

Origins of the Dreamweaver

as contemplated by: Himself

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With Special Thanks To:

Gaby Di Zitti

The History

I have changed. I am not the man that *I* even once knew to exist. I've incomprehensibly accomplished a great many tasks that others cannot begin to conceive of at a time when I was yet to be fermented, and yet, my focus has undeniably been on the negative, been on what I've done wrong, in what ways I've failed. The same frame that I question internally, amazes others. It's the base idea of how I can be such a being whom holds such great power in so subtle a form that caresses their intellect so.

I do realize, as beings of order, creatures of habit, you usually assign signifiers to each other to differentiate from one another. If it helps your unconsciousness to further assimilate the information I pass on, then please call me, 'Dreamweaver'. The name and reputation that precedes the identification of my previous presence may be unknown, forgotten, misunderstood, or ignored altogether, but it will never be effaced from my memory. The manifestation before you is not of flesh and blood, but of pure, restless energy left here to pass on a few helpful nodes of guidance for those less inclined to think for themselves, to stand up against conformation, and to bring to attention the things that we wish not to address and would rather ignore.

Think about it, if one should happen to consistently ignore the negative aspects in life, then, death may be the best outcome for them. Without steady examination and contemplation of past events and occurrences, what may be learned? Tell me! What may truly be learned? In comparison, if one should happen to consistently ignore the beauty and wonder that may be found in life and choose to only focus on who's fucking them and how hard, what may be gained respectively? In my time, I learned, and I now understand that to regret is to have truly gained knowledge about one's self. In effect, I've also gained knowledge about the endless possibilities of the human-termed universe and how to listen to your own internal reflections.

So, to begin the process of examination of the time already come and gone, I will begin at my end, only to end at my beginning. From my examinations, or discussions, or contemplations that of which you will read, information may contradict, and thoughts may collide. In fact, if I should feel so apt, I will give you a direct line, direct insight, if you will, into my own consciousness and the insatiable storm that plagues me internally day by day, minute by minute, second by second.

What you call "life" began in the vessel you envision before you. Only difference is that, as in your beginning, I was smaller, less adept and able to communicate as in the present, and had the incontinence of a 90 year-old rest home

resident. I cannot give you a true ‘physical’ description of my vestige as I exist not in the conscious world any longer, but rather the unconscious, or the ‘Dream State.’ So, if you should feel so inclined to **need** to **see** me in your mind, I give you full creative license to visualize me as you should feel fit. Now that we are clear on that, let us progress.

My parents were two hard working city-folk, one, a renowned psychologist, and the other, a successful scientist. Having the wherewithal to question society was a given and I was one of the best at it at such a young age. Home was a two story building in the heart of all the action, yet just far enough from downtown to feel safe and secure. It seemed that life’s origins were setting me in the direction for happiness and success. The sentiment in regards to the unknown future in the last statement was correct, but the context of that current point and time was not.

Love and emotion ran rampant within my home. I loved and was loved. Emotions flourished, sometimes, as is part of life and growth, arguments arose, and yet comfort abounded. They taught me everything they knew in regards to science, psychology, and philosophy from the moment that the door of perception was opened within my mind. I never stopped; I never looked back. My brain would reel for seconds that transformed into minutes, and minutes to hours. I couldn’t sleep, and when I did, I dreamt in theories and contemplations. You could say it was the perfect conditioning for mental growth.

On a side note: because of this contemplative mental growth, I have learned to despise perfection. “Perfection” is only an excuse; an unforgiveable reason to bring to a halt the search for greatness, for not mastering what has the possibility to be mastered. Perfection is not perfection. No. Paradoxically, **imperfection** is perfection.

One of these sleepless nights, a storm rolled in that blanketed the city in a mix of dampness and darkness. I can remember being on edge when the first drop of life fell from the heavens. The sight was beautiful and the feeling transcendent, but, once again, much too perfect. As my parents finally slipped into the sweet release of slumber, a sudden cacophony erupted from the floor below. Even at a young age, I knew instantly the source of the sound: someone was breaking in. Immediately, I heard the frenzied footsteps of my parents waking, gathering what defensive tools that they could, which amounted to a couple of baseball bats, and rushing downstairs to defend their young and their territory. Silence pervaded the house, and as I crept slowly to the top of the stairs, two loud shots rang out... Two loud thumps sounded. I ran down the stairs to find my parents shot in cold blood and the frightened scavenger who pulled the trigger unmoved. “I... I didn’t mean to,” he

said, “Son, I’m... I’m sorry.” Breathlessly in shock, I didn’t know what to think, let alone say. In a moment of reckless fear and heartache and with tears flowing down like the falls of Niagara, I took the gunman’s barrel still warm in hand, centering it on my forehead. “Pull the trigger you fucking coward!” I yelled, “Finish what you’ve started!” Bursting into guilt-filled tears himself, he told me it wasn’t yet my time and that I was meant for something greater. He then proceeded to flee the premises as fast as his legs could carry him, never to be seen by my eyes again. It wasn’t yet my time? What does that even mean? I’m meant for something greater? What gives him the right to say that? To do what he did? How would he even know?

So, what does one do in a situation like that? I sure as hell can’t answer that question even to this day. I did what my instincts told me to do: I ran. At sixteen years of age, I took to the streets, running without a purpose... It was the middle of the night and I didn’t stop for a soul. I ran through the piercing rain that fell from the sky, fleeing death. In the moment, I felt as though I had died and that I would never be whole again. After running deeper into the city and through countless alleys, I came upon a building, well, a tent, rather, that didn’t quite fit within its surroundings. As I fell to my knees, there came a young girl from the tent, around my age, who proceeded to point at me, looking back, as though directing those behind her to a side-show attraction just beyond their sight. I then lost all ties to the conscious, tangible world.

When I came to, I began to make out shapes, colors, then sound, and finally clarity. It was... It was magnificent... Like nothing I had ever seen, and surely in a more positive direction in comparison to moments before passing out. I was in a backstage room, I surmised, separated from what I thought to be a show going on. I stood up, surveying my surroundings. There were pictures on the wall of performers I’d thought I heard about from the theater down on the street I had lived on. Between these pictures, there were three rooms that I could choose from to investigate and explore. Two of these rooms were to my left and right and one to the center. I noticed that the ones to my left and right were being used for storage of performance materials like those found in a circus. The one to my center, though, was barely lit by what I thought to be the weakest and smallest candle I’d ever seen. There was an old man with a long white beard and bald head that seemed to either be sleeping or dead. I, of course, hoped for the former, but was ready to accept the latter, seeing as I had just witnessed the death of those dearest to me. I was going to leave him alone, but he had the most fantastical looking inscription on his forehead: a scar was present, in the shape of a sun that might have had the depth to

reach skeletal bone. Even more enthralling was that, as the weakened candle blew out by the time I had entered the room, the room was still lit by the glowing scar's beautiful yellowish orange hue. I crept ever so slightly closer, and the more I did so, the more it seemed that I was drawn in by its grandeur. I kept going, walking ever so quietly, and the closer I crept, the louder the show going on seemed to get. Soon, I felt as though I was being whisked away into a menagerie of kaleidoscopic imagery like that found within a dream and it was euphoric. I was transposed, no! I had transcended. It was a new kind of happiness; one of warmth, one of comfort.

I should have stopped moving, but I took another step, and the second that his eyes opened and locked on my vestige, the music, the sights, the euphoria came to a sudden, abrupt halt, and my feelings once more reached isolation and discomfort. Even the sun upon his skull quit its peculiar glow. He relit the candle. "I've been waiting." I couldn't speak. "I'm quite sorry for your loss."

The girl I had seen preceding my passing out came into the room. "Oh!" she exclaimed. "He's wakened." "Luna," the old man went on, "give him the pack and send him on his way."

She walked out of the room, into one of the two storage rooms I had passed, and came back, handing me a small woven pack. "Thank you," I said. It truly was a stupid thing to say at the moment, but what could I say. When someone hands you something, you normally say thank you, or so I thought. Lookin' back, it could have been a bomb for all I knew. Thanks for blowing me to the kingdom of the stars! But, what great luck! No explosive device. We'll get to the contents in just a moment.

"Boy," he continued, "I offer you a chance, an existence, like no other. If you fair well, you will gain a reward greater than immortality. You could become something no man has ever dreamed up, nor ever will." When I look back on those words and that moment, I have grown to remember him having a special gleam in his eyes at the word **dreamed**. "In the pack are a few things to keep you alive while you prove yourself worthy." "Prove myself worthy? For what am I proving myself worthy and how am I to do so?" He laughed, "In time. Luna is going to show you some tricks of our trade, and with these, you will be able to survive and mature. Can you do that?" I looked at her... "Are you alright with this?" She smiled and said, "Yes. I would love to show you." I looked back and nodded. The elder then looked at me with some kindness in his eyes, "And Luna, be sure he eats just a little bit. The boy's thinner than I was when we first met. After that, you know what to do." I looked back at the old man, "Sir," I said, finally showing some respect, "may I ask you one thing?" He nodded. "Why are you showing me such kindness? You feed me after finding me and provide me with materials to live. I've done nothing to earn

this.” He laughed once more, “No, you haven’t, but you will...”

The last I remember of that night was receiving a meal fit for a king from Luna and watching her, unbeknownst to the old man, place a note inside the pack that was given to me. She then looked at me, gave a quick wink and smile, and sat down next to me. I expected her to begin showing me some of the ‘tricks of their trade’. Au contraire. She looked at me with those piercing eyes and said not a word. It was then that I noticed she too had a scar like the aged in the other room. Hers had a blueish hue to it and was serrated in the shape of a crescent moon nestled around her eye. It was truly a sight to behold matched against her black hair and blue eyes.

If I may take just a moment to describe her features: as serene as the Sakura, or cherry blossoms, that inhabit her country of origin, she was thin, beautiful, and such that every feature on her seemed to be fit for a queen. Her clothing had a quality reminiscent of that of the ancient goddesses’ silk that no man or woman could have ever touched in its creation. It, too, was transcendence. It was her.

As I finished eating, she gave me a small drink of a substance hitherto unknown to me. The taste was beyond that of anything I’d ever had before. Tasted, in all honesty, a bit like wine, I would later surmise. But, after this particular substance was beginning to be processed, so to speak, I began to tire, and Luna turned out the light in the room, allowing me to fall into a deep slumber.

It was in this deep sleep that I began to dream. It was then, within this dream, that Luna approached me and began teaching me what would later serve to keep me alive whilst surviving on my own, on the streets, as what I termed to be a street rat. When she was done teaching me the tricks of their survival, she started to explain a few things that remained as of yet untouched by my mind. The old man, named Solanus, though frail to the eyes and visually content, had power beyond comprehension; that he, in turn, intended for someone to take his place. He was tired, and in need of rest from the position that he currently held; one of great responsibility and prestige. I asked more about what that was to see what I could get out of her. She retracted from the question, telling me that she had already said too much. She did tell me, though, that I was destined for something that would change the world, if I should follow the old man’s offer and apply myself.

Within this two year period of my proving, she continued, Solanus and she would be watching, though not actively guiding. If she was needed, though, all I had to do was to look for the moon, and no matter what, I would never be alone. This was the one consolation, I must say, that kept me going throughout my trial. Not knowing exactly what was coming in the near future scared the living shit out

of me, but I couldn't back down. If I were to fail, all that was left was death. Not a very uplifting musing.

I woke up from the dream. I was in the middle of the city once more, right back at the alley where I had ended up when Luna had first laid sight upon me. Bright and sunny day as it was, I didn't know where to begin. To my left was the pack that they had given me. Opening it up, I saw an envelope with a moon scripture printed on it that, enclosed within, contained the note left by Luna. I opened it up and it read as follows:

“I am the weaver of the greatly imaginative silk, the deeply felt emotional thread, yet lesser embraced mental tapestry. Beyond the consciousness lies my playground. Influencing as I am, not a soul shall know my true burden. I carry my head high and ask, not for help, but only understanding. I am the Dreamweaver.”

On the back of the slip of paper, I saw written in a very neatly nestled woman's handwriting, “Thought you might have just wanted a hint at what your soul is truly meant for. Watch for the white light of the moon's gaze. I'll be there.”

I thought I knew the meaning of confused, but this small barrage of seemingly cryptic information truly perplexed me for at least a few intensely contemplative minutes. Moving past this, I finally began to search through the rest of the pack for my tools of survival. I was astonished. There were a couple of decks of cards, a threesome of juggling balls and clubs respectively, cigarettes, rubber bands, matches, and not a speck of food. What was I to eat? That, my friends, was left up to me.

Realizing this, only my hesitation hindered my progress. I began to walk, looking for a good place to set up shop to begin my work. My heart emanated with the knowledge that Luna had provided me. It instilled in me the will and the purpose to gather my mentality and use the tricks provided for me to survive. I was to perform, making whatever I could to buy the precious scraps of food that would keep me alive for the two years' trial. As I strolled along the streets, I began searching for anything, searching for the materials to uphold my survival. Finding some cardboard, I decided I would use that for a table, and as I sat down against a wall at a busy intersection, the recalling of the dream initiated. The first thing that came to me involved the deck of cards. I pulled them out and began working out, consciously, what was learned unconsciously. Something amazing occurred to me during this time. Knowledge learned consciously, whether that's in schools being taught to students or knowledge learned on the streets, can be forgotten and takes quite a while to really memorize and/or utilize. In sharp contrast to that, the knowledge of how to perform these tricks as seen in my subconscious, felt almost

natural, innate, because of how well it had been demonstrated to my unconscious mind's eye. I didn't have to work to try to recall how to do these tricks with any more intensity than that of remembering how to breathe.

People came and went, time passed slowly, yet I was still able to gather little bits and scraps of food to nurture my internal fire. All and all, I lost around thirty pounds within the first few months, and as I was able to attract more of a patronage, more of an enriched and varied audience, I earned more money and, therefore, ate better. Things were finally looking up for me, in at least one way or another. As the first year went by, though, the nights began to get lonely. Reminiscent memories of my parents commenced to pass through my consciousness and even my dreams. Sadness was a given during this period, but in a strange way; I felt at peace. Where did this peace and solace come from? I would look at that purplish black sky filled with inklings of white shimmering kindness and see the moon. The sheer beauty that it held! Looking at this glowing rock, I couldn't help but be reminded of her raven colored hair, and those eyes.

No longer was I alone. I felt her presence with me. It was glorious, magnificent, transcendent that just the sight of a big rock would bring peace to my soul. This was something new to me, but not refused, rather embraced.

The two years ended. Mentally and emotionally, I was stronger than I could have ever been. Two years older, now 18, I felt as though I was ready for anything. Turns out, I couldn't have been more wrong. Isn't it interesting that when one thinks that they couldn't be thrown off their steed of blissful ignorance, there's always something that magically comes through (be it a person, place, thing, or idea) that can rock the mental crystal ship of comfort.

Ah! I failed to attest to what the weather was like during this two year period. Normally, I wouldn't care to mention it, but in this case, it's a motif that is better mentioned later than never. During the two years, it was usually sunny and warm by day, and clear, but cool by night. I would normally perform during the day, take the day's earnings, and purchase something warm to eat during the night. I soon grew to use a fairly dead mattress I found in a dumpster to sleep on in the alley next to my cardboard stage. Fantastical to think that I slept in the streets in those days... My apologies, I digress in these long discussions of time passed. See, for the two years, whenever it would rain, I would look up to the sky and it always felt as though I was never alone, even with as cold as it would get. In fact, sometimes my mind would assimilate the combined information of my being alone and the sky raining by causing the hallucination to commence within me in which my belief was that the rain was calling to me. There were voices in the rain. Strangely enough, I **was**

never alone. My physical perceptibility was stronger and ironically more accurate than one could hope.

On the last of these nights in which the rain was especially heavy and the sensation of surrounding eyes was strongest, huddling closer to the mattress and using the cardboard as an umbrella was inevitable. I looked up, waiting to pass out and drift away into the darkness of sleep. Suddenly, my eyes opened and focused a bit. Above my weakened body were two forms: one that was decidedly female; the other male. Both were somewhat dark and quite incomprehensible in the weather's chaotic speech. I remember nothing after this except slowly fading away into obscured darkness as the rain pitter pattered against the cement.

Suddenly, I awoke to the same sight of two people over me. Luna and Solanus, both visibly concerned (or so I came to believe), were hovering over me checking my vital signs from a small distance. "Well, I'm sure glad we've got an extra pack of the equipment we gave him. I guess it really doesn't matter any ways. Not like he's going to be needing any of these articles any longer in his new position." I was puzzled, but glad to be awake once more cycling through incomprehensible thoughts like a rolodex. Looking around, I noticed that there were smoke stacks in the dark sky. FLASH! Lightning streaked across the darkness miles ahead of us. The CRACK of the thunder. Wind whirled and took with it the smoke that billowed out of the stacks. Where in the hell was I now? The ground moved. It felt as though it was moving somewhat erratically, but with a decisive pattern. "Rather unusual," I thought to myself. At the visual clue of my perplexed countenance, Solanus motioned to me, gesturing with his hands, to look around and gain my bearings. I became more than surprised, entranced even.

The realization hit me as a metal bat would a brittle bone. There we were... It was an old cruise-liner sailing the ocean blue. Even more astounding? We were sailing within the eye of a hurricane. I was confounded. I was speechless. What can one say? What can one think?

Upon returning my glance to Solanus' eyes, he prompted me to view the surroundings off the side of the ship, to try to see if what I saw was familiar to me. In the broken and slightly moonlit reflection of the side of the ship from the water, I read the name printed there and lost any semblance of breath. My heart pounded out a beat stronger and with greater passion than any tribal ritual could provide. There is only one ship in existence, or rather, in **past** existence, that held the title of the ship I was on. There isn't a single soul on earth that doesn't know it. It was once called the "Ship of Dreams" by those who were lucky enough to be graced by its vision in port in Southampton. Builders and patrons alike knew it to be true. It was the "Ship

of Dreams” in every sense of the word. I was sailing aboard the historic **Titanic**. I will now allow you sufficient time to take this information in, for I know the feeling of shock and intrigue that that fact brings upon one’s mind.

Yes. We were sailing aboard the Titanic in the middle of a hurricane. If I may add a quick note of reflection, no rational thought can possibly penetrate the mind at the time of realization. In effect, I was awe-struck and overwhelmed beyond compare. I shall continue.

Luna then uncomfortably took her leave stating that maybe we needed to be alone, the aged one and I. Already feeling overtaken and suffocated with thought, news had begun to be broken to me that I wasn’t ready for, but needed to hear. “Boy, do you remember your parents?” I paused. In fact, I didn’t say a word for a couple minutes. He sighed. “Well, you need to know something about them. About the parents that you remember? The ones who **raised** (I remember special emphasis on this peculiar word) you were nothing more than a depiction of unfounded reality. See, you... How can I say - You are no longer a member of the living’s company. You didn’t... You didn’t make it.” WHAT? I didn’t make what? My mind began to race furiously, searching for a shred of tangible reality. All was lost. Turmoil raged on in my thoughts. “I’m guessing you don’t remember this ship then?” I stared at him, dumbfounded. “Luna, come back in. We should all be here for this.” Finally, I had the courage to answer him, and, in turn, probe for answers. “Sir, I don’t remember. I know nothing about my connection with this ship. I’m truthfully lost at this point. All I know is that I’m on the fucking Titanic in the middle of a fucking storm!” My anger spilled over into my shaken speech. It was unfortunate, but not unexpected.

He looked at me with experienced eyes. We walked over to a small wooden table on the top deck of the ship surrounded by a few wooden chairs. From the time I had woken back up, until now, we had sailed cleanly into the eye of the storm. There was no wind, no rain, nothing but calm sailing. In any case, the three of us sat down and we began the analysis.

I looked to him, then to her, and asked, “You said that I didn’t **make it**. What does that mean?” Luna and Solanus looked at one another. Luna spoke up, “Sweetheart, you died on this ship. This ship is your final resting place. In fact, it’s all of ours. Do you see **them**?” See who? I looked around. All I could see was the storm, mainly darkness, total emptiness. She began again, “You need to take control of your thoughts, of your mind. Though our physical bodies have left us, our souls continue on. In this world, energy is the chain that binds us together. We are free spirits roaming the other side of that ethereal barrier that separates the living

from the dead. It is the energy of storms, energy born of natural occurrences and disasters, the energy of the air, the energy of life that allows us to remain as we exist now. It is an incredibly complex and difficult concept to grasp in a single evening, but your mind controls your perception of the universe. To elaborate, the universe will always remain the same, but it's on you to allow yourself to **perceive it as it truly is**. This ship is alive with life, you just can't see it at the moment." I spoke up. "So then you... And Solanus..." Luna looked at me and smiled a smile that out of context might have been mistaken for pre-meditated mischief. "Yes. We, too, were aboard that ship. We were taken as well."

Well, dear listeners, as in many of the situations thus far in my tale, in my life, I cannot say that I was expecting to hear that. Having not experienced death at that particular moment in time, where I might have been able to reflect and draw gained knowledge from it, I was yet still able to begin to gain a minor foothold on what she was saying. What she had said. The way she had said it. My current situation, given the fact that I'm now deceased... It still somehow felt... Right. It actually felt right.

Death is funny. Death is something that the living know much less about than life. But, being as I have seen the other side and have experienced what it has to offer, there is **nothing** to fear. The only fear that is present in regards to death within the human complex is the fear of the unknown. Human beings are bent on knowing everything. When presented with something that the human psyche may know nothing about, the being is instead instilled with fear. It creates vulnerability. If you must learn anything from me, then learn to fear not death's grasp. Rather, embrace it. It will do you better in the long run...

I believe it was at this point, after Luna's inclination to describe to me what our present situation was, and during the moment in which Luna had probably realized that my mind was officially swirling in a pool of unimaginable contemplation, that she decided to lead me around the ship to gain an understanding of my new stomping grounds. It would be just the two of us. Solanus had remembering of his own to do at that moment. It didn't matter. I needed to keep active to avoid losing what was left of my soul's being. "I didn't see them either at first. You have to succumb to the idea of being deceased, and then succumb to the ship itself, before you can begin to really take in your surroundings. Why don't we head inside and down to see the grand staircase?" I followed alongside her and began my simple line of questioning. "Who are they?" She stopped. "The other passengers. You think we're the only ones? Look, there's one. And another right there. Such a sweet little boy..." I looked, but dear listener, I saw no one. No movement. Nothing. And I told her this. She seemed rather aggravated at my

ignorance of sight. So, she dragged me, rather than walked alongside, to the grand staircase. I must say, for the time that the ship itself was, well, not dead like us, it was fascinating and awe-inspiring in its grandeur. The wood so perfectly crafted, the beauty of the clock at the top of the first flight of stairs. It was, plainly and simply, beautiful. It was the **Ship of Dreams**.

