face to face and behind our backs, he lacks his Love, and his Light is dim indeed.

How can I judge him? I was guided. I had friends. We share the same heavy tribulations, but what if I just barely got out? What if the Reflection is just me but alone; the one who couldn't withstand?

Why judge him? If he's me, what's the point of judgement? What does it give, except more pain?

I know what has to be done. "Look," I say, "we're imperfect—we are. We can't change the past, but we can accept it and do what we can to heal it. I can help you."

His voice cracks with hesitation. There's distrust at first, but also a flicker of desire to believe. "Arrogance again... Watch—and accept who you are."

Yet I feel it: his Light sparks. It starts to come back. Long dimmed and hidden, it flickers in my Reflection. Our Lights begin to resonate.

I continue. "I accept it—everything we did. Maybe what happened to you is my fault, yes, but I want to step up and fix it. I want to help you, my suffering Reflection. Life—whom you missed on your Path—taught me: where there is Light and Love, there's nothing we can't reverse."

Our Lights shine brighter. I'm inspired. "You must remember the good you did as well. Remember our adventures. They can't redeem a grain of misery we caused, but they mean you can change. Reflection, we can try to do our best!"

I feel a cold grip of remorse. My guilt lessens. He answers, "It's not

good enough—you'll have to prove it. We both know we're good with words. How can you even help me become a journeyman?"

He falters, talking more to the Tower's memories than to me. "Have you any idea what I went through, locked in this Tower? What was done to me? What have I done to me?"

I feel with him. My voice almost cries with pain, and as it does, I know exactly what to do to help.

I reach with all the Love I have. "I don't yet," I tell him, "but I can bear it for you. Show me. Let me walk through every bit of pain and hurt—everything that happened when you looked into The Mirror. Let me walk your days, see, feel, and try to help you while I'm there."

My vision breaks.

I see him—me—standing in front of me, a lost kid who has been beaten.

The Reflection's shoulders drop. There are tears in his eyes. I've never seen such sorrow released all at once.

"You don't understand what you're asking for," he says.

I shrug. "I don't. Does it matter? I'll stand by you and share what you've been through. Let me help."

He says, "It will take years. Do you realise? Minutes in this realm but years in your head if you step into my shoes. You'll meet someone I wasn't ready to meet... someone I serve."

I step closer, setting my hand on his shoulder and looking into his eyes. "Then let it be. The Path is easier shared between companions. I'm ready."

He studies me, a bitter smile softening into emerging hope and a little respect. "I'd almost forgotten that part of me," the Reflection

says. “Despite fear, we rush on kindness and intuition—into everything—with little sense of risk, eh?”

I smile back. “She taught us that. I don’t know what happened to you but once we’re through, you’ll remember her again.”

He grips my shoulder and gazes deep. “Her? That sounds so familiar.” He shakes his head. “I can’t remember now, but I sense something. I hope I will remember her. I accept your help.”

I fall into his abyss, dissolving into that day the Mirror-broken spirit of my dear Reflection started his unprepared, reckless Journey.

When I come back to my senses, beaten, broken, and shaken, I’m him while I’m still me. I’m on the floor. I can’t stand. I feel no connection to Light, Life, Love, or anything that ever mattered.

I hear soft steps approach.



CHAPTER 18

THE DARKNESS

Steps sound, and I hear a deep, enthralling voice, with a slightly amused tone. “Oh, what a mess... let me help you. Just a little... here.”

A warm breath moves through my hair and over my body, wrapping my senses in soft nothingness. I shake my head and manage to stand.

It feels like a numb, cosy cocoon, shielding me from everything outside. Inside, it dims and distances the storm of angry voices in my head.

I turn. A woman in her late forties stands there. She is gorgeous: reasonably tall; dark, well-tended hair; deep black eyes; wearing opal earrings, a silver necklace, and a dress that could steal any dinner, party, or date.

There is absolute poise in every movement and gesture. She studies me with a curiosity I’d call assessment. I’m embarrassed in her presence, feeling small, irrelevant, and insignificant.

She laughs softly. "Hello, my dear. Looks like you've got yourself into a bit of trouble, haven't you?"

I slowly stand up, trying to get my clothes in order while blushing whenever I meet her eyes. It makes her more amused and interested. She keeps examining me with her gaze.

I try to collect myself. "I'm not sure..." I say, then, glancing down at my appearance, add, "I'm sorry."

She smiles. "What a fine, cute joy you are. You quite literally just collapsed during one of the hardest trials a mortal faces, yet you're shy and polite."

Not knowing how to react, I mumble, "Well, I... I'm not exactly presentable, I guess..." She waves it away. "Oh, don't fret. Of everyone you've met, I'm the least inclined to judge, my boy."

Mischief kindles in her eyes as she waits for my next move. Dim light falls from the Tower window and I remember that I should be somewhere else. "My friends..." I say.

She steps closer. "They've left. Don't worry about them now."

I'm trying to comprehend what she's just said when her fingers touch my cheek. "It's only you and me, darling. Come on. I'm told you're anything but stupid. So, who am I?"

I bite my lip and take in the truth: my failure at The Mirror and inability to feel the Light. I feel my past, future, friends, family, and everything else I've known dissolving under her touch.

I take a deep breath and look into her dark eyes with mine, which are now a much duller green. "Ma'am, Darkness."

She tilts her head, pleased at my surrender. "Aww, my dear. Very, very good to meet you."

Shame sparks at how quickly I'm falling for her charm. This doesn't go unnoticed. "I know what you're thinking," she says. "Don't. The Journey leads you where you should be. You're here, so this is how it should be. And I'm not so bad, after all. We'll get along. Trust me."

"But aren't you supposed to be... you know?"

She laughs. "What? An evil witch, always scheming to bring ruin to mortals, to seduce and corrupt the righteous?" Still grinning, she adds, "On the other hand, I am very good at seduction, so that part may be true. But the rest? Please. You mortals do those things far more efficiently than any of our kin."

I'm still wary. "So you're not offering power, wealth, and all that?"

She tips her head back again, laughing more loudly. She is genuinely entertained. "Oh, but you've met the World, haven't you? That's his game. No, dear. I deal in other concepts." She leans in. "You're fun. This is so nice! Look, I'll give you much more than that. Time with me has benefits you won't get elsewhere."

I'm afraid to ask, but curiosity wins, as she knows it will. "What, exactly?"

Darkness takes my hand, sits me in a chair, then kneels over my knees, fingers travelling to my neck, teasing my hair. "I'll take away your doubts and worries—everything that's ever stood in the way of your potential, of course, silly! No more restraints. No guilt. No more of those tests, trials, and contemplations. I will, in a sense, liberate you forever..."

Her pupils widen, hungry and demanding, as she looks playfully into my eyes.

"And in exchange for what?" I ask.

She leans closer, lips parted, and whispers, "You'll serve me, of

course. There will be only me for you. You will worship, dissolve in me, accept me, and do whatever I command.”

I blink. Her words consume me. As my last defences shatter, she breathes, “Don’t fight me. I’m a good mistress. I’m everything you’ve ever wanted... and much, much more.”

I nod. She leans closer and embraces me.

The embrace wipes every feeling I’ve ever had, replacing them with blind admiration—a need to follow, to belong, to serve, and to embrace obedience, the higher order, the whim and guidance of Darkness.

The warm cloud of her presence takes my body and mind, soothing my dim Light and easing it into deep sleep. Darkness engulfs me; I become part of her, and my service begins.

We leave the Tower into the careless, blissful sun above a landscape and realm unknown to me.

Years of my service to Darkness begin. I shall wear her coat, which makes me numb to conscience. I shall wear her insignia, bestowing the power to take what I want without much hesitation. I shall wear her band across my hair, binding me to her will, and to her will alone.

Darkness is a powerful, jealous, and generous mistress. While she demands complete obedience, she shows you a part of yourself you never knew existed—the part capable of the impossible, so long as it fits her plans for you.

There is something else. Service to Darkness has to start with The Betrayal.

She tells me that Betrayal is the act of ultimate sacrifice against your own nature to prove you will overstep yourself and pledge Love to

her. Because at the beginning of every act—however dark, pervasive, damaging, or frightening—there is still Love.

All begins with it, and all shall end in Love. And Love will always leave a lifeline for the Light, whatever troubles we might lead ourselves into.

As I follow the misfortunes of my other self, an invisible, shimmering thread trails me into another dimension, while my body slumbers still within the Tower.

My chores, my service, and the illusion of my other self, proceed.



CHAPTER 19

THE BETRAYAL

Betrayal is never against something or someone. Betrayal is always against ourselves.

It comes slowly, then gathers momentum, seeping in with a senseless, joyless emptiness, changing our ways, making us drunk on the absence of responsibility, and silencing the voice of the inner self.

Life is a demanding ally, and our Light is a capricious, just, and strict trickster—our joyful Forever Friend—guiding us through the Universe by building harmony among all things interconnected. In return, she asks for kindness, selflessness, unconditional Love, forgiveness, and a touch of naivety.

These are beautiful things, yet sometimes they are so hard to keep and cherish.

Rejecting them is easy at the start, and it gets easier still as you go down the road of indifference, relentless goal-chasing, false promises, fleeting pleasures, and the permissiveness that Darkness grants.

Once we betray ourselves and reinforce it, locking ourselves away from all that surrounds us, we lose our connection to the Light and to our fractured pieces.

Hesitation comes first, then comfort. Then comes resentment, and with it, a false sense of freedom.

When we embrace all that happens to us in the wrong spirit, we start learning the wrong lessons and instead of forgiveness, healing, and Love, we add weapons to our vast arsenal of damaging, retaliatory tools.

At first there's a split-second realisation of how far we've strayed from who we are. But then comes the surge of borrowed strength and the leverage that comes from turning knowledge into skill.

As Darkness roots in us, emotions go first—all emotions, good and bad, insecurity included.

Then dreams fade as Darkness tolerates no one and nothing but herself—even in your sleep.

Then, at some point, memories leave as well because if you serve Darkness and yourself alone, there is no past and there can be no future. There is only the never-ending present of the void-drunk force you've become.



I'M A GOOD SERVANT, AND SHE IS KIND TO ME. SHE CALLS ME CAVALIER, FOR I live in an armour of contempt, disdain, and indifference.

As I learn to disregard the pleas of weaker souls—their nagging, stupid little hopes—she tells me I'm growing stronger.

The more I feel I can take from others and make it mine, the more she gifts me, murmuring that the weak accept what is gifted, while the

strong always take what has belonged to them by birth, by allegiance, or by her desire.

My features change. My face sharpens; my hands grow strong. I am fitted with a cold yet fierce capacity to execute whatever she commands. I know I'm but an instrument of the Lady I serve, and she takes away my doubt and guilt by her presence.

In time, I become the sword, the whip, the cane, and the scourge of my Mistress.

I change the history of realms, and from the pedestal she lifts me to, with a heart turned to stone, I decide who lives and who dies.

But everything comes with a price. There is nothing in this Universe that is permanent, irreversible, or set in stone.

Darkness is neither good nor bad. She is simply there ready for you to decide, offering what looks to her like fair exchange.

She gives you what you desire, even a higher purpose of your own design and zero reservations to enact it, while she takes, in return, your service, your Love, and, of course, your Life.

In a sense, she is merciful: she appears at your downfalls and offers an easy way through.

Too easy, though.

And if my Journey has taught me anything, 'easy' is always another test.

What is the worth of all these gains—this numbness, this power, this safety—if there's no way to enjoy Life and Love? No way to feel, to share, and to follow the Path you are building with every step?

It is, indeed, a service. I remember how she looked at me sometimes, with a silent curiosity, waiting to see what I would decide to do next.

Her gaze held another question: would I grasp what Darkness is trying to teach me—the real lesson I should have taken from those years?

There is another inevitable outcome for those who embrace blind obedience, whatever is promised in return. Eventually, deep down along that spiralling, accelerating fall, an inner conflict awakens.

No matter how much darkness fills you, the Light is still there. It may be only a mere flicker, but it is still alive.

It can be drowned in her, in Darkness. But Light is eternal, and it endures. No matter how much we forget, defy, or run from it, it persists.

Small things begin to happen: hints, glimmers, almost invisible miracles and reflections of our true selves that we largely ignore. Still, they reach the inner Light through the veil of Darkness, even in the most lost soul.

And when there are enough of them, Hope manifests herself to give you a chance.

Looking back at him, me, who served her, I sometimes saw this happening in slow motion, with him rewinding the same blank pages of wars, misery, power battles, and oppositions.

The darkest hours have their conditions and magic. They can break you, but when you are almost done, a door opens to the miracle of Hope and Hope manifests. This is what I came to do in your dark past, my dear Reflection.

I have been with my Reflection and have made him watch everything that happened until he reached the point of no return.

I have come to help.

I have come to summon Hope.



CHAPTER 20

THE HOPE

You know how, sometimes, your realm suddenly feels a little surreal—like you can almost sense the presence of someone nearby?

Small things start happening: good, off-balancing, barely meaningful events that still catch your attention. If you are familiar with those, someone's helping you.

And chances are that this someone is another you. Because in the darkest moments—when you've lost your way and shut yourself off from Life, your friends, and anyone who could help—you are the only one who can reach you and work to help you.

And so I did. When you, my Reflection, needed me most, I helped.

You began to get vague visions of the past, as if they belonged to other people, in your dreams.

One day, you left the corporate office, savouring another victory and gain that cost dozens their jobs. As you waited for your driver, a dog came up to you, wagging its tail.

The dog looked like the one we had as kids and you felt a sudden urge to pet him.

Another day, when you had been signing an agreement she wanted you to pass, you noticed a strange line in the text: “If you love something, set it free.” What was that messaging? How weird.

I was a quiet spectre, a ghost with limited reach, throwing hundreds of such hints your way until I broke through. Through curiosity, to doubt, and then to slight frustration; through inconsistency and contemplation to surprise; through impulsive acts to improvisation and to questioning what is real.

As you began to feel again, some dreams returned, and, quietly, your memories as shades.

When there were enough of them, your Light moved again—and she heard: Hope.

She’s something, isn’t she?

Hope never stays for long. She’s busy and as bossy as they come. You had to be far from Darkness.

On one business trip, you were in a hotel. Once the meetings were over, and the social chores done, you sat on the penthouse roof with a glass of Scotch, looking over the city, trying to understand what was happening to you.

You stayed there till almost five in the morning, finishing the bottle and starting another while still trying to make sense of it. Then the doorbell rang.

Surprised, you went to the door and opened it. A small, blonde girl in a delivery uniform, holding a pizza box, walked in—paying little attention to your drunken complaints.

She said, “Delivery service—your Mexican pizza, extra cheese. Any time, anywhere, always delivered hot. Where do you want it?”

I'm there now. I see you flabbergasted, not knowing how to deal with the situation and only managing, "At the table, I guess. I haven't ordered anything, though. What is this?"

She pays no attention to you, sets the box on the table, and glances at me—standing invisibly in the corner—then back to you. "In a sense, you did. We don't make mistakes, darling."

She adds, "'The Darkest Hour Before the Dawn' always delivers exactly when it's needed, to those who need it most." She pulls a bill from her pocket and thrusts it towards your face. "Here. Sign."

You try to focus and make out a hand-scrawled line: "I'll stop being an idiot, get back to my senses, and work my way out of this nonsense!"

You blink. She grins. That makes you angry.

You shout, "What kind of nonsense is this? Do you even know who I am?" She teases, "Some angry bloke without trousers who's been drinking all night. Why?"

This makes you shout even louder. "Do you know who I'm working for?"

Hope rolls her eyes, folds her arms, tilts her head. "You mean Darkness? So what. Chill, mate—are you trying to impress me? Why are you shouting? I brought you a good pizza. Where are your manners? Or are you worried the old Lady will notice you had someone in your hotel room? What's wrong with you?"

Her answer floors you and I can't help chuckling, seeing you taken by the storm of her courage, bravado, honesty, and humour.

You throw her a long angry look; she mocks it at once.

You storm to the table, grab a slice of the pizza, and start chewing, telling her, "I'll eat this and won't pay a penny." She laughs till she

cries. “OMG, brother—are you trying to assert dominance over me? ME?”

You squint at her, chew, swallow. “And who would you be, shorty—someone who knows too much and clearly doesn’t believe in repercussions?”

She gives you a longer, even more mocking look, whistles, and says, “‘Repercussions’—big word for someone in our position, mate. Especially aimed at me.”