Luna grabbed my arm and seemingly threw me into a sitting position on the bottom stair. She knelt down in front of me and grabbed both of the temples of my head within her fingertips. “Close your eyes,” she said, “you need to begin to truly see, to open your mind’s eye. We have no time to waste.” We have no time to waste? I tried to question, “Why don’t we have time to -” “Don’t interrupt!” she pleaded. “Just close your eyes and listen to me.” I conceded. She began to direct me, almost in a meditative like state... “Your eyes are closed... Slow your breathing... In, and out. In, and out. Soon, you will begin to hear the footsteps of the people carrying on their lives on this ship...” I laid down all thought and surrendered to the void, and, I began to hear footsteps, all around me. I grew to be pleasingly speechless. “You can hear them now, not just their feet, but their speech.” It was true. Conversations began to arise. I heard talk about horse races, new versus old money, talk of the difference between the first through third class passengers, parents talking to children, children laughing... I was enthralled. Utterly enthralled. Yet, my eyes did not open. “Breathe in and out. Slowly now, slowly begin to focus your mind. You are now searching for the mental blocks within your consciousness that are keeping you from being fully present, fully aware. Remember, they are not obstacles, they are just blockages that with relaxation and realization can be drawn back. Take note of them and gently release their grip on your thoughts. You need them no longer. I’m right here. You are in no danger, you are safe and secure. Now, you can hear the people, right?” I smiled and nodded in agreement. “It’s time for you to actually perceive them, to see them. Listen to the sound of my voice. When you open your eyes, on my word, you will envision this dark ship with new light, as it was on its maiden voyage, as you will have it!” It didn’t happen, yet her eyes broke the news to me of her internal and emotional hope for success.

In my latest considerations, my explorations into the mental processes that have rotted philosophers and ‘thinkers’ alike from the inside out, I have grown to accept how intrinsic that dreaming is. Why is **this** important with the most recent events that have occurred in my current retelling of my origins? Because, well, I would never look back on my dreams the same. Luna was failing, much to her displeasure, to draw out my psyche and manipulate it, no, to imbue it, rather, with an illusion as she had learned to do in learned lesson from Solanus’ teaching. See,

she had failed because she knew not what was in fact creating the dreams. For the majority of her life, she had decided that her dreams came from her own mentality. This is the same line of misguided conjecture that is still present today! Ironically, though, there is a small population that perceives this (i.e. - the coagulation of dreams of the mind) and yet still holds the supposed myth of the **sand man** within knowledge. Quite odd, no? Though they believe that their brain is the key to dreaming, they will not disprove the fact of the existence of a sand man. Rather, they will hold him in contempt in the same jail cell that Santa Claus, the Bogeyman, the Tooth Fairy, the Loch Ness Monster, Bigfoot, (any given) God, and more are in. Oh dear! Have I crossed a line? I can feel many of you pulling away from me, from my words. I don't blame you. It's hard to see and understand truth as it comes at you from such a direct ponderance. Here's the best part: of those listed previously, there's only one that I know for sure exists. Nope, you were close. No, not Bigfoot, but, the sand man. See, I know the sand man. In fact, you're talkin' to him. But, summon your patience, if you would please, and wait for the reward of your tribulation. You will find the answer is closer than you could have imagined.

Luna was tired. She wouldn't even look at me. She sighed a heavy sigh, sat down on the final stair of the grand staircase next to me and began to think uncontrollably. How was she to get me to live as I was meant to? She didn't know. She was on the verge of giving up. I was seeing nothing and hearing nothing anymore. Only enough light in the room to see a couple feet in front of me remained and it was darkening fast. Then, and I don't know how else to describe it, something occurred which taught me more in a second than I had learned in the whole of my existence. I had closed my eyes, and I had begun to illustrate, with only the all seeing consciousness that we all bear, a room of comfort where I wished to take Luna, to serve her a cup of wine, to bring her happiness. As I saw this, I heard a great gasp. I opened my eyes and there I was, with Luna, fireplace next to us as we sat at a table, each of us with a cup of wine. She smiled and looked at me, who at that particular time was beginning to feel not only discomfort, but panic. I reacted slightly erratic. "How the hell did this happen? Where are we? What did I do?!" Luna was laughing giddily like a little child. "You did it! You actually did it!" Speechless. Not a word emerged from my lips. "**This** is what I was trying to get you to do. You finally can begin to be free." Freedom, huh. This felt far more like a new level of captivity. I began. "So, I can't dream of any place without ending up there? Is that the way this works? Do you even know -" She stopped me. "Don't speak! Think of somewhere else, something else. Try this. Close your eyes and picture yourself sailing in the ocean." I did as she had ordered. "Now, here's where it gets

tricky... We're sailing in the ocean, on a sail boat, right?" I confirmed. "Okay, then picture that sailboat lifting off of the water, letting gravity fall to the wayside." I could tell I was sitting on a wooden surface, that was ever so slowly bouncing with the rhythm of the waves of the ocean. I could hear the water splashing against the re-purposed tree. Then, as I opened my eyes after Luna's description had ran its course, I saw the boat that of which we were stationed on lift from its liquid support and move cleanly, like a knife through butter, into the completely transparent atmosphere and off into the light blue abyss we all know as the sky. I was, in whole, in a new state of euphoria that can't be reached by normal means. No drug could produce the kind of joy that glistened from my soul. Luna was in a state of sheer amazement, yet wholesome pride. "Stop now," she said, "and close your eyes again. Put us back where we were, at the foot of the grand staircase..." I did as she so eloquently commanded. Opening my eyes, there we were, back at the staircase, with the darkness that we had been sitting in originally.

I was curious of something that had arisen in me. How did I see the ship before, when I had first arrived, and how did I hear those people? "Oh. Well, I guess this is as good a time as any to delve into truth. Are you ready for it?" she asked. Well, let's see. Apparently I can teleport people anywhere and it doesn't have to even be a place that follows the common sense laws of the land or even the laws of physics. Sure, I'm ready to hear some truth. Gimme some truth.

"Darling," she began, "ever heard of the 'Dreamweaver'?" I shook my head. "Right. Figured you wouldn't have. Problem is, I can't tell you much. The mind is such a fickle little device. You give any suggestion, any influence, and it will latch on to it like a nursing child. So, on these grounds, I can't tell you **what** I believe the Dreamweaver is, and or **who** it is... You must find out for yourself..." I sighed. I stood up from the grand staircase's stair. "Well then," I said, "if you won't tell me anything, maybe I should just leave. You must not need me that much." She jumped to her feet. "No! Don't leave! Please!" I had her attention and realized her fear. If I left, everything she had done would have been in vain. I knew she couldn't let this happen, whatever the cost may be. I gathered my courage and continued to spread my antennae. "Luna, you said 'we don't have time to waste.' For what reason have we not time to waste? You've one minute to give me something, or, I will leave right now." She practically lunged at me. "God damn it you fool, don't go! We need you!" We? "Luna, who's 'we'?" She took a step back. "No, no, no, no... I can't. Please!" "Luna! I said who's 'we'?!" Tears began to form at the edges of her eyelids... "The spirits. The ones you can't see, ones you can't hear. Even the living. Those that made it out from the ship wreck and those that still inhabit the rest of the

water-ridden Earth. Me. We all need you.” Information kept flooding my mind. It was beginning to be too much. My thoughts began to change for the better and for the worse. I couldn’t control anything. I fell to the ground. Luna moved quickly to aid me. “Sweetheart,” she commenced, “clear your mind, or things are gonna get rough.” I couldn’t. Tears of my own hit me and all I could remember was what I had thought to be my childhood. Voices rang out - those of my parents. The sound of gunshots blasted Luna’s and my eardrums. Fascination abounded. Everything that I imagined came to fruition. How could I stop?! I tried. I thought of sunny days and warmth. The inside of the ship glowed with light and the heat began to rise. No! Too much! What the hell could I do? So, I thought of rain and cool temperatures, but, the state of my mentality was too severely diminished and I flooded the grand staircase with freezing water. “Get a fucking hold of yourself!” Luna screamed. Then, without hesitation, she used the palm of her hand stricken across my face to wake me up from my nightmare.

“There. Now sit up and shut up. Obviously, I have no choice but to give you something. Problem is, I don’t know and/or understand much myself. What do you want to know?” Shocked, fatigued, and now sore from her wake up call, I cleared my mind (which by the way brought us back to the familiar darkness at the grand staircase) and gathered my thoughts. “What, what am I?” She sighed, and a look of worry washed over her countenance. “You’re a Dreamweaver. Only the second of your kind. Your parents, at least the ones you remember, are not truly your parents. The scientist and the psychologist? No semblance to the real people. On the contrary, though, they were both brutally murdered by a fear stricken burglar.” My friends... Any time you hear something like this, whether you have a general understanding, or the full connection to those who have passed, emotion can only bubble and tears can only spill. My heart was broken yet again... “So, they weren’t even my... They weren’t...” She shook her head. “I don’t know much about you, save for that. The only way to learn more is to relive your forgotten memories.” Now, I shook my head. “I can’t relive my memories!” Luna chuckled. “You just produced sunlight, rain, gunshots, and voices from the depths of your perception and placed them within the confines of this ship and you tell me you can’t even relive your memories?” Looking at my feet, I realized the inconsistency with my conjecture and the past events. “Right,” I said, “you wouldn’t know how to do this would you?” Again, her head shook, but only for a half a second. “Wait! I’ll be right back.” Running out of the room, to who knows where, she reappeared moments later with a pill in her hand. “Take it, but let me give you fair warning first. You are going to black out, and upon your return, will be a different entity entirely. This

thing has never worked for me, or for Solanus, but it was never constructed for us. I don't know what will happen, but, I promise you this: I will protect you and your body from any force that will tempt your vestige, but you must enrich your mind and gain a foothold on who you really are, or are meant to be. I only see rough seas ahead for you and the rest of us if you do not embrace the currently unknown. I remember reading one of the stray papers in this ship's library. It was left there from the previous Dreamweaver. It said something to the effect of, 'This journey will tell you everything you want to know and then-some, but at great cost. You must be prepared to lose something most hold dear.' No, I don't know what that was, the papers didn't say... It just trailed on about how the 'only way to know the world and its people is to know yourself and the depths of your consciousness.'" I pressed for more information. "Was there anything more?" She nodded, but with noticeable trepidation. "It... It said that... 'You will have an unbearable weight resting upon your shoulders. The world will be at the mercy of your influence. You will either seize the reigns or perish in the process. If you should fail to gain proper understanding within the time that your predecessor has perished and you stake your chances, the world, no, the universe and the presumable counter-existences will falter and fade away.'" Not that I thought it was going to give me any kind of comfort or irrelevant closure, I asked one last question... "Luna, should failure become reality, what happens when one **fades away**?" She wouldn't answer. She only whimpered.

You can't begin to imagine the feeling. Here I am, on the most wondrous memory of a ship of the past (and currently of the sea floor) and I now have the **weight of the world** resting upon me. Oh, but there is a shimmer of light, the silver lining of the dark cloud of oblivion, the promise of clear skies during the storm! And what is this little blue hope? A pill. The very thing that holds a great deal of society in grief-stricken contempt. The very thing that, given an orgy of the thing's little friends, has apathetically murdered countless of the living, thrusting them ever so abruptly to the other side. Here I am. And I don't even have a fucking choice. I can only accept to save myself, Luna, Solanus, and billions upon billions that of which I may feel nothing for, or know nothing about. My other option? Allow every bit of energy that has formed to create life to drift into the abyss of nothingness. In other words, I was having a great day.

"Give me the pill, Luna." She wavered. "I said **give me the pill Luna...**" She backed away and I had no choice. My arm shot out to meet hers and I forced her to give it to me. She began to cry and pleaded for me to stop, but, I couldn't. I threw the pill in my mouth and swallowed it, praying it wasn't some kind of sick joke

that included a small blue colored bit of arsenic. Quickly the room grew silent. Our eyes met, and they never let go. Minutes crept by, second by second, advancing into greater bouts of unhindered hyperventilation on her part. Then, without warning, it began...

I grew tense. I couldn't focus on anything. My sight... My sight retreated. I have come to accept that my last known vision from a bout of true consciousness was the muddled image of the, goddess as she was, beauty, Luna, as a lonely tear sailed its final voyage, succumbing to gravity's will, down her mar-less cheek. From that moment on, in the present and future, I would never be able to behold the world's beauty with the most natural of senses again. I had lost that which 'most hold dear.' I would forever walk in the sullen shadow of the land of the dead and the land of the seemingly unimaginable without my sight, yet while still bearing the ability to see. It would be the road that holds only one path. A road that only the eternally cursed shall traverse.

"Wake up, son." That's all I heard after the darkness enveloped me. "Wake up, boy." I opened my eyes. I could see! But, how? "Boy, get off the ground. It's depressing seeing you just lying there." I picked myself up off of the ground and took inventory of my surroundings. It was a terribly dark room with only a light centered on a chair holding court at the heart of it. A man was sitting there. I couldn't see him. My eyes were in working order, but my vision blurry. "Don't worry. Your eyes will adjust. Just walk toward the sound of my voice. Have you figured out, yet, what you lost that 'most hold dear'?" I nodded. "And?" "My sight," I replied. "Very good. You **can** come closer still." Even though I had been walking at a brisk pace, I was getting no closer. "Taking the route of most resistance, eh? Come, come now. Use your new gift. Envision yourself as you wish to be. Tell me, where is your destination?" I responded. "Face to face with you, sir." "Alright, then. Envision it, and it shall be done." I closed my eyes, inhaled deeply, exhaled, and did as directed. The voice immediately resounded next to me. "Welcome." I opened my eyes and there he sat.

Another old man, within the same vein of aesthetic texture and feel as Solanus, but much more decrepit and broken down. He was tired. On his forehead were scarred the two previous insignias I had seen burned into Solanus' and Luna's head, but, these looked ancient. They glowed, no, pulsed so gently as if they had their own storage of knowledge separate from that of which was held in his mind. They didn't need to glow for show. Their collective ethos held far greater experience and wisdom than any could strive to acquire. His face... It was... Fear-inducing. Covering his eyes was a black bit of partially transparent cloth tied at

the back of his head. His eyes. Gouged out or torn from their sockets, missing, and only a small trail of blood remained staining his wrinkled cheeks. His forehead held more crevices in it than Earth's canyons could attempt to mirror. Hair gone. Skinnier than any starving man I had ever seen before... His breathing was labored. You could hear a faint wheeze emitting from his parched lips. Unfortunately, death, or whatever it is that our energy surrenders itself to when one's time comes, was imminent and he needed to be relieved of duty. He was not meant for this ethereal world any longer.

Seeing all of this at once, overwhelmed as I was in a split second, I couldn't help but gasp. "Aren't you glad you found out what you'd **lost** before you ripped out your own eyes, boy?" At the time, I couldn't make heads or tails of how he had come to own this terrible physical affliction, but I would realize later after gaining a certain asset that I will not reveal to you, as of yet, dear listener, that he had initially believed, after taking **his** pill so many years in the past, that something had latched itself onto the windows of his soul, and he intended to rip whatever it was from their grasp. He immediately grabbed for and ripped rather ravenously at the first thing that he got his claws on. Unfortunately for him, the first things trapped within his grip were his own two eyes. But, I digress. Back to the tale.

"I didn't have anyone to help me out," he said, "to tell me that I'd regain my eye sight in my dreams of my own creation, in the beginning. No, this isn't a dream of your creation, but I gave you your sight because I wish you to see what you will one day become. It's not a favorable picture to have painted before you, what with my own blood running down the length of my weathered face, but it's truth. And that is what you need to see and hear right now. The truth." I gave what could have quite possibly been the most nerve-ridden chortle in my own history. That didn't seem to phase him, though. He never missed a beat, but instead, trudged on with his speech. "Now, I can only tell you so much before I wither and cease and you will have to take over. **I** am just energy, restless energy, as **you** are, and in the end, **you** will wither and pass as well. We don't die, we just surrender ourselves, as energy to the land, to the world, to dreams. But, it's the time spent between now and then that really counts, my friend."

"Do you know what I am, son?" 'Insane old man' doesn't count as a respectable reply, so I made a viable attempt. "You're a Dreamweaver, sir?" He smiled a peculiarly omniscient grin and continued. "Do you know what a Dreamweaver is?" I searched through any and all of the nooks and crannies of my mind. "Sir, I can't say that I do. All I know is what Lun- All I know about the subject is from this paper I read that was in the library on the ship. It said

something to the effect of **I am the weaver of the greatly imaginative silk, the deeply felt emotional thread, yet lesser embraced mental tapestry. Beyond the consciousness lies my playground. Influencing as I am, not a soul shall know my true burden. I carry my head high and ask not for help, but only understanding. I am the Dreamweaver...** Right?” His smile faded into an intense countenance molded of concern. “Boy, I know about Luna. I know about Solanus. I know about everything you do or have done. There is no reason to hide anything from me behind this wall of secrecy. Promise me now that you will be straight with me from here on out. Lying only buries the truth and I have no time anymore to fuck around.” My heart hit my throat, but I didn’t show it. I apologized.

He accepted my apology and I continued to evaluate his words. “In any case, what you have said is right. That is the creed of the Dreamweaver. Our work is not hated, it is not feared, it is not even known to be our work. Deo, what is a dream?” Deo? (Just for the sake of the word, the language, and your knowledge, listener, he pronounced it such as ‘Day - O’) Who’s Deo? I considered not asking and allowing him to move on with his current vignette, but I couldn’t stop myself. “Sir, who’s Deo?” He stopped and a furrow seemingly spontaneously constructed itself at his brow. “Why, that’s your name, boy. Deo. Do you know what it means?” Once again, I explored every corner of my memory, whether I would actually be able to find some thread of information I’ve missed, or not.

I confided in him; I had no idea. “It means ‘god-like.’ I agree that it doesn’t suit you now, but do give it time. It will.” He paused a moment to catch his breath and readjust his sitting position. When he moved his arms and body a bit, I noticed what can only be described as a metropolis of dust particles and mites that had lined the seat and arms of his throne of antiquity. He’d been sitting there in that position for thousands of years, believe it or not.

“You don’t remember anything, do you?” “No sir,” I replied, “that was my hope in consuming the pill. I thought it was supposed to make me remember things like who I am and where I’ve come from.” Shaking his head, he chuckled and retorted with, “No, no. That pill only allows you to relive your most crucial memories. It allows you to view those chosen intrinsic memories that have single-handedly shaped, carved, and formed you into the man that you currently are. Look, when I first found out about my gift, or curse, depending on your view, and I assume you’re viewing this as the latter rather than the former at the moment, all I had to help me out was a god-damned pill and a couple scraps of paper. One of those papers was the document that of which Luna had read to you; the Dreamweaver’s creed. I didn’t find it to be mighty helpful at first glance, but, I was

a young child bred full of blissful ignorance at the time. I now know that it's the only thing that matters; it's the job description. It's as important as knowing your name. The second document, which was a little bit more intact when I had come across it, had descriptions of the three major kinds of beings, of, entities, really, that inhabit this universe. One was a Dreamweaver, the second -" At this point, his labored breathing took over for the moment and he began to choke. I moved in to help him, but he pushed me away.

"I'm alright. I'm alright. Thank you. Now, reclaim your position and back off so I may inform you of what I can before it's too late." I did as he requested and he continued on. "What was I talking about - Look, I know Luna believes that the thing to worry about is, and I'm paraphrasing here from her thoughts and memories that I've seen, "those that wish you harm," or some jaded jargon. In a strange way, she's correct for her sake, but not for yours. For her, as a spirit waker, she is somewhat vulnerable and is at risk of her energy being absorbed, or taken over, and losing her soul, but not you. You are the creator, the designer, the draughtsman, the one and only dreamer, if you will, of the world of the crossed over and the world of the living subconscious." "What's a spirit-waker?" I inquired. "Ah, my apologies for not elaborating. It was the second of three descriptions within that second document that I found. A spirit-waker receives or welcomes the soul of the recently passed and gives them information in regards to how they passed, where they passed, and so on so as to give the lost soul some bit of closure from their past. Then, if the spirit-waker has ties to a Dreamweaver, they may project from the given soul's memory, a proper place where the soul may inhabit unto eternity."

"So, does Luna know she's a spirit-waker, then?" "Why, yes, she does... What she doesn't know is who she has to look out for." My eyes turned to my feet, pondering the thought of who or what that might be... "Ha! You attempt to figure out the answer to the riddle even without knowledge of the clue. I admire your tenacity, young one, but allow me to give you the solution. There are beings that wish to acquire all of the energy that they can to become more powerful than the rest and reign supreme over others. It's no different from those that wish to rule in life. Difference is, they cannot kill anyone in death. Everyone is equal, yet they still attempt to take a stance of tyranny anyway. Now, in that case, the spirit-waker must identify this spirit quickly so that a nightmare may be initialized, or created, for the negative energy to become the involuntary inhabitant, shall we say." I stopped him. "Forgive me, but are these concepts what the living term to be 'Heaven' and 'Hell'?" He took a moment to catch his breath, once more, reflecting on what I had presented to him. Sighing, he began, "well, in essence, yes. But, with those

terms and ideals comes another term, ‘God’, as the living refer to him or her, and I cannot openly say that there is or isn’t a being separate from ourselves that creates and produces life. Should there actually be a ‘God’, I would assume he has the task of separating those into ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’, not us. I, myself, wouldn’t know about that. That is not for me to know. I just know that I’ve been here to do my job. Nothing more and nothing less. I suggest to not dwell upon it, for it will only encumber your mind and your work. Leave that for the philosophers. They need the subject matter to cogitate and question more than you or I.”

He coughed a bit, doubling over in pain. Again, I moved to try to comfort him. As my hand held his back for support, every bone, every rib, every hidden muscle immediately became evident. With my help, he shifted his weight back up, sitting once more against the back of his chair. “Son, I’ve not long to exist in this plane of reality. The pill you took, the blue one, it was a sleeping pill which has allowed me enough time to create one last dream for **you**. It is my last masterpiece. Get the journal, from under my chair. I’ve kept documentation in note form of everything I’ve learned from my time as a Dreamweaver. In it is even included the two documents I found originally aeons previously. There’s not much in the journal, but it should help you just enough to begin your work.”

He began to choke violently, coughing up blood all over my arms. We both dropped to the floor, him dying slowly in my arms. “Listen... Listen closely... The dream... **Your** dream will help to explain everything... It is born of your lost memories, the only ones that really matter... When you wake, you will immediately be thrust into the role of the Dreamweaver. Whether you **should** accept this responsibility or **not**, it’s **your** choice. I only ask that you take into consideration the magnitude of your decision... Our universe and the other, outlying universes, are within your intelligence now... I know I’ve made the right decision... Farewell, Deo.”

He was gone. He was really gone. The only man that, from this moment on, might be able to actually help me, had finally surrendered to the void’s darkness. He was free, finally free from the overwhelming responsibility.

I opened the journal and ran through some of the major points. The world was fading around me, but I knew I would have just enough time to answer some of my questions. The dream that he had created for me was beginning to take over. Tired as I was, I was able to gloss over the text with haste to make some preliminary discoveries. One, the place that the Dreamweaver dies before he becomes the Dreamweaver, becomes his domain, his home base, if you will, for his operations. In essence, I died on the Titanic, therefore, the Titanic is now where I will conduct

my work. Next, I saw a question written out in presumably his handwriting. It read, "What is a dream?" His answer was scrawled out below. "An image that depicts the assimilation of information gained throughout the day as the brain sifts through necessary and unnecessary facts, thoughts, memories, etc. No! This is the human perspective on the subject. The truth? Dreams and/or nightmares are the creation of the Dreamweaver which act as influencing factors on the given mentality. Information innate to the being (i.e. - naturally gathered information harvested from self-experienced memories, environmental factors, self-analyzed thoughts, feelings, and emotional triggers) are used by the Dreamweaver as not only comfort points, (to softly steer/direct the subject to reach a desired conclusion or predetermined mental destination) but also as deterrents for the involuntary client."

Skipping through various lines that he had written, mainly concerning unnecessary information in regards to his own self-realization of the terrible weight **he** was to uphold, more concrete nodes of personal interest to me were revealed.

Again, written to himself with his nearly indecipherable penmanship, "The dream, the dream induced with the aid of the blue pill, is not a dream that one in actuality is able to 're-live' given the phrase's denotation. No. One is more or less a visitor, an audience member to the dramatic, comedic, and/or tragic play that is your one gift of a last dream/memory before you become the dream-state's masterful composer. It is a retelling by your subconscious of the last memory that most defines you as a human being, as an entity existing in the universe's grasp at large." On the side of the page, he had written a side note as follows, "I found that the spirit-waker and the perceptionist were people that were present within my dream. Wonder if that is always the case? There doesn't seem to have been a Dreamweaver preceding myself, or so I think, so I may never know."

My mind had a new notion to keep the gears operating intact when I wanted to rest my weary soul during the widely recognized twilight hours. What is a perceptionist? Because of my terrible time constraint, I assumed it was the third of the trinity of entities inhabiting the... the... dreamscape. Yes, I remember that I quite liked that word when it appeared within my mind.

I have one more note to add, before I divulge into the sweet forbidden fruit of knowledge so happily ascertained from the tree of supplied memory. When the dream/memory was illustrated as such at the time, I was too emotionally and mentally involved and, therefore, lived it as if I were alive, experiencing it once more, first hand. I could illustrate the memory as it was drawn out for me and afterwards make my comments and decrypt my deductions, but I fear that that might be in vain. The brain is a fickle beast, as once intimated by Luna. If it should

so choose to selectively forget information it finds unnecessary for its survival (information that, for the memory to be decrypted, turns out to contradictorily be necessary), then trying to make a deduction based on forgotten fact would be an official waste of time. So, though it did not occur this way in my past memory reconstruction, I shall include my deductions and moment by moment analysis to aid in elimination of an attack of selective remembrance and to enhance your understanding of my ever evolving stance upon my figuratively anchor weighted burden. It may, in detail, take longer, but it will ultimately be worth it. So, without further ado, I will clean my slate of incessant notes and pre-tale warnings, finally allow myself to succumb to the pull of the unconscious as the world finishes fading around me, and commence my story of internal examination and personal revelation.

Sailing out of Oblivion

The dream began as any dream begins - you're never quite sure how you've arrived at the point of insertion, but there you are in the midst of some action under current execution. Quite often, the action being executed is something you would realistically partake in, in your conscious state. For me, I was performing. I was a close-up magician and a juggler. (This should immediately click for those of you paying close attention to the context. For, the tools given me to survive with by Luna and Solanus during my supposed two year trial were tools of performance: a couple of decks of cards, juggling balls and clubs, cigarettes, rubber bands, matches, etc...)

I was finishing up my performance for a group of high class businessmen who were apparently in the construction or real estate industry (I can only speculate due to a couple documents present detailing future locations of new homes around the city lying about the table that I remember using for the show). I'm not sure exactly what kind of construction or real estate they were ultimately involved in, but it didn't matter; it was obvious that they had what I desperately needed at the time: money. I had also seen a flyer on the floor of the gentleman's office that had hired me, at around 9 a.m., when my act had begun, about the RMS Titanic leaving Southampton's port at noon. I was only a couple miles away from it.

After the close-up act, I collected what money I could and took to the streets trying to find my way to the ship of dreams. A homeless man (who I assumed knew the streets well enough to be able to survive this long) pointed me in the right direction after I showed him a quick magic trick and gave him a couple bits of

change in payment for his help and I was off. I remember casting a quick glance at what gear I had with me. I only had one, obviously quickly deteriorating, suitcase that held my equipment. No clothes were included in its custody.

On my way, I contemplated my future prospect. It wasn't the idea of getting on the ship in the first place that had so entranced me, so enthralled me. It was the fact that this ship, born of the White Star Line family, was a ticket to a new life away from this place.

My heart was no longer in Southampton. On the path to the ship, my mind was racing, examining and re-examining the death of my parents and the cause for my apt yearning to escape. (This time of past self-examination and thought pattern re-iteration turned up nothing in the way of who they were, only how they died. All I can conclude from this excerpt of thought was that my parents had been murdered by a desperate man during a desperate time in his life. I would go so far as to venture a guess that my parents might have been wealthy and he had struck the house in hopes that it would be vacant at the time and an easy raid would be possible. Must not have worked out well...)

I walked along the sidewalk viewing the dynamic structure of life as it began to stir at the start of the day. Shopkeepers unlocking their doors, businessmen beginning the daily grind, cafes serving the most delectable array of coffee, croissants, scones, and more. Such a beautiful day. I was amazed that this time of pleasure had arisen even while my mind was constantly turning itself inside out, writhing in undeniable confusion, pain, and unconstrained indecision.

I remember thinking, "One last corner... One last corner and it will all be over." Like the beam of light that breaks the grasp of the darkness, there it was! A breath-taking wonder of the seven seas that lifted spirits and emotions to a point higher in the atmosphere than any bird's wing tip could pray to contact. To see it was to surrender your rationale to the belief that anything was possible. To see it was to bow down to its grace, its beauty, its power. The pristine black and white color so recently painted, the smoke stacks rising as skyscrapers toward the heavens. I was instantly taken aback, and happily so. It made the thought of my parents' demise seem to diminish a small degree; just enough to relieve the pain. For myself, it was to truly be the ship of **my** dreams.

The port was aflame with first through third class passengers arriving and preparing for the trip of a lifetime. I had never seen so many of the rich and the poor together in one place, standing, awestruck, eyes aglow, united as one. In my mind, it was as if for the first time in my life that not a single person was defined by their class as they stood out on that pier. No, they were all just members of the human

race standing in wonder.

Upon viewing the surroundings, one saw butlers grabbing bags, sailors and engineers suiting up for work, and shipping containers tossed here and there with supplies for the maiden voyage. Children were even running from the heart of the city to see the, I felt at the time, eighth unrecognized wonder of the world. So much activity, all with the enlightening aroma of positivity. It was new, for me. It was a fantasy that not just one man had held within the confines of his soul, but all shared quite openly. I'm not sure if it was the positivity, or if it was the sea air, but in any respect, it was refreshing.

It was only a couple hours away from the ship leaving the dock and my mind began running through every scenario imaginable that might possibly end in the result of my boarding the vessel. Unfortunately, due to my lack of funds, every scenario that I came up with either involved stealing, lying, cheating, or some unspeakable crime and I knew my conscience wouldn't let me rest should I take up the offer. My conscious perception was beginning to take a hit and I was drifting slowly into depression. Time passed ever so quickly and, before I knew it, I only had a half an hour before my only vehicle to emotional and physical freedom was to sail away from line of sight. What could I do? Then, it happened.

I was lost in steady contemplation whilst sitting on a bench that allowed me to view most of the pier area at my leisure. A couple behind me, a married couple to be, or so I thought, was having a rather loud row and it was terribly difficult to ignore. Being naturally curious as I am and given the cacophony that the argument produced, I was bursting at the seams with interest. "Was she worth it?! Huh? No! No, I'm not going with you. I don't care if the ship has money pouring from fountains on board. I'm not going. You'll just find some other little whore to bed. Go to hell you scoundrel. And fuck this too! (She ripped her ring off and threw it at his face.)" The man was practically on his knees begging for mercy, begging for another chance. "Honey. Please, honey, she meant nothing to me. Please, god, don't go! Put the ring back on. You're the best thing that has ever happened to me. Why do you do this to me?" Bad move, sir. Bad move. She reared back and with the combined strength of a thousand soldiers screamed, "It's over, you... You... I just, good-bye! Oh, and this ticket is gone too!" And with that she ripped up the ticket that she held for him.

My heart once again had leapt to my throat. I felt that Karma had wanted to make up for the loss of my family due to such a horrid and tragic death by giving me one chance of renewal. It was my shot, my only shot! I stood up as she was just about to walk past me, though I couldn't utter a syllable. Truthfully, she wasn't

expecting me to stand up so briskly in her path and I'm sure I scared her just a bit. She looked me over and in the midst of her overwhelming anger, managed to crack a smile. I couldn't tell if it was the slightly tattered clothing or the broken down case of tricks that caught her eye, but she proceeded to make an offer. "Child, I don't know what it is about you that wills me to do this, but I wish to make some light out of this clouded moment. You see that ship, there?" How could I not? But I played along. I peered at the Olympic classed vessel. "I'm gonna change your life, boy. Here's **my** ticket... Idiot shouldn't have let me hold **both** of our tickets." Everything from there on is kind of a blur. My heart's joy pretty well muffled out the rest of her speech. From that point, all I remember were her parting words, "So, I don't know how you can make it on bearing the ticket of a first classed woman, but I'm sure you'll figure something out. You have an air of intelligence, young man." With that, she ended her speech holding her head high, knowing that she had done her good deed for the day and continued on her way to finding another, more properly mannered suitor.

I had it! I had the ticket to my salvation in my hands. The happiness that I possessed, the pleasure, it was far too great for any one being to behold. I screamed ever so joyfully and then it hit me. The love-lost lass was right. How the hell was I to make it on the ship with this ticket in her name? Yet again, I felt, Karma gave me another gift (though I feel now that maybe Karma was trying to **off me** y'know? It did whatever it could to get me on a ship destined for the sea floor...) in the form of a deserter.

This man, hidden behind a shipping crate about twenty yards from the ship and dressed in middle class to lower class garb had a nervousness about him. Made my nerves uncontrollably twitch just to watch him. He was talking to himself, too. Not like the flowing drabble of a vagrant on the street, no, more like the indecisive dribble of a hard working citizen cautiously working out a problem to resolution in his mind. I couldn't help it. I was just given a gift that was to last me a lifetime and I had to pass on the kindness. I approached him slowly, for I wished not to startle him as I had the soul-ripped lover. "Sir," I commenced, "is there anything that I can help you with?" The trembling man looked at me. "You want to help me? You don't even know me, man. Why?" Unquestionably, I was beginning to ponder that myself. "Well, sir, I just saw you here so burdened with a weight that I had hoped I might be able to lift off of your shoulders. Would that be possible?" He was struck with amazement, really, that any human being would come up to him for no reason to help him out. He stood up and stopped shaking for the first time that I had seen him. "I, I won't tell you what my problem is, but I will tell you how to help me.

I am meant to be on that ship, as a worker, a fireman actually. I'm not going, you understand?" I nodded in confirmation. "Good. Take this to the boarding agent and tell them you'll be going in my place.. Tell them that Mr. A. Slade, on their manuscript, has deserted their company. Would you do that?" I couldn't help but break a smile once more. "Of course I will, Mr. Slade. I'm glad that I can help..." With that burden lifted, he was on his way to whatever business he felt that he had to accomplish out in Southampton. It didn't faze me one bit. I now had an acceptable excuse to board the ship and I wouldn't have to fabricate some tale of how the woman's ticket came into my possession, though I did keep it nonetheless for when I would arrive on board. You can't just give up first class accommodations like that. It's not everyday that they're handed to you, sinking ship or not!

With only a few minutes to spare, I made it to the boarding agent at the entrance of the ship. "Ticket please?" It was involuntary. A tremor spilled over me and I couldn't stop myself from trembling. "You alright, sir?" the ticket agent asked. I shook my head. "No, sir. See, a Mr. A. Slade who was supposed to work on this vessel has deserted you, sir." His face instantly bore wrinkles across every pore of his skin. "Did he now? And I assume you're going to tell me next that he just so happened to give you his ticket?" I nodded in acceptance of his assumption and flashed the ticket within his line of sight. He looked rather surprised, actually. "Well, you're not gettin' on this ship, boy! Now, move out of the way. There's plenty more **paid** passengers that are awaiting their turn behind you. Good bye!" My head immediately dipped in disbelief that I had reached the point of failure yet again in my short time on Earth. How could I be let down to such a degree on so many separate occasions? Then, like an angelic voice sent from the heavens, **she** spoke to the ticket agent, "Why won't you just let him on? What has he done to deserve your unjustifiable judgment? Let the young man on. I'll take responsibility for him."

I turned a full 180 degrees to locate the source of the sound. There she was. She stood so stoically in such a beautiful Victorian or Elizabethan-esque corset-dress (I'm not much of a fashion expert, so, I don't even know which is the correct style. I'm comfortable leaving this distinction up to your discretion, whichever you think the correct style for the time would have been. It's all just clothing to me.) with her pitch-black hair flowing under a small hat of some sort. Her blue eyes reached through and grasped my soul with her gentle demeanor. I couldn't move. I was struck with this new, unending feeling of excitement, intrigue, and comic nervousness. "What's your name handsome?" she inquired. My reply was undoubtedly incomprehensible. It sounded something to the effect of "D-Diddo..."

D-Dennna... Demo... Deo... Ma'am. Deo's my name." She couldn't help but release a shy giggle that let me know she was thrilled to be admired so. It didn't matter to me that I had potentially made a fool of myself. What she did to attempt to come to my aid was so inspiring and humbling, I would have done anything for her. To her due respect, she kept on the ticket agent's heels. "Well, you gonna let him on or not? There's people getting pretty frustrated because they have to wait for **you** to make a decision." The man, now sweating, turned to me and confided, "I'm lettin' you on not because I want to, but because I don't want any trouble." He turned to her, "Don't come cryin' to me if this peasant-boy should rob you of your precious jewelry, alright? I'm only doing what I can to protect you as the passenger. Good day to you ma'am. Please move along."

In total amazement, I was allowed through and I boarded the ship with my savior in tow. She gracefully tapped my shoulder. I turned and she said with so sultry a voice, "6:30 p.m. at the foot of the grand staircase I've been hearing so much about. Meet me there. We shall dine together tonight." And with that, she took her leave, off to discover her cabin and the rest of the accommodations at hand.

Though I could never do justice to the beauty and splendor, I shall quickly attempt to describe the sensory overload that took place as I traversed the hallowed halls and steps of that glorious ship. It was a vehicle as depicted in a fairy tale. Just imagine! The sight and smell of the several types and textures of rare wood used for banister and stair, the gilded decorations from floor to ceiling aligning the walls, the new elevator systems coordinated from deck to deck, the crystal chandeliers hung so brilliantly and plentifully from room to room, the cleanliness of each of the outside decks with deck chairs and lounges. Passengers were searching, as a treasure hunt, with true euphoria greater than life had ever been able to produce thus far. High and low, they searched for their staterooms that of which would be their onboard habitat for the duration of the trip. I was in a fantasy land. It was finally happening. My new life was to begin. I was to leave my misery and hopelessness behind me. I was flying in a sky filled with opportunity and no longer flailing helplessly, drowning within a lake of self-loathing. Oh how I lapped up the serenity!

Time passed ever so swiftly, for I knew not that the ship was ready and so willing as to sound its horn of voyage commencement at somewhere around noon or noon and a quarter. The sound was a starting pistol, no, more of a battle cry for me, for all of us, ready to take on the yet uncharted molecules that behold the everlasting ocean as their birthplace and residence.

The creatures, they settled so quickly. Comfort abounded within that vessel, though the separation of the classes was evident. (Not to bring down the joyous

mood, but I must argue this point...) It was simply depressing, how the rich, the class deeming themselves 'first' would look down upon the others. This class difference seemed so sadly evident, but still there stood a fascinating revelation in this illusion, a silver lining embedded within the black cloud straying too closely over that messiah of a ship - the attitude of the 'third' class: they cared not what others thought. They just enjoyed themselves and the opportunity that they had. Pleasurable sight! How welcome you are! It is all in the attitude of the afflicted, you see. A man may bear only three of four major appendages, and yet be the light that forces the dark into its rank hole. A man may also have everything that life's quandaries, better yet, life's trials and tribulations have to offer - money, fame, family, success - and sit in his manor overlooking the peasant class (at least compared to his net worth) while shoving the barrel of a silver lined (ironic, no?) pistol in his mouth, firing when the summer of his discontent commands him to execution. 'Tis only the estranged paradox of life at play here. It occurs everyday, every hour, every minute, every second. If one is reading this, considering the latter of the two attitude types listed previously, please listen - cast your mind's eye upon all of the positivity rather than the contradictory and **do** open your heart and soul to the energy smiled upon by natural happiness so you may feel as such.

My digressions worsen as my past unfolds before me. My apologies, we shall return to the dream/memory.

I traveled throughout the ship, establishing points of reference in my memory as I recognized them. I am one that chooses to learn and attain the mental map of my surroundings should I need to escape the area to retain my sanity in any given situation. I took up my post at the meeting place, outlined by she that had yet to be identified, after accomplishing this task. I had apparently taken quite a while charting the grounds of the ship, for it was now only half an hour till 6:30. No matter. Whether I had to wait several hours or several seconds, I would never have turned down the opportunity to be able to spend time with this woman. Even if a gun was held to the temple of my head, I'd still wait. There was just something about her that entrapped me and that held me in such a way as I never wanted to be free. I was a prisoner of love. Or was it infatuation?

There is an argument that rages on in my head due to the aforementioned question. I wonder sometimes if different people from different lands with different personalities than myself suffer from the same internal conflict? The decision between a feeling being deemed infatuation and love is sometimes difficult to tell apart because of the power of the emotional pull on the subject. Should this being be quite well endowed (or cursed as I've heard some state) with emotion, they may

find it an incredibly difficult task to differentiate the two previously mentioned ideas. In contrast, should this being base less decision making and personal choice on emotion and instead supply more pure business-like consideration and decision making in its place, then there is most likely a stronger likelihood of being able to differentiate the two emotionally charged events.

Either way, I stood my ground and waited for my raven-haired beauty of a guardian angel.

Waiting by the last lonely stair of the grand staircase, 6:30 came and went. It was now 6:45 and I was approached by an older looking gentleman in an (based on aesthetics alone, at the moment) expensive grey suit. Very refined. No hair to keep his head warm. In place of that, a long white beard was present. So frail, visually speaking! I marveled at how he was still moving around so well without a cane or walking aid in sight. In any case, he walked up to me, stating, “Bellaluna sent me to talk with you and inform you of her current circumstance, unfortunately.” I gave a quick laugh and, smiling, retaliated with, “I’m sorry, you must be mistaking me for someone else. I’m waiting to eat dinner with the goddess that practically gave me the key to my new life. I know not who this Bellaluna is you speak of.” He looked me over, up and down, and said, “I speak of the woman who helped to get you on this ship. **Your goddess.** Bellaluna is her name. Black hair? Corset? Blue eyes and a hat?” When the realization hit me that this man truly **was** sent by her and that she wouldn’t be making it to dinner, a wave of disappointment washed over me. I knew there would definitely be another chance in meeting her, but I didn’t want to wait. I wanted that chance now.

“Deo, my name is Solan. I cannot say for sure if you saw me standing in Bellaluna’s company earlier when she aided your boarding process or not, but I was there, and I witnessed everything that occurred. No matter if you recognize me or not, you looked rather like a quiet, young child entrapped within blissful wonder, ignorant of the world around you. Though she is **busy** currently, (Solan seemed to have this deep felt sadness when he carefully touched on the word **busy**) I should like to introduce you to her at a later time during this trip, if I can. But, for now, would you like to accompany me for dinner? Since we would both be alone any ways, why not share in conversation and meal? There are some things you might find intriguing to know.” He was correct. I **was** intrigued **before** he even considered I might be and I was hoping that he and I could speak candidly about her. There was no arguing the point. I agreed instantaneously and we dined together in the first class dining area. (I must say, it looked rather comical, I thought, for a man of Solan’s stature, age, clothing of choice, and assumed aesthetic net worth to be

eating at the same table with a younger looking gentleman such as myself with the tattered clothing I wore. You could tell we had become a conversation piece for the other patrons because of our sharp contrast, but it was wonderful since neither of us had the time of day to care.)

He had lamb and I, salmon. I was able to have my fill with a meal fit for a king. (Sound familiar?) When we had finished and began to talk a bit back and forth, he grew quiet and slightly introverted as we migrated onto the subject of our meeting, Bellaluna. “I want to thank you, sir...” he said. “I have not seen that kind of fire, that spark in her eyes for quite a while. It is always breathtaking to see her vitality glowing so beautifully, and that warmth is always more than welcome. So, again, I thank you.” What could I say? I just came back with “You’re welcome, sir. I agree with you. She’s such a wonderful being, though I don’t know her as I imagine you do.”

He looked straight into my eyes and confided in me, “There is a man on board who has been around her for a while now. You’ll know him soon enough as Dante, if you are so lucky to be plagued by his existence. I have no reservations in telling you, Deo, that I hate this man with every fiber of my soul. He is a detriment to her. He tries to feed off of her like a parasite going in for the kill, and I’m more than sure he wants her for her money, for her material worth. In recent years, she has inherited more money than she will ever know how to deal with, and right around the moment of inheritance, Dante forced himself into the picture with haste.”

Oh, how my heart was stricken with the call to action! I was like a soldier who had received a long wished for draft letter to fight in a war for love and eternal peace. Purpose was knocking at my door with Opportunity looking through the window to see if I was home. I wished to give everything I had in me to help the situation in some manner. She had aided me. Why couldn’t I do the same?

“To give you a little background on her, she was orphaned, as her parents passed early on in her life. I have been there as more of a friend than a guardian, though I have taken care of her. Her father died of a disease still unknown to us and her mother of a heart attack days later. They were wealthy, well loved, well respected, and well admired philanthropists. She has only the best of each of her parent’s qualities.”

In this trip of nostalgia and indirect forewarning, he became choked up when discussing the fact that her vibrance had been receding most recently. “Dante, that horrid excuse of a man. He deserves to be thrown to a pack of wild, starving dogs, or taken out in the fields and terminated at gunpoint. I normally wish no harm to befall any human being, but he is not human. He is a selfish spawn of Satan. In

any sense, I believe she's being controlled, maybe even brainwashed. Instead of being her joyous, vibrant, independent self, she has been this, this depressed and oppressed being. He's stealing her heart and soul. That's why I was so surprisingly thrilled when I saw her smile as she was able to utilize her innate philanthropic skill to help you board the ship. That's what she lives for, to help people, to help the world, and she does it so very well. I only wish you could have the chance to really meet her, without **that** cloud hovering about."

He dispersed a heavy sigh and stared off into the distance, lost in thought. Gathering himself, he stood up. "Well, this has been quite an evening. Thank you again. It was truly therapeutic for me to discuss this, uh, situation with you. If nothing else becomes of any of this, if our paths never cross again, I wish you a safe and life changing venture." I reciprocated the well wishes and we parted ways for the evening. I imagine he went to his room. I, on the other hand, couldn't sleep and, therefore, decided to ascend and walk the top deck in the brisk night.

It was cold, yet refreshing, dark, yet lit just enough to see. My mentality was swirling within a whirlpool of thought and ponderance. It was inevitable that I thought of her and of Solan's emotionally charged words with me at dinner. How I wished I could do something... But, what? What could I do? I couldn't even board a fucking ship on my own and I want to try to better someone else's life? What if she's happy? What if she's perfectly fine and Solan's just overreacting? I couldn't step in the way of that... I just couldn't.

I continued on my walk around the edge of the outside deck and I caught a majestic glimpse of the moonlight as it was painted across the surface of the ocean. The way it was so delicately dancing atop the breakers grabbed my attention so gently and so swiftly. It calmed me and caused me to lose focus on all thought. Only serenity pervaded the receptors of my mind. The tenderness with which it caressed my mind to rid my head of stress was welcome and I lapped it up as a dog takes in water after a long walk. I was in a trance and the moon was my puppet master. As it stood strong, alone in the night sky, I stood strong, alone on the deck. With it in sight, I felt a great comfort that one may only experience in front of the fireplace with family and friends in their own abode. It is a natural kind of comfort that reaches as far back as childhood. You never know exactly why it comes, why it arrives at the most particular of times, yet you never chase it away. You are always there with open arms waiting for its delicate embrace.