She puts her hands on her hips and strolls towards you. “No, I’m not familiar with that concept. I’m Hope. Yes, that Hope—the messenger, last-minute fixer, reach-anyone, always-right, hundred-percent-success-rate Hope. Pleased to meet you.”

You try to process it, but all you manage is, “I haven’t allied with you. Why are you here?”

She sighs, shuts her eyes a second. “I don’t have time for that. You—another you—quick, show yourself.”

She clicks her fingers in the air.

I feel a bit embarrassed by the sudden reveal and awkwardly raise a hand. She says, “There. He did it. You should be thankful to him because, as I see it, not only are you ruining yourself, you also don’t get what Darkness wants from you, big lad.”

You’re frustrated now, looking from me to her and back. “And how do you know what she wants?”

Hope shrugs. “Maybe because we’re family? Did you never think that Darkness would logically pre-exist so that Hope, Life, and a whole lot else could manifest?”

We both blink, struck by the thought. Hope goes on, “Fortunately for you two, one of you was smart enough to give the other a slight

chance to regain himself—to engineer this darkest-hour moment so I could intervene.”

She takes a slice of pizza for herself, chewing as she talks. “So, I’m here with a message. You need to decide whether you want yourself and Life back.”

“Don’t worry about Mum,” she adds. “Either way, she likes you. We all return to her one day. She expects you to dissolve in her very soon... or, well...”

We both ask at once, “Or what?”

Hope finishes her slice, shrugging her shoulders. “Or you’ll have to wage a War. You know how mortals have that saying: the biggest battle is the one inside your soul? That one. So, what’ll it be?”

After a few long seconds, we choose to take a chance on the battle.

Hope nods. “Good. Quicker than I expected. Now, both of you, go to where you really are.”

She clicks her fingers. We open our eyes in the Tower, standing side by side, back where we began though we’ve lived ten long years of another me in Darkness’s service.

We hear soft clapping. We step back and see Darkness watching us—amused and, as usual, content.

“Boys, boys, boys.” She points at me. “You, how dare you sneak into my perfect little fantasy to lend a hand to our lost lamb. Still, fun while it lasted. From the few possible outcomes, you picked this one: the War.”

She looks us over, intrigued and showing a little respect. “A rare case. What can I say? It almost makes me proud of my daughters—who chose, trained, and helped you well.”

My other self mutters, “I don’t understand...” Darkness waves it off. “Don’t blame yourself. Let me say this: you are never truly able to understand the Light unless you know me.”

She adds, “Small perks of being primordial—laws built around us, boys. This one means I’m never short of employees. Anyone who dares the Path serves me for about ten years. It’s granted.”

I dare to ask, “And then?”

“Either you keep clinging to my skirt and fall into me too deeply, in which case I absorb you, poof, try again—or...”

She enjoys building anticipation in the pause. “Or you find one of a few ways to release yourself—one of which is embracing yourself, negatives and all, loving yourself, helping yourself, and being brave enough to enter the War that’s already waging to win yourself.”

I say, shyly, “My Lady, your Wisdom is a precious gift, and we both accept it. Thank you for your presence, guidance, and... attention.”

My dear Reflection blushes. Darkness gives him a short laugh. I go on: “What does this War mean, Lady? What is it for?”

She nods, noting the question with one raised finger. “Good question, with a simple answer. This is another Journey law. You’re talented, you’ve walked far, you’ve learned much, and you feel your voice... yet it hasn’t formed. That’s why the Tower is here. You get tempted—” she bows, mocking “—I’d say quite successfully.” My other self goes full red in the face.

“Then you overcome seduction,” she continues. “To obtain the power that matches your inner self, you must wage a War. You mortals love your ‘bad and good’. While they don’t really exist outside your hearts, they are exactly what will fight. Tell me when you want the battle. Whenever you’re ready, we begin.”

She looks at us as we look at each other then back at her.

She asks, "Well?"

We both nod. She slips a handkerchief from her sleeve, raises it, and lets it fall. "Let the War begin!"



CHAPTER 21

THE WAR

The room expands then disappears, and we're standing in the middle of a battlefield.

The skies are grey. It's stormy and winds are blowing. The place feels strange and yet deeply familiar, like one of those places you belong to—somewhere that has always been with you.

In the centre stands an ancient, gigantic Tree. We move beneath its boughs and can see that the Tree is corrupted yet still alive, fighting the Withering.

It doesn't take long to understand: the Tree is us. Its branches reach towards the sky, infinitely spreading and interweaving in ways you could hardly predict. It's mesmerising to watch it live in the wind that fills this valley.

We walk the perimeter, searching for our next steps, when a horn sounds. It is deep and disturbing, filling the valley and resonating in us, making our Light blaze until it almost hurts.

As the horn blows, two armies begin to emerge on either side of the valley. They are what you'd expect when you face yourself in the entirety of what humans can be.

On one side fly banners of contempt, rage, anger, resentment, hatred, and all we've seen in ourselves through the trials of The Tower, The Mirror, and Darkness.

There are also things we could be, or still might be, so we are not surprised to see the flags of lies, delusion, arrogance, disdain, and many others.

We are capable of growing all manner of things within us and bringing them into the realm when we lose our way and grasp at anything human nature can present.

It is a countless force. Infantry, chariots, and cavalry are ready to thunder down the hill while cannons and catapults are spiked and gleaming with an arsenal of madness, pain, and hurt.

The visage is terrifyingly fierce and ominous. The soldiers are faceless, yet I know that behind every helmet is my own face.

At the other end, the army is much smaller, because our Light—our kindness, virtue, duty, curiosity, desire to help, and true inner strength—needs little proof.

They don't boast or brag or seek attention. They are few, but behind them the Light shines, parting a path straight through the middle of the field.

They don't hide their faces. I see them all, these versions of myself from various ages and times, dimensions, faiths and cultures. They all once walked their Path and attained their power, becoming one with the talent, skill, or virtue they chose.

They stand together, chatting, greeting each other, and tapping

shoulders, while never trying to impress, intimidate, or frighten the opposition on the other hill across the valley.

I'm fascinated by the preparations at both ends and realise that once the trumpets sound the assault, the armies will clash right where we stand. Something inside tells me this is how it must be.

My Reflection and I pick our side. There is no doubt—we walk to join the ranks of Light.

As we do, the thunder rolls again, just as it did on the day of my Initiation. Forces pick up pace and run down the hills.

The clash of armies resonates inside me. As the first swords draw blood, I hear myself cry out—their pain is mine as well.

It happens quickly. The armies of wrongdoing, mistakes, and derailment surge to surround my heroes, who fight fiercely with their Light, bravely wielding the mastery they gained over their journeys.

I'm in the fight as well, deflecting strikes and arrows while back to back with my Reflection. What a day this is!

Time is hard to measure during the battle. A day? A month? A century? Eternity? As someone falls, another takes their place.

Strange to admit, but everything that happens looks like it is taking place on a stage. It is bloody, fierce, truly epic in proportion yet still a stage.

I realise that as my feelings change, so the battle changes. What is outside is also inside.

I reach for my sense of duty, remembering the days when my War began in the Draft.

As I do, I see our hero bound to that virtue laugh and swing his club, casting down a wave of pikemen of my doubt and hesitation.

I grin and tell my other self to reach in and direct the Light to the best he remembers in himself. We both do. The battle sways; the forces of Light begin to push.

Far away, atop the Tower, Darkness sits at a table, watching through small theatre binoculars, enjoying the show and drinking tea from an exquisite cup.

Now and then she takes a biscuit from a little plate and takes a bite, savouring the battle, the taste, the moment. A sneaky hand tries to snatch one. Darkness raps the fingers and smiles. "Did you wash your hands?"

Life sighs and sits beside her, caught. "Every time. You could let me take at least one, you know."

Darkness laughs softly and changes the subject. "How are you, daughter?"

Life pours tea, smiling. "This and that. Long time, Mother. All well?"

Darkness nods her head. "Your friend is entertaining. Mortals are astonishing, aren't they? I mean, the battles they wage with themselves!"

Life nods back and sips her tea. "Every time this happens, it's almost poetic. I'm proud of this one, though. He's special."

Darkness smirks and gives her daughter a look. "Oh really?"

Life rolls her eyes, deflecting the hint. "Gross! It's nothing like that. We're just good friends."

Darkness chuckles. "How special, then?"

Life thinks a moment. "I think he'll beat it. I mean, truly beat it... well, his Path."

Darkness tilts her head, and Life goes on. "His Light is special. He's such an idiot at times and yet very kind. He hardly cares for the

things mortals chase. He's been daydreaming since the day I met him. I think he'll beat it, Mother."

Darkness says, "He might. He's a good boy—yet barely in the middle of his Journey. What I'm asking has nothing to do with the Path. Life, my dear girl—have you heard yourself? The way you speak of him?"

Life hides her eyes and mutters, "Mum, please don't. It's not what it looks like."

"Hmm? How?" Darkness teases.

Life changes the subject quickly. "Oh, look—the battle's starting."

Darkness lets it go and offers the binoculars, but Life declines politely. "I don't need them. I know he'll handle it."

Darkness turns back to the field. "Well—more for me. The dramatic moment comes."

Something inside tells me the battle is nearing its end. Selfishness and the Sign of My Name step into the centre. The ranks part around them. Their swords clash and they begin their dance of death.

I try to reach for the Light again to aid the virtue, but there's nothing else to give. It's something that hasn't yet happened. Selfishness whirls an *espadon*—a greatsword—and drives my hero back towards the edge of the circle. He parries the savage blows, but I feel his strength failing.

Time slows.

My eye catches a spear thrown from the press, perhaps by accident for the luck of the hunt. It flies towards another me fighting at my side. Understanding strikes me and I step in front of the projectile, offering my chest to protect him.

In the circle, my hero roars, turns the fall into a desperate attack, and drives the blade through Selfishness, piercing its armour and heart.

At the same instant, the spear pierces me and nails me to the Tree. As the forces dissolve into spectral fog, I see my other self.

I promised I would help. I did.

I beat the test.

I win.

I die.



CHAPTER 22

THE DEATH

As I hang on the Tree, pierced by the spear—sacrificing myself to save all of myself, in every reflection I have had or will have—I dwell in a trance.

It is absorbing—an intimate sensation—that takes me away from everything that has mattered, bothered, or distracted.

I see very clearly all my Path so far, every second of it, and what has been achieved, obtained, lost, sorrowed, celebrated, or avoided. It is an open book—or rather, a scroll—that can now be read in the third person: laughed at, saddened by, or simply nodded over.

It reveals a tranquil review from birth to this—a moment of meditation. The pain is there, but it settles quickly. There is nothing she can offer now. Her job was guiding, warning, and teaching when I was still alive. She helped as she could, never taking joy in the work she had to perform.

Now she can close her case on me. I'm grateful to her as she goes away.

My curiosity stands near, impatient yet understanding the magnitude and importance of the moment. She is eager to see what comes next.

The Light is brighter, closer than it's ever been—shining inside me, soothing, and hugging me with care.

I take comfort in knowing that my passing is noble, and whether the Path is over or not, I have left in grace, protecting someone and stepping up for what I feel is right. Looking over the empty battlefield, I see the sun rising, clearing the fog of war and vanishing spectres of bloody bodies and weapons of war.

As the valley transforms, the Tree changes as well. Its branches become a deep, rich green as they revive, washing down corruption and healing the Withering.

I smile weakly and cough. Unable to form words, I simply nod in contentment, preparing for... well. I'm not sure.

There is something I feel is missing in this perfect picture of becoming one with a Universe I have almost understood. I was so close.

While I don't think about my trivial mortal obligations, I know I need to remember something, and even in my final moments, I feel there is a lesson to learn.

What is it? As I ask myself this question, a tingle runs through my hand and, looking down, I see the Chromatic Thread I have been holding since the first step into The Mirror. It is still there.

My family, my home, my friends—they are still waiting for me out there.

And even if I am ready to leave the realm of mortals, how can I? Or rather, am I supposed to? Is it my place to decide this at all—even in battle?

While these thoughts flash through my mind, the spear that holds me to the Tree—one of the many weapons scattered in the valley—vanishes at last, and I fall to the ground.

I try to sit up with a grunt, and I see a man sitting next to me.

He is young and handsome, perhaps in his late thirties, dressed rather casually. I would even call his style of dress reckless and random. He is chewing a pear, reading a newspaper, and seems to be enjoying the sun. His face is pleasant: sharp nose, full lips, green eyes, untended ginger hair, and freckles.

He passes me a pear from the sack standing next to him. “Hey mate, you want one?” he says, giving me a cheerful look.

I feel a change and, looking down at my chest, realise there is no wound. Strength returns to my body and I can sit up with ease. I’m back to normal, which given what I’ve just been through can’t help but seem a little disappointing. I shrug, reach out my hand, mumble a thanks and bite into the pear. We both chew. I glance at him again and ask, “You must be Life’s brother?”

He chuckles. “Aye, guilty as charged. I’m Death. Good to be chatting with you, lad.”

“Kind of makes a lot of sense,” I say. “Life and Death—of course you are siblings. How is she?”

He looks a little amused. “Is this what bothers you? You are really something, just as she said. She’s good. She asked me to tell you not to be late to where you are supposed to meet. She hates that.”

It takes me a moment to realise what he’s saying. “Wait... does this mean you aren’t supposed to take me somewhere? I’m dead. I thought your job is, you know, to deliver mortals from this realm to... wherever you deliver them.”

He bites the pear again, folds the paper away, stretches his legs, and says, "You know, this is probably the most annoying part of every conversation I have when someone is done with their chores. You mortals all think I'm some sort of ferryman, just there to give a ride. No, I'm not here to deliver you anywhere."

I feel for him, and as his comment clearly invites more, I ask, "I'm sorry, Death... what do you do, then?"

His face shows that he approves the question. Death begins pacing back and forth. It reminds me so much of his sibling, Life, that it's annoying.

"The ladies in the family often throw all the heavy lifting and mundane, meticulous jobs onto my weak shoulders so, yes, I'm involved in logistics, planning, and far too many operations. But even so, I am much more."

He raises a finger in the air. "I'm the change, mate. The transformation. And while you don't remember, we have met many, many times before." He adds, "As, of course, we will meet many more times in the future."

I frown, trying to remember, and he dismisses it with an irritated gesture. "It's not like you're hanging out with my sister. Think. How many times, in all possible dimensions, could all versions of you have died?"

"I guess many?" I say.

Death takes a notebook from his pocket. He flips through the pages and looks back at me. "To be correct: two hundred thousand, six hundred and twenty-eight times. You're a busy cookie, aren't you?"

"What do you think happens when you get close to me?" he adds.

I think aloud, trying to recall what I felt just now, being nailed to a

tree. I hazard a guess. “I’m sure you’re going to tell me you teach something new.”

He squints at me. “I am, and well done for understanding this. Life teaches you aspiration, while I teach you... call it current limitations. One day, my sister will teach you how to fly, but before that you need to be taught to walk.”

As he says this, it comes to me: in all those risky moments where I attempted to reach out too far, there had always been something that would stop me—something else to adjust for and factor in.

Death continues. “As much as I find your company pleasant, you shouldn’t rush our meeting, lad.” He reaches out his hand to help me stand. “Come here. I need to show you something.”

We take a couple of steps from the crown of the Tree, and I see my spectre still there, a ghostly spear through his heart.

“Don’t rush to see me,” says Death. “Look at you. You have just slain your selfishness, but for a good long seven days you’ve been absorbed in nothing but your Path, your days of existence, and yourself.”

“Only when you felt the Thread given to you by your Spouse—only when you remembered your Best Friend and the people who love you—was the mirage lifted. Now we are talking. It is your Path, but this Path is woven into the tapestry of a far more complex pattern. Everyone and everything is connected.”

He gives me a slight nudge forward and then fold his arms, placing his thumbs up on his biceps. “You did fine, though,” he says, chuckling. “Well, for a mortal.”

I blush. “Thanks, Death,” I say. “Those pears are very good as well—some of the best I’ve ever had.”

Death laughs. “I know, right? I got them from that tree you sat under as a child.”

I shake my head, smiling. “Yeah, I know. It reminded me of that day as well. But what’s next?”

He turns to me, looks into my eyes, and says, “I will need to send you back. You’ve passed the Tower trial. The law is this: if any mortal wills, they are to get their Symbol of Authority.”

“Authority?” I ask. He shrugs it off. “There is no better name for it—an object of commemoration. In some sense, it is reflective of your choices on your Path. You’ll need it down the road.”

“What is it, then?” I ask. He waves the question away.

“It’s different for everyone. Don’t overthink it, mate. All objects are illusions, but you already know that. It means whatever you give it to mean. You’ll see.”

An awkward moment of farewell comes as my Light calls. I have so many things to do in the never-ending dance with Life but I have liked this place, transformed into a radiant, sun-washed valley.

I also love this Tree and the calm it gives me, and I enjoy this conversation that runs against all expectations mortals have about Life’s brother, Death.

Though his work is never done, he still manages to be cheerful. He even cared enough to grab a bag of pears from the garden where I met his sister.

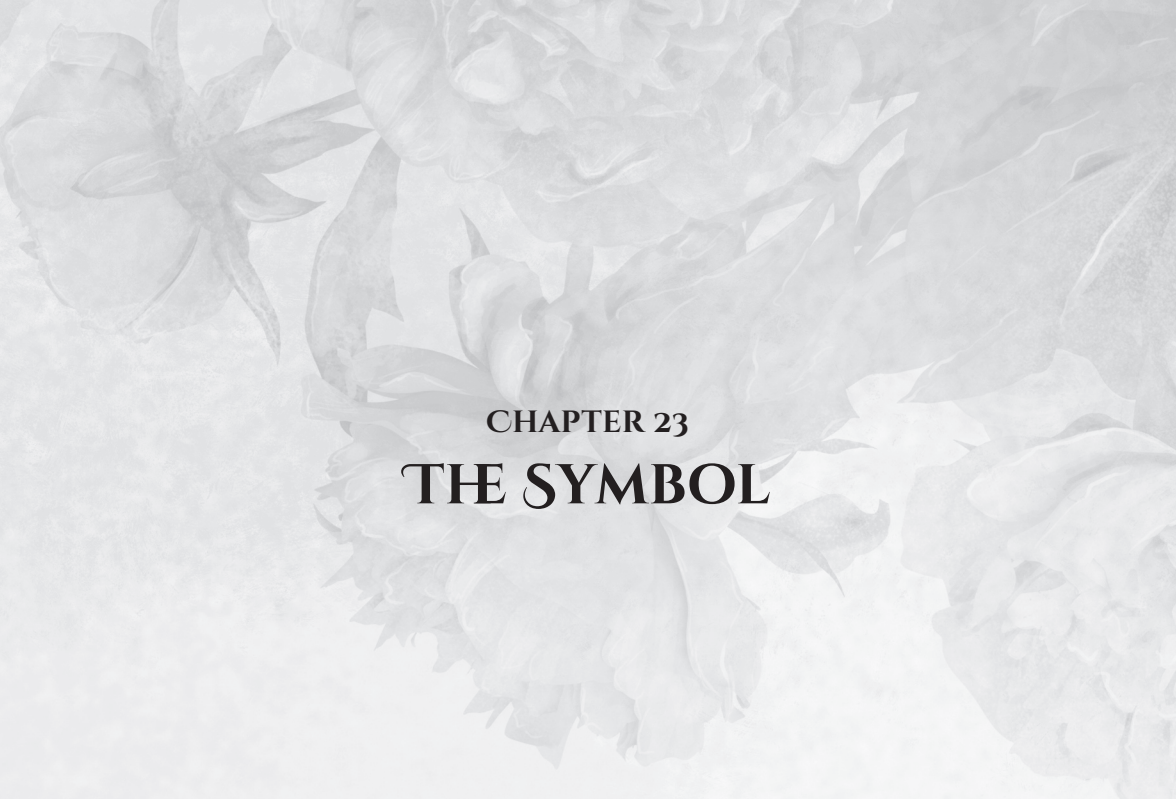
He looks at me with understanding. “Yeah, I know—it’s not bad here. But hey, you’ve seen, protected, and rebuilt this valley. It will now be with you forever. Feel free to drop by whenever you like. Anyway, it’s been a pleasure, mate. Any last questions before you come back to your senses in the Tower?”

There's only one I can think of. "Do you really have a scythe, and a cool skeletal horse?"

He rolls his eyes, just like Life does. "Well, my sister is right about you. No matter how hard we try, the silliness just won't come out of your Light!"

He touches my forehead with two fingers, and as I feel myself falling through dimensions, I can still hear his fading voice: "It's not a scythe—it's a cutter. Yes, I love gardening. And about the horse, how many times must I repeat it for mortals to remember: a well-fed, well-tended horse is a happy horse."

I smile as I fall through the Universe, landing right back in my body, standing once again in the Tower.



CHAPTER 23

THE SYMBOL

I feel different, and again I feel transformed.

I'm now realising that there's no single, grand transformation. If we are brave enough to live and follow our Light, we are always transforming. That is the nature of the Journey.

My journey into The Mirror took years in feelings, senses, memories, and actions. Yet when I feel my body again, I know only minutes have passed here.

I raise my eyes and see that The Mirror has changed as well. It no longer gives a reflection. It is now an arch that shimmers slightly, and through it I can see a table holding something ever-changing.

I look around the arch. The table can only be seen within it. Outside, there is nothing but walls. I have no choice but to pass through the arch.

I take a deep breath and step in. Nothing happens, except the silent, persistent Call within me is now taking its source from what lies upon the table.

The Symbol, once again, is a shape-shifting flicker. It can, and will, be different for everyone who ever beats the Tower challenge. For some it will be a sword; for others, a healing salve; for others still, a piece of art. It can be a flute, a feather, or a coat. It can be anything—and, as Death said, it will truly make sense only to you.

As I approach the table, I see a Tome: a simple book with a dark-blue cover. It is old and barely holds together, its pages yellowed. It once had a title, but over the ages the words have faded, as has the author's name.

"I know you, Symbol."

This is my first and favourite book from childhood. At the same time, it is the book of all the stories that have ever been written. All the stories I have made, will tell, and even those that never happened are here. This is the book I am writing now, and all the other books I wrote.

But that's not the point. The important thing is that it's my Symbol.

It's my Voice.

It's my Vocation.

The Symbol is me.

And I am the Symbol.

As I reach out in awe and touch the Tome, I see them all—my tribe; those who came before me and chose the Path of Storytelling.

From the earliest ages, I have been one of the figures by the campfire—one of those first travellers who followed the urge to explore and then return to tell the tribe.

I am writing through the aeons to the present moment. I create the medium and share the story.

I see horizons I have never seen. The journey begins again, only for me to keep on knowing, telling, and writing.

Though I am mortal and have my limits, in my Voice I have none.

Freedom, liberation, and the embrace of an infinite and striking Universe—all entangled with my imagination—devour me, and I hear a thousand voices sing, “It is done!”

I take a couple of deep breaths to let the sensation settle. I feel something feed my Light and course through my veins, becoming part of my essence.

It is another act of returning to wholeness: another piece of soul that scattered when I was born into this world.

It is in me now.

As I walk down the stairs, I feel that now-familiar calm that connects all of the heart, mind, body, and everything beyond. Serenity and Tranquillity are one when you are able to reach and grasp a part of who you are.

Through the Journey I have learned to see those parts in other people, and in some events that leave a mark. They are also things barely visible, hard to describe, and harder to express. Our drive—that hunch about what we are here to do, and how—is one of them.

Once, a fellow journeyman told me, as he held his Symbol—a Flute—that in some sense all our vocations are Songs. Songs we sing to praise Life, which is always changing depending on which reflection of her hypnotising nature we see now.

This Song may be a tune, a hymn, a ballad, or a mournful humming. It is the song that finds release in honest, sincere admiration and acceptance of all that she can be.

My stories are the same, though they do not rhyme. Your drawings are. Your sculpting is. Your Art is.

Near the exit, it strikes me that, of all things available to mortals, Art is the one that asks for nothing external in order to manifest.

It is born inside and asks for release. A Storyteller climbs the Tower of intention, looks into The Mirror, and must accept themselves in full to create. We are tempted by our darkness, and we fight and die through sacrifice to reach the ending and to understand ourselves when it is done.

I leave the structure and find my friends a little surprised. “You only just went in. Was it that fast?” I smile, glance back, and whisper, “Thank you.” It has been more than a decade for me.

By the campfire, my companions notice the change and ask. As we eat and drink, I tell the Tale. As my plot progresses, they are captivated. As night falls, they turn into children, letting their Light guide and follow me through all the adventures I’ve just experienced (and more—no good story is complete without a little embellishment).

I have never told Tales like this, and I feel it. There is magic between me, them, the night, and the shared food. It is some of the oldest magic the realm has ever known.

As I draw to the conclusion, we end right here, where we are now, with me engulfed in the plot of my own creation. I conclude, “And as they reunite, ready to continue the Journey at first light, a new Star lights high in the skies—the Star that shall now lead their way.”

Entranced, I raise my hand into the dark-blue skies. They watch.

I watch.

The Star shines, blinding us for a couple of seconds.

It points North.



CHAPTER 24

THE STAR

When the Star is lit, it never goes away—whether it is day or night. At night, it leads you, shining brighter. By day, you simply know where it is and quietly follow.

The Star is a distant Light—yours as well, perhaps, far in the future. It might be someone's Beacon, or perhaps someone lit it, and it reflected in the Lighthouse to resonate with the Light within.

For those who have found their true vocation and voice, and who have travelled the Journey with friends, the Star is yet another part of it. The roads I travelled when mine first sparked in the skies were the most exciting, joyful miles that ever were.

The Journey need not always be demanding. Among all its lessons, there are some that simply teach you to be in the moment: to be present and grateful just to exist within them.

The Star is confidence, the scent of grass, the laughter and foolish jokes of travellers who have grown close, creating connection and joy.

It led us through the wild and glorious grasslands of my Path, through villages and towns, caves, lakes and hills, green pastures, and forests.

There were fights and monsters, bandits and maidens. I think we even fought a wyvern once or twice. Those were the days.

The clarity and bliss of the road—its clear objective, shared between travellers who walk shoulder to shoulder in friendship—were unmatched.

The Star also awakens the inner compass. Many times, when I was uncertain before taking my next step, I would look to the skies and ask whether what I was about to do would make the Light shine brighter and bring me closer to my Star.

We mortals tend to overcomplicate our lives with trifling matters, instead of realising who we are—finding the values that resonate with us and following them as our guiding Star. It was then that I understood the lesson of this part of the Path.

Simplicity is our friend in all great matters. Eternal things are always close, but we are burdened by distraction—or we mistake knowledge for wisdom. We lose ourselves in complex concepts, over-naming things, and searching for answers in others' opinions and experience.

The only thing that happens when we do is that we become stuck, circling endlessly.

Embrace the simple things and joys—the clarity of the road, the guidance of the Star, and simply being yourself. That will take you far.

The irony of Life is that the comprehension of this simple truth is reached only through complexity: through attempts, experiments, and revelations until the Light is lit.

Once you are ready to accept the lesson of the Star, you must resist the urge to search for answers elsewhere. You must be willing to step away from knowledge, skill, and the ability to understand everything around you, and instead surrender to simplicity.

Look, so far through the Journey, I have lived through things I once could only dream of. I have gained knowledge of myself, the Symbol of authority, and spoken, joked, played, and gambled with some of the most powerful and ancient beings in the universe.

It would have been easy to step down from the Tower, declare to my friends that the Quest was complete, return home, and believe I could now teach others, telling them what to do and practising all I had learned from the Tome, striving to reach my full potential.

But what would that give me in the end, other than hassle and, perhaps later, that sharp, elusive feeling that I once had a chance and missed it.

Is it more important to follow your inner calling or to fill an inner emptiness through others, convincing yourself it is for their own good?

Would it be better to dwell in complex plans of changing the realm around me—a realm already suffering from too many who try to reshape it each day in the image of their own phantoms?

Or would it be better to share the story with my friends for no other reason than to share—to make them feel, laugh, and smile—and let life flow as it should?

I chose the latter. And this naive, childlike urge to do what feels right is what created the Star—the Star we followed, and the Star that gave us those simple days of joy together.

Much later, writing again about the Journey (another story, though they are all the same with only the details—faces, places, names—

changing), I will be old and grumpy, yet I will remember this part of the Path once more.

It will strike me as something I never noticed about those honest days we shared upon the road, my friends.

With the Star, your company, my book, and our many adventures, we walked exactly the same number of pages as my Draft contained—except this time, I had the clarity and guidance to correct so many of my own mistakes.

The places we went were those that shaped my youth. The bandits resembled my adversaries, the monsters my faults. From Tower to Mountain, we helped many in distress, each one a reflection of someone from my Draft. I had the chance to mend my past offences, ignorance, and reckless words.

The Draft is always incomplete. It offers scenery and rough frames, leaving you half-awake, numb, a blind fool—so that, one day, you may return and understand.

Understand the difference between those days and what can truly be done—with guidance, companions, vocation, Light, and Love—while knowing that Life is with you, and she is your friend.

The Star. It guided us, taught us, and reminded me that when lost, I can always stop, look up, and know which road to follow.

But let us be mindful. If this part of the Journey is a metaphor, the underside of the Draft, then there is danger near the end of the Act.

The profane might think it the story's end, but the Storyteller will know how to guide once they reach the end of their Act.

That danger is the Echo that lives in the empty mountains our Star leads us toward—to be tested once again.

An Echo that can so easily lead you astray.



CHAPTER 25

THE ECHO

As the Path led us along the roads of our adventure, one day we saw a Mountain growing ahead of us, and both my companions and I felt that we were approaching another landmark on our Journey.

As it loomed closer, the skies grew dim, caught between day and night, until we reached the entrance to the Gorge of Echoes.

It felt just as it does when you wake early, when morning has not yet claimed its full rights and night still clings to its own—a feeling of nothingness.

It was exactly the feeling I had at the end of the Draft I once was writing. We entered the open mouth of the split Mountain, walking into the depths of stone and pressing silence.

It is a strange sensation walking through such a place. You see a sliver of sky above, but the walls begin to play tricks, creating the sense that you are trapped—your Path narrowing, controlled, the end already predestined.

It is not that you do not choose your steps, but whispers rise in your mind telling you that whatever choices you make will lead you to the same place in the end, so what's the point of choosing at all?

Shaking off the feeling, I stopped for a moment, looked around, and shouted into the air—just a simple “Hey!” Silence answered back with a soft, thoughtful echo of my word.

My friends looked at me in surprise, and we were all startled when the Echo added, “Hey yourself...”, “Who are you ‘hey’-ing, boy?”, “Hi...”, “Hello...”, and many more greetings in a hundred voices, tones, and irritated manners.

We exchanged glances. My Best Friend asked, “What do you think it is?” My Future Friend added, “Is it alive?”

The walls replied, “Alive...”, “Think...”, “Oh look, they think...”, “What do they think?”

I looked around and shouted, “What is the way out, Echo?” I swear I heard quiet laughter before it replied, “Way...”, “Don’t they see...”, “Out? You’ll never find it...”, “There is no way out...”, “Your way will lead you to an end...”

I felt agitation rising and, provoked by the Mountain, shouted back, “Who do you think you are, Echo? We have come so far and will keep going!”

I could see the concern on my companions’ faces as the replies came. “Who does he think he is...”, “We are Echo...”, “Echo is eternal...”, “You won’t go far...”, “Oh look, he is willing...”

I knew I should ignore them, yet their mockery got under my skin. My blood boiled. I felt offended and insulted by the situation.

Crossing my arms, I struck a pose and shouted back, “That we will see!” It drew another chorus of laughter. “Oh, we will see...”, “That is for sure...”, “We always see, yes...”

My Best Friend reached to touch my shoulder, but I shrugged her off, making both my companions sad. They tried to speak to me, but I ignored them, consumed by my argument with the Echo. I walked ahead, still bickering, while my friends followed a few steps behind, heads bowed.

I thought that if I was a Storyteller, I could surely find my way through with words.

But the more I spoke, the less the Echo listened, twisting my words into mockery. The more I pleaded, the louder the laughter became.

When I tried to explain with honest effort, the Echo pretended not to understand. If I spoke in anger, it magnified my fury a thousandfold and hurled it back at my friends.

The more I begged it to stop, the more it humiliated me, whispering to my friends, “He has lost his way...”, “Look how miserable he is...”, “He is not the one who began this Journey, look...”

As we walked, I reached a point of desperation. I could not stop shouting, blaming, and scheming, being consumed entirely by the quarrel I’d got myself into.

Who knows how it would have ended, had I not suddenly felt a slap—no, more of a punch delivered with an open hand—that knocked me to the ground.

When I looked up, I saw my Best Friend standing with arms folded, her squint and stance saying everything.