"Do you ever look at the moon, like I do, just to be able to be graced by its celestial prestige?" It was a familiar voice. It radiated throughout my soul instilling me with hope and warmth. It was **her**. I turned and there she was standing as a

vision of innocence. She looked as though she were standing there before me with every vulnerability on display for me to critique. She ran her eyes up and down my vestige and it was all I could do to not tremble in front of her. She could have ripped me apart from the inside out should she have had the dark inclination, but she too shared the same emotion, the same feeling. We stood there, silently looking deep into each other's eyes and time seemed to remain still. The air no longer chilled us, life no longer affected us; we were just bundles of energy existing in tandem with one another.

Bellaluna looked to the direction of the horizon and sighed deeply, in much the same tone as Solan earlier. "I'm glad that you made it on board today. That was quite a predicament. Can you believe the gall of some people?" She exerted a very relaxed kind of laugh that seemed to single-handedly lift a great weight off of her. I thanked her for her help with my boarding, and then, she stopped me. "I also want to apologize, for tonight, as I wasn't there for dinner. I left you completely alone, and it's not like me to do that." Her demeanor morphed into one of genuine concern and trepidation. The smile left her face and I could tell that she was internally begging for forgiveness, but she wouldn't chance it to break down in front of me, in front of a man. It was reminiscent of the strength and immovable emotion that a brick wall provides or an army platoon presents in times of war. (I have analyzed and reexamined this vision in my mind of her several times over and I've arrived at the same theoretical conclusion every time. I have come to the notion that it was her past, her past loss of her parents and, more than likely, her forced involvement with an unwanted suitor, e.g. Dante, that caused her to be so outwardly cold, so frosted to the bone. She would do whatever it takes to seal up her heart from the fire that is pain, that is rejection, that is sorrow. But, at the time of her countenance's performance, at the moment that I witnessed her cutting herself off to the environment's influence, I thought no theories, I formed no opinions. I just let my mind move with the waves of the ocean.) "Please," I said empathetically, "please don't apologize for not being there. Look, Solan told me about everything and I desperately wish that there was something that I could do for you. Anything. I can't bear to stand for someone trying to take advantage of a wonderfully sweet woman." Her mood changed. An instantaneous defensive attitude possessed her. "How dare you make such a bold claim about a situation, about someone you don't even know after what I've done for you! You, you are unbelievable! I hope you have a pleasant trip and a fantastic life you, you arrogant, ignorant little man! Good bye!"

And with that, she left. The moment that had, in its authenticity, been so incredibly awe-inspiring and euphoric, was now dead. I was now alone and

watching the woman causing me so much happiness and mental strife, due to my wish to aid in the removal of stress off her mind, not only walking away from me, but taking with her the only vivacity I had experienced since after my parents had met their untimely demise. I then looked back to the ocean's grace, beginning my plunge into personal reflection and analysis as was my usual routine when the night took its hold on the Earth.

It was at this moment, in the dream, the recollection of past memory as made possible by the previous Dreamweaver's hand, that, like a movie shifted into fast forward, my perception of time and space became a blurry and incomprehensible mess. I could see things and people, events and happenings, flying by, but no detail could be made out or defined for me. Hearing muffled, senses confused. Lost in mesmerized wonder and fear at the colors, sights, sounds, and smells that erupted before me, I was practically begging an unknown jury in a non-existent courtroom holding court in my mind to acquit me of the madness that held me captive in its insanity. It was only then, after only a couple of minutes resounding in my soul like hours, that time and space returned to its natural form for just a moment. I could faintly hear Luna, back at the stairway I imagined, in the present time. If you remember, my sight was lost, or given up, so my assumption relates. 'Tis but a hypothesis. I perceived frantic movement of two sets of feet. Yes, there was another there. She was with Solanus and they were huddling over my body. I gathered that I was lying on the ground as attained by the fact that I was off my feet and backed up against what felt like carpet. Unfortunately, as quickly as the conscious world made its way back to me, it left, and I fell once more into darkness. It was evident now that the dream was relaying to me the most pertinent points of my past, actively sifting through and leaving out the details that mattered not to my much needed memory refresher course.

When I emerged into the light of my memory's sight, I could see again. I was in a first-class room aboard the Titanic, but I was not alone. I saw a visibly distraught Bellaluna, a seemingly angered Solan, and a more than agitated, dark haired, thinly built, young, taller gentleman by the name of Dante. Once again, as in most dreams, I was thrust into the scene mid-confrontation. It was nearing the climax of the argument and tensions were raised to the breaking point. It was a most regrettable time in which Solan and I had apparently taken the task into hand to try to bring to light the fact that Dante was only there so as to personally funnel funds from Bellaluna's accounts to his own pocket. I remember seeing Solan taking out several documents from his dark overcoat that showed solid proof of Dante's less than gentlemanly intentions. These documents were bank statements showing

moments in time, hither unknown to my knowledge, in which Dante had somehow withdrawn money from Bellaluna's inheritance fund and placed it into his own account.

On a side note to explain Solan's retrieval of said documents - Solan had a personal friend from his home town who was a banker that gave him special access to bank records. The banker (I would find out later) had a special fondness of Bellaluna that he never acted (nor would he ever) upon, but, when asked to help out with said documentation access, asked not a single question.

Bellaluna looked upon Dante, with damp eye, and interrogated him about his actions, only to find out that her worst fears were, in truth, a regrettable reality. In her push for more detail oriented answers, she found her search was but in vain. It was then that this new side of her, this primal, this carnal being that I had never witnessed before, emerged from her hidden subconscious to wreak holy hell upon the man that of which had crossed the boundary of no return, rendering her privacy and possessions no longer sacred. She burned with fire that would have ravaged anything in sight, evaporating any body of water no matter how large or small. So inflamed was she that her words made no comprehensible connection with one another as they were flung about the room in Dante's direction like thrown knives or fired bullets. She fiercely ripped into the very fiber that defined him to be of the male gender, not caring whether he understood the magnitude of his mistake or her pain. His face seemed to withstand most of the blows from the start of the barrage, but obviously showed signs of wear and tear as the abuse continued. She claimed that she was to sue him when she reached landfall and that she would use every bit of documentation as stored by Solan to consume every bit of material worth and monetary value that was attached to Dante's name. With a final flare of her rage, she forced him, at arm's length, from the room, and ordered him to never see her, speak to her, or even consider thinking about her, from that moment on.

Dante's face showed no remorse, no heartbreak, only shattered ego and revealed purpose. He was a smooth kind of man who wished not to let others pick him apart under a microscope, but when shown for the criminal that he truly was, he did not retaliate, he did not disagree, he merely turned cheek and initiated planning his next moves, whether they be steps in the positive or negative direction. A calculating kind of gent whose probable moves (at least in my mind) were to lead him to find out how much money he was able to make off with, and then re-position himself for another host to house his parasitic control. (Fascinatingly enough, we were to never see him on the ship again.)

As Dante scurried like the bug he was from the room, he took with him

Bellaluna's ability to keep her composure. The door slammed shut and all that was heard was the sound of her straining vocal cords as she sobbed uncontrollably. "How could... How could I be so fucking stupid?! How could I let that, that **thing** do this to me?! So ignorant! So naive I am!" My heart, how it ached, once more, struggling to find what would help her most. So, I acted. I moved not, but rather waited in the center of the room with open arms. She moved with such erratic haste and thoughtless grief, impacting me in such a way that I lost my balance and we fell to a couch behind me. Her tears poured out as a spigot would in a free form fashion uninhibited by any valve. Her cries tore my heart apart left and right. I was doing what I could, as little as it seemed, to console her. I spoke softly to her, "Darling, it's okay. We'll figure it all out. Whatever it takes. Alright? I promise you, I will not leave you. Solan will not leave you. We **will** figure this **all** out." Solan looked at me with this kind of peculiar, omnisciently understanding smirk that hit me in such a way as to tell me with not a single word that I was finally at home. I was finally in the right place at the right time with the right people. He gave a quick nod and motioned towards the door. He was to leave us to be alone, together, in each other's arms. He took his leave.

The grief, it struck her heartstrings, playing her as a skilled musician might. It took so much out of her, though, and she eventually fell into a kind of exhausted sleep.

In this quiet moment, with her in my arms, and the both of us draped across the couch, I took the time to view the stateroom, realizing, now, that it was hers. She had pictures placed ever so gently upon a shelf that hung above the first class fireplace depicting friends and comrades from her past travels. A seemingly well-traversed woman, the pictures abounded from far away countries and lands with people culturally ingrained within each location.

There was an outlying factor, though, shouting, begging, pleading for attention and acknowledgement, embedded within these images. Many of the people that she was in company with were black, demographically speaking. (To elaborate, if I may, I say **black** as a broad spectrum description because not all of these people were of African, or African American, as we so commonly hear, descent, as the politically correct terminology so narrowly attempts to permit. You see, there were Jamaican people, people from the Dominican Republic/Haiti, Barbados, Africa, etc. I know this due to the clue provided at the bottom right corner of the images that held titles such as "Taken in Africa" or "Shot in Jamaica.") To many, this may not seem like such an issue, such an outlandish thing to see. But, consider the times. There was still racism so prominent, so horrid, so ignorant in presence all around. In

seeing these images, I gained much more well rounded respect and admiration for her.

In fact, my assumption was that our feeling upon this subject was of mutual agreement - These are all just people. There is no reason for treating another from a different race any different than that of anyone else. We're all a part of one race, really - the human race. Each color, each culture, is just that! There is nothing that separates us in truth. We all have brains, eyes, hearts, lungs, everything. It's just a color, nothing more, nothing less. At least that's what I believe.

To elaborate further, I also look upon the human race, as a whole, as nothing more than another species of animal. We are not so different than that of the creatures we deem as inferior to our superiority. Our innermost feelings: anger, hatred, fear, happiness, love, sincerity, sadness. Are they not shared amongst every living creature? To say that we are superior to animals is ignorant, I contest. Don't believe me? I don't blame some of you. So, I shall cite one instance in particular. There was a man, who as of late has passed, that was beaten horribly by men of other races after a long winded chase, and this act single-handedly tore a city apart in the most vile riots that the land had ever seen. The rioting stretched far and wide with fires erupting everywhere, people being murdered in the streets, men, women, and children looting stores and shops, all because they wished to express their belief, their innermost angst. Does this description of the human 'superiority' strike the hot iron of **pride** inside you? It shouldn't. As a truly 'superior' being, shouldn't the human race have been able to (first off, control their anger and not senselessly beat someone in the street) discuss, interject, debate the correct response to the then current issue at hand. Yes. Yes, we should be able to do that. I'll say it again. We are all a part of one race. We are all human. We are no different than the other living creatures present throughout the land. Only when we make the effort to look upon ourselves through a third party's eye, only then will we be at peace. Only then will we be able to contemplate harmony. Only then can we become something greater than ourselves, greater than the dreamers of the world could ever imagine.

Ah, any ways, my apologies. I look upon the human race with not condescension, but with caring, loving, tough affection. Please pardon my rambling discussion of before. In a moment of steady reflection previous to the examination of my past in this current iteration in which you are present, the mistakes of those surrounding myself, including the many mistakes I have made seemed to have gotten to me. I do not despise the human race. I love it, in truth. As I have said previously, I strive for imperfection and how can you reach any higher level of imperfection than that level so existent within the human race? I must say, having

provided a good amount of negativity to the being, I cannot love any race, any culture, any entity more than the human being. The humans, many of them, are always striving to learn from others, from themselves, from their mistakes, from their successes. That! That is what makes them great. That is what makes the human race superior. The insatiable thirst for knowledge and growth. I cannot be more proud to have been part of that. It's a feeling that touches me on more conscious and unconscious levels that enlightens me and lifts me to greater moments of euphoria hitherto unknown to myself. It is fantastic. And for that, I thank you all. But, as I said, I digress, and now I must meander back to the tale.

My eyes took their leave to continue on venturing around the room. There were art pieces strewn about (it seemed she had a taste for the classic Greco-Roman style) along with expensive clothing quaintly folded and resting on the bedside. Paintings, sketches, photographs all around. It was mesmerizing to try to understand her from only images. She showed not a single sign of immaturity or childishness in her poses, speaking of course of those images with which her vestige took part, or her choice in art from one to another. Most of her poses were very conservative and not a bit outlandish or tourist-like. I found her to be, from an assumption made quickly and simply from the brief time that I had known her and, well, her belongings, as one that another might consider to be an 'old soul'. And I found it so intriguing, so amazing, so enthralling. Removing for a moment the scene I had just witnessed where her heart was ripped from her chest with the revelation of Dante's lies, the other time that I had seen her, I felt I was in the presence of a queen, of a goddess. I was in the company of the, no, **my** Earth-bound Aphrodite.

And for me, that carried a great weight upon my mind. Somehow, and for some reason, this woman had emotionally bound me so that any time spent in an attempt to mentally migrate away from her as my mind's subject matter was executed entirely in vain. Then again, now that I think about it, I had no need to search for an alternative thought pattern. To admire her delicate form brought a sense of serenity to me, so positively charged, so happily maintained, so undeniably strong, that every nerve ending, every muscle in me, seemed to radiate with this warmth never felt before. The magnitude of this warmth was such that I, rather quickly and comfortably, drifted off into a gentle slumber with her in my arms. For, I needed no excuse, no rationale imaginable, to leave her side or her embrace.

The next morning, I had arisen to find myself alone in the cabin with a small note on a table nearby. I could tell that it was her writing, as ascertained by the instantly clean, concise, and ultimately meticulous penmanship. There was not a hint of stress or haste in its structure. There was only this cautious delicacy as

most profoundly evident, in my mind, in the construction of the feminine hand. In any case, I examined the note to acquire the context and purpose of its existence. Present within the text was a request (most readily accepted by my yearning desire) to meet her in an hour's time on the top deck of the ship to enjoy the fresh air and each other's company.

As I finished reading the letter and went for the cabin door, the dream/memory shifted into a state of blurry haste in the sense that time advanced ever so quickly, yet I could still decipher active shapes and forms passing me by. I was moving rather purposefully, maneuvering through corridors and stairwells searching for a passage to light resulting in the uniting of our paths, and the mutual expenditure of our day together, alone.

Emerging from the bowels of the ship into daylight, time slowed to its normal pace once more. This wasn't mere luck, chance, or coincidence, for my emergence to light bequeathed unto me the beauty of her silhouette in the midst of the sun's rays. A slight wind had caused her hair to lightly drape across her face, as she stood against the ship's railing taking pleasure from the sun's reflection upon the water. Slowly I walked to her, nervously considering and reevaluating whether I should make myself known, or leave her to the natural elements that entertained her so. Wishing not to disturb her, but wanting to fulfill the request asked of me, I decided to carry on and make my presence known. Assuming that she must have heard my approach, she turned around to face me. My heart stopped, pausing in anticipation, waiting for a mark of acceptance from her expression. Oh, how I longed to be in her good graces! She turned, as previously stated, and gave a friendly smile of welcome. Relief passed over me like cool river water and I joined her along the ship's railing according to her motioned beckoning.

“Ah, you've finally arisen. Maybe a couple hours later than I would have imagined, but still, you've exceeded previous expectation.” I was moved to inquire. “What previous expectation?” She returned with, “Well, I wasn't expecting you to show up, for starters, based on how much of **my** private affairs **you've** been involved with lately. Speaking of which, it's not every day that a girl is shown the limitations of her feasible knowledge in regards to her close friends, their relationship with her, and their secret connection with her financial assets. Though no one wishes to have their faults displayed to them on a silver platter, so he/she may marvel at his/her naivety, I, well, I must thank you for everything you've done for me. In all honesty, I asked for nothing from you, and, in an unknown time of need (unknown to me at least at the time), Solan, a man I've known for a considerable amount of time, and you, someone I've just recently met on this

voyage, stepped in to help me when I've done nothing for either of you!" I was slightly taken aback at this statement due to the fact that it was so plainly obvious to me that she had in fact done more than she gave herself credit for. I had no choice but to counteract her thinking by reminding her of her act of unfathomable kindness. "You've done nothing?" I began. "You changed my life, whether you know it or not. I almost didn't make it on this ship, my ticket to freedom from my past of nightmares. I came so close to being defeated once more, being, being 'shot down' so to speak, but you were there for me. You, an unknown player in the dramatic play of 'life', entered just before the hero was to meet his tragic end and rescued him from certain death. For that, I will always be indebted. Please remember that." With the look that surfaced upon her countenance, I was most assured of the fact that she would in no recent time lose sight of my plea. Following her change of expression, she looked at me with bright, joy filled eyes and invited me to tea, as it was just past tea time. I gladly accepted, without a passing thought or ill conceived notion to steer me away.

So, advancing from the top deck of the ship with the objective of embellishing and developing our currently flourishing relationship, we traversed the decks to find a small cafe to sit and converse at.

As we both took our seats, my sight reclaimed its blurry state and time slipped from my grasp for the last time within the lasting duration of the dream. This would also be the last moment of genuine happiness shared between myself and Bella.

When the sands of time slowed to their normal rate of passage through the hourglass, I remember that hours had gone by and we were still enjoying each other's conversation at the cafe. I then noticed a document, a menu, I believe, with the date of April 14th, 1912 written across the top. For those living in that time period before the inevitable occurred, and for those of your time that are ill-informed of the event, that date has no substance; it has no deeper meaning. But, for those after that night and for those who now know, that day would and will forever live, in infamy, in the hearts and minds of all.

The other people on the ship, myself, Solan, and Bellaluna included? We had no idea! No warning. It was not meant for us to know. No, that would be Fate's game. Fate would be the only player that wouldn't have the odds stacked against him. Fate would be the conductor in this cacophonous symphony of death and destruction, the master of space and time driving us toward imminent chaos.

And what were we to do to stop Him? In our blissful ignorance, nothing was alarming, nothing acted as the figurative or metaphorical 'red flag' that would and should have signalled a time for concern. Among the bourbon and cigars, the spas,

the fine dining, and many other amenities privy to every passenger in every class on the ship (along with the future prospect of a new life for many or a new place of exploration and personal expansion for some), there was not a single hint of paranoia or nervousness in the air. (Even the soothsayers were quiet and content!)

In any case, an hour and a half had passed since we had left the cafe. I found myself not only in Bella's room, but in her bed lying next to her as well. I found a light and looked at the clock to gain some bearing upon what stage of darkness we were in. I noticed that it was only 11:35 p.m. Laying my head back upon the pillow to attempt to succumb to gentle unconsciousness, my only thought resided in eventual and much wanted slumber. Apparently, Fate didn't like that.

The ship, usually holding a steady yet calm rocking sway to it as it sailed so cleanly through the ocean, suddenly and abruptly, (to me) felt as though it had collided with something. (How wrong I wish I was...) The abrupt pitch of the ship was quite notable to myself and Bella, but as we found out a bit later for some, it was more difficult to initially detect. Like a virus without opposition, the news of the collision along with the report that the ship was in fact taking on water spread dangerously fast. Solan burst through the door from the adjoining room with a look of shock and dismay. He looked at me, then at Bella, and without a single word we all began searching for life vests and grabbing the necessities for survival (if any) from our suitcases and dearest belongings. Bella and I burst through the door separating us from the rest of the passengers and joined up with Solan in the corridor in mere seconds to begin our ascent from below to the surface. The inevitable point of our plan's execution had arrived and upon the analysis of our situation as to decipher the best course of action, Solan, Bella, and myself realized that any order previously present within the confines of the ship's influence and authority was lost. Epitomized best by the uproar sounding from distraught men, women, and children separated from one another in the psycho-circus, Chaos held tyrannical rule over all. The heavy, strained bellows of the crew could be heard above all searching for "Women and children only, please! Women and children only!" Hundreds upon hundreds of people were ravaging the halls, their mind sets shifting drastically away from any mode of reason to the more instinctual fight or flight response system. Completely understandable as it was (or 'is' now), it made any chance of escape damn near impossible.

The three of us, Solan, Bella, and I, finally had fought our way through one of the interconnected corridors only to be met with another, the end of which would stand our stairway to hopeful salvation. As we began to make a push through the ever increasingly hysteric crowd, two things simultaneously hit the three of us. One:

We heard through a wave of mixed murmur and horror that passed over the people in front of us and behind us that it was just confirmed that there were not enough life boats for everyone. This revelation brought the aforementioned hysterics to a new level of insanity. As I said, though, there were two things that we had realized. One, as just stated, was the realization that we more than likely wouldn't make it off the ship alive. The second dark discovery, if you will, was even more heart wrenching: In the door that we had just passed by, off to our left, we could hear the cries of children behind a jammed door as they begged and pleaded for rescue. The three of us stopped and looked at one another with an understanding gaze.

I will admit that at that split second, momentary instant, fear held me captive in such a way that I contemplated running for my own life instead of considering saving the children's. When I think of that moment, to this day, I hold myself and my thoughts in contempt, even though Luna begs me not to. She says that anyone would have felt that way in that situation, but, considering my responsibilities now as the Dreamweaver, or even as a man in any situation, I feel that I may never be able to forgive myself for that slippage of honorable character.

Breaking from our gaze and deciding to take action, we immediately threw away any thought of our own safety and our own belongings to instead aid the trapped children. We immediately yelled to them to back away from the door in case we needed to attempt to break the lock or kick the door in. At this point, reason was cast aside as we couldn't seem to come to a conclusion why the lock jammed as it did and the door wouldn't open. We resolved to use brute force to break open the door and as we commenced our rescue effort, Bella brought a vital piece of information to Solan's and my attention. "Look!" she cried pointing down the bit of corridor left in past tracks. "The water! It's already flowing in!"

As evidenced by the encroaching sea, a great deal of time had passed between the moment the ship struck the iceberg and our arrival to aid the children. I cannot say for sure how much time had passed, though. Unlike the other portions of the dream that had passed from the cafe to the striking of the ship against the iceberg, time was no longer manipulated as a tape player. There was no rewinding or fast forwarding. Just fear-driven second by second decision making that either worked or didn't. So, with another digression over with, let us venture back to the children in imminent peril.

Knowing that we didn't have a moment to lose, Solan and I quickly came up with a plan to try to get the children out. Solan would begin a search for any object, be it blunt or sharp, to try to use against the door. Bella would stand next to me and converse back and forth between her and the children to try and keep them as calm

as possible throughout the process. While Bella and Solan enacted their portion of the plan, I would use my fists, my feet, along with my whole body, to break through the door to attempt to free them.

Bella started off our work as Solan began searching. She calmed down the kids for a moment and told them to make sure that they stayed far enough away from the door so as to be safe. Now, it was my turn. I beat and beat at the door with my fists as hard as I could. I heard them crying and it fueled me in such a way that every bit of primal force in me exploded to the surface as I threw every ounce of strength at the door. Beating and beating away at it, I could feel a great amount of pain, but I was never hindered, nor slowed. Kicking and punching, the fucking door just wouldn't give. Slowly, blood began to paint the sturdy wood as my fists bled out and spilled on the ground. It didn't matter. I kept ramming the door again and again till, finally, with water nearing us every second, I could hear the characteristic crack that marked the breaking down of the barrier. This only pushed me to work harder. Bella, making sure the children were alright, reassured them that rescue was imminent. Solan came back dumbfounded and depressed he hadn't found anything to help in the rescue effort, but was relievingly shocked to see my progress. Even still, I was enraged. These were innocents left in the wake of God knows what to fend for themselves when they obviously were still dependents upon another. Anger flooded my judgment and I lost it. My whole body was now the blunt object Solan had previously left in search of. I ran at the door, and, after slamming into it a few times, it finally gave way.

As bloody as I was, I grabbed the little girl and Bella grabbed the boy from inside. We looked around for others, but they were the only. Off we went, trudging through now quickly rising water. Running to the end of the hallway with Solan at the forefront, he helped us navigate through stairwell and patron, brandishing the hope that we would make it to the lifeboats, if not for us, for the children's sake. Forcefully passing man and woman, we had finally reached the top deck of the ship. It was then that the little girl in my arms looked at me with large sullen eyes. "Excuse me?" I looked at her. "Yes? What's wrong sweetheart?" I asked trying to be as calm as possible. (Kind of hard now to look that way seeing as how blood was dripping from my fists, legs, and head, and she saw **me** break through the door just moments prior.) "Am I? No. Are we going to die?" My heart broke its normal beat in sadness. "No, n- No darling. You're going to make it. Don't you worry! That's why we're looking for somewhere safe for you to be." She shook her head. "No! I mean **us**. Are we **all** going to be alright? Are **you** going to **die**?" Her words hit me like a charging bull. I assumed that she understood at this point that it was **women**

and children first as her clarified question excluded **herself**. I, I couldn't answer her. She prodded again as we neared a very crowded section of people huddled around an almost full lifeboat. "Sir, thank you for saving me and my brother. I have to ask one more thing, though. What's it like when you die?" I answered her as honestly as I thought I could. "As I've heard it, sweetheart, it's like a dream."

A couple of the crew members loading on women and children grabbed the boy and girl from Bella and I and handed them to women on the small boat. They then tried to get Bella to board. "No. My place is here with them," as she pointed to Solan and I. "There are others, though, that are fit to replace me. Save them." And with that she turned to us and asked, "Now what do we do?"

I knew it was forever futile to order her or beg her to save herself and board a life boat, due to her strength of character and notion, so I kept my useless idea to myself.

As for what we did do. We looked around us, as man, woman, and child were thrown into chaos, and made our peace with it. At this point, we more than realized the inevitability of our destiny. It was at this time that the ship split into two, unable to keep together with the tremendous pressure forming at its center. We hit the floor of the deck and held onto a side railing near by for dear life. Screams of terror sounded in the still night. The moon shone and the cold spread amongst us. For originally being part of separate parties, the three of us held on, hand in hand, and formed our own small group, till the end. And the end, well, it was near. The half of the ship that we were on, taking on water quickly now, pivoted downward while we held to the opposite side's upward shift. We did everything possible to hold on to the side of the uppermost part of the ship that was now a sinking tower of terror. Unfortunately, the rail had gotten drenched with water and with a slip of our grip, we fell quickly and violently down, sliding fiercely along the floor of the top deck slamming into inanimate object and horrified passenger alike.

With a splash we hit the water. How can I begin to explain the pain that we endured? Not only was the impact itself breath-taking, but the water, the water had its own weapon. It was so cold, freezing, that I felt it burned the skin. A cold such as that is comparable to having daggers and other assorted cutlery thrown at you as your skin gets sliced and diced little by little. The kind of pain that grips you and doesn't let up, not even for a second. As for the aforementioned freezing cold temperature, it sapped the life from us slowly. How methodical it was! I admit, we hung on long and strong, but to no avail. You could feel your muscles and bones, your tendons, your nerves, all shutting down, losing heat as the constricting temperature took over. It was imminent. There was no fighting it, really. With

everyone else flailing in the water? That just served to make sure there wasn't one part of your body that didn't get drenched or saved from frostbite or worse. Anyways, it does absolutely no good to waste time on the negativity of that time anymore. In summary, the three of us were no match for the water's horrid climate. Hypothermia took us in its grasp and made sure we were never able to see the morning light of April 15th.

This rather drawn out, terrifying final portion to my memory ended the previous Dreamweaver's masterpiece of a review of my last week as a living, breathing organism scurrying along Earth's lands and sailing across its majestic ocean. Death brought me from a place of light, of sight, back into my present state of being, back into the darkness. As I stirred from my incapacitation that left me unconscious so as to recollect my past, the air felt different in the room. In fact, I wasn't in the vicinity of the grand staircase anymore. I couldn't place my location, though, without further aid from those that could see. I could smell, however, and what did I smell? That ever so familiar scent of new and old pages locked together in an all encompassing binding. Yes, that smell of knowledge and adventure. That scent of other worlds and lands that could be held within the touch of your inquisitive, curious, and enthralled fingertips. It was obvious, now, actually, without anyone's help. I was in the ship's library, provided for the second class passengers.

"Hello?" I probed, testing the air for those present and for their intention. The rustling I kept consistently hearing stopped immediately. "He's awake! He's awake!" I heard, coming most decidedly from Luna. Footsteps ran over to me, ceasing movement comfortably near by. A second set made their slower, more experienced choice of movement towards my being, taking their stance opposite the first pair of feet. "Please, please tell me you remember now. Oh please, please, please..." My newly heightened senses, due to the loss of one, were coming in handy now, gradually giving me a much greater field of insight into the energy supplied and manipulated by my surroundings and those found within. I could feel the beat of her heart in the air. Like the frantic beat of a rabbit's pulse hiding from the hunter's line of sight.

I started to respond with what I felt she needed to hear at the moment. "I remember, my dear Bellaluna. Our time together and our wonderful history. Mr. Solan? You too, my friend. Everything is crystal clear enough that I feel as though no time has been lost, though I would most assuredly assume you may not agree to that naive sentiment, yes?" Her intimately emotional cry of relief along with his slight chuckle of understanding led me to realize that we were finally beginning to match up in current mental standing. "You'd be surprised. It's only been about ten

minutes since you fell into a sound unconsciousness. Took us about that long to drag your lifeless body up here, to the library, to find anything more in regards to the journal of the previous Dreamweaver. I doubt we'll find very much, if anything at all, but it's worth the effort. Believe me. It is. Now, if you'll excuse me."

Solanus sounded tired. As he resumed his pilfering through papers and books, Luna sat close to me. She nudged my cheek ever so slowly and gently whispered to me. "He's not well, anymore. He's starting to fall apart, though he plays a tough game when you're up and around. The pressure that he's under, the great **responsibility** that I had mentioned so long ago? It's finally cornering him. You have any idea what he's been doin'?" I shook my head. I had my own issues and responsibilities to tend to in times passed. I hadn't the slightest idea. "Look, I'm gonna tell you everything and make it clear as to the current standings. I can honestly say that **you're** not gonna like it, and neither will **he**, but it needs to be said. So, in effect, expect hell from him after this, though I highly doubt he's got the energy or time anymore to do anything about it."

"I take it that you've already spoken with the previous Dreamweaver?" I nodded respectfully. "Good. He told you what we are, moreover, what he is? Perceptionist, right? Not fully? Alright, good enough for the moment. We'll get into the semantics in just a moment. The aforementioned Dreamweaver, the one you spoke with, is on his last leg. He's been dying for a while now. Wait, **dying** is the wrong word. He's been **fading** for some time now. You see, since we've already had the pleasure of dying, we will not have to undergo that again. But, it is possible to fade. It is a miserable process, equal only to the living's, oh what's the damn word... **Torture**. Equal only to torture. When you met the Dreamweaver, how did he look?" I told her my observations. "About what Solanus described. That wonderful man has been in that position for an eternity. I never had the pleasure to meet him, but Solanus did. Solanus explained how great of a man he was. He met the other perceptionist and the other spirit waker. Said they were exceptional beings. In any case, back to what I was beginning to describe to you. As the previous Dreamweaver has begun fading, (i.e. - the reason that he is so frail, so dusty, so malnourished looking...) Solanus, as a perceptionist, has taken to helping him in immeasurably difficult ways. See, a perceptionist is more or less a magician compared to the Dreamweaver who is a painter. The painter - **creates** in the fullest expanse of the term; develops landscapes, beautiful portraits from the mind. The magician - an **illusionist** performing sleight of hand, tricking the spectator into believing something. Hence, Solanus cannot **create**, but can trick the mind into believing that there is in fact **creation** taking place. And he's the best at it, the

best there is. When the Dreamweaver's decline was more than imminent, when it actually began, Solanus was called on and was subsequently given predesigned dreams to manipulate, merely working as a distraction for the unwitting dreamers, so that more time would be available to find the new Dreamweaver, essentially, you. From that point, the work for Solanus has escalated as the Dreamweaver's health has declined. Solanus is working, simultaneously, on hundreds, thousands, millions of dreams, all at once, while we have been trying to rouse you into some sort of working state. He can't resolve the dreams and he can't finish the work with the individual dreamers. Again, only a Dreamweaver can. But, he can keep them busy, keep'em entertained for now, for lack of a better phrase, until you're ready. And I must happily say, I think you've reached that point, which is good, seeing as time is almost up."

As she finished this statement, there was a sound as though something had hit the floor. "Solanus!" Luna screamed. She leapt out of her chair and I could feel and hear her footsteps running to his side. "C'mon, let's sit you down with Deo. C'mon." I could hear the scuffling coming towards me. With a thump, Luna had placed him in the chair next to me. I heard the labored breathing and I knew something was wrong.

"He's gone... He's finished. That's it." Solanus sounded as though he were desperately searching for oxygen to fill his lungs. "Luna, keep looking for that journal. I know there's something else. There's something missing. Find it! I'll stick with him for now. It's only a matter of time." And it *was* only a matter of time. Moments after Solanus had realized the change had taken place, that my predecessor's being had finally **faded**, I began to hear these **voices**. I was hearing speech. I could feel my head filling with thoughts, memories, notions that belonged not to me, but to the living. Strange dialects and tones clouded my mind. It was beginning.

"I found it! I found it!" Luna cried joyfully.

"Quiet child!" came Solanus. "Quiet! Can't you hear them? Footsteps! Listen..." And so it was. Thundering towards us from a room beyond the one we were currently in came the sound of a single, determined set of running footfalls. Soon, only a door separated us from their creator. "Be ready Luna!" Solanus cried.

"Mr. Solanus! Ms. Luna! Reports of the shadows! Please, you must do something to help us. We've no way of any kind of defense or retaliation."

"To whom does the voice belong?" I curiously inquired. "Why," Luna began, "that's the voice of one of the spirits I mentioned earlier. He's one of the deceased passengers' spirits inhabiting the ship. Such a nice gentleman - Wait! You can hear

him?! Solanus! Did you hear that!”

“I did. Deo, have you noticed any other changes as of yet?”

I waited a moment and then told him that I noticed nothing new of importance. As I did so, the man to whom the voice belonged penetrated the threshold of the entrance of the room.

“My apologies Mr. Solanus and Ms. Luna. I mean not to interrupt, nor be a stray nuisance. I have news and... My God! Is that him?!”

Both Luna and Solanus gave a slight chuckle and then both confirmed that I was in fact, in the gentleman’s words, **him**.

“Oh I beg of you to forgive me for my intrusion, sir! I am only fulfilling that of which they have asked of me. I was to report back to them if the shadows were to return, and by God they have!”

I did the best I could to reassure him, though he interrupted several times in order to apologize for his “intrusion,” that he was intruding nothing and that all was in fact alright. “Oh, thank you sir! Your kindness truly precedes you! We have heard many a word about how wonderful you are. That is why I feel so terrible as to be the bearer of bad news. Does he know about the shadows Ms. Luna and Mr. Solanus?” There was a silence for which I knew not the reason, other than the fact that they might have been searching for the most appropriate answer to his question, that served to stoke the fire of curiosity within me.

“So?” I asked, “If I may, what are these shadows he speaks of?” There was a heavy sigh, met only with the abrupt remembrance that sounded from Solanus’s lips. “Worry not, my friend. I will handle them for the time being. That is the least that I can do. You, on the other hand, must begin the work that I cannot. It is time for you to take creation into your own hands and relieve the world of its current tribulation. From the moment we found you to the moment that the previous Dreamweaver faded away, I have taken the stance of temporarily harnessing what influential power I have in holding the dreamers’ dreamscapes in check, awaiting the arrival of your natural abilities. But, you already know that, as I remember that Luna has already given you a briefing upon the recent given circumstances. So, we will expedite the speech that currently seems to be doing nothing other than taking time away from your initial orientation.”

He continued, “It seems that the moment for biding our time has finally come to an end, and the time of your work, of your duty, is to commence. Are you ready, my friend?”

I thought about the words spoken by Solanus and the time spent leading up to this point. How the memory of our total efforts seemed to flow freely within my

mind!

In any case, I replied, “Yes, I’m ready. What am I supposed to do?”

He laughed and asked Luna to sit down with us. Then his briefing initialized, “To begin such a task as you have that floats dormant above your head as a cloud ripe for the release of rain is something that most cannot handle. There are many questions that remain within that will go unanswered. Questions such as the one you asked moments ago inquiring what to do to begin. Questions such as, ‘Once I enter the dreamscape of the subject, where do I go?’ ‘With whom do I interact?’ ‘When must I complete my objective?’ ‘Is there a time factor and/or time limit that I must adhere to?’ And so the questions continue on and on with no resolution in sight. The thought that naturally arises with such an amount of remnant interrogative points is, ‘Where and how will I find the answer?’ As of yet, you need not worry about such thoughts. Such thoughts will only cloud your judgment, will only inhibit your abilities, therefore, let them go. If they arise momentarily, take comfort in the thought that they will subside just as quickly as they arose.”

Solanus took a deep breath and then began again... “Now, setting the aforementioned points behind us, we must move on to the moment of creation’s beginning, namely, your first of many masterpieces. Art thou ready?”

Though I couldn’t see her, I could tell that Luna’s energy was aglow with both excitement and anticipation. I nodded in acknowledgment of Solanus’ question. “Very well, then,” he began, “let us commence.”

And with that statement, Solanus spoke of a magnanimous man currently in mental turmoil, wrought with anxiety and thoughts of intense self-deprecation concerning the current standings of the psychiatric facility/hospital he is the head of. “This man, of whom you will discover more about later, is more important than you will ever know. Being there to assist him in this time of influential need will forever alter the lives of those that he has spent a myriad number of years trying to help. Your work with his dreams, specifically, will not only aid him, but will serve to aid those at his facility causing a domino effect of positive energy and greater well-being. This greater well-being then helps to eliminate the shadows’ threat that we and those that we help now face. Again, do not worry about the shadows for now. Worry about this man. The rest will come in time.”

With that, Solanus rose from his seat. “Luna,” he started, “it’s time.” She now rose from her seat and grabbed my hand. “Take him to a quiet place and make sure he gets acquainted with Nightmare. He’s gonna need to get to know him sometime.”

Luna took my hand, leading me through hallway after hallway, doorway after doorway, until we reached a private room with a fireplace. “Now,” she said, “sit by

the fireside.” She sat me by the fireplace which was apparently, according to her, quite dark and damp. “Well?” she inquired. “You mind shedding a little light here?” I closed my eyes and imagined the most warm and welcoming fire I could. Before I opened them, I could feel my skin grow more and more comfortable as heat radiated towards me from the now lit fireplace. Luna, now much more content said, “I have to leave now. You will be visited by one more before you must begin your journey. I would ask if you were ready, but, with this one, you have no choice. And, by the way, if you soon notice that you have eyes with purpose once more, you might wish to direct your inquiries to him when you come into contact. Either way, this is where I must make my exit. Good luck, darling! And take care! See you very soon!”

She left and I was left alone to my own devices in a quite cozy room nestled against a fireplace. I awaited the next being that I was to be in contact with for seconds that evolved into minutes with no change. How strange! Where is this being, this creature of hitherto unknown relevance? I couldn’t help but yawn, and as I did, I closed my eyes, relaxing while feeling the heat of the fire against my back. When I opened my eyes once more, I could see lights and shapes dancing about the room. My sight was returning! My spirits rose! They rose to no great height, however, due to the anticipation of the visitor yet to arrive.

Soon, it came to pass that I felt something. No. **Someone** was watching me. The fire burnt itself out with an undeniably violent gust of wind, or so it sounded like. (I found it strange, though, that I didn’t feel any wind pass by me.) As the room grew darker and darker, I could hear footsteps behind me, moving ever so slowly towards me. Then, they stopped. The sound restarted, but now it was at my left side. It ceased again. Now, it was on my right. I couldn’t make heads or tails of how this creature was moving and shifting sides and positions so quickly without any extra noise on its part. Finally, as I waited on bated breath, listening so intently for the next hint of sound, I could feel and hear the very breath of the creature running, with a bit of warm moisture, from my forehead down to my chin. How I jumped! You cannot begin to imagine the fear I felt, for I could not see this other organism! What was I to do? What was I to say? Who, or what, was this being currently encircling me? In an attempt to answer those questions, I gathered what courage was available to me at that time and began with the question that came to mind first.

“May I ask your name?” The breathing once present now ceased completely. It was the kind of pregnant pause that lets you know that the opposite party is deep in thought about what was just verbally delivered to them. For a few moments, there

was only silence from him, or her, or it, accompanied by the sound of rushing water from the outside of the ship. Courage welling within me once more at the stray thought that he or she might be more frightened by me than I of him or her, I looked about me, which supplied me no comfort, as I could see not a thing. As I took a single step forward, dryness in my eyes caused me to blink. When my eyelids returned to their open position, I was no longer in the quiet room full of solace. I was now in my past place of residence, the home with which I shared habitation with those I considered to be my parents.

It was dark and the rain was pouring as heavily as it was the night their lives ended. I was in the living room when the door burst open. There he is! The very man who held the gun that was used in changing my life forever! I could hear my parents stirring in their room above. In a split second decision, I decided that I would take the situation in hand and save my parents the eventual inevitability of darkness overtaking their light. I moved after the man who at the time was digging through a drawer of valuable coins or trinkets of some kind or another. All that mattered was that they were valuable to someone in need of quick monetary gain. I lunged at him with arms thrust forward awaiting his throat. At the moment that my fingers were to grasp skin, muscle, and vertebrae, I felt nothing. I felt not even resistance to my hasty advance. Instead, I fell face first into the drawers of which the burglar's attention was so blindingly directed towards, effectively passing through the man, body and soul. As he took to movement once more, mirroring the pace of a bloodhound fast after a scent, I shadowed him every step of the way throwing fists, books, and other miscellaneous items at him to break his possession hungry stride, and yet, nothing landed. No movement of my own seemed to physically sway his stance or obscure his objective. Finally, reasoning within me took over, effectively laying to rest the rule of charged emotion.

As difficult as it was for me to come to terms with it, I realized that all I could do at that given moment was to watch the events play out as they had occurred that fateful night...

A few moments passed by giving rise to the flood of my parents' footsteps descending the staircase to defend their young. My father, with bat in hand, swung at the armed man only to miss him by mere inches. My mother swung and made contact, though that did little to prevent the inevitable from occurring. The armed man stepped back, aimed his weapon, and fired two bullets. The first of two shots found refuge within my father's heart. The second sailed through my mother's head, eventually coming to rest in the back wall of the living room. Both impacts were fatal, dropping my parents to their knees, then to the floor with a horrible dull

thump. Once they had fallen, I witnessed my own vestige coming down the stairs, yelling at the armed man, taking the barrel of his gun in hand, and pointing it at my head, while begging him to pull the trigger. After he said his piece, he fled just as I remember, leaving me alone in the house with my deceased kin.

I couldn't help but watch myself struggling to find the resulting course of action after the end of my innocence. I could see in my very complexion the bubbling up of internal strife that triggered me to run from my own home into the night of sullen wonder. Seeing this, I broke down, tears running from my eyes of their own accord. I couldn't stop, though I tried mercilessly. My emotion was too great and my resistance too weak. I could find no method of recourse to shake myself from the grasp of such depressed reverie until movement once again caught my eye.

Shadows moved within the house seemingly from everywhere and nowhere all at once. The very confusion that you feel from reading and attempting to comprehend the true meaning of the preceding statement is the same feeling that radiated within me at that very moment. Footsteps once again sounded, this time from directly in front of me, and for the first time, I finally saw the source of their creation.

A figure, cloaked in terribly aged and ragged black material, stood before me, with staff in hand. It walked in such a manner as to suggest that it was crippled and, therefore, not something that I was to feel threatened by. Though darkness ruled over the environment, I could see partially torn flesh and tissue making up the features of the face of this decidedly terrifyingly ominous male figure.

When he finally got near enough to me, he removed the cloaked hood from his head revealing far worse tissue damage than I would have ever been able to imagine on a living human being. He drew in a breath as if it were the first in hundreds, or even thousands of years, and commenced his attempt at mutual communication with me.

“What is it that strikes the chord of sorrow within you? Why is it that you envision me as a creature suitable for a horror story, and yet, when you finally see me, you relax almost completely? Deo, wilt thou speak with me? Or, has emotion taken thy senses away from you? Will we have to wait until your constitution, weakened by the previous sights' significance, returns?”

These questions, these riddles, they haunted me. Though I had never heard them before that very moment, they resonated within me, rendering my sensory faculty effectively inoperable until he was to make his next move. In truth, I was taken aback by this man, for in his eyes, you could tell that such a magnitude

of strength was bottled, always ready and willing to be dispersed at the most reasonable time and place.

He looked away from me to the dead vessels that were once those to be known as my parents, and then back at me. “Thou, who hath felt such deep seeded pain when offered to this situation’s exposure, you shall walk with me and gain the knowledge that shall set thy mind at ease. Will you do so? Wilt thou join me in taking healing steps of thine own? For it is this that will aid you in helping others, as that is the design that Fate has planned for you. Step forward, if you will. It is time that we store this horrid memory in a safe place, buried within the bowels of the past...”

And so I did; I stepped forward. He turned away from me, towards my parents’ bodies, and slowly waved his hand over them. Within moments, the surrounding air shifted and changed. Energy filled the air. It felt as though at any time electricity could manifest at your fingertips without a hint of motive or purpose present beforehand.

With the electric air came a most astounding visual change as well. I watched as what was once my childhood home evolve into someone else’s place of residence. Certain aspects of my old abode grew and others shrank, some became brighter, and some became darker... It was all too evident that I was no longer in my place of instinctual comfort. The night was still upon us and the rain still as oppressive as before. Time had not shifted from its normal rate of advancement.

“Well... Here we are... We are now at the location where you will gain the closure that you need to quiet the demons raging on in your mind. Please stand beside me. What once was will become evident once more ...” As if this man standing beside me was the narrator in this Shakespearean Tragedy of a dark night forever existent within my mind’s eye, the events of the past seemed to take their cue from his presentation and played out before us as they once had. The man that had so readily shot my parents ran to the door of the residence that we now stood within, violently opening the front door and slamming it behind him with a countenance that only depicted fear and self-contempt. How he screamed! How he sobbed! Nothing was left to the imagination as he began to pour out his sorrow like a dam that burst under the pressure of an unrelenting river’s flow. He cursed himself and he cursed the world. He moved with haste from one end of the home to the other. He picked things up and threw them with force against the wall. He ripped up papers and broke glass. He was destroying himself both in materialistic habitation and psychological well being. Sadly, one could see that this display was not going to lead to a cheerful resolution on his part.

As he finished destroying most of his home's aesthetic appeal, he looked to the murder weapon that he still held within his possession. Picking it up, he looked at it from front to back, top to bottom. While he steadily studied the metal contraption, he slowly brought it up from his chest to his chin. As it continued its ascent, the barrel came to rest in his mouth. Wrapping his right index finger around the trigger, he took one last breath of fresh air and closed his eyes. Tension built within the muscles, tendons, and ligaments of his finger, hand, and arm until he pulled the trigger...