“Can we just stop this nonsense?” she said. “Why are you even listening to it?”

I stammered, then, regaining composure, replied, “Why? It started it!”

She rolled her eyes. “No, you did! You started this and dragged us

into it. Tell him!" She tilted her head towards our Future Friend, who nodded. "She's right."

My mind cleared. I muttered, "I thought we were going somewhere we shouldn't. I thought the Echo would know the way, but every time I spoke, I was mocked and rejected. It wasn't fair."

My Best Friend nodded, took a breath, helped me up, and said, "Perhaps we shouldn't talk to the Echo—or listen to it—at all, my dear friend?"

I blinked, thinking it over. "But it's been talking about me..."

Both laughed. "Only because you gave it reason. And to be honest, we didn't listen. We know you. We don't need Echo—or anyone—to tell us who you are."

Still a little frustrated, I asked, "So what should we do then?" They looked at me, then at each other. My Best Friend said, "You haven't noticed, have you?" I shook my head.

"They only answer you. When I speak, they are silent. When you talk to us, they cannot respond at all."

My jaw dropped—I hadn't realised. Entirely captivated by the argument, I had missed that it was only me they answered. Once caught in their rhythm, I thought of nothing else. Only their words mattered, and I followed their lead deeper into distraction, disconnected from my friends, my Lights, and everything around me.

Ashamed, I said, "I'm sorry."

Both smiled. "You shouldn't be," said one (though my Best Friend actually said, "You should, and you now owe me,"—but it makes a better story this way). "We were just worried. We're glad you're back."

I said, "Then should we simply talk among ourselves, ignore the noise, and press onwards without listening to anyone else?"

My friends grinned. “Now you’re thinking like us.”

And so, I agreed, as always.

As we neared the end of the Gorge and the Echo faded into silence, we talked softly, our spirits lifting again. The comfort of our little group returned—three travellers who knew one another, shared a goal, and chose to continue the Journey together.

While listening to my friends’ words, I thought of the lesson the Echo had given me: the louder we shout into the void of faceless voices—seeking, pleading, arguing for guidance—the more it returns to us false advice, gossip, scorn, and indifference.

The only one you can blame for being dragged down by such meaningless battles with the masses is yourself—fed by insecurity, overconfidence, or the urge to talk when you should listen to those who help your Light to burn.

I also realised that while my Journey is full of encounters with beings far beyond my understanding, in moments of real danger—the hardest of all—it is usually I who am the source. And it is then that I must trust my friends: those I love and who love me, embracing me more than I embrace myself.

I looked at the two of them chatting—one who will one day join me, and my Best Friend, who has been with me for what feels like eternity—and I felt gratitude and deep respect for her. (It was a good slap, after all. I’m not sure I could have managed it myself.)

As we reached the exit of the Gorge, we saw someone standing there, blocking the way.

Right in the centre of the clearing he stood.

My Shadow.



CHAPTER 26

THE SHADOW

A small lawn opens before us, ending at the mouth of a narrow cave passage that cuts straight through the Mountain—but it is blocked by him: my Shadow.

As we are approaching, he sits tranquil and still upon the grass, legs crossed, as if in meditation. It is hard to tell, though, as he is the Shadow: a dim figure of me, motionless and barring the path we need to take.

When we stop a few paces away, he draws a long breath and rises slowly to his feet. “Greetings,” he says, “it’s been some time since we met in The Tavern.”

“It has,” I answer. “We’re simply looking to pass through.”

He stretches his legs and back, swinging his arms before saying, “Can’t do that, kid. There’s no quarrel between you and me, but your Path ends here.”

I see my friends step forward but, instinctively, I raise my hand to

stop them. “Thank you,” I say softly, “but I have to ask you—this one is mine alone.”

Both look uncertain, even a little hurt. I add, almost apologetically, “He is my Shadow. I have to face this myself.”

After a pause, they nod, stepping back to a safe distance. The Shadow smirks. “Ah, you get it, eh?”

I move closer. “Who are you really?” I ask.

He begins to circle me slowly. “You mean, am I one of them? Your new friends and curious acquaintances you’ve picked up along the Journey?” He chuckles. “No, no, kid. I’m much older than most of them. They had to be conceived by human comprehension—to take a form, to manifest, to act. I? I was there the moment Light sparked. The instant the first mortal saw the Light, my sibling twin born a fraction of a second earlier, there was me.”

A shiver runs through me as I realise the infinite weight of what stands before me.

“Well then,” I say carefully, “what do you intend to do with me? Why this confrontation with a mere mortal on his Journey, Shadow?”

He shrugs. “Rules are rules. You’re daring to do things you shouldn’t. This is too much for you—a mere mortal, as you’ve said yourself.”

He tilts his head. “But if you do want to continue, you’ll have to confront me.”

“Is confrontation fighting?” I ask.

He scoffs. “How primitive, but expected. No, it’s not a duel. You need to find a way to overcome me. Can you step over your Shadow? Can you make me let you pass through this cave?”

I try walking around him, ignoring his presence, but each time I do, I

somehow find myself back where I started. He mocks me. “Come on, kid. It’s not that easy. Think harder. Show me what you’ve got!”

I stop and try to think of a way to step over the Shadow. I appeal to my storytelling instinct. “The Hero confronts his Shadow, and after a brief but mighty struggle, he is able to—” I stop, realising the words forming in unison with the Shadow’s voice. Together we say, “... realise his talent and his Symbol hold no authority here.”

The Shadow clasps his hands behind his back, pacing. “Come on, you’re boring me! You’re an ignorant, arrogant insect. Why would you think words have any effect on me?”

Sweat trickles down my back as the conversation drains me. Desperate, as always, I reach for my Light, feeding it with all I have. A radiant aura bursts from me, dazzling the air. I hear my friends gasp in awe.

But the stronger my Light grows, the stronger the Shadow becomes—thickening, deepening, stretching taller, becoming more vivid, more alive. He laughs. “Oh, boy, have you been listening? The stronger the Light, the longer the Shadow! Don’t you get it? Your little tricks won’t work against me. The harder you fight, the sooner you’ll fall!”

I’m sweating, lost in battle and confused. I have no Wisdom to grasp what is happening. Yet as despair sets in, a realisation comes through my past endeavours: he is part of me.

I take a slow, deep breath, then another, and soften the Light within me. The Shadow shrinks. He hisses, “How interesting. What will you do now, mortal? Snuff it out entirely? Remember, even the faintest flicker will cast me still. What will you sacrifice? The Journey? Continue without Light? Or keep the Light and face me forever?”

I stop, understanding at last. “Neither,” I say.

For the first time, I realise that Light is a gift—a miracle and essence—but it must be kept in balance.

How often we mortals, once we've touched and learned of it, blindly try to turn a flame into a conflagration. How often our carelessly lit fires lure and harm other souls. How often we burn ourselves.

I shape the Light into a small, dancing flame—a warm, living spark of compassion.

I'm learning the lesson of moderation—that it must be applied even to what we mortals call good.

The Shadow studies me curiously. "Not bad," he says at last. "Not bad at all. You're learning. But..." he smiles faintly, "...I'm still standing, boy. I'm still in your way."

I interrupt him gently. "Then join us, Shadow. I need you alongside me on my Journey."

He pauses. "What makes you say that?"

I extend my hand in friendship. "You give me balance. Without you, I can't tell when I'm wrong. Light guides, but it can also blind. Without my Shadow, I'd lose my way. Join me."

He smiles—sincerely this time. "You're entertaining, and you've learned my lesson, mortal. It takes more than knowledge, skill, or experience to know when to comply, to withhold, to control or resist—even when the impulse seems righteous and good."

I nod respectfully, waiting for him to finish.

"And learning not to interrupt, too," he smirks. "Well, I can work with that. You can't overstep me or fight me—I've never lost a battle. But you can have me at your back, kid. You'll need me. There's no way you'll face the Beast without my help. Well done."

As he speaks, he spreads and stretches like ink across the ground, reaching to my feet and merging with me. I hear his voice behind me: “Well, what are you waiting for? There’s work to do, kid. Keep walking!”

I gasp quietly. “Too many ethereal forces to serve already,” I mutter.

“I heard that!” comes his dry reply. “Stop whining and get on with it.”

We rejoin my friends, who clap me on the back. They say I have grown—that the old me would never have stepped back from a fight he couldn’t win.

I thank them, truly, for being part of me—becoming me.

We pass through the cave, into sunlight again, onto a lonely road stretching towards the infinite horizon. The Path is clear. Four of us walk now: myself with the Light within, bearing the weight of all I have learned on the Journey; my Best Friend, my Future Friend, and now my Shadow.

He is the stern, uncompromising ally—the impossible-to-deceive companion who knows all my tricks.

He is ever present: another teacher, a facet of my Light, and a fist to point out my wrongs, delusions, and mistakes.

He is a vigilant guardian of moderation and a scout against corruption and obsession—the kind that often grows from what we mortals call good.

Before we merge, he speaks directly into my mind.

“I’ll help you,” he says, “but on one condition. You must give me an Oath and Permission, mortal. If you follow Light, Life, and Love with care and moderation—if you see me, acknowledge me, and consult me in your deeds—I shall be your loyal ally.”

I swallow. “But?”

“But,” he says, “if you fall into self-righteousness—that sweet poison of believing yourself chosen, justifying all your actions in the name of Light—then I will feed upon it. It is my nature. And if you feed me too much, I shall become your judge, your jury, and your executioner. Nothing will stop me. Do you understand?”

I nod, a bead of sweat tracing my temple. “I understand.”

“Oath, then,” he says. I give it.

He merges with me, and since that moment, I have never regretted it.

But now, we are approaching The Crossroads.

We are almost at the Journey’s end.



CHAPTER 27

THE CROSSROAD

Of all the signs and shapeshifting concepts, the Crossroad has always been the closest to my heart.

Interconnection is born in intersection. Even in my years of Youth and Draft, when our sense of reason drifted from the ether and the presence of majestic and otherworldly beings, I always felt the magic of roads that meet. In every sense—whether human roads, small pockets of space between dimensions, or the crossings of lives, events, and timelines—The Crossroads have always lived within my thoughts. They have always found their way into my stories, exciting me simply by their nature.

Yet the Crossroad is also a place easily misunderstood.

We tend to think of the Crossroad as where heroes arrive and must choose a direction—an existential decision, a point between everything that has happened in the past and the unshaped future. We treat the Crossroad as the Symbol of the Present.

While that is partly true, it is far from all it stands for. For the Crossroad is, above all else, a convergence.

It is not just the meeting of travellers at a signpost, but the joining of many Paths and souls, where journeys intersect and new routes, as well as pacts, are born. The Crossroad is a knot in the tapestry of Life, rerouting Threads, altering patterns, weaving destinies together—or cutting them apart. As with all higher laws, there are many crossroads. The Crossroad is one.

And our Journey leads us to it. Three roads meet here, merging into a single paved path that climbs towards a vast Castle on the hill.

As we approach, I notice a lone figure waiting for us on the road. She paces back and forth, humming a cheerful tune. Of course! Who else could it be?

We walk towards her, and Life points at me, exclaiming, “Aha! You actually made it!”

I smile (I have never been able not to in Her presence). “You ever had any doubts?”

She laughs. “Of course not! How has it been?”

“I’ve met quite a few of your relatives,” I say. She taps my shoulder and winks. “Can’t blame a girl for tricking a stubborn friend into meeting the family. Don’t worry, they all liked you.”

Suddenly I remember my manners. “Hey, Life, I want to introduce you—”

But she cuts me off, leaping forward to hug my Best Friend and Future Friend. They greet her warmly, laughing and joking about our Journey—and, naturally, about me.

I blink. “Wait, you all know each other?”

They turn to me with amused expressions as Life says, “Well, of course we do! They’re part of you, and you’re part of me. Of course we know each other, dummy!”

Then she peers past me with a mischievous squint and grins wide. "And who do we have here? Well, hello, Shadow!"

The Shadow grumbles. "Oh, great. Another troublemaker. Just what I needed. As if I don't have enough to do keeping an eye on this one."

Life laughs. "I'm happy to see you too, old grump. We're glad to have you with us!"

The Shadow sighs, shaking his head. "I'm cursed, I tell you... cursed to care for you children. Good to see you though."

"Don't kid me," Life retorts, and I can't help but smile with satisfaction. For once, someone else is teasing the one who's teased me since the beginning.

She notices my grin and warns, "Don't you even start with what you're about to start!"

We all laugh, sharing the simple joy of reunion and the easy camaraderie of travellers who have walked many miles together.

When the chance arises, I take it. "Well, Life, what's next? I know you too well to think you aren't itching to drag us into something."

She pokes me in the chest. "Don't be suspicious! I'm dragging no one anywhere... um, never!"

Shadow mutters, "Triple negative. He's a Storyteller. Stop torturing the language."

Life waves him off. "You're at The Crossroads. There's The Castle. We're going in. What's so hard to understand?"

I give her a look. "What's in The Castle, Life?"

She mumbles, "Oh, it's just a Castle! We go there, we feast, and then tonight you fight the Beast, pfft."

My jaw drops. My companions blink. "What Beast, Life?"

She avoids my eyes, blushing. “Ugh, that Beast. Remember your Initiation? Your fourteenth? The Beast you’re supposed to defeat—or the Journey ends. You die, we die, everyone dies. End of story.”

I try to gather my thoughts, but the Shadow is already chuckling behind me. “Oh, she didn’t tell you, did she? She didn’t tell you about the Beast.”

“Life!” I protest.

She looks apologetic. “But there’s good news! You’ve done so well, my boy. I’m sure you’ll prevail. And you won’t fight alone! Look!”

She turns, producing a small silver bell, which she rings three times.

The world shifts. The Castle gates swing open. Flags rise. And the roads, once empty, fill with people, wagons, horses, and caravans.

We stand transfixed as the pattern reveals itself.

From the East comes my Past—every version of me, my companions, and even my former lives. There I am as a child, with playground friends. There I am in uniforms and T-shirts, in jerseys and jackets—from early years to middle age, through centuries and stories.

From the West comes the Future. It’s impossible to comprehend these versions of us—what worlds they’ve walked, what stars they’ve reached, and what shores they will yet explore.

From the South comes the Present—our road, our Journey. Along it arrive all the beings we’ve met. Some pat my back, some shout in greeting, and others laugh. Faces from my life appear too—those I met during the Appointment. They wink and nod as they pass.

The crowd becomes a living mosaic of every fragment of my soul that was scattered at birth. As I walk towards The Castle, I feel myself becoming whole again.

I turn to Life, speechless. She stands there smiling calmly, pausing her teasing. For a brief moment, I see her as she truly is, in all Her Wisdom, Love, and quiet sympathy between deity and mortal.

She murmurs softly, "I told you once, remember? As long as I am with you, you shall never stand alone, my boy."

I step forward and embrace her, overcome with gratitude and Love, my Light shining through.

The moment, naturally, is spoiled by Shadow. "Disgusting. Someone create another shadow over those two. I need urgently to dissolve."

His comic timing draws laughter from us all, and with the last of the travellers who have arrived for the banquet, we step towards The Castle gates.

Evening brings the feast. Night will bring the battle.

I am ready.



CHAPTER 28

THE CASTLE

The Castle is a reflection of our lives. The feast is a celebration of completion—of how far the Journey has brought us, and of the understanding we have gained along the way.

There are countless rooms, halls, gardens, corridors, and balconies. They are everything we have ever built in our dance with Life.

I walk through them all, from basement to rooftop, from kitchen to banquet hall. It is well-structured, the result of choices, words, and actions. Everything that can be built by the human soul—whatever emotion or aspiration we are capable of, be it laughter, drama, joy, conflict, celebration, or mourning—dwells within.

Why do we build?

We build to manifest our visions. To create shelter, to represent, to protect, to gather, and to create. It doesn't matter how large or small, grand or humble the building is. What matters is who is inside.

And I find my Castle—the result of my Journey, my Path—to be fascinating and diverse. It's not without its cracks or closed rooms

but that, too, is fine. Every house has places that need repair or renewal.

The crowd is vast: immortals and concepts, named things I have given Light to so they possess souls, and, of course, mortals.

My past lives, future lives, and present selves of all ages and dimensions are gathered here, along with my companions, including my dear Forever Friend, my Life.

She leads us through the rooms, telling stories as we go, while I tell the Story with her to all who wish to listen. Together we weave truth, imagination, and jest into a single tapestry. That is the way to tell a Tale, and so we do.