"God damn it!" he screamed. The gun had jammed. "Fucking piece of scrap metal!" He threw the gun towards a window, breaking it into several pieces. His anger began to build up, growing more and more unbearable by the second, until he could not hold himself together any longer. He gathered his strength, ran to one of the walls in his house, and slammed his head against the wall. Determination to end his days led him to continually beat his head against the wall until paint started crumbling off and blood started to pour from his head. Such a terrible sound emitted from the action he repeated! "I... I reciprocated it!" he cried as tears began to roll down his cheeks. "It happened to me and what do I do? Instead of finding some way to let go of my past, I passed on the horrors of my life to this innocent! He did not deserve this! Why?! What hell I have brought upon his frail being! I must bring myself to an end... I cannot and will not be able to live with this horrid turn of events. Fare thee well, world. I shall take myself out and save those that I can any more heart ache..." He continued to slam his head against the wall, giving everything he could to reach his goal, but inevitably, his body could take no longer. He had bludgeoned himself not into death, but into unconsciousness...

I looked at the man who stood beside me watching this scene unfold second by second. "So? Is that it? Is that the end?" His head did not turn from the scene of the unconscious man. Slowly and methodically, the world around us faded into darkness. He finally looked at me and said, "It is time that I plead for your forgiveness. It was me. I was the one that ended your parents' life. I... I created you, in a manner of speaking. I was the cataclysmic catalyst and it has haunted me from that moment when I pulled the trigger for the first time. When I failed, as you have seen, in killing myself the first time, I woke up hours later to not only still have the same feeling of painful regret and remorse fueling me to find a way out, but, the feeling was both more intense and more insistent than before I passed out. I vowed to myself that I would not and could not allow such a monster to continue on breathing amongst the living, for I knew not what else I might have the gall and desperation to do. I found the gun, that still lay within the confines of the room I

was in, and attempted to unjam it myself. Hours passed with frustration abounding and sweat pouring from every pore in my head. Finally, I was able to unjam the damn thing. I took a final deep breath, closed my eyes, pointed the gun to my head, and fired the weapon...”

I lost control and tried to interject into his explanation/forgiveness plea, but he wouldn't allow it.

“No! Please! Please let me explain. I know the pain that you are feeling! I went through the same thing. But, please let me continue and hate me, if you will, upon my anecdote's end.”

And so I did.

“When I opened my eyes, I regained my sight within a dark room. At the center of the room was a, a, throne, for lack of a better term, with light draped upon it. In the chair sat a man who looked to be dying slowly and painfully, yet you could tell he demanded great reverence without having to say a word. He asked me to step towards him, and seeing that there was no other light in the room, I did as he asked. As I stood before him at his feet, I could see dried blood upon his cheeks that at one time had been dripping from his eyes so violently gouged out. He was dry, dusty, and disintegrating. I'm sure that if you've met him, you know exactly what I speak of. Any ways, he looked at me, if you want to call it that seeing as he was lacking ocular organs, and said, ‘You have done a great injustice to your brethren, and yet, have given the human race a fighting chance once again. Upon murdering his parents, you have sent him to his rightful place, providing me a predecessor to lead the world into the future. Your work is not done, though, as you are meant for something greater, as is he. Unfortunately, you have no choice in this matter. It is your duty to work together with the victim of your senseless act to bring about change within the world... For the better. He will provide dreams of praise, dreams of support, and dreams of paradise to entice the given dreamer to continue on their path to happiness and positivity. You, on the other hand, will come in to play when the dreamer needs a severe change of future paths. You will provide the dreamer a nightmarish reality, all within their subconscious, to bring about a terror-driven alteration within their lifestyle. To do this, you yourself must see the very steps of hell as they present themselves to the human being, and then you will be able to enact change... Are you ready?’”

“Of course I said yes, for I wished nothing more than to make up for my past transgressions when it came to you. I wanted and needed closure upon the act of violent ignorance that I inflicted upon you. The previous Dreamweaver, as I'm sure that you've figured out by now was the one who I was speaking to, then said

something to the effect of ‘leave your past behind and get ready to welcome the afterlife’ as he removed the bloodied, tied cloth from his eyes and bid me to look upon them. I did and was subject to a hell that I would not and could not wish upon any other. In time, though, there may be some that need the kind of awakening that I received.”

Hearing such a tale of his distressed past events as well as his search for closure via my forgiveness, I couldn’t help but feel terribly sorry for him. There was no way that this was the same creature who ransacked my home, possessed by a need to acquire materialistic items... In many ways, I wished to forgive him right there, but it seemed that he needed to tell me his whole story of his journey to this point to be able to even forgive himself...

“I know that this is a long-winded explanation for a very short, in retrospect, question, and for that I am sorry. But, please allow me time to finish what I’ve started.”

And so I did.

“The previous Dreamweaver forced me to look upon his bloody and torn up eye sockets, as I’ve mentioned beforehand, and as I did so, I could feel my consciousness being pulled into the lockets of his mind. I found myself instantly transported to a long, bright white, clean hallway with dilapidated wooden doors lining each wall to my left and right. One additional door stood directly ahead of me, at the end of the hall, in the center of a separate wall that was nestled between the aforementioned left and right walls. Each door looked the same, and yet, was decidedly different. As I went to the first door, it deteriorated into sawdust leaving only a solid wall in its place. I turned around just in time to watch five other doors dissipate into wood chip dust. Only the door at the end of the hallway was left. It was my only way out and I took it.”

“I emerged from the door facing what once was my childhood abode. There was a nostalgic yearning that erupted from the quietest nooks of my heart. How I wished to still be there, hidden from the darkness surrounding me. And there was a great darkness surrounding that which I once knew. I looked about me and then to the area encompassing the house. As if preserved in a bubble, the ground gave out after several feet from the epicenter of the house’s perimeter. Below it... Below it laid nothingness. A sea of black, as I might imagine a dormant black hole, if there ever was such a thing. It doesn’t suction anything into it; it only sits, viewing the light above. The eerie feeling that I garnered from this forced me to make my way to my long lost home before me. I reached the front steps only to hear blood curdling screaming emanating from the top floor of the two story building. When

I was a child, we had a family dog who barked at a leaf if it seemed remotely out of place. To hear that cry of terror coming from the house accompanied by no animalistic barking or sounding off ripped into me, and gave me more than enough innate reasoning to know that something was wrong. The front door was always locked when night fell and so I thrust my whole body at the door, believing that fact to still hold true. It didn't. The door gave way instantly as it wasn't even closed to begin with. The fear that gripped me previously at the absence of our dog's alarm grew ten-fold and I ran upstairs with everything that I had in me. I slipped in something at the top of the stairs and fell hard against the wooden floor, drenching myself in the blood flow stemming from my parents' room. I stood up, gained my bearings once more, and made the trek into their room where their lamp flickered with, what I believed to be, the beat of their hearts before they perished. Walking in, I saw their faces staring back, eyes glistening, lifelessly strewn about the floor. The bed was in disarray and in it lay the axe that was driven through their chests. Our dog was in their bathroom and it, too, bore a wound indicative of the sharp wedge shaped blade basking on the bed sheets."

"I was torn apart and mercilessly driven into undying trepidation and fear. My heart was taken off of its emotional life support, burying me in the debt of depression. And then, as though my sense of smell was the General leading the army that was my remaining sensory input, I began to smell the by-products of a fire. Beyond that was the somewhat familiar burning and watering of the eyes that smoke from a bonfire commonly causes. All I knew was that I was superiorly screwed. A fire had manifested on the floor below and was beginning to snake its way up the stairwell to find me. There was only one cause and there was only one escape. The fiend that had murdered my parents initiated the flame to wipe away his trail. In effect, the window of the upstairs master bedroom was my only way out. I braced myself and threw my body at the window as hard as I could, shattering the glass into several pieces, and giving cause for blood to seep from lacerations within my skin. I rolled a myriad of times on the roof and, consequently, off of the roof, thankfully hitting the grass of the front yard. The whole house was now ablaze and the only thing that I could do was run from the devastation. I bid my deceased family and the place I once knew as my hub of safety farewell and I ran for the door that I had passed through to first arrive here. I had made my peace, so much as I could."

"I stood for a moment, contemplating what had just happened. My parents... They were murdered in cold blood, with an axe nonetheless, by a man who had a thirst for materialistic possessions. And not just any materialistic possessions, mind

you... Gilded silver did not appease his mind so beleaguered by a hunger for... For... For things. He wished for specific things of a base level value. Anything not passing his inspection was deemed crap. And if anyone got in the way, as I bore witness to, they were robbed of more than they were capable of giving whilst remaining conscious; remaining with a beating heart and active mind.”

“Once I gained my bearings on what had just happened, I scanned my surroundings. Having just passed through the solitarily standing door that provided for my previous entrance and exit, I knew not what to expect as I lead myself away from death and deterioration. What lay before me as of yet just materialized took me by surprise, giving rise for a range of emotions to initiate and take over. Before me sat the very man who laid waste to the lives of those I held most dear. He was the man who killed them, who desecrated them, who **murdered** them. I looked upon him and at first anger spilled over me as cold river water might, driving my mind to utter madness. Having waded in that for a bit, sadness then took hold of me. I now knew exactly who it was who saw my family in their last excruciating moments. No longer did I have to wonder and mentally depict the portrait of the madman. Consequently, a lust for revenge bubbled up in my heart and mind. And that was what took me by surprise. This vile poison guided my fists and feet to the visage sitting before me. It didn’t matter that the room we were in was decidedly whiter than any I had seen before. It didn’t matter that he had worn clothing specifically suited to a prison or psychiatric facility. It didn’t matter that he was barefoot and restrained as per doctor’s order, written on a document attached to the bed, so as not to cause pain to himself or any others. It didn’t matter that he didn’t fight back. I couldn’t hold back the tears and the pain that influenced my misguided and horrid judgment. I wailed on him until he bled. I kicked him until he bruised. I beat him into oblivion and then some. Something within me bid me to continue perpetually until breath no longer passed his lips. And I almost reached that point... It was moments prior to the point of no return when the voice of reason gathered every bit of strength within my mind to scream out the order to cease and desist.”

“I stepped back in shock as to what I had done. I looked at the man. He was now bleeding profusely, choking on his own blood, trying to catch a whisper of breath, however difficult that might have been. Immediately after assimilating this within my mind’s eye, I stopped all action and enacted a plan to try to mend that dermal obliteration that I had caused. From turning his head gently to prevent him from choking on the blood that seeped into his throat from internal afflictions, to attempting to clean up what blood formed on his body at the sites that I focused on in my attack, I did my best to mend what I had ripped apart. Mentally and

emotionally, it was to no avail. This wasn't for him. This wasn't to make him feel any better. It was to make me feel better. It was to make me feel less like a monster, less like a cold-hearted killer, less like **him**. What was this fire that burned within me so, that caused me to lash out like an animal consistently abused and then freed for the first time in his or her life? What was it that caused me to rip away at him until he was no longer capable of executing the common activities that combine as one to form those of daily living for all? I knew not and it frightened me. It terrorized me, mentally. It gave cause for my sanity to be called into question and for me to despise myself as a member of the human race.”

“I looked for an out. I looked around the room for a means of escape. I could no longer look at the sad excuse for the fiend that murdered my family. It drilled into me how I could be no different than him, how I could not hold myself any higher on the totem pole of civilized society than this man. For I had brought physical pain nearing the magnitude that he had instilled within my mother, my father, and my pet. How I loathed my very being! I begged for a place to run to, to hide in. I finally found it. Turning to my right, I came across a wooden door, the same that had transported me to my home and to this isolated room. I now wondered where it might take me **next**. But with Fear and Loathing keeping me company, I cared not, I just wanted to leave my downed state behind.”

“As I stepped through the door, I found myself now out on a street surrounded by a menagerie of people all with signs and messages to be heard. They all looked upon me and cheered loudly with a sound that infused me with happiness and a sense of accomplishment. I nearly forgot what I had left behind moments before, until I found the reasoning behind their cheering. Somehow, I know not how, they knew what I had done in the room of solitary confinement. Though they bellowed and hollered with excitement and praise, there was a vile underlying tone to their preaching. They sang and shouted how the word of God was spoken in the form of justice upon a spawn of Satan. They yelled to the heavens above how I had brought them to a new level of ecstasy by quelling the embers of the demon who found fit to spit upon a kind family with a kind heart. How this ignorantly breathed life into me once more! I felt a transcendence of spirit, I felt support for my action. And yet! As they all marched, carrying me on their shoulders with their heads held high and their spirits soaring higher than any being could ever imagine, I slowly started to see my reflection in store windows, puddles, car windows, glasses, and any other reflective surfaces that we passed. Sweat began to pour out of me from my head down to my toes as a different kind of reflection took hold. In its place, Guilt found a home. Horror and Disgust also burrowed deep within me. These sycophants!

These psychopaths! They were building me up, placing me on the highest pedestal that of which I was beginning to fall from. How blind could I be? To force such hate and irreparable action upon a man, as I had done in that white room, was to be no better than the murderer himself! Panic now struck me and Fear began to settle in once more. My heart raced uncontrollably. How could I run now? For if I were to run, they may feel that I have some sort of misguided sympathetic feeling for the man and turn on me in such a malicious manner! It mattered not. I knew in my heart and soul what was right and wrong and providing such joy in reciprocation for the action I executed upon the man was, to me, inherently wrong. If I could not escape, such behavior might alter its methods and be the end of me.”

“I took a final deep breath after deciding to run and began my descent from the supporters’ shoulders. I pushed and I shoved through the crowd as they turned on me quicker than I had originally imagined them to. Like an incurable virus taking hold in the body, a wave of negativity washed over them, persuading them all to believe that I disagreed with their mantra. And now that I did that, they saw me as the bane of their existence. I could hear the cries from the crowd now calling me a ‘Sympathetic to Satan and those belonging to the grasp of this dominion’. I feared them. I feared what their intent was for me to become. I turned street corner after street corner, running for my life, as rocks and shards of glass were being maliciously sent my way, bruising and puncturing me with each pass. All I wanted was to find that door which I knew would lead me away from this distasteful reckoning. Many doors passed me by, though none resembled the one I needed. Some were metal, some had glass, some bore signs, and some were as plain as the threshold they rested above. I needed to find the path to peace once more as I was growing ever so tired ever so quickly. I only had it in me, physically, to turn one more corner, knowing that the angered group behind me was inching closer and closer. I reached the last corner and turned to my right to find the very thing that I so desperately searched for. There it was! It was in the middle of the street, standing on its own, awaiting my arrival. I immediately grabbed for the doorknob, ripped the door open, leapt inside, and slammed the door shut behind me. It didn’t phase me that the door had no wall to support it and that as I passed through it, I passed into a new location of momentary habitation, as I had just as easily done before.”

“I was now in a room, no, an apartment, overlooking the streets below where I had recently been fleeing for my life. The bleeding from my arms and legs had stopped, though the marks signifying their origins remained. I heard voices behind me, all decidedly female and all tinged with an air of seductiveness. Something about their voices, alone, slowly started to tear away at my heightened state of

insecurity and awareness. Though I stood watching the supporters below, lost in terror and contemplation, I was quickly surrounded by several women, clad in nothing but sheer clothing covering those areas of the body which many define to be private. They, as a group, seemed more than comfortable with themselves, enough to remove that which stood as the only barrier between their flesh and mine. Now, the only obstacle in the way of their ultimate goal was **my** clothing. They grabbed at it, tore at it, clawed at it, trying to bring me to their clothless level. Slowly they stroked my hair and my arms, caressed my neck and kissed my lips. They brushed upon and enticed one another. They relentlessly attempted to guide me to a place of sultry, unadulterated pleasure. My body acted upon their advances, as the human form is wont to do, though my mind knew that something was wrong. Once more, my brow perspired, soaking me with waste and water as I fought against that which was the natural course of action for one's body, given life's necessity for procreation.”

“I fought against the courtesans and pushed them away, realizing full well that I was not in a place of safety, mental or physical. One of the women behind me managed to find and grab a syringe that was apparently lying about the room and violently injected me with some hitherto unknown substance of poisonous heritage. I could feel the fluid flowing within me from the hypodermic and it took hold in a myriad of ways. I knew flight from this place was my only option. Somehow, the door that I had so quickly entered earlier now had bound me once more within a new stage of hell. Helplessness and self-contempt abounded as I searched recklessly for a new means of freedom. The door I had recently burst through to find this penthouse suite was no longer existent. Where had it gone?! I had no time to relax and think, for the women no longer took an indirect route to guide me to their promised land. In fact, as the woman with the needle proved, they would use any means to reach their goal, or, otherwise bring me to Death's door. I needed to act quickly and I did, however insane the action I took seemed to be. I ran with my clothing still somehow intact upon me full bore against the windows overlooking the streets. A window was once my escape and I had hoped it might be again. I ran and jumped through, giving cause for me to begin to bleed out again from the lacerations upon my arms, legs, and face being reopened. I fell several stories, gaining speed as I dropped, flying towards asphalt. Maybe, for me, Death's grasp would conversely be the scent of success. Maybe it was a welcome thing for me to die upon impact and say goodbye to this purgatory that I was now writhing within.”

“Seconds before I hit the ground, a door appeared on the asphalt directly below me. With the force that I had garnered up to that point, I hit the door,

breaking through it, passing quickly to another environment altogether. I was on a beach. Actually, I was lying on a beach, waves lapping up against me, and I was still bleeding out somewhat profusely. I thought I was to die from the blood loss, but, though it came out, I never grew dizzy or lost consciousness. I only felt the pain from the open wounds mixing with the salty water. Well, that and a new feeling: an intense craving for nourishment. I needed food, it seemed, and my body was in so much pain, in such a new way, as to tell me that I hadn't eaten in days. I found it so strange, but, I hadn't time to think, nor the strength or will to do it. I only looked about me, looking for some salvation in the form of edible organic material. Being on a sandy beach with nothing about you can be, in so many ways, an alternative kind of desert. Slowly I began to slip into madness, searching for something to fill the void that was my stomach. As if to toy with my mental state, I turned around to a place I had turned to several times before in my search and there it sat. It was a table, just by the waves' reach, that held innumerable amounts of fruits, vegetables, sandwiches, sweets, meats, and more. Something inside took hold of me and I began to eat. I began to fill my mouth with everything in reach. I ate and ate until I reached the point of being full and I then ate past it. I consumed so much so fast that breathing became difficult. My body ached from supposed malnourishment so much so that my mind bid me to eat enough to prevent any future lack of essential nutrients."

"Foreshadowing what was to come, dark clouds formed above me and the atmosphere grew, almost instantly, more humid than I felt it could ever be. Rain began to pour and wind materialized around me, yet I could not halt the call of the food before me. Slowly, a shadow began to take shape, being cast from a place behind me, enough that I had to turn around to find its source. It was a massive wave towering high above the land that was to crush me in its wake. And fascinatingly enough, I still couldn't stop myself from forcing food down my gullet. It bore a quality so reminiscent of newly found fortune in any form you may imagine and I couldn't let it go."

"The rogue wave made its descent upon me, finally serving to destroy the table of collected food items and thrusting me into its watery embrace. Feeling the ice cold salt water encompass me caused me to snap out of my state of inescapable hunger quelling satisfaction. I now was, once again, fighting for my life and my state of being. I made an attempt to reach the surface, but the water actively forced me down, trying to end my time for good. I looked and I looked, oxygen quickly depleting within me to fuel those muscles and tissues in constant movement, until I could no longer hold my breath. Desperately, my body begged for air and then I saw

it. It was that same door that provided my means for survival thus far! I swam as fast I could down to the sea floor, where it lay, and I grabbed for the doorknob once more. I opened it with every bit of strength I had and forced myself through.”

“I awoke, realizing that after swimming through the door in the sea floor, I must have passed out. Finding myself sprawled about a couch and having no energy left within me to fight anymore, I took what little time I unknowingly had to note my surroundings. I was in a fairly dark room with windows lining all four walls. I was also on a second or third story as I saw the tops of trees in each of the windows. There was a small dead radio on a table not too far away from me along with some books on a shelf against the wall opposite of me. (I know the radio was dead as I attempted to find something to soothe my mind and found myself to be disappointed.) An armoire, a couple of end tables, and a myriad of pictures and paintings were visible scattered amongst the room. In any case, I was so tired. I was so beaten. I was so bloodied. I had nothing more to give and I didn’t care where I was or what happened next, until it did.”

“The dead radio turned on by itself and its tuner worked on its own as if tasked by an unseen force, which took me off guard. Slowly, the static from the speakers became clear speech and recognized thought. My breathing became labored as anxiety set in. How the hell did it turn on?! I scanned the room, hoping for it to still be empty. It was. I relaxed once more as much as I could, laying my head down on the couch, listening to the radio broadcast. The broadcast was about natural disasters and what to do in the event that one should occur. The voice coming through the radio was, in some manner, rather melodic and it relaxed me so to hear it. After a few minutes, the broadcast abruptly changed from a general discussion of several types of natural disasters to a conversation about the after effects of earthquakes. For me, it mattered not what the conversation or discussion was about, so long as I could stay stagnant and allow myself to mold into the couch. I felt such wondrous comfort that I had no reason to move, no reason to flee like I had in the other scenarios and locations previously presented with. Nothing lasts forever, though. Within a second, I heard and then felt a rumbling coming from the Earth below me. The whole house that I was within shook with tremors so powerful that the windows broke, the roof split, the wall to my left fell towards a tree outside, and the floor beneath me bore a fatal crack. With every shift and shake of the quake, the crack grew width-wise in size. I could hear people through the now open windows crying out in terror, animals sounding off their calls of alarm, and pipes breaking open within the walls of the room that I was in. I could smell the horridly strong stench of fires that had broken out about the surrounding homes

and buildings as well. Being surrounded by the sounds of Death overtaking those who could not save themselves, overwhelming fear and horror took over within me as it had done before. The difference was, this time, I couldn't hold myself together. I was terrified by each movement of the Earth below me and I broke into tears as I contemplated what was to become of me. The crack along the floor soon extended from one corner of the room diagonally to the opposite corner on the other side. I had hoped that the danger might have subsided after a few moments. I was sadly mistaken. The shaking not only continued, but it increased in its intensity and violence. It was so violent, in fact, that the floor finally gave out beneath me and the couch spilled me out into the darkness below."

"I tumbled and fell through carpet and wood as furniture and items from the room I was in flew past me into the abyss below. I fell for what seemed like an eternity, though it may have only been a few minutes in reality. Eventually, light began to emerge from behind me as the building above collapsed, forming a greater hole than had been there in the first place. What I saw below me was a familiar sight. Lit up by the minute amount of light slicing through the darkness was a section of a wooden door. I didn't have long to watch it as I, almost instantaneously, slammed into it, splintered it, and fell onto a flat, rough surface."

"I rolled over on the asphalt that I was now lying upon and fell asleep. As I awoke from a dream-less kind of sleep, I looked straight ahead of me at the sky above. It was a clear blue sky with not a cloud floating by. Having gone through such terror, such horror, such exhaustion, and such anxiety, I began to hallucinate. I wasn't hearing voices, but, rather, I was seeing people. They weren't just anybody, either. They were the faint images of world leaders and those that changed the world, for the better. I could see images of Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Gautama Buddha, William Shakespeare, and others passing by as the clouds that were absent would have been. I looked upon them and though no clear, legible thought pervaded my mind, I knew instinctively that I yearned to be these people. I yearned to be in their footsteps altering the face of the world in the present and for millennia to come. I earnestly desired to be something greater than I ever thought I could become. This feeling welled within me until it overcame my body and mind. I began to break down into tears, watching the sky above turn into a muddled, watery, blue hued atmosphere."

"I couldn't take it. I felt useless and hopeless just laying upon the ground. It was the end for me; I knew it. And I cared not what would befall me next, however dreadful it might be. Ironically, my time in such a nightmare of circumstances had reached its end."