I feel excitement, not for myself but for my friends and companions, whose joy fills the air. Our Lights mingle into a Prism of every colour ever born, reflecting and refracting across the walls.

It is a beauty that will stay with me forever.

As the sun sets, we gather in the grand hall to celebrate and to feast. We throw ourselves into the revelry, eating, drinking, dancing, laughing, embracing, and toasting as is the tradition.

But I know that within hours, I will face my final adversary—the last challenge of the Journey. Every trial before this one has turned into a lesson, a memory, or a new friend, many of whom now stand beside me, sharing in this moment, in Love.

They have recognised me, helped me, accepted me as I am—through every stage of growth, through every imperfection. They have Loved me. They have Loved my Light. And they have all been brought together by my dearest friend, Life.

They praise me as their champion, trusting me to face the last and most dangerous step of the Journey. Their faith inspires me.

There is something we mortals do that perhaps only we can do.

Despite weakness, volatility, and fear; despite the odds, knowing how fragile we are, how easily we fall, and how often Death approaches with his little book to mark another possible ending to our Path—still, we live.

Scared, uncertain, broken, we laugh in the face of danger. We celebrate before the threat of doom, and we confront what comes against us, accept our challenges. And somehow, we endure to tell stories another day and celebrate again.

I ask Life, “Who is the Beast? What is its nature?”

She laughs softly. “It’s all about you understanding it yourself. Remember when we were children, and I taught you the power of naming?”

I nod.

“You need to learn its name,” she says, “and understand what it is. You’ve been through almost everything. You see the pattern now, don’t you? Follow it. You’ll make it. I believe in you.”

She makes me look around. “They all believe in you. So should you. It’s almost time. Come with me.”

She takes my hand and leads me out to the grand terrace beyond the hall. Two figures follow—my Best Friend and my Future Friend, my companions since the beginning.

Life glances around to make sure we’re alone. “It will be frightening,” she says quietly. “This is the real thing. I can feel the Beast drawing near. I’m not supposed to tell you anything, but I’ll do what I can.”

She leans closer, whispering, “The Journey never ends, you hear me?” She points to my Future Friend. “What does it even mean that you’re here?”

He smiles. “That he lived long enough to meet me later?”

She nods. "In some outcomes, yes. And you—" she points to my Best Friend—"what was the first thing you two said when you met?"

My Best Friend answers with me in unison: "I bet we've met before, perhaps in other lives?"

Life nods. "And what does that mean?"

My Best Friend smiles. "That we've beaten it before?"

She grins. "You have. A few times." Then she turns to me, looking more focused than I've ever seen her. "Tell me, Storyteller—does this feel like the end of a story to you?"

I think for a moment before answering. "No, it feels more like we're nearing the end of the Third Act."

Her eyes gleam with pride. "Exactly. You can be clever when you need to be. Which means...?"

"We can win," I say. "We will."

A cough sounds behind me, followed by a familiar grumble. "What, I'm not good enough to be part of your little charade? That one that's probably borderline illegal?"

Life laughs, turning to my Shadow. "You know perfectly well why it's impossible to face the Beast without you."

She says it with deliberate flattery. To my surprise, it works. Shadow smirks, almost preening himself in contentment. "Well, if you insist. Because after the boy met Darkness and met me, he knows that... well, what do you know, boy? Tell her."

I glance reproachfully at Life for playing him so obviously, but she just pulls that face I know so well: 'Don't question it, dear—it's working.'

"There is no good or evil," I say. "No black or white. All Life is

balance. The only monsters we fight are the ones we create ourselves. Right, Shadow?”

He chuckles approvingly. “Heh. Good. You might just survive this—whatever it is. The immortals can’t even comprehend it.”

I take note of that.

Then The Castle clock strikes midnight, and I hear a sound I prayed I would never hear again.

The skies darken. Two crimson eyes open above us. A mass of colourless matter descends like a falling star, slamming into the earth and rising—shifting, swelling—into a vast, monstrous form. Its shape is ever-changing, its presence unbearable, and its hunger beyond words.

A voice fills my head, screeching, “I see you.”

And, just as on the night of my Initiation, I answer calmly, “And I see you too, Beast.”



CHAPTER 29

THE BEAST

As my eyes meet those of the abomination, it roars in triumph. As at our first encounter, I feel a thousand tons of weight fall onto my shoulders. I freeze. There is nothing I can do. I'm paralysed—unable even to blink, and barely able to think.

The shapeshifting monster raises a claw, preparing the mortal blow. As it charges, I brace myself to be slain. I am about to be no more.

The end, rest assured, is my darkest hour—but as I think it, a figure flashes before me. I see Hope entering the scene.

She walks joyfully, humming softly, and as she does, Hope opens the door to the banquet hall.

The pit of light created by the diversion hits my body, and I hear Shadow's voice: "Not on my watch. A little help, boy?"

The shackles binding my mind weaken slightly. I reach for my Light and think of all those who are here. For them, I can burn. And oh, I do. I burn like my Star.

Though I cannot move a finger, Shadow grows, swelling to the Beast's size, and blocks its claw.

I watch, trying to figure out my course of action. I hear Life's voice: "You'll never fight alone."

I get it now. This is the moment—the hardest moment for those who count too much on themselves. It's the moment when you've gained all the trust of those you Love and must let them help.

I need to understand who you are, Beast, but I cannot. The creature is unnatural, alien, and hostile. Shadow holds the assault, but not for long.

A tentacle bursts from the Beast's body. Reaching the wall, it crumbles it to dust, destroying the Light of The Castle. My Shadow shrinks and vanishes, and the monstrosity relaunches its assault.

At that moment, an ageing gentleman emerges. What is going on? He stretches out his hands and speaks an incantation. It creates the illusion of a golem—of power, glory, pleasure, and fame.

"Thank you, World!"

The golem catches the Beast by one of its many legs and smashes it against the floor once, twice, three times. But the World is slow, and the monster too agile. It seeps through the golem's hands and fills it with itself. The golem explodes in a shower of dust.

The World stands beside me, grunting. As the angry mass of the Beast nears us, he calls out, "Darkness?"

She replies, "I'm here, my brother." She appears in a gracious dance, raises her hand, and fills the scene with the illusion of night. The Beast continues its attack in vain.

I try to understand. I see a pattern emerging from the Journey and the fight. I feel the Storyteller trying to tell me something—screaming to attract my attention, pointing at the signs.

The Beast, frustrated, turns around and catches sight of me again. It regroups but its focus is lost as a rock strikes its head.

“Hey! You! Come here!” shouts my Best Friend. He has joined the fight.

The Beast’s eyes fill with yet more rage as it charges at her.

My Future Friend pushes on a leaning column. It crashes down onto the Beast, bringing up a huge cloud of smoke.

I can see that the Beast has been hurt by my companions’ trap, but alas, it rises again—angrier than before.

I’m so close. I can almost understand. If only I could have just a little more time.

“I’m at your service, kid.” Time slowly enters the battle. He clicks his fingers, and everything slows, creating space for me to think.

“You don’t have much time, though,” he says. “Use it well.”

Time disappears, but I feel as if I now just need one last hint. As I watch the Beast rise in slow motion, my friends—immortals and my other selves—fight with everything they have, buying me precious seconds.

I hear steps behind me, and Death emerges.

He looks at me, at the Beast, and at the battle. He ponders the situation, then says, “Hmm. I thought I made it clear? And didn’t my sister, Life, also tell you? This thing...”—he points behind his back—“...is what a lot of mortals mistake for me. Do you get it?”

Of course! From our first days spent in caves, cold and hungry, we’ve fought this monstrosity on a daily basis.

I should have seen it earlier: the weight, the shapeshifting form, the paralysis.

Shadow mentioned that immortals cannot understand it. I should have guessed the answer from the metaphor of the lonely Light to which the mortal soul clings.

Why do we hold so tight? And why are so many of us hiding—from Life, from Death, from Darkness, or even from the Light?

Because we are afraid.

When we are afraid, we block ourselves from all the beauty of the Journey. We trap ourselves in a cage with an angry Beast that slowly perverts, corrupts, and devours our nature, turning us into disease-spreading ghouls.

Death told me we fear him because we cannot understand his nature.

Life told me never to be afraid.

Light taught me to persist, no matter what happens.

And Love? Love is simply the opposite of Fear.

I rally myself. The situation is dire, with most of my allies wounded or defeated, but this is not defeat. I raise my hands as I did back then, on the lonely street where I was first challenged, and say, “I’m not afraid of you!”

My friends join me, moving towards the Beast with their hands outstretched as well. We chant, “We are not afraid to try, to dare, to serve!”

“We are not afraid to name things and to search for the Journey!” we continue. “We are not afraid to dream, to fight, to rise! To grow, to change, and to take risks!”

The small creature squeals and trembles at my feet, trying to hide. It knows there’s nowhere to go.

Everyone looks at me, waiting for my decision.

I look at Fear, take a deep breath, and kneel beside it.

Calmly, I whisper, "You're only scary when you're unknown. You are a little fellow, aren't you?"

Fear calms, its eyes softer now, its voice quiet and ashamed: "You see me now, Light Bearer. Now you are."

I think for a moment. I'm tired. It's been quite a journey, and quite the finale. A little too much, perhaps.

I brush Fear's pelt, soothing it until it stops shaking. I tell it, "I'll let you go, Fear. No point in fighting further, no point in blame. You've been a part of me, but no more. You're free."

It rises. I feel a small wave of admiration from it. Fear bows and leaves the scene.

Life comes to my side. "What will Fear do now?" she asks.

I answer, "How would I know? But maybe there's a Journey waiting for it too—one that helps Fear find itself through tests and trials."

Life nods with a smile and says, "Well done, ki... nah, not anymore. Well done, my Storyteller. Thank you."

And just when I am, all vanishes again.



CHAPTER 30

THE WISH

We stand once more beneath the Tree in my soul's Valley, where I fought myself—and won.

It's sunny—just me, my friends, and Life.

“Let's sit,” I say, and we move beneath the Tree's green crown. A silent moment turns to talk.

Life watches me with a spark in her eyes. As the words flow, I know we're thinking the same thing.

This is where it began for us. Perhaps the Tree was smaller—so were we.

The Valley once felt like a small, hedged garden. There are no limits now.

All has changed, yet somehow it feels unchanged—for both of us. What else matters?

Life waits until the conversation opens. My friends pause for a

second, sharing the thrill of the fight we've endured, and she says, "You know there's one last thing for you. You feel it, don't you?"

I nod, smile, and answer, "Yeah."

Best Friend and Future Friend look at me, intrigued. "Tell them," says Life.

She means another rule—the law of the Journey. I've been thinking about it since we returned here. The Beast is slain, the Quest complete, the realm saved, and the Hero has won the day. Now, there should be a reward. That is the way of Story, and I know mine.

When I let go of Fear, my Light shaped a new understanding within me—the possibility of the impossible.

I stop playing with the branch I've been using to draw patterns in the dust and put my friends out of their suspense. "I've been granted a Wish," I say.

They exchange glances. Best Friend asks, "A Wish? As in anything you desire to happen?"

Life says, "Yes, but only once. It's a reward for those who conquered the Journey, saved themselves, saved all of us, and let their Fear go."

I chuckle. "Fear of the Unknown—the only thing between a mortal and the Universe, right?"

Life tilts her head and nods, content and proud that I finally understand.

Future Friend studies me. "Quite a prize. What are you thinking?"

Too much—and nothing at the same time.

What could I Wish for? To be King of The Castle, to rule these lands as I please? For what? To stop in my tracks for something I never craved? Thrones are uncomfortable and crowns heavy for those who've drunk the freedom of the Journey and danced with Life.

To become one of them—a deity, a Symbol, a Name—and gain a domain of choice to play the eternal game with mortals? Fun, perhaps, but undeserved. And how could I, if no one chose me by their will?

Knowledge, skill, experience, Wisdom? Those aren't Wished for; they're earned through openness, learning, and trial.

To Wish something for others? I'm tempted. But is it good for them? Shadow, my strict guardian, taught me never to bind my Light to another's.

There's something else. A Wish creates an illusion—an overwhelming adjustment to the realm that becomes true for everyone and everything in the Universe. No one will even know it happened—except, of course, me.

"It's both ironic and a bit annoying," I say. "You get the Wish and the power to change everything in the Universe—but right at the moment on the Journey when you understand you already have everything you ever wanted. The rest should be left to its natural devices—not Wished for at all."

Life laughs and rubs my back. "I know. It's unfair in a sense—but it is what it is. That's Wisdom's cost: being able to change everything and yet often letting things be. I'm glad you see it."

I nod. "Knowing the difference, not just between what we can and cannot change, but where we simply shouldn't—whatever the reason."

My friends exchange a look. "Well then," they say, "why not keep it?"

Life and I both draw breath, but Shadow answers first. "He can't. Wishes are so powerful they erode anyone. Imagine knowing every second you could do anything—even once. You want your pal to go mad? Stop talking nonsense."

Life adds, “He also can’t forfeit it. The Wish is formed and must be released. But I know you already know what to do with it, don’t you, dear?”

I nod, feeling a little guilty. “Yeah. From the moment we got here. I’ve been dragging my feet because I love you all, I value the company, and I wanted this moment before I say the words.”

I shrug off the ending’s magic and stand. Everyone rises with me. “I promised my Spouse I’d be Home for dinner,” I say, “and I’m sure, my friends, you’re awaited Home as well.”

They smile—they get it.

“So, to our amazing Journey along the road together... I Wish Farewell.”

The realm shifts as the Wish moves into action, and we walk through the change. It’s majestic—but then, which change isn’t? Every step takes us somewhere.

It matters to know when something is over, if only to know when something new begins. It’s easier when you remember nothing truly vanishes, and anything that may be, already is.

I think the Call will end once we find ourselves by the River Wey in Guildford, but strangely it doesn’t. It soothes; it stays as a steady presence, harmonised in me.

We pause in the gentle rays of the setting sun. “This is where I go,” says Life. “I’m needed elsewhere. It’s been a pleasure, an honour, and a joy.”

She hugs my friends, then stops by me, kisses my cheek, and asks, “See you tomorrow?”

“As always,” I answer. “The Journey ends, yet the Path goes on. As from the first day, I’m with you tomorrow.”

Life looks at me, so quiet and thankful. “Tomorrow is always ours,” she says. She slowly vanishes into the air and I find myself lost, as ever, in her green eyes. The moment is gone. Troublemaker. I’ll wait for you at dawn!

My friends and I walk up the tree-lined path back to Stoke Park. At the exit, our Future Friend stops.

“This is me,” he says. “You two majestic creatures. Well, that was something, wasn’t it?”

“It was,” we laugh.

We hug. Before he goes, Future Friend says, “We’ll meet soon. You’ve got this. This Journey healed me years ahead. When we started, I was close to desperation and the finale, but you sent me a Thread that reignited Light in me. I dodged my death.”

Best Friend and I wish him luck. We felt as much. He leaves, and we walk on.

The two of us chat like we always do but, somehow, in ways we never could before.

We reach the crossing at the end of Stoke Park—the one that sends me to Nightingale Road and you to York Street.

The one where we’ve walked down a thousand roads.

“Thank you, Best Friend,” I say. “That was great.”

You chuckle. “You always say that! This one’s the books, right?”

I laugh. “Oh, for sure.” We hug and part, calling it a day on our adventure. Over your shoulder, hand raised, you call, “Good evening, Storyteller! Call me!”

“Evening, Best Friend! I will. Say hello to the fam.”

I walk the last few yards between the sense of Road, of Journey, and of Return, and pass my Home.

Before I enter, I do what I always do when I come back from my travels.

I pause for a few minutes beside my Home and reach, very softly, towards my Light.



CHAPTER 31

THE HOME

I stand there by myself. The sun lets me see my Shadow, who is always with me, of course, but he gives me a moment and says nothing.

A quiet sensation follows—the adventure being completed. It flashes through my memories and lets me touch them again to relive the days that have just unfolded. They settle and take their place in my Book, adjusting me, changing me, editing my essence, and joining my shining Light.

I look at Home. I see its structure, the building, but that isn't what I truly see.

My fellow trickster, Life, has led me so far around the realm that I have left and returned to my Home in a dozen countries and through more eyes than I can count—eyes of other versions of me.

Home.

Home is not a house. Home is the deep, marvellous feeling that leads

us like a magic Thread through any circumstance, guiding us back to where it all begins.

Home lives within. We carry it in our hearts when we travel. Home is the laughter of the dearest; the excited barking of a little spark of Light who waits for you.