“As I laid on the ground, I took a moment to wipe away the tears that kept forming so I could see somewhat clearly once more. When I had finished and opened my eyes, there, standing above and looking down at me, was the Dreamweaver. He looked at me and smiled. He said, ‘Are you ready to leave this all behind?’ I didn’t have to answer. He knew I was ready and he told me to look closely within his eyes, or, what was left in their place. As I did, I felt a feeling of warmth that felt so foreign to me, and yet so welcome. I blinked and upon my eyelids opening back up, saw that I was within a ship, below the surface of the ocean.”

“The Dreamweaver sat before me. His face formed into a look that defines understanding. ‘Now you know the evils that mankind can create, the evils that they have the ability to execute upon one another. It is in your hands, now, to utilize that which you have seen and that which you know about the world’s innate fear, to create nightmares that will deter those who wish to do wrong so as to bring them to the light. I, as well as all who exist in some form or another, can only ask you to do your best. No conscious being in existence fully believes that you will succeed each and every time. For, that is a thought born from ignorance as all know that one must fail to succeed. Always remember that! It will take time and effort, but, you have the knowledge and the background now to take on that which may seem impossible at the moment. Do not stray from the courage that burns so brightly within you. You will not be alone in this venture. You will have others at your side; others who fully understand the notions passing within your mind at any given moment. Those thoughts that arise, those that cause trepidation and anxiety, are natural and will become easier to deal with as time passes. Take heed. You have everything you need. Fear not any insecurities you may have. Success will always be an inevitable goal for you.’ His expression then changed to one of concern. ‘Before I leave you to return to my wandering mind, I wish to let you know who you will be working with. I will not tell you about each of the members involved, just one in particular.’ I nervously awaited for the next moment that I would hear his voice and, in my own way, I had good reason to feel as I did.”

“The Dreamweaver looked away for a moment, took a deep breath, looked back at me, and began his final explanation. ‘Do you remember the moment that changed your life?’ My heart shot into my throat almost instantaneously. I told him that I did. He asked, ‘Do you remember who it was that was left there, left in that home, left in your wake, left as you were left?’ I began to sob as a young child as I knew that he meant, well, **you**, Deo. I knew who he meant and the guilt that I had felt so long ago, the guilt that I had fought to keep bottled. It rushed back

quicker than I could handle. I felt sick. I almost collapsed. The Dreamweaver put his deteriorating arm around my shoulder and whispered in my ear a few last words before he left for good. ‘Do not despair, my friend. In time, all will realize that the events of the past, the events of the present, and the events leading on into the future are meant to exist. They are meant to unfold. They are meant to happen. The members of the group that you will be a part of are meant to be with one another, however bitter it may seem at first, if at all. Time will tip its hand to you. Just accept the cards that you find to be in your hand. For, as the seconds pass, you will find happiness. Trust me, if no one else. You will find happiness in the time to come. And with that, I will take my leave. Take care, my friend.’ With that, he dissipated into dust amongst the air and I was left on the ship, on this ship.”

“Deo, I won’t tell you all about how I met with Luna and Solanus and how our relationship came to be. I won’t tell you because we have lost so much time already with my tale just previously told and it matters not in the scheme of what we must accomplish in time so quickly to come. What I will tell you now is this. For the past, for **our** past, I can only say that I am deeply saddened by my actions and for that, I wholeheartedly apologize. As I said before, I reciprocated that which happened to me. I reciprocated that evil that passed over me. I cannot take that back and I know that I have unfortunately changed your life forever. There is not much more that I can say. There is not another way that I can express my remorse. I am sorry.”

Phodus looked into my eyes. Water ran down his cheeks. There was so much energy bound up in the form before me. So much stress. So much fear. So much self-hatred. So much negativity. And I knew, for once in my life, how I could make another being feel better. I knew how to lift off the veil of pitch black darkness laying over him. And I did it. I simply said, “Phodus, I forgive you. You and I... We, with the help of Solanus and Luna, will be making memories and changing the world unto the realm of eternity. Let’s not begin with the residual guilt and the residual anger presiding within the hidden chests of the past. That is over and done with. We’ve grown beyond that, have we not? Let’s, instead, take hold of what we have and make the best of it. Let’s change the fucking world. For the better...” He looked at me, wide-eyed, and without even having to say it, I knew he thanked me from the bottom of his heart and the whole of his soul for what I said. There was a weight lifted off of his shoulders, a massive, debilitating weight, and now, now he was finally free, ready to take on that which was to be coming in the near future.

The conclusion of Phodus’ tale, apology, and my final forgiving interjection came to an end when the ship rocked with a pitch unlike its normal wave-induced

movement. I could see in Phodus' eyes that this was abnormal, and this feeling that I had, this notion of irregularity in shifting tides, so to speak, was cause for concern. We waited in silence, silence not verbally agreed upon between us, but silence agreed upon nonetheless. My heart could not catch up with its regular beat. It kept skipping beats here and there, making it difficult to catch my breath. In any case, I did not change the expression upon my countenance so as to try to help keep both of us calm. This momentary lapse of sound reached its closing when a terrifying rush of wind and ocean spray ripped across the side of the ship, producing a cacophony that disturbed every part of your body and mind. Horror became plastered upon our faces almost instantaneously. Immediately, Luna came down and yelled, "Get up to the top deck, now! Hurry!" In no time, Luna, Phodus, and I all began to move as fast as we could to the top of the ship to find the source of the ship's unusual pitch and sway. As we neared the top of the stairwell that lead up to the top deck of the ship, we ran into Solanus who, when told what our destination was, joined us quickly and without hesitation.

When we reached our destination where we could stand along the railing to look out over the small sun-beaten waves moving about the surface of the ocean, I could tell that the atmosphere that once was, was no longer. The sun itself didn't even hold the beautiful glow that it once had. I would learn in moments to come that the sun knew more than I at that point, and it had good reason to be in preparatory mourning.

Solanus emerged from behind me, from the bowels of the ship into the light, followed by Luna and Phodus, all sharing a most taxing look upon their face. All three of them walked quickly over to where I stood at the railing and proceeded to silently look out towards the horizon, as if they had lost something. They looked and looked, but it seemed to no avail. I was more than curious as to what they were searching for, and more than concerned due to their shared expressions, but I said not a word. I only looked towards the direction of their attention and searched myself.

It was strange how it began. First, the temperature outside seemed to shift exceptionally quickly, growing colder second by second. Then, as you looked upon the surface of the water, the waves that were present grew larger and moved with greater turbulence than they ever had during my time on the ship. The air moved with a fierceness, too, that had not existed before. I could tell that, though I questioned whether this might be my doing, unconsciously speaking, this was an effect that I could not produce in my current state of knowledge based upon the manipulation of dreamers and dreams in and of themselves.

“And here they come,” came Solanus without any trepidation within his voice.

And he was right. With an ill-infused purpose buried deep within their hearts, if they had them, I witnessed what looked like shadows charging the ship, starting from the horizon point North of our position. They moved with speed unmatched by any vessel that I could have imagined traveling upon the sea. One couldn't watch them without feeling some level of apprehension, even if you weren't afraid of whatever the outcome may be when they reached you. As they moved, they bumped into each other, forming new shadows, and split apart, as atoms might, to create separate shadows. There was no predefined shape that they tried to keep, no consistency within form or structure; it was only the absence of light that remained constant.

“Is there still time, do you think?” asked Phodus of Solanus. “Of course, child,” Solanus said as he looked to me, “ready yourself. It's time to tackle that which you were meant for in this form. I want to inform you of things that you will notice, and things that you will not be expecting. For one, though you now are able to see the spirits that roam this ship with us, thanks to Luna's work with you, to hear the call of the dreamers still present within the realm of the living is something completely different. The voices of the dreamers will emerge within your consciousness and it is based upon your intuition, based upon that which you feel deep within the confines of your being, that you will deem which dream and, therefore, which dreamer must take precedence over the others. This is not a simple task, and it will take some work, but, I feel that you are now more than ready to take it on. It is only you that can stop the process. It is only you that can halt the happenings that will unfold before you. All you need to know is that you are doing the best that you can and you are giving yourself wholly and completely to those whom you must aid in this dire time and in times to come. And, as it currently stands, it **is** a dire time. These shadows that you see before you do not show up in such stature all on their own. No, it takes a time period devoid of influenced dreams to allow this chaos to evolve as such. It is your duty, inherently, to quell that evil which runs free. I cannot tell you much more, as I know not much more about the process. I have only acted as a distraction to the dreamers, belaying the purpose and the drive of the shadows wishing to take advantage of those unsuspecting to their dark intent. As far as creation, I know nothing, and it is for you, Deo, and you, Phodus, to discover on your own. I only know that it is likened to that creation that you experienced, Deo, with Luna when you discovered how to transform your surroundings as you wished. Time is of the essence now, more than ever. The shadows are near, and their hot breath is now draping over our necks. Deo, open

your mind as you did when you were with Luna and, this time, leave it open. From this moment on, you must always be ready for the unexpected, for the universe which lays untapped to play out before you and with you at the helm, for the world to change around you quickly and without hesitation. You are now the one who must lead all and I am proud to have been one of the beings there to help get you to this point.”

With that, he stepped back and said, “Phodus, you wanted to say something?” Phodus stepped forward and took a moment before he spoke. “There is one more thing that the previous Dreamweaver said that I feel is something that you must know now. He told me this, and I am paraphrasing, so you know. He said that it is you, Deo, who will define when I am needed. It is you, Deo, who will define when Luna is needed. It is you, Deo, who will define when Solanus is needed. For, it is you that can define dreams or nightmares, speak to those no longer members of the living, or act as a perceptionist, if it is your wish, but you will suffer indefinitely until there is nothing left of you to fade away. That is why, when you saw the Dreamweaver, that he was so frail, that he was so malnourished looking, that he was so decrepit, that he was deteriorating without an end in sight. He told me to tell you that that path is a path full of pain and suffering. He chose that path to savor the talents imbued within myself, within Solanus, and within Luna. He savored them for you. For now, as he told me, we are the select few that may exist into eternity due to that which he undertook himself. ‘Even Solanus’, the Dreamweaver told me, ‘can live on into eternity!’” “Hey!” Solanus exclaimed. “What? Ha!” laughed Phodus, “it wasn’t me, my friend. He’s the one that said it!” Phodus then continued, “In any case, it is now your time, Deo, and we are here to back you. Please, do as you will to take your first steps into the great unknown, and we will be there at your side.”

With that, I looked North to the direction of the source of the waves and to the direction of the impending fear inducing mob of shadows filled with malintent. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath whilst trying to exhale and relax the nerves that had inevitably fired off due to my receiving such a magnitude of responsibility.

I want to take a moment, my friends, to say a few words before I divert my tale away from my own origins into the origins of my work with dreamers and their dreams. I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to this tale. It is a tale that has lasted for countless years within the confines of my soul and it is a tale that I have thought many a night about telling. Whatever the reason may be, I felt that the time was now to divulge this information unto you, the dreamers, my listeners. I thank you for taking this journey with me back into my past. Whether or not you

have gained insight into your own lives, or your own origins, I will never know, but, because I was able to convey my history to you, I know I have gained invaluable insight within myself. To take a journey, such as this, back into one's past will most assuredly aid him or her in guiding the light of the future to be as bright and as pure as it can possibly be for him or her. The fact is, we cannot change our past, no matter what lengths we may try to go to to do so. Instead, we can utilize the events and the consequences of our past to change the future. That is why we study history. That is why we examine that which affects us so deeply. And, that is why we, as a people, are able to grow and mature as the centuries pass us by. And that is why, I, your narrator and storyteller, thank you, once again, for sitting with me throughout this time we have spent together. It has been an honor and a pleasure to meet with you and speak with you. Now, the time for deviation is through. Let's get back to the events that held our attention before my ramblings took place.

In closing my eyes, I did my absolute best to block out all that didn't matter at the moment. I blocked out any mention by my mind's voice about my parents, about the ship, about the shadows moving in on us, about anything. All I focused on was opening the door to my consciousness to allow those voices that needed to be heard to move in and make themselves known. And it worked. I was astounded when it first began. I could hear a couple voices at first, that were not my own and were not native to my ear, which evolved into tens, then into hundreds, and finally thousands. I could hear nothing else, not the wind rushing by our heads, or the ocean crashing against the ship. All I heard were the voices. Some grew loud, and some grew dim, all within passing seconds. It was so strange! By the level and the tone of the voice, I could tell, utilizing that feeling buried deep in my gut, which voice needed to be heard immediately and which voice could wait. I could almost prioritize, if you will, the urgency of the dreamers waiting in a kind of dreamscape limbo for my answer and for my influence. Soon, there was one, above all, who struck me in a way that the others didn't. My work's maiden voyage would be taken working with his dream, with his mind.

All of the thousands of voices that once existed soon fell away leaving only the sound of his vocal cords reverberating in my head. Oddly enough, though, none of the words that I heard were clear. His voice seemed to almost be speaking in gibberish, or as a tape recorder being rewound to the beginning of a predefined speech. Almost all at once, though, this stopped, and what I heard was more than clear and more than legible. As his voice became clearer, I opened my eyes, and looked about me. I was in a psychiatric hospital ward, in a small office where the head, or the chief, of the hospital might reside. There was a desk and behind

the desk stood several filing cabinets overflowing with papers and documents. Along the walls were hung appointment dates and times with small abbreviations for diagnoses for each patient who was seen at the given time. Also on the wall were plaques awarded to a very successful doctor with several high level licenses/certifications and many accomplishments in the medical field. Sitting behind the desk was a man, visibly aging quickly, with his head in his hands, covering his whole face. You could feel the tension and stress pouring out of him as he sat there internally running through things in his mind. There was an opened bottle of scotch, half empty, sitting on the ground with drops of the scotch running down the side of it. There was a cup near him on the desk sitting by a small plaque that said his name and denoted him as the Chief Administrator of the psychiatric facility. The cup was empty and scotch was spilled around it. As I noticed this, I also noticed movement beginning to take place on his part. He removed his hands from his face and looked about him. Seeing the empty glass, he grabbed the bottle of scotch near his feet and poured himself another cup full of it. After putting the bottle back down, he began to drink for a moment and then stopped, possibly reinstating the contemplative thought that held him in its grasp moments prior.

I moved back into a darker corner of the room, not quite sure whether he would be able to see me or not, when a nurse walked through the door that lead out of the room with a troubled look on her face. “Jesus Christ... I thought you might be here. My supervisor didn’t, but I did. What are you doing?! You can’t be drinking now! You have too many things that require your attention. There are too many patients that require care.” Putting the glass down, he shot a glance at her that was defined by anger and desperation. It was surely one that she wouldn’t forget as she left the room in failure having not roused him from his own self-destruction. With her retreat came the time for his internal monologue to become a soliloquy. The words following this were those that I heard emitting from his lips.

“I have walked through these halls with the utmost pride and positivity resting upon my shoulders. Such feeling guides my state of mind to a higher place with every step I take when I am able to look to the excellence which I have cultivated based upon those working for me. But, in such times as we are in now, this spirit is broken, as is the state of my institution. Though we excel in the kind of care we give to those unfortunate enough to be given refuge within these walls, my conscience forces me to focus and reflect upon, every day and every night, the ultimate failure of our, no, **my** tactics taken to mend the mentalities of those who cannot mend them themselves. This failure buries me, body and soul, six feet under, with my conscience as the undertaker. Broken are the nights of consistent sleep I once could

call my own. Why... Why do I even use the word consistent anymore? There is no consistency!”

“And, that is to say, it is not their fault! It is not the fault of the patients! My God, they, as well as their family members and friends, are seemingly thoroughly satisfied with the care that they are given. I do not blame them for the cell of contempt that I have been inhabiting as of late. I am the one condemning my own work! In my younger days, when I was first starting out in the medical field working with those that were afflicted mentally with a myriad number of given maladies, I was ambitiously planning out new schematics for treatments and processes that, I thought, could be utilized to cure the world. I was ignorant... We all were...”

“We knew not what obstacles and pitfalls would stand between us and success in helping those who we so desperately tried to aid. We wanted nothing more than to rehabilitate all of our patients, rid them of their horrid maladies, and release them to live the lives they deserved. With time, we began to understand the true nature of the beasts we were dealing with.”

“And that’s about how it felt! Joined in battle, the doctors and the scientists trying to find cures, or new treatments and procedures, would take on the diseases and afflictions in what felt like hand to hand combat. Day in and day out we would battle the afflictions, gaining ground as the patients began to be able to speak, or to walk properly, only to lose the foothold we had later on, as the patients fell back into their state of torture. How it ripped me apart inside! I could see the joy that they had, matched by the joy of their family and friends, torn down by the relapse of the disease taking over and ridding them of any hope.”

“What am I doing here? Why am I even trying? I know that even though I, as well as my staff, will put countless hours into trying new techniques and new medications, nothing will arise from it. No new breakthroughs will emerge. Maybe I should give it all up. Maybe I should tear down this house of horrors and end the struggle. Maybe... Maybe...”

With that, he began to fall asleep. Moments later, the nurse who I had seen speak with him came back into the room with another nurse in tow. “See, I told you. He was drinking heavily and now he’s passed out. Now what do we do?” The other woman, who I assumed to be her supervisor, looked at him and then back at the original nurse. “Doesn’t he know how much good he’s done? I know he considers himself to be a failure, but hell, he’s done more for these people than he will ever know. These people were given the best care they could have ever had, by his hand, when others rejected them because of insufficient funds, or demographic concerns, or the severity of their case. I wish he could see what we see. I know that that

would alter his thinking and put him back on the right track. Only a year ago, that motivation, that fire that burned so brightly within him, was alive and well. Now, I don't know. I haven't seen that sparkle in his eyes for what feels like ages... Let's let him sleep it off. Maybe he'll wake up in a few hours and feel like tackling some of the work that's piling up. God knows we need him to do it. Nobody else can do it like he can." She finished her speech, made a gesture to the nurse I had first seen walk in, and they both took their leave to return to work.

I took the moment of silence, only marred by the doctor's snoring, to look closer at the articles and objects scattered about the room. There were several documents scattered about the floor of the room, some with the words "failed" and "failure" written, in what I assumed to be the doctor's handwriting, at the top of each page. I decided to look closer at several of the documents and, consequently, gained a little bit of insight into one of the doctor's past patients.

Typed out near the scribbled word "failed" at the top of the page was the name "Takashi." Apparently, the name belonged to a man who had been admitted to the psychiatric facility due to his long time battle with, as it said, "Catatonia." There was a small inscription written, again, in the doctor's handwriting. It read, "Saw Mr. Takashi today. He was in a terrible state. Couldn't put together sensible sentences, had moments of extreme agitation matched only by several half hour periods of sitting perfectly still and staring at the Origami figure hanging from the ceiling within his room. I cannot figure what is the best course of action for him anymore. We've tried medication, we've tried therapy sessions with Dr. Linnet, and nothing seems to work. I've failed this man. Why can't I see the cause?! Why can't I fix this man for his child?! The poor child... I'm not even sure how long it's been since he has been able to talk coherently with his father. I just don't know what to do..." The writing then trailed off into illegible scribbled lines. In reading this, something in me started to form an idea of what would best work to bring this doctor out of his terrible state. Though I felt I knew this, I didn't know how to begin to create a dream. It seemed alien to me. So, I sat on the floor, by the passed out physician and began to think... And think... And think...

Then, I heard a voice. It was not just any voice; in fact, it was quite familiar to me. "Hello, Deo," it said. "Solanus?" I inquired. "Yes, child. I'm here for you, here to help, if I can. I guess you needed me, whether you knew it or not. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here." I couldn't figure out how he had come into the picture, as the last place I remember him was where I had left him with Luna and Phodus. "How did you get here, Solanus?" I asked. "Well, as far as I can figure," he began, "you must have dragged me in, or your brain, looking for a way to solve the task at hand,

found a way to transport me here to help you out. The brain is an interesting organ. As a person sleeps, it is constantly trying to solve problems faced during the day. Sometimes this problem solving manifests, for the dreamer, as a dream, or so some scientific research believes. I'm sure there is an equal amount of scientific study to prove the opposite of this hypothesis. In any case, I believe that since your brain is trying to solve **another** brain's outlying issues and problems, it pulled in that which is familiar to it and that which it believes may be able to shed some light on the best possible solution for the predicament. In other words, I am a **familiar entity** within your life, or existence, and I might have some piece of information that may be beneficial to producing the best dream of influence for this physician apparently lost in self-doubt and self-loathing. Make sense?" I could only reply with, "Sure," though his explanation caused a bit more confusion given all of the things I was being hit with at that current time.

Solanus looked around the room, gathering his footing and a general sense for the atmospheric and environmental clues present. "So," he began, "he's quite an accomplished man. He's running his own facility, has awards and plaques on the wall outnumbering any man I've ever known, and has more high praises than any in his field. Still, he is drinking himself into a stupor, lost within a tide pool of depression and, as I said before, self-loathing. Maybe that's not the correct word, though. I guess a better description than 'self-loathing' might be that he has no self-esteem any more in regards to his work history and success rate. Is there anything else I'm missing?" I tried to fill him in as best I could on what the nurses said. "Ah! So, he is even lauded as being a success by his staff! I wonder why he cannot bring himself above sea-level into the clean and clear air of happiness..." I then began to describe my line of thinking. "Well, I think that this man, this 'Takashi' has something to do with it. From what I gather, Takashi has been dealing with varying levels of Catatonia and our doctor here cannot bring him out of it as much as he wishes. He wants Takashi to be okay for his child and he can't figure out how to do that. When it comes to creating a dream, I cannot even begin to think how to supply him with the cure for Takashi and, therefore, cannot provide him the answer he seeks. Maybe there isn't a cure. I don't know. I've never dealt with mental illness at all, let alone the degree of illness that he has. My guess is that I have to produce a dream to show that he's helped Takashi and Takashi's child in some way, but, again, I must defer to the fact that I don't know how Takashi's been helped." Solanus looked at me with an equally puzzled expression. He opened his mouth, and with some hesitation, said, "Maybe it would help to ponder what a doctor considers when trying to aid any patient. I have always heard a certain phrase. What is it...? Ah!

The phrase I've always heard used by the medical community is 'quality of life'. Whether it's a terminal patient, or a patient with a debilitating disease, that is always the phrase that comes up in discussion. I guess the question is then bound within the idea of Takashi's 'quality of life'. How can you show the inebriated doctor that he's aided in either stabilizing or improving Takashi or Takashi's son's 'quality of life'? This is not a question that I can answer, by the way. You are the one who will have to ultimately answer the given issues and predicaments with a customized dream. I can only provide routes to find the finalized answer. Understand?" I nodded yes and thought about Solanus' words. They ran over and over within my head like an endless loop of water created by a river that ran clockwise over rocks and pebbles only ending at its beginning. Slowly, I began to formulate a dream. Slowly, I began to have ideas forming as crystals of ice on a freezing cold, yet rainy, day. I had one more question for Solanus. "I've got an idea now," I said to him, "but, do you know how to initialize the dream? Or how to get in his head? In his mind?" Solanus looked at me, again presenting me with a puzzled expression painted upon his face. "No, I don't know how you would do that. I was always presented with previously created dreams that were already planted within the dreamers' heads by the prior Dreamweaver. All I had to do was to stall the dreamer while the dreams were being created and finalized."