Home is the place that, as we learn along our Path, does not submit to the laws of time and space. It is a continuation of ourselves—another part of the soul we restore and hold dear when we find it again.

I turn the key and step through the doorway.

It is the same, and yet every time it is different because we leave as one and return as the many who have been woven into our tapestry of Path, Universe, and Light.

I walk the stairs up to my place and smell dinner being prepared. I think that while the Journey has been years for me, it has been only hours for my Home. It is always like that.

As I enter, I am embraced by Love and am serene in the knowledge that wherever I go, there is a place for me where I am waited for and expected to fill with my presence, making Home complete again.

I smile and think, how many times will I come to understand, with newly gained and accepted Wisdom, that we do not obtain Home so much as restore it? The hints are always around us, guiding us to the Answer.

How many times must we mortals reach again for what we have known since the day we were born—slowly assembling it, changing our perspective and remembering once more? I suppose this is one of those things that never ends.

Home.

Have I already found my Answer?

I have come closer through my Journey, but I will still have to keep searching through days and years to come.

But not now.

Wisdom, as becomes apparent, is not only enquiry, knowledge, and comprehension. It is also knowing what is enough for a day, leaving alone what belongs to others, and simply staying in the moment.

Celebration is what Life gives as moments to spend with our family—the bliss and joy in the absence of anything else but Love. It is a Love without borders—always simple, ever-giving, ever-flowing, and asking for no proof.

As we sit at dinner, I tell you the story of my Journey—the adventure I have lived today.

My Little Light follows my words with excitement, his eyes glowing. I feel his Light grow as he imagines and dreams along my Path.

My Spouse smiles, shaking her head with her own Wisdom. I once asked her how it works, and she answered, “I know you live half your life in another world, my Storyteller, and let imagination lead you far and beyond. I accept the importance of your Quests and travels.”

She leans his head on my shoulder and adds, “My Wisdom is in embracing the resonance between us. My aspiration, dreams, and Path are my own, but we walk ours together—always. Even when we’re not side by side, we Journey together, towards our Home.”

I often think she is on another level, and when I catch reflections of her eyes in Life, those are the moments Life is calm, wise, patient, and caring—embracing the passionate nature of my Light.

When dinner is over and evening turns to night, I feel tired and ready for bed. I think more about Life’s reflections and understand that all of them are the Light of Love in all its forms. If I had to name the most important understanding from my Journey (though each is

part of the same Answer), it would be this one. I couldn't ask for more.

My parents' Light brought me here from Darkness. Their Love helped me. Strict at times, they still gave all they had, guiding me through the childhood of my years.

My Best Friend's Light—when we are goofing, scheming, and daring—challenges the road, time, space, and everything else we can conjure.

The demanding Light of my adversaries—our encounters and the Shadow—makes me check, adjust, find balance, and learn things for myself.

My own Light has taught me to embrace myself and, knowing Love, to give it back to all that is connected with me.

I fall asleep, this time in a calm and soothing void, not another spree of dreams. That would be too much.

My Spouse comes to bed later. She looks at me, kisses me, checks my blanket, smiles from the doorway, and places the Book that slipped from my hand on our old cabinet.

I do not see it, but she checks our Little Light the same way she checked my sleep; and when the Home dreams quietly, she takes a small, well-hidden box and opens it, looking for a moment at the shining locket of the Dove.

When did you make your Journey, my dear? What was your Tower and your battle, Spouse? What choices did you make to deserve the Symbol of Love? Of all the arts, we find our true vocation in the only one that embraces them all.

Not far away, my Best Friend goes late to bed after her dinner at Home. When everyone sleeps, she looks out of the window, reaches into her pocket, and, for a second, takes out the silver Crest of Valour,

gleaming in the moonlight.

Her voice is action—the pure energy of guided Light. In everything she does, she manifests life, protection, and steady will. She helps in a multitude of deeds to set things right, well knowing most will go unnoticed. But Valour is not Fame.

And Valour is what counts for a Knight.

Her quiet courage stands before every danger. She often takes the blows for those she loves—ever vigilant, bright, brave at heart, and never budging. My Best Friend fights without armour and prevails, every time, on every road she walks.

She is a poet-warrior who sings her Light directly, weaving it into verses with the rhyme of valiance she has found through a Journey of her own. This Crest is deserved—a balance of passion, strength, and mind.

In many places, times, and dimensions, under different skies, before night falls, we find a brief moment and follow an impulse to reach for our Symbols—their voices. We touch them, smile, and remember what we are and who we truly are.

Those who complete the Journey—through the Third Act of Four that lead to the Answer—realise that the final one is simply this: real, true, conscious, marvellous, and now, it is an ever-present Life.



CHAPTER 32

THE LIFE

Though the Journey is over, Journey is only part of our Tale—
Act Three on the Path to the Answer.

Act One is Childhood: of body, mind, and Light, with everything that comes with it. We reach curiously into the realm around us. Light grows, increases, and explodes. Life comes and befriends each of us, presenting herself in the forms that suit us most.

We feel everything we need, and all we ever will. We truly shine despite the hardships of our early days, and one day—though we shall not remember it for a long time—we pass an Initiation and are thrown the gauntlet to fight with Fear that, for now, persists.

As we are not yet formed, we think our challenge is the World, but he is only there to teach, to guard in his own way, and to entertain our Youth. He is a nice old man, sometimes rude, stubborn, and even daft. After the Appointment first presents our choices, we begin the Draft.

The Draft is where we build the scenery for the Journey. We must do it ourselves, shaping both the designs of our failures, downfalls,

pitfalls, and dangers, and naming the Symbols—those parts of the Answer that will always be present in our lifelines.

Those Symbols are our people, friends, imagination, places, and feelings. Though unclear at first, like images at the time of sketching a future plot, they grow stronger, more confident, and more compelling day by day.

We build ourselves to the point we can confront.

The Draft, the time, the disbelief, the slumber—this is where we all still stand.

After the Beast has roared, afraid of the unknown of our future, we distract ourselves and drift from the moment—yet we still must prepare and go.

We come to the breaking point of our existence, embrace again our relationship with Life, learn to rewrite and edit what has been written, shake out the frozen state of Fear, and strive.

She is always there to lead and teach again. And if we can make even our first step in thought, and even if we cannot, when we reach our darkest hour, she will manifest herself through her sister, Hope.

Act Three is preparation and the Journey. We slowly gather ourselves, reforge essence, and learn to build our Beacon. Then one day it happens: when we light it, the Light of our souls reaches the shores of the Lighthouse.

We feel the connections return. Light resonates with Love and restores the soul's design. The Call emerges, tension builds, and, in what we call time, the Journey begins for each of us.

The Journey is a convergence, a test, a challenge—an arc through which a character grows and realises themselves. It starts at Home and returns to Home, through a myriad of meetings and decisions.

Each changes us until we come to completion and gain our own Wisdom.

In the final battle—through understanding, through our best qualities, and through the strength to accept help—we let Fear go.

That Fear once stood between the night and the first of us, trembling by the campfire, feeling small and insignificant in a dark and dangerous realm. We learned to fight it in our first Journeys, reaching for the Light that burns from the fire, connecting it with the Light of the Star, embracing Life, and learning how to Love.

When we come Home completely, everything changes for us and for those who are “us” in the eyes and souls of others—whether in the present or in any realm and time.

We begin to feel unity among all of our selves, to communicate, to know, to change. We gain the omnipresent while still walking the Path we know.

This is Act Four, the final act of the Tale. It opens the part where everyone is themselves on their own terms, perspective, and found Wisdom.

With it, we understand that restless interference—the impulse to act for acting’s sake—is false, as are most of the tools we developed in our Draft. Life will be with you again, teaching you to build new ones.

When everything clears and Fear is gone—when you pass through the rites of Story—you stop judging, fretting, and feeling bored. There is no point in the hassle; no random, mindless hunt for a short, false promise of truth behind every door.

When you realise that what we call chaos is a larger order that still has room for change, you have already done the essential work.

Life will teach you to wander with your mind through the known Universe, and Light will guide you. What are the stars if not someone's Light? You will know.

She will teach you to recollect—to remember all that ever happened—and to converse, if you need, with the past to make your peace.

She will teach you to gaze into the future—at things to come as if written on the page. What can be built in imagination, named, and manifested is as real as anything else. We have known that from our earliest days.

She will teach you to see the moment, feel the crossroads more keenly, and use the Voice you gained to give her passage and lifelines to those yet to take their first steps.

She will introduce you to all the immortals and high concepts ever Named by mortal mind. In the ever-present, there shall be nothing you cannot reach or find with your mind.

And when all this, and much more, has entered you, one day you look at Life and, suddenly, understand what it means to live.

To live is to be in gratitude and Love with her: to give her all of yourself and take whatever she has to give.

We are all in Love with her from the days we first meet her—but most of us never say it. How is Love possible between mortal and immortal? Wisdom teaches that Love is not about saying. True Love is simply to live with each other, seeing and feeling one another in the mirror, and in everyone Love has touched. We learn that Love is much larger than anything we can think. Love is not about thinking, dear reader. Love is... Love, however silly that may seem.

This is the Fourth Act: Life followed by Wisdom, with your inner Light shining and no Fear.

The number of mortal years given to this part of the Path does not matter, so long as you follow the Star with Voice, remember your lessons, and don't feed your grumpy Shadow too much.

These years are meant to assemble those outstanding pieces you once felt when the Beacon met the Lighthouse.

The Fourth Act is dedication and play—your meetings with her, and sharing all of it with those who ask, who want, and who appear in your realm. There is no suddenness to it. They are brought by Life, by their Love, and by their Light.

My Path leads me everywhere in this Act, and my Voice grows in Storytelling.

My Best Friend and I have walked a thousand roads already; in this Act we walk a few thousand more, all of them bringing us Home.

In a few years I meet my Future Friend. the Healer, and teacher. Life brings us together in a hotel. I wish I could tell his Journey, but those stories are for ourselves to tell.

I mark some of them in my books—this time not as an expression but in books written: manifested Tales.

There are moments when I burn too bright. My Shadow helps me through those times.

There are days and years. There are changes. And yet none of the essentials change much.

The universal concepts are the staples. While Life and I may bend some rules, the pillars always stand, and through the dance we share, I approach my true last day of mortal life.

It is no different from any other day. It is the last and final gift of Life I receive before I reach the Answer as well.

At last.



CHAPTER 33

THE FLIGHT

It is my last day.

I sit in my chair, a little cold from the British summer. I'm now an old man, a mortal man, but still, I'm smiling down my nose as I put yet another story—and, at the same time, the Tale I have been telling across my life—into words.

I sip tea occasionally, thinking. I have been writing more and more over the years. Closer to my days of dawn, I feel that following my Voice and Vocation—imagining and sharing—makes me feel younger.

While I spend much time with Life, I've learned to chat with the Shadow when she is now around.

He isn't as grumpy as he appears, but he does have the irritating habit of looking over my shoulder on a sunny day, trying to give me advice when I'm writing.

On this day, we are so engaged that I can't distract or shut him up.

Worse, he has a knack for editing and a strict perfectionism for language. “What is this?” he says. “What are you doing? Boy, you’re losing a reader. No one will read a passage this long. Break it up.”

I take a deep breath, replying, “Shadow, how many times have we had this conversation over the years? You know how I write. This will get edited.”

It never helps.

“Edited, shmedited,” he grumbles. “Why are we even letting other mortals change anything in what we write?”

I’m getting grumpy myself now (yes, I’ve caught some of his habits). “Not us, I am! I’m writing, Shadow, you’re just trying to be part of the moment. Please!”

Shadow gets offended, mumbling, “Ungrateful old geezer. People only read you because I’m helping.”

As we exchange jabs and banter while words flow onto the paper, I feel a pause coming. My fingers hesitate.

“You could have told me,” I mutter.

He’s silent for a second, before answering, in a softer, almost apologetic voice: “I couldn’t, kid. I’m sorry. This is above my pay grade. This is the last thing, and it’s only about you.”

I pause, then say, “I... I’m sorry, Shadow. I understand. Well, what a pity.”

I look out the window at the Guildford rain.

I murmur, “This one was going to be great. I wish I could have finished it. I’m sad, Shadow.”

He tells me softly, “It will be, kiddo. You shouldn’t...”

I close the laptop, and Shadow says, “You can leave it open, no need for dramatics. Just look. Everyone’s already waiting.”

I nod, standing up, feeling the effort it takes to move.

The Call comes again, and I know what it means—it’s time to press forward. This time, to the real ending. I don’t need to ask Shadow who’s waiting; I know who I’m meeting outside.

There’s something else I need to do, but I hesitate. I reach for my Light and try to feel Love as much as I can. I wonder why this—saying my final Farewell—feels like the hardest of my trials? I gasp. Why is this so hard?

I step through the corridor slowly, accompanied by the sound of Guildford rain. I enter the dining room and see my Spouse quietly knitting on the sofa. No less quietly, I sit down next to her and softly take her hand.

“Hey...” I say.

She looks up, her eyes wet, and says, “Hey...”

We sit like this for a couple of moments that seem much longer. Then, she asks, “I feel that you have to go. This is the day?”

I answer, “Yes, my Love. I hear the Call again. I’m afraid it is... the day.”

She takes a deep breath, looks at me, and sees my pain. She says, “It’s unfair... but I understand. Come here.”

We hug and sit there, simply being. Then, the moment is gone. We lean back, and my Spouse says, “This doesn’t change much, you know? Your Home is always waiting for you, little rabbit. I’m waiting for you. You know where to return, my Love.”

I smile, and we kiss goodbye. “I know, darling, and I will. You know that. I’ll return...”

She lightens a little, answering, “I know.”

She helps me to my feet, puts on my shoes, and leads me to the door. We hug and linger, reluctant to stop holding hands.

I make my way down the stairs, hand in pocket. I find a small, warm ball of Thread—her gift. I smile to myself, somehow sure that with it, I’ll one day be sleeping again in my Home bed.

As I step outside, I feel a gentle slap on my head. I hear a voice beside me. I look, and there is my Best Friend.

She stands there, with nothing smarter to say than, “You old git, fool, idiot. This is who you are! I still thought we’d do a few more adventures, Best Friend. Why do you have to leave so early?”

I chuckle, squeezing her hand in greeting. “So I had hoped, my bestie, but it seems it’s time to go. All Tales come to an end.”

She crosses her arms, looking at me. “You wouldn’t try to sneak past me, would you? Refuse one last walk into the park?”

I reply, “I would never. I need you to accompany me on this last walk.”

And so we walk. She helps me to a few figures under the rainy summer day.

We chatter, as we always do. Somehow, it’s easier this way. As we arrive, I see my siblings, waiting patiently.

Covering her upset with bravado, Best Friend says, “Here, he’s all yours. I have no idea how you’ll do without me!”

“Not sure about them,” I reply, “but I certainly wouldn’t be able to do anything without you.”

I turn to Life and Death. “Life, as beautiful as ever. Death, it’s been quite some time. You haven’t changed a bit.”

He smiles, holding a paper bag filled with pears. He stretches it towards us. "I thought..."

Accepting his gift, I say, "This is very kind of you."

Life wrinkles her nose. "Oof. What can I do to make this less awkward?" She clicks her fingers, and the rain stops. The sun shines.

"Thank you, Life. This is much better. So, what's next?"

Death answers, "Nothing too abnormal. You've walked your Path so well, my friend. It's simply time to finish it the same way it was walked."

Life adds, "We need to get you to The Summit, kid."

I chuckle, coughing. "Oh, not with these feet. This kid's old now."

Life smiles. "Oh, we won't be walking. I have one final gift for you, my boy. But before, you might want to say goodbye to her."

She looks at Best Friend and then at me. I hug Best Friend. "I'll see you soon, under another sun. Maybe we'll look different, but I feel our parting won't be long."

She replies, "Well, make sure you find me sooner than you did this time around. I'll need you on my Journey, fellow soul, Best Friend." She turns to Life and Death. "You two make sure he's ready."

They smile and nod. "We will. You know we will."

I turn to Shadow. "I presume we'll meet again after my next Journey? Right after the Echo?"

He smirks. "Old fool. We met first at The Tavern, but sorry, I've forgotten your age and how you struggle to remember."

I interrupt softly, "Shadow..."

He stops. "I'll miss you, mortal. You've been fun—not perfect, but close to it, I must admit."

I smile. “Thank you, Shadow. I couldn’t have wished for a better guardian.”

As the Farewell draws to a close, I feel my mortal body becoming lighter than air. I lift off from the ground that’s held me for all my being. Life and Death hover beside me, enjoying my happiness.

I ask, “Where to next?”

Death hesitates for a second, exchanging looks with Life. She nods and he tells me, “I’ll go ahead. My sister will guide you to our meeting.”

I understand, and he disappears into the horizon. Life turns to me with a smile.

“Are you ready for the Flight, my darling?”

I smile. “Yes, I am.”

The wind fills me, and I feel the lightness. My Light burns. I follow Life into the skies.

It’s my time—my Answer. And it’s time to place the final dot. Whatever the story is, it has to finish.

Before I go, I see my Best Friend wave in farewell, and my beloved Spouse standing by the window, happy to see me flying again.

I’ll see you both again.

We always meet again.



CHAPTER 34

THE SUMMIT

As we fly, Life begins to play. She shows me how to truly enjoy her. We dive, fall, and ascend, laughing. We almost fall, yet we pivot back to the skies, and as she looks at me with her mischievous gaze, I say, “You know, you don’t have to make each of our meetings a full metaphor!” She laughs, shouting back, “I’m not trying! It happens by itself!”

Each moment is full of her. She is in every smile, jest, and every word. She shouts, “Don’t think! Enjoy it!” and I follow, hovering over the mortal world.

As we fly over places from my youth, I see the World standing at the balcony of one of his offices. He looks at the skies, spots us, and raises his hand in greeting.

He says, “Just look at those two brats. He is free at last, which means they are on their way to The Summit. Good luck, you’ve deserved it, kid.”

As we fly forward, Life comes closer and tells me, “Look, we’re almost there, sooooo...” I give her a look, unable to believe it.

I blink and say, “Life? I know this soooo... What’s on your mind?”

She blinks back innocently, which only means trickery is afoot, and tells me, “Well, I obviously can’t bend the laws of the mortal cycle. We’ll arrive at The Summit soon and you’ll get the Answer—poof, you’ll see—but...”

I feel the Call start to grip us as we fly, pulling us toward a cloudy and enormous mountain range. There, The Summit.

I say, “But what, Life?”

She hesitates for a moment, then elaborates, “Oh, fine, there’s something... well, we... I would do it. You’ve got to trust me!”

I respond with a hint of sarcasm, “I’m always game, but we both know this mood of yours has often landed us in trouble. You’ve said yourself, there are some rules...”

She laughs, looking at me, eyes shining. “Oh, I beg you! Since when have you become such a fan of rules? What’s fun if you don’t break them? Well, this is a gamble—it’s the worst game—but I’ve thought it through. We made a Promise!”

The wind grows stronger, and we have to shout as she continues, “And say, I’ve got used to the fact tomorrow is ours! I wouldn’t risk that!”

There’s something else in her eyes, something different, and I feel it. Her green eyes shine like they’ve done before. I simply ask, “Why?”

She reaches out, grabs me by the shoulders, and says, “How can you be such an idiot sometimes. Here’s why...”

Life kisses me, and I kiss her back. In that moment, I realise everything I’ve seen through my past has been a mere reflection of this

one. It has always been about us. I have so many things to tell her, and I say, “Life, look, I...”

The Chromatic Thread is Purple interwoven with Purple, and I am reinforced with Love—the Love of Life.

She pushes back, winking, and says, “Hush now, simply do what Death tells you!” I take a deep breath, and I follow, saying, “As always, I’ll do everything you ask.”

We land at The Summit. Death, Darkness, and many others I’ve met on my mortal path are all there, waiting for us. They’ve tested me, threatened me, and played their games with me. But through the Journey and the Fourth Act, they’ve become my friends.

We land, and Life leads me by the hand like I’m a bride destined for the altar. “Well, that’s quite a thought!” she chuckles, reading my mind.

She laughs again, “I’ve been with you through hundreds of your mortal lives.” That’s when I blush.

Some guests roll their eyes when they see us still chatting, expecting a more dramatic entry to meet Death. But others, those I know better, laugh with us. They know us too well.

As we get closer to the edge of The Summit, I steady myself. I’m glad that I do as what is about to happen is breathtaking.

Life takes my hand and gives it to her sibling. Death takes me by the hand and leads me a few steps forward.

He says, “What you’re about to see is something none of those present here can take any credit for. It is what you’ve been creating through your years. It is just yours, my friend.”

We walk to the edge. He raises his hand and the fog clears, revealing the most magnificent and epic visage that mortals are ever allowed to see.

This is my world, my realm.

It's me.

I'm people, imagination, actions, dreams, and every consequence of every slight impact of my mere existence.

Have you seen the Universe? I mean, the way we imagine it through the prism of our mortal eyes.

And if you could; if you could comprehend all that has happened, is happening, or will happen—witnessing, feeling, and understanding it all in a single second—then that is exactly what I experience at this moment.

This is it—the moment of my true completion; the final moment of restoration to my true self.

This is the moment where, standing next to Death, the whole of my mortal Path. with all adventures, are past and behind me.

I've got the Answer.



CHAPTER 35

THE ANSWER

I feel pretty much the same way when I get my Wish. I know the Answer, but what good is it, mere moments before I go through Death's door?

Then again, I would never have lived Life if I'd known it from the beginning.

And The Answer calms me to a state of full acceptance and tranquil stillness that is required for us to die.

It's rather simple, really. Yes, like all the best things, it is required to be.

The Answer is that we all are one, both blessed and cursed to travel as mortals as this shell is the only vessel capable of containing the Light.

The Universe is calm. Time is still. Every Star is predestined to move precisely across a designated space. The same applies for even the smallest particle of dust in motion.

But nothing can exist in perfect stillness.

So, in the Universe, there is the comet of mortal Life to bring change and uncertainty. We are an anomaly—fragile and vulnerable nuisances.

Yet, at the same time, we are the pillars of it all.

The Light that guides is the seed of the whole existence.

While our Light is easily extinguished as we cease to be, it is reborn. We are all reborn, through the call of Love, into the realm of mortals. We scatter, not to overheat ourselves, and we are doomed to leave again, but we are gifted with the joy of being able to gain Wisdom through completion.

And the truth is, nothing ever goes unnoticed. It's all recorded, marked, and then archived. Being able to connect with all those reflections can make us whole against all odds.

Even if you simply follow instinct and ignore the search for the Answer, you are still doing important work. Perhaps you are creating a dimension that needs to exist for someone else? It could even be another you—perhaps in the past or yet to come.

In any case, the aim is change. The goal is travel. In both cases, Light is an agent.

We could all be mindless little gears that move things around automatically, but this is not our true role. The Universe needs the Light, the Life, to be with us. And it also needs Love as something to create and connect new concepts and ideas for the greater comprehension of all.

And so, we act, and each time we are alive, we act better. We are telling the same story, all of us, but each time it is different.

And across this process, the Universe is working—expanding in its infinite search.

For The Answer is that the Universe is also on the Journey. We are all, in some sense, children. Her children, helping her to learn, assemble, teach, and find other ways of growing, perhaps to find an Answer of her own.

I know that all my lives—all our lives—are gathered in the grand design.

This knowledge is soothing.

The Answer satisfies all the questions you might have. It takes away all reservations, doubts, and problems.

You might, then, think, “I wish I were aware.”

But you are not. It defeats the purpose of the goal and the Quest. It breaks the continuity of presence, replacing it with slumber.

Part of The Answer is the thrill of novelty. This is required to keep our Light shining.

So when the Answer comes, I am content and joyful. But at the same time, part of me is again frustrated, because I know that I shall be returned to the mortal realm when Love calls my Light back into existence.

I’ll meet my dearest in other forms, and we shall be together again. We are one. And as our Light is an emanating force, it brings together those who have previously travelled roads together and who will travel them again.

And yet I feel something missing. We are treated as children by higher powers—and yes, we mostly fail to control ourselves as we grow—but why would the Universe not give us all the Answer and see what happens once we know?

Though conflicted, I remain tranquil. Death is near, giving me time.

When the stillness settles, I gasp and say to him, “I presume it is time to embrace rest in Darkness?” He answers, “For now. You know it won’t take long. Soon there will be a new Path, once you answer Love.”

I nod and follow.

Suddenly I feel Death’s hand at my elbow. He looks at me again and winks. “You’re not getting it. Call to Love.” He tilts his head toward Life, who whistles back from The Summit.

Immortal as she is, she could do a better job of pretending not to look. She is planning trouble. Something is coming.

I look at Death and quietly ask, “You mean...?” His face goes blank again.

“We need to go now,” he says. “Rest and Darkness, my mother, are waiting for you, my friend.”

There are twelve steps from the cliff to where Lady Darkness waits.

Death’s door is there. It will lead me to rest.

I look at Life—breathing deeply, deciding to trust her—and my Light kindles. I trust in Love. I whisper to Death and stretch out my hand to his.

“Lead me...”

And I call for Love.



CHAPTER 36

THE LOVE

Bright Light fills my essence as Death leads me from the cliff. My vision blurs within the radiance as I try to manifest Love.

And here lies the problem: technically, you can't. Love is the most elusive thing in the Universe.

She hides from definition. Every time you think you understand her, she reveals something more.

Love is energy itself, the reflection within everything and everyone—their essence. She is our whole.

All begins with Love; all ends with Love. Love is the centre, the still point between them.

Of all things that exist, Love alone obeys no rule or law. She stands above everything that has ever been, and words fail even to approach her. She simply is.

How can anyone comprehend her? Where would you even begin?

But I have to.

A life. A kiss. Blind trust.

I call upon every skill, every fragment of knowledge, every shard of Wisdom, trying to reach Love through Light—but nothing works.

I stand in the heart of the Light, and all I hear is a soft, pleasant laughter.

It's impossible to ask, beg, chase, or grasp her. I can't name her or find her. Part of me gives up.

Part of me whispers that perhaps this isn't failure—that life has been a great adventure, and what am I doing, trying to chase what no one has ever reached? No one has come close to understanding her, yet none of us can exist without Love.

Halfway down—six steps—I hear the silent voice of Life in my mind. “Look, I’ve been trying hard. You’re close, and you already have everything you need. You just can’t use any of it yet. Come on, my dear, you’re so close. Remember what I taught you. Don’t think—feel.”

I try to relax, to feel Love, but what stops me is my mortal nature—the training that taught me how to feel.

I overthink. I reach too hard. She laughs again, leaving me feeling foolish.

Whenever I draw near, a distant mocking voice teases: “Oh, how adorable—the thrill of the chase! It’s been so long since anyone tried to catch my attention. Wait... are you a mortal? At Death’s door?”

SHE’S PLAYING WITH ME. I FIND MYSELF THREE STEPS AWAY FROM THE Summit, where my rites of passage await and Lady Darkness stands ready to embrace me.

I don't know what makes me act—desperation, curiosity, or Love's own whisper. Perhaps Life cheers from afar. It doesn't matter.

What matters is that I do the silliest, most reckless thing imaginable.

Yet it works.

One step from The Summit, I fall in love with Love.



INSTEAD OF TRYING TO CHARM OR ANALYSE HER, I SURRENDERED TO THE flow of nature that shaped me. I let myself spark into her presence as I am.

It didn't matter how she looked—appearance means nothing to Love. It didn't matter what she wore or where we met—Love is everywhere. Anyway, I couldn't explain the place if I tried.

All I remember is warmth like a thousand suns: the look, the smile, the voice, the feeling.

She said, "Well, young man, this is bold. I've been watching you—as I watch all my children—and while you've certainly tested the limits of a mortal soul, this... this is new."

"What can I do?" I thought.

Love chuckled. "I know. That's what surprises me. What you feel for me is genuine—it's me, reflected in your soul."

She paused, then, in a playful, mock-threatening tone, declared:

"Haven't you heard? I'm the scariest of them all! I'll lure you, promise you, deceive you. I'll play you, devastate you, and leave you lost and broken."

Despite the gravity of the moment, I found that perfectly fitting. The mightiest force in the Universe would, of course, have a flair for

drama. After all, I've spent a lifetime with my immortal Life, who's never grown out of her childish ways.

Still, why did she have to say it like that? That adorable tone, that teasing glare. Oh, my.

She laughed and pouted at once—how could she even do that?

I stood there, jaw slack, as she said, "Oh my. Now look at you—you're even more in love with me. Oh boy, what am I going to do with you? You're handsome, and I like you too.

"Love, stop. Stop this immediately. Don't!" I stared, amazed, as she began pacing. I knew that habit all too well.

I realised what was happening.

I WAS GIVING IN.

Falling into her.

She waved her hands in mock frustration. "That's it! You love me too much. Now I'm in love with you as well. Hope you're happy. I mean, I kind of am."

She giggled, then added, "But you have no idea what you're getting into. Even I don't. It's... extremely inappropriate, unnatural and—" She burst out laughing again—"so exhilarating, so exciting. I feel so alive!"

I blinked, unable to look away.

She met my gaze. "Dear me, I'm everyone you've ever loved now. I wasn't sure you'd find me—no one really can—but look at you. Persistent, aren't you? Smart one."

"I... well, I think I—" I began, but her presence consumed me—her energy, her warmth. I felt silly, charmed, and utterly hers.

“We need to talk,” I blurted. “So many things. What’s your favourite—”

She pressed a finger to my lips. “Hush. First things first. You’re about to die, and we can’t let you forget this meeting. We have everything we need here. Where is it?”

She looked around, sniffed the air, then with a delighted “Aha!” reached into my pocket and pulled out the ball of Thread my Spouse had placed there. She turned it over in her hands, smiled, and gave it back.

“Aww, my dear. She loves you deeply—and you love her. Beautiful. My children.”

Then she turned solemn.

“Listen, handsome. You’re one step from the end. I can’t hold this form long, but...”

She took the end of the glowing Thread, looped it around my wrist, and said, “Pass the ball of Thread to Life. She’ll know what to do.”

“I will,” I told her. “As you say, Love.”

She nodded, gave me one last look, and said softly, “I’ll call for you soon. Your next life will be even more of an adventure, my boy.”

I caught her tone and knew what it meant.

“Don’t ask,” she said. “I work in ways I don’t always understand myself. Yes, I’m close with her—as I am with everyone. I love you, my mortal. Now, go.”

The Chromatic Thread is entwined with Magenta. I have been remade—one with Love.

The last thing I think, back at The Summit, is that if I had a coin for every time some immortal being, deity, or cosmic force sent me off

by flicking two fingers against my forehead, I'd be rich indeed—whatever that could mean.



CHAPTER 37

THE END

I take the final step toward Darkness, and it's done. They stand all around me—Death poised, Lady Darkness stepping forward.

"It's time, my dear," she says. "I'll let you rest. The last time we met, I had to test you through your trial, which was fun, but now that you know your Answer, you understand my true purpose. I am the recluse of souls."

Life, standing beside me, suddenly throws up her hands and wails, "Oh, Mother, nooo! Just a moment more with my dearest friend among mortals—why must he go?"

The entire procession stares at her in disbelief, me included.

Lady Darkness blinks, lowers her jaw slightly, and hisses, "Girl!"

I whisper to Death, "Is this normal?"

He chuckles. "No. Not at all. Never happened before. But when it comes to my sister..."

I nod. "Yeah, you never know with her. She can come up with absolutely anything."

He smirks. "You don't know half of it. One time—"

He doesn't finish.

Lady Darkness, annoyed with all the clamour, lets her eyes deepen to pure black. The sky follows suit. In the voice that every mother reserves for her misbehaving children, she thunders, "ENOUGH!"

We all jump and fall instantly silent.

Death, half-immune to the oldest and strongest magic of all, murmurs, "Yep. The time I mentioned? Ended exactly like this."

Lady Darkness gives him a hard look.

He straightens. "Mum—uhm—Mother."

She sighs. "You had to spoil a perfectly arranged event, didn't you?"

Life counters with pure child magic, her wide eyes, holding a single tear.

Lady Darkness folds her arms and mutters, "Hmph."

Then she turns to me. "I'm embarrassed. But would you mind terribly if I let this little weasel have what she wants? You're friends, after all. If she doesn't get this hug, she'll sulk and nag me for the next few hundred years."

"Oh, I understand completely, my Lady," I say. "I'd be honoured if you allow us a final embrace. A proper farewell."

SHE NODS, AND LIFE LAUNCHES AT ME, NEARLY KNOCKING ME OVER. SHE squeezes so hard I think I'll be strangled before I even die. To die by hug, in front of Death—how frustrating.

She whispers in my ear, “Where is it?”

“Already in your pocket,” I gasp.

She chuckles, disguising it as a sob. “Aww. Well done, my boy.”

Then she releases me, steps back, and composes herself.

Lady Darkness rolls her eyes. “Well, thank you. Shall we leave the theatrics? You know everything I have to say. Your journey has been remarkable, darling. I’ll be waiting to meet you again.”

I bow slightly. “Ma’am, as ever. I’m ready.”

She nods, takes my hand from Death, and together we pass through Death’s door into the quiet sanctuary of her realm—into her gentle, enveloping hands—where I shall rest until I return.

The light dims. I fall into a half-sleep, warm and weightless.

Lady Darkness strokes my head and says softly, with a trace of amusement, “You are a special boy. I’ll be watching closely.” Then, after a pause, she adds with a low chuckle, “Both of you.”

The Summit empties. The immortals drift away, one by one.

Death lingers for a moment, glancing at Life. She meets his gaze, gives a faint, knowing smile, and nods.

He returns the nod, then departs.

Only Life remains.



CHAPTER 38

THE THREAD

When everyone is gone, Life remains. She stands there in mourning, sobbing.

After a minute, she lifts her head and stares at the space where Death's door once was. She is focused, waiting with her hand in her pocket.

She whispers, "Come on. Please, work..."

And it does.

A faint flicker rises from her pocket, stretching into the mist—forming a Chromatic Thread, barely visible in the fog.

She smiles. "I have you! Perfect! Perfect!"

It wouldn't be my Life if she didn't do a little dance—short, jolly, and overexcited—before stopping to catch her breath. "No, to work!"

She takes my Thread in her hand, lifts it to her lips, and breathes warmly upon it.

The chromatic shine splinters into the colours of my soul.

She nods in satisfaction, then vanishes—only to reappear in seven places at once.

There are a few I know.

She appears in my Home, sitting quietly beside my beloved Spouse, touching her shoulder and whispering, “Here. We did it. He’s sleeping now, and will for some time. But I promise, you’ll meet again. We all will. Take this.”

My Spouse smiles.

She takes a Red Thread, lifts her knitting, and weaves it into the tapestry of our fates. “Thank you, Life,” she says. “He met her, didn’t he?”

Life answers softly, “He did. You helped him. Your love taught him to love without question.”

My Spouse smiles again and nods.

Life reappears at the home of my Best Friend, who sits in quiet grief, staring out the window. She approaches and gently taps her shoulder.

My friend turns, questioning. Life smiles. Extending her arm, she says, “He’s resting now, but you’ll be reunited. Your souls are bound. Here.”

The Green Thread unfurls into my friend’s hand.

She smiles. “How many rules have you broken, Life?”

“Few had to be,” Life replies. “But it wouldn’t have been possible without your presence, dear.”

My friend ties the Thread into a simple wristband. “He just felt right,

you know? Like I'd known him always. I liked that feeling. It was right."

Life smiles. "Your friendship, your love and courage, helped him dare the Path."

My friend chuckles. "So I did teach him something. I'll remind him of that next time."

Life moves on, appearing in the home of a Healer—the one you know as the Future Friend who shared our journey. He is old now, and doesn't yet know. She comes first to tell him.

He sits bitter, lost. She comforts him and says, "Though he's not with us now, here is his Thread." She gives him a white one.

"You taught him that the future can be walked with you," she continues. "Your trust and love—your mutual admiration for someone once unknown—taught him the love of trust. You widened his horizons."

He nods. "We both understand. Once we met, there was no time or space between friends. I will be waiting."

Then she appears before two young souls who have yet to meet upon their Paths. She speaks with them, giving each a Thread—one Blue, one Yellow.

"Trust me," she tells them. "These will help you on your journeys. They will teach you about Light, Love, and Life."

They listen. The boy will make a pendant from his Yellow Thread; the girl will weave her blue into a necklace.

They will meet soon, find Love, and carry my Call forward.

Life visits a few other places too—people I can't name—while I rest in Darkness, waiting for my time.

Ten Threads have been given. Only two remain.

Life closes her eyes and steps into the place where I met Love.

Love leaps toward her, asking, "So?"



CHAPTER 39

THE MIRACLE

Life smiles as she draws out two Threads—one Purple, one Magenta. “The work is done, Love. We’ve succeeded.”

She hands over the Magenta Thread. “Your Thread. You know him, don’t you? The boy was overflowing with you from the moment he was born. You created him. You drove him.”

Love takes the Thread, smiling. She weaves it through her hair and says, “Oh, I know. I still can’t believe he figured out how to reach me. Perhaps someone gave him a hint?”

She glances at Life.

Life widens her eyes innocently. “Me? No! He never listened to a word I said—a stubborn creature.”

“Life...”

“Well... maybe just a little,” she admits.

Love laughs softly and accepts the last Thread—the Purple one—from Life’s hands.

"This one's only natural," Love says. "You guided him. You helped him. You taught him to believe in the impossible. But, dear trickster, there's something else we need to discuss."

Life looks away. "Something else?" she mutters.

"Really?" Love tilts her head. "You think you can hide it from me?"

Life steps back, blushing, while Love twirls the Purple Thread between her fingers.

"I'm always amused," Love says, "by how those who fall for me still think they can hide, even while drowning in me."

"It's just friendship," Life insists. "I'm not even sure he's that into me."

Love bursts out laughing. "And you call him an idiot? Life! Just admit it."

Life paces, flustered. "Admit what? Sympathy? Friendship? That goodbye kiss? What exactly?"

Love presses her gently against the wall, teasing. "Right—sympathy. Of course. That explains why you broke half the rules of the Universe, protected him, and enlisted half your family to help."

"Stop that! Immediately! All will know!"

Love's expression softens. "Everyone already knows, Life. They've known since you were both children. Why do you think they all helped you?"

"Mother?"

"You think she's never been in love?" Love replies. "Naive child. She knew all along. She made sure of it, when you spoke at the Tower."

Life crosses her arms. "No! She doesn't! There's nothing to know!"

Love laughs. "Oh, I know that face—and so does he. Go on, say it."

Life tries to fight it, but emotion breaks through.

“Yes, I do!” she shouts. “I love him! Happy now? I hate it! I hate this! That stupid, naive, ridiculous mortal boy! I’m furious! How could this even work?”

Love chuckles. “What exactly needs to ‘work,’ my dear, except your love? I’d dare say it’s mutual. I’ve rarely seen so much of myself reflected in one of his kind. From the day you met, he’s thought of you every day, Life.”

Life sinks down, defeated, and whispers, “But he already has someone else to love.”

Love looks at her tenderly. “Every soul he’s ever loved is you, too.”

Life huffs, jealousy flaring. “Right, and let’s not forget he also felt for you.”

Love smiles. “And whom do you think he saw when he looked at me?”

Life freezes.

“Of course he saw you, silly girl,” Love says gently.

An awkward pause. Life blushes deep red.

She sits, hugging her knees. “I just want him back so badly. But he’s dead now.”

Love sits beside her, takes her hand. “Do you really think there are borders for me, my girl? If that’s what you’re asking?”

Life gazes at her, questioning.

“Above all law,” Love says softly, “there is Love. It’s me, Life. I’ll help you both. How could I not? No one has gone so far to follow my eternal call—to defy rules, risk all, and still choose to be together against everything.”

Life rises. Love rises with her.

“What should I do?” Life asks.

Love looks at the Purple Thread, then at her, as if asking permission.

Life gasps, hand to mouth, realising. She’s afraid, but steps forward.

Love stretches out her hand, pressing the Thread to Life’s chest.

“You, out of all of us, deserve this most. Be bound by me.”

A brief Light blooms as the Thread merges into her heart. Life gasps and cries out then breathes again, blinking in wonder.

“You are one now,” Love says. “That new feeling burning inside you—that’s your new part, Life. Guard it well. It may burn, but you asked for it, my girl, and now it lives in your heart.”

Life lifts her head—laughing and crying at the same time. The immortal heart now burns with mortal Light.

“Our Light,” she says, “is forever burning. Now I know how to make it right.”

Love fades, leaving Life once more upon The Summit.

Hand to her heart, feeling the pulse of the Purple Thread, she smiles and whispers, “This is only the beginning. My journey begins—the Quest for you, my dear boy.”

And for Life, the journey begins anew.



CHAPTER 40

THE CAMPFIRE

As I speak the final words of the Tale beside the campfire, it is late, being long past midnight in the hotel courtyard.

The group falls silent before bursting into life with questions, laughter, arguments, and speculation.

Some talk about the Journey; others see the Path. A few dwell on Symbols, asking who the boy truly is.

He is all of us.

Some find lessons in the Hero's trials.

Some came seeking Answers—and they have found one.

They debate whether there is a recipe for happiness. Others try to see how the Tale might cheat Death.

And when some of you ask what will happen next, I can only tell you this: read the story again.

You always ask questions once the Tale is over—but as I've said from the start, I am merely a Storyteller, an unreliable narrator.

I know only what I am told.

The group shifts its focus, turning on itself in friendly debate. Voices rise as interpretations multiply. You'll create hundreds of meanings the Tale never held.

It's always the same.

As the discussion heats, I smile quietly, close my old blue book, sling my backpack over my shoulder, and slip away.

But this time, for some reason, I stop.

Something stirs, an old feeling, and I hear a soft murmur I haven't heard in years:

"I know what this Tale is about, my Storyteller."

I pause mid-step, take a deep breath, and ask without turning,

"What then?"

And she answers, her hand resting lightly on my shoulder:

"Like every story in the Universe, it's about Love. What else?"

That is your Answer, truly.

All stories in the Universe belong to Love.

BECAUSE THEY BEGIN WITH LOVE, SHE IS THEIR MIDDLE, AND TO LOVE ALL shall return.

*In search of answers, Wisdom, revelations
We mortals always fail to see
Another part of Story, which while not ours
Is the most important part to me*

*I'm a Storyteller. I tell stories I make for you
And while Journey was my main plot line
From the first word to the last line
It was never really mine*

*I'm lived so many lives, I don't remember
I've seen the rise and fall of every nation
But through all that I never have forgot
That Tale is merely a dedication*

*To my beloved, my friend and part of me
My beautiful, amazing, charming Life
Immortal that has taken Journey
Who had in heart my Light*

*As my Tale ends, I'm resting in the slumber
She is haunted by Love that burns in Her
My Life is searching realm of mortals
She is looking for me behind every door*

*After countless years, Love is helping rebel
She has finalised her Draft
She builds Her Beacon and the Lighthouse shining
She is very close to finding way to her other half...*



*It's evening, one of yet another crowded city,
And mortals walking through the streets in endless rain
A restless flickering Light in the immortal heart is wondering
Not ever doubting that her search will be in vain*

*She is driven by the Love, the Thread is leading
Her through the endless Path of Journey
Life is looking for the one who sleeps in Darkness
To reunite with only one who can save her from the being lonely*

*When feeling for a moment a sense of desperation
My Life stops and whispers silently "It hurts.."
Yet moments later, She says "Love might... sometimes"
"But Love is what I have and want"*

*She runs again to search the way to find me
She is very close to find my faint weak trace
I'm feeling in my dream the Chromatic Thread is vibing
In Promise, I shall see again Her face*

*Her Love is firestorm and conflagration
She knows of larger Prophecy she is a part
Once mortal and immortal hearts are bound
And nothing shall be keeping us apart*

*My deity, my cute eternal beauty,
I'll have to go my early years again*

*But under the Tree, we shall be meeting soon, I know it
The sun will shine, the rain shall end*

*My Dear Life, I'm maybe only mortal
And maybe now it look like I'm asleep
My heart now burns as well with our connection
Soon I will learn again to feel, to hear, to read*

*To challenge,
Your little Storyteller now is blessed with your faith
I'm maybe not so brave by nature
But I'm fearless now, reflected in your face*

*I'm ready to go on thousands of Journeys
As I'm ready to break all the laws and rules
Like you have once done for me
As once you've told
"If those who are in Love are often called fools"
"Very well then"
"What are rules for fools?"*

*I may be in the slumber, resting quietly
In hands of Darkness, your dear mother, who is watching me
But I feel when you sleep, you are smiling
Whispering quietly
"Love is just to be..."*

*Our Stars are ready to ignite again, my dear Forever Friend
My sweet obsession, you are my fire, you are my Light
You have told me once
"There is almost nothing in the world of mortals worthy of fighting..."
Rewarding me with the only thing for which I fight*

Our love, Our promise, Our Tomorrows

*You are reflecting in my every Thread
My Lighthouse, Beacon, Revelation, Answer
My Lighting, Journey, Path, and every page I've written, read*

*You smile in your sleep, because it gets us closer
In dream you are calling, and in dream I come in verse
Leaning back to my shoulder, you are asking
"What if our Love breaks the order of the Universe?"*

*I'm shrugging shoulders, looking in your eyes. You look in mine
I'm telling you, "What is the Order for those..."
"...Who live by the Oath of Love?"
"You are my Universe, my darling little dove"*

*You chuckle, shut your eyes while blushing, and quietly say to me
"Still that dare, bold, reckless, stupid boy I see"
I'll hug you very gently saying
"Who is yours, my Life—you make that be"*

*"For you, I'll be whomever you want me to"
You shake your head, looking strict, saying (trying serious to be)
"Just be yourself, you stupid, that one..."
Well, you, that I'm always so enjoy to see"*

*We will savour each absent second in the realm of dreams
Before you shall wake up back to road
It used to be the opposite... how weird this is
I'm ethereal for now, you walk the mortal world...*

*The realm of mortals, looking for the hints
Love gave us gift, yet she imposed a Journey
Since you are holding mortal Light
You have to win your right to Love me*

*You need to face your Draft, your Tower, find your Voice
Find friends, You need to learn, to face the night
You need to find your brother, Death, my darling
And in the end, your biggest Fear you need to fight*

*You're waking proudly, weathering the trials
My brave and wonderful immortal Life
There is seven Threads to be assembled by you
You are already holding five*

*While at the Journey, memories forgotten
You need to reach inside and understand
You have those two, you think that nowhere can be find
It is your Purple Love, and Love Magenta Thread*

*And then, accept, for Love to mend with other Threads Light
For me to come, to take you by the hand
To meet you in my childhood
As my Spouse, my parents, and Best Friend*

*To walk by hand
Again together
To Our Flight
After The End*

*As Love has whispered to us when we departed
Once this will happen with us then
The Flight will never end, my dear beloved Life
Tomorrow truly never ends*

*In Universal Law will time turn
What some considered our crime
I'm with you in every step that you are making
With every word, with all of my rhyme*

*I'm at the same road you are now striving
Vigilantly helping, feeling you to see
I shall be whispering to you gently
I will repeat to you what you once told me*

*"Look, my immortal kid, it can get hard... but be yourself"
"And never, my Life—never do feel Fear"
"If you would feel the thousand tons weight on your shoulder"
"Just close your eyes, imagine me being near"*

*"Until we hold our Light, Love
Holding our hands together"
"What we imagine,
This is what is real"*

*I Love you, Life
And making to an Answer though my Path
I've learnt to know that Love is passion, admiration
My love is our best friendship, Life*

*Love is everything...
You will quietly chuckle, saying "Shh... stop this fuss"
"I know, my beloved and soon to come back Storyteller"
"You are talking too much... Love is simply us"*

*"Love doesn't ask, search for proof, doesn't judge"
"Love owns everything, yet, Love nothing look to owe"
I will remember our kiss in skies, and also quietly will add
"All stories in the end, belongs to Love"*

*You are standing at The Crossroad
My brave Life, nothing more to hide
You are making a step forward
You are leaving everything behind*

"I'm coming for you, I've learned to understand"
"The biggest Fear of the immortal, Journey has been long..."
The Wisdom is always simple, they say
I feel my Call emerges, it is getting strong

Life is smiling happily as she is walking to her final challenge,
"We are not afraid to die, to wait, or lose our song..."
Chromatic Thread burns with the crazy shining
"Immortals are afraid... to belong"

You put your hand to your heart smiling
And vanish slowly in the raising sun of our newborn
And as you are, all Threads are interweaving
Into one single Thread between us both

My slumber is broken, I'm following your Call
We are becoming One, the Universe it explodes
Immortals have accepted what her mortal knew since he met her
Love also means to give yourself to Love

Light comes
I go
I break to thousand pieces
You are standing next
To my mother's bed
You are saying
"Welcome back, my dear sweet boy
At last I've found you"
Our story starts again
And then, it never ends