When he had finished stating his past experience with the previous Dreamweaver, a question appeared in my head that I hoped would get Solanus to inadvertently provide me with the solution I sought. "When the previous Dreamweaver would be creating the dreams, did he ever give you any words of advice before you stepped in to distract the dreamer?" Solanus thought for a moment and then his expression changed dramatically. "Yes, actually. He always told me that a 'tactile approach suits the beast best'. So, when it came to me creating illusions to keep the unsuspecting dreamer occupied, I always created illusions that acted upon the being's sense of touch."

After hearing this, I looked at the desk which was doing a fine job of holding the drunk man up off of the floor, and slowly began to walk towards both it and him. I stopped my cautious stride near to the occupied chair and slowly put my hand out to touch the doctor's back. Strangely enough, as my hand neared the back of his shirt, I could feel a kind of static electricity building and gathering at my fingertips. I pulled my hand back and it disappeared. "What was that?" Solanus asked. I gave him no answer. I was too focused. I stuck my hand back out towards the sleeping man and pushed farther, finally coming into contact with his right shoulder. There was a binding effect that occurred that is hard to explain. I could feel energy

flowing through me, from his shoulder, through my arm, to my brain. All of his emotions, those present at the last moment of consciousness, I could feel within my head. I could feel the tension that he felt. I could feel the stress that had built up. I could feel the depression that resided within him. I could feel the frustration that debilitated him. It was all there. As this all happened, a notion that I hadn't discovered before began to unfold. If I can absorb, shall we say, all of his emotion and perhaps that which is residing in his mind, can I then transmit my creation, or creations, in the form of a dream, or dreams, back to him in the same manner? How will I know if it works? How will I know if what I've produced is effective enough? I decided that I had no idea of the answers to my last two questions, but that the only question was whether I should try it or not... I felt it worth a shot and commenced the formulation of a dream that might wake his psyche to reevaluate his past and his work. The description that follows is what I came up with.

My first thought was to sketch out, if you will, a dream based around a scenario where Takashi was responding well to the treatment that the doctor provided. I figured that this would, on some level, provide a positive outlook in the doctor's mind about his approach to medical care. My main problem with this approach, as simple as it was, was that I hadn't a clue what Takashi looked like. Though I could gather intangible information from the doctor's mind in regards to those feelings last present within him, I could, in turn, not extract any pictorial information that might help me further. At the time, I did not know whether I would ever be able to do this, or not. At a later time, possibly not even in this book's telling of events, this question will be revealed. For now, I will only be providing that information that I was given or was able to learn at the time of the dream described.

Realizing that I had no picture, no visual identifier in regards to Takashi to utilize for this dream, I decided to delve into simpler forms of positive reinforcement. My thought process evolved quickly to attempt to adapt to a new possible solution found down a different avenue of thinking. The new question was as such. How could I show that Takashi was improving and that, as Solanus brought up, his 'quality of life' was improving, without depicting Takashi as a walking, talking human being?

Several ideas bounced around my head. One idea was to create a room where Takashi's improvement in motor skills and hand eye coordination would show improvement via tests that were run that had him sketching and drawing simple, highly recognizable shapes. In the room would exist the images that Takashi had sketched and the doctors who needed to see the given improvement would

somehow be shepherded in to see the fruits of his labor, if you will. My recollection is that I felt that this was too artistic and, essentially, too far from something that would draw the doctor in to reevaluate his methods. The scenario needed to be derivative of something that this doctor deals with daily, something that he is more familiar with. Another idea I had, initially, was to create a scenario where the doctor would receive several documents detailing the latest effects of the last line of treatments that Takashi underwent. These documents would be something he was familiar with, as I saw documents scattered all about his office, and would be something that his subconscious would be drawn to. My memory of this moment tells me that the reason I gave up this particular idea was due to the fact that, though it may work, it had no emotional thread, no sensory attachment, built into it. Please let me explain what I began to learn then and what I have learned now...

In the human condition, the way to make an idea or a way of thinking stick is to bring in **emotional** and **sensory** triggers. Here's an example: a child burns himself on a stove top burner. In slightly greater depth, what exactly is happening? The child touches a scolding hot burner which then causes his skin to burn. Within no time at all, the brain of the child gathers information from the nerves of the skin, which causes the brain to send a message back to the child's hand giving rise for him/her to immediately draw his/her hand away from the stove top's burner. What has now happened is this: the child has learned that touching the stove top's burner, when it is hot, causes pain, activating a sensory trigger (within the sense of touch), which helps the child to always remember to never touch a stove top's burner when it is hot. Hence, the child has gained a valuable lesson, and the child's line of thinking is, rightly so, solidified for life. This is what I was beginning to contemplate in regards to the inebriated doctor's case. How could I activate that sensory trigger in order to strike the man at his core? How could I stir him in such a way as to alter his foundation currently filled with negativity?

Something hit me as I was openly sifting through all of this information within my consciousness. (By the way, my whole thought process from the time that Solanus last spoke, until now, took only seconds. I wish to give you this information in hopes that it helps to bring a better understanding of the full range of thinking that one goes through when creating a dream as well as how long this thinking takes.) I not only needed to find a solution which activated his senses; I also needed to find a resolution that involved Takashi's child. That was one of the major outlying factors involved with my declining my previous ideas.

Now, my notions took a turn, as the factor of having the child involved seemed to alter most everything. Having the child involved gave cause for me

to simplify the dream solution down to a child's level of thinking. Due to this, difficulty turned into blissful simplicity when the idea that I would eventually utilize in the end emerged from the synapses firing off that I needed so at that time. It was an idea that would enact the heart strings, as we humans call them, whilst involving the child, and, in effect, showing that the doctor's methods were working to improve Takashi's mental state and 'quality of life'. Here's how I planned it: I didn't know how to get the doctor into a dream of my creation as of yet, but once I did, I would keep him within the room that I knew well enough, the room I was standing in at that moment, and have the nurse who spoke with him somewhat informally earlier walk in with a note. The note would be written in Takashi's child's handwriting and would be from Takashi's child to the doctor in regards to Takashi. Before even reading the note, what this does subconsciously, is two fold. It brings in Takashi's child so that the doctor's active mind, in regards to the child's well-being, is put at ease and it enacts the sense of sight to further solidify the doctor's acceptance of the idea in whole.

Though this was an idea for a dream that probably would have worked, I felt that it was lacking something. It lacked a connection that assured the good doctor that what he was hearing was true, that what he was hearing was not something that any being could have made up, that it was in fact Takashi's child. And so I was back to thinking about how to possibly convince this man of the illusion that I had to create.

As I stood thinking about the next idea, something very odd and quite jarring occurred. The world around me, that which I could see, seemed to ripple as water in a lake does when a pebble is dropped in it. I couldn't even begin to grasp the notion of why this was happening. That's when Solanus, thankfully, satiated my curiosity. "It seems that the shadows must be breaking your concentration back in your dreamscape of origin, back on the ship. Time is now no longer on your side. Choose a path, a way to supply this man with the correct influence, and execute your plan. We need to get out of here as fast as possible." And so I did.

My mind, infused with this new information, came up with a plan that had little to no possibility of failure. It was a dream that enacted not only the senses of sight and hearing, but the emotional pull of a child's love bound within one sentence. I will describe the dream to you after I describe how I was able to induce the doctor's mind to dream a dream of my creation.

Seeing that the doctor was still passed out, that he definitely would not be rising anytime soon, and that the world around me was still rippling, which made my work much more difficult, by the way, I began to consider what the method

would be to get into the mind of the doctor. I remembered that using a tactile approach gained me the knowledge of his current mental and emotional state. In other words, when I put my hand upon his shoulder, I could feel his tension and his depression. So, I tried touching his shoulder once more. That only acted to give me the same feeling as before, and yet, there was a difference. I could feel this kind of energy based pull towards his head, as though that was the major source of what energy he emitted. So, I moved my hand to his neck. Now, I could feel the feelings created by his emotions within myself undoubtedly stronger than before. I could even hear his past thoughts, which were all, unfortunately, depression filled and self deprecating. Even so, this led me to the hypothesis that maybe grasping his head, in some form, would give me the desired effects, or at least get me farther than I had been. In effect, as I went to lift his forehead, which had been planted directly on the desk in front of him for some time, I could see the doctor in my mind. He was in a kind of limbo state where he existed amongst a world of nothingness. Something internally told me that this was where the dream was to be created, and so I began my work.

I placed him back in his office, where we were now, and planned for the nurse that had originally walked in to walk in once more. When she walked in, she was to place a note on his desk attached to a piece of paper and throw the bottle of scotch that existed under his desk out. “You’re better than this!” she would say. “Don’t believe me? Read the note. You are a successful practitioner with limitations unknown. Don’t let the alcohol take over your mind, your body, or your soul. Nothing productive will ever emerge from this. These people need you. And in reality, you need them too.” Then, she would leave. On the piece of paper would be a misspelled handwritten note, by Takashi’s child, that said “Thnk yu for heelpingg my daddy!” next to a small sketch of the child and his father that the child had done for the doctor. As he would read the note, a phone call would be put through to him by the facility’s operator. On the phone would be Takashi’s child thanking the doctor for, as the child would be putting it, “getting my daddy better and giving him his voice back.” (The reason behind the giving of the father’s voice back exists within my thought of past observations made by the doctor when the child would visit. I assumed, knowing a little about Takashi’s symptoms based upon his records that I had read earlier, that there were probably moments when Takashi’s child would be trying to speak to his father and Takashi would be in a silent, watchful kind of Catatonic state, unable to speak to his own child.) After the phone call and after the doctor had time to absorb the information provided to him within the child’s note and phone call, as all things do, the dream would end, giving the doctor

no time for any stray thought non-related to the matter at hand. This was my plan and I stuck to it.

I produced the dream within my mind, where the doctor was in the limbo-like state, just as I described to you. I painted each detail of the room: the color of the desk, the shape of the desk, the placement of his bottle of liquor, each document plastered about the walls of the room, each document strewn about the filing cabinets and the floor, each plaque that was hung up on the wall, and more. As I said, I painted each and every detail of the room within my mind so that he was in a place that he was familiar with and the whole idea of the dream would not be too far-fetched for him to grasp. Once I finished the execution of the dream as previously mentioned, Solanus grabbed my arm saying, "It's time to go," as the world around us began to ripple violently. "How do we get out of here?" I asked. "The same way that you put Luna and yourself on that small sailboat sailing off into the sky. Your wish is your command." So, I worked at it. Though the world around was moving, shifting, and changing uncontrollably, I closed my eyes and imagined that Solanus and I were back on the Titanic, my dreamscape's origin. And so we were. When I opened my eyes, there we stood alongside Luna and Phodus, at the same place we had left, staring off into the distance at the shadows charging towards the ship atop the sea. "Did the dream I created work?" I asked. Solanus looked at me and said, "I don't know. We'll have to wait and see." We watched the shadows coming closer and closer, now only about fifty yards away from the vessel, with no change.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, the very change we sought presented itself.

The shadows themselves were broken up into a few major sections, one line of shadows, followed by another line, followed by another. One could not count how many shadows there were in each line as, noted previously, the shadows would bump into each other shape shifting, separating, and forming new structurally unique shadows every second. The first line, being the biggest of the 3 lines, first began to stumble and slow their charge. They grabbed at themselves, or so it looked like they did, as though something was eating at them from the inside out, and ripped themselves apart. They dug and dug, with what I imagined to be hands or some uniquely shaped appendages, at their abdomen sections, at their legs, and at their heads, until they completely dissipated into the ocean. It was as a sandstorm might look when it finally dissipates and the sand returns to the desert floor as the storm passes. So fascinating to watch! I was amazed, in truth.

"Well," Luna began, "guess that doctor must have taken well to the dream you created for him." Did he? I myself couldn't tell how one dream could have

eliminated so many shadows searching for spirit energy to absorb and take for themselves, so, I asked about it. I was surprised as Phodus was the one who spoke up to relieve my wondering mind. “Think about it,” he said, “you helped out a man, so I’ve heard, who is in control of the care of hundreds, maybe thousands given a long enough time period, of patients within his facility. Putting him back on the right track, or showing him the way back, would, to me, more than likely domino effect and provide his patients, his staff, and any others connected with him a more pleasant outlook on their life and their work, subsequently, improving their overall health.” Solanus took over where Phodus left off. “Yes, and then elimination of horrid feeling and experience within the waking life gives the shadows, that feed off of subconscious ill thought and feeling, no chance to take root and spread whilst attempting to absorb the energy that belongs to beings like us, like the spirits that roam this ship, like the dreamers that you will be working to aid into eternity.” After Phodus finished, Luna added her observatory point to the pot of information sailing around my head. “And it seems that your dream has worked. To take out a whole line of those shadows, as you did, you needed more than one dream and, in effect, more than one dreamer to drastically improve mental and emotional strife. Given the improvement, those shadows that are trying to feed off of those dreamers are robbed, or starved, if you will, and cease to exist. So, great work! But there is no time to waste! There are still two lines of shadows and they are definitely not halting their advances. Focus your mind once more and begin your work with the next dreamer.”

And so I did. I closed my eyes, in the midst of the chaos surrounding me, and listened to the voices that were still babbling on loudly and incoherently within my mind. Slowly, one voice began to increase in volume and clarity, as the doctor’s voice had done before. As before, when I focused on that one voice, the others died away. Soon, the voice stopped its speech and the sound, that I recognized once more as a tape recorder reversing its playback, commenced for a few moments. It was time for me to pay a visit to the next dreamer.

I was in someone’s bedroom. A young boy was laying in a bed with his family surrounding him. His father, his mother, his sister, and a doctor were all present with him. The three family members had eyes red from tears that had created a reflective river-like channel down their cheeks. There was a bookshelf behind the doctor filled with what I imagined to be all of the sick boy’s favorite books. Picture books, flip books, and a few chapter books were all present. In the doctor’s hands was a book on cancer and other terminal illnesses. There were several tabs in the book signifying sections that, I believe, related directly to that which affected the

boy in this case. Whatever the case may be, what existed before me was a child whose health was evidently failing. It is imperative that I add that I knew not how quickly his health was failing until the child, before my eyes, passed on. You can imagine the effect this had on the family, so, I will leave that be. There are times in all of our lives when a description for an event is best left unsaid when retelling the events surrounding it. This is one of those cases.

As the child passed on, I understood almost subconsciously that he and that the doctor were not the ones who needed an influenced dream. No. It was the father, the mother, and the sister who needed aid in continuing on with their lives and getting the necessary closure to do so. I knew who needed the dream and for what reason they needed the dream, as well as the intended effect that the dream needed to have. I was lacking, though, in how to achieve such effects especially when it came to the human feared, and human felt, horrid subject of death. I needed help with this and I had to think quickly, when it came to who might best help me between Solanus, Phodus, and Luna. If I took too long, I remembered, I would be giving the two other lines of shadows a chance to break my concentration, causing the atmosphere around me to ripple and throw me back onto the ship. I didn't know what would happen next after that and I didn't want to find out.

My initial thought, and the thought that I stuck to, was to somehow bring Luna into the dream with me. I closed my eyes, amidst the sobbing of the family members, and used every ounce of my concentration and focus to imagine and, therefore, bring Luna into the room with me. I opened my eyes and was still a bit overwhelmed with the sounds bursting from the family members. I felt a delicate hand on my left shoulder and turned to see Luna standing, at my left, with a smile most dear and warm. "Guess it's my turn, huh?" she laughed quietly and understandingly given the situation. "I'm glad you remembered that I'm a spirit-waker. Shall we meet this boy?" I told her not yet, though I asked if it was possible to speak with or meet with him at anytime. "Oh yes, of course," she retorted, "he will always be available. Really, I'm sure he'd love a little company. Crossing over as he did, or as anyone does, is a bit of a lonely kind of passage. You walk into a new place, hitherto unknown to you, and you have a kind of euphoric, pain free, stress free, freedom filled existence that begins to unfold before you. It's rather terrifying at first, all of that bliss that one feels at first. And yes, though there is this kind of positivity that one basks within as they break the barrier to the other side, nothing is perfect, as defined by the shadows that are trying to overtake those spirits on this ship within the dreamscape. Nothing is perfect."

Upon Luna's completion of her explanation, I told her what I had witnessed.

I then began to explain that I felt that the sibling of the boy, as well as the parents, were the ones who needed to dream to gain closure. She agreed with me completely. I then started to describe my first thought for a dream to her in which I answered the very questions that still haunt me to this day after my figurative parents' death and keep me reeling in lost thought. I explained to her how I would recreate, for each of the family members, a replica of the boy that each family member would encounter in their separate dreams. The boy would then speak with each family member, explaining that he is now out of pain, is happy, and is content. He would explain that there is nothing to fear within the grasp of Death. Instead, it is a freeing change, bringing about much needed relief in the face of suffering and hellacious day by day existence. He would then answer any questions they might have of him within the dream. (I was to achieve this by having the boy with me as I executed the dream and speak with him as they presented their inquiries to me.)

Luna stopped me in the midst of my explanation of my idea and my intention. She was chuckling to herself a little bit, and it threw me as to the reasoning behind that. When she spoke up moments later, I found the necessary understanding behind her reaction. "Why would you work so hard, my friend, creating a fully functioning figment of these family members' imagination when you can let the boy, the original if you will, the real boy, speak with them each, one on one?" Simplicity sometimes evades me at the wrong moments, and this was one of those moments. How could I have been so oblivious? I knew and know not, but in any case, it was her suggestion that I took. For, she agreed with the other portion of the idea, in letting the child provide his family closure's comfort. So, we took a moment and then commenced work on enacting the required steps to produce each of the family member's dream.

I asked Luna if she would be willing to speak with the boy to explain what was going on, why it was happening, and what we thought best to happen. She returned my request with, "Absolutely, my dear. Take heed of the timing that you have left as we do not want any interruptions in our work. Remember, those shadows were gaining fast." I did as she suggested, but there was one hang up with my plan: waiting for the child's family to fall asleep. I asked Luna about this and her reply was to try a tactile approach, as I did before with the doctor. She said that she had heard about something from the previous Dreamweaver that would happen when the previous Dreamweaver would touch the forehead of the potential dreamer during their waking hours. The same action, applied when trying to get the sleeping dreamer into the mind of the Dreamweaver, used upon a non-dreaming subject, would initiate the act of growing heavily weary and getting the non-dreamer to

begin their process of falling asleep.

I took this information with me as Luna left to find the boy's spirit. I found the first subject in the family library: the father. He was sitting by a window overlooking a garden outside within the home's backyard. He was actively mourning the loss of his boy. He kept telling himself the same thing over and over, "At least he's out of pain." He was assuredly having a terribly difficult time accepting what life had dealt him. I decided after waiting a few moments that this would be a good place for him to fall asleep should he do so. I had never enacted anyone's sleep process with this tactile approach before, so I knew not what might happen. When he finally took a small moment to breathe after his bout of sadness, I touched him on the forehead. Almost instantly, his eyelids visibly grew more than heavy and he couldn't fight it. He started to drift to sleep, looking out of the window, and finally was able to rest his back against the back of the chair, his head tilting toward the ceiling. A few more seconds passed and I could hear the gentle sound of slumber. I looked around for Luna and proceeded to walk around the home, entering a couple different rooms to see if Luna was there, until I found her and the boy speaking outside of the front door, looking at the dirt road leading away from the home. I walked in front of them and asked the boy if he was ready. He nodded, knowingly, and proceeded to follow me in to the library where his father was. (I would also like to mention here that I answered a question now that hit me earlier when I was dealing with the doctor of the psychiatric hospital. That is, I knew now that the people who I create dreams for, the living ones, cannot see me as I walk about their space. So, I can move very easily by them, and if needed, through them, without having to worry about startling them.) We sat down on the window sill by his dad and the boy began to cry. He felt absolutely terrible that the cause of his family's pain might be stemming from something that dealt with him. Either way, I told him not to worry and that what we were doing would help them in the long run.

I took hold of the father's forehead and I could not only feel the intense sadness that he felt, but I could now bring him into my mind. In fact, I did just that. I then looked to the boy and asked him to bear with me as I figured out how to get him into my mind as well to speak with his father. It was inherently easy, thankfully, as I felt his forehead and was then able to pull him in with me. After I did that, I imagined that the father and the boy were in the garden, as I felt it was somewhat of a serene place for them to be at such a difficult time, and I allowed the boy to speak with his father as he wished, for as long as he wished. Out of respect for him and his father, I will not tell of everything they spoke about and of what they said,

as I promised the boy that I wouldn't. It wouldn't be right. It's a difficult personal experience left to each individual and the relative of that individual. Not a soul but those of the two members of kin involved should know about the inter workings of their unique relationship. That's the way I handled it and how I will handle it from now unto eternity.

When they were done, the boy walked from his father and out of the garden, which was my cue to end the dream for them both. I removed my hands from both of their foreheads. The father remained asleep by the window overlooking the garden while the boy opened his eyes and caught his breath. He looked up into my eyes and thanked me from the bottom of his heart. He was so young, being only six, and with his words, I couldn't help but shed a tear.

Luna then told me that the mother should be next and told me that she was resting in the parents' bedroom. We walked up there and I asked the boy if he was ready. He was. I then placed my hand upon the mother's forehead, as I had done before, as well as the boy's. I felt that the garden really was the best place for all three family members to speak with their recently passed on family member and that was where I imagined the mother and the son to be. They spoke, they shed their tears and spoke their pieces, and then, the dream felt that it was over before it began. The boy executed the same action as he had done previously to show that he was done and I ended the dream. I looked to Luna and nudged her in the direction of the boy, as I wished her to comfort him since I could tell that he was starting to lose control of his emotions. Tears ran down his face almost constantly and he couldn't speak at that moment. I asked Luna if she thought that it might be best to create a replica of the boy, at this point, to speak with the sister of the boy, as I had thought about earlier. The boy looked up at me and though he couldn't see clearly or speak legibly because he was crying, he gave me enough of a hint to the fact that he wanted to do everything in his power to speak with his sister, at least one more time.

Luna and I didn't know where to find her, and upon asking the boy, he took us both to a small grove of fruit trees down the road from the family's house that he said he and his sister would go to in times of great stress or hardship. "Where is she, sweetheart?" Luna asked. We turned to the right to face the grove and he pointed all of the way to the back of the grove where a small wooded area sat. When we went to this wooded area, he then took us to a small cave hidden amongst the trees. There, nestled by a small fire that she started with a match from a book of matches sitting to her left, was his sister watching the fire as it warmed the cave. The boy looked at me and said he didn't want to talk to her in the garden. He asked if I could

imagine them both here, at the cave. I would never turn down such a request and I instantly told him I would do just that. I felt her forehead, causing her to tire and fall asleep almost instantaneously, and then felt his forehead as well. In my mind, I placed them both within the location that the boy asked for, and I left them to visit for as long as I could. I held out for quite a while, but, the world around me started to ripple as it did when I was with the doctor. I didn't want to tear the boy away from his sister and fought the rippling to concentrate on the task at hand. Moments later, though, the boy initiated his signal that he was done. He walked out of the cave and into the woods, so, I ended the dream for them both. Luna and I quickly explained to him what was going on, in regards to the world around us rippling, and welcomed him to join us on the Titanic as we returned to our dreamscape, if he wished. "Either way," I said, "Luna and I must go. It's up to you, whether you wish to come with us or not. What do you say?" He looked up at me, with eyes that expressed those of heartfelt thanks, and said, "No. I'm sorry. Thank you, though. I can't leave my family. I promised them that I'd always be around." I looked down at him and said, "I understand completely. Thank you for allowing Luna and me into your home and your presence. We hope that you continue to exist happily alongside your family and, just so you know, you are always welcome aboard the ship with us. Alright?" He nodded and with that, I imagined Luna and I aboard the Titanic once more.

As we arrived at the very scene that we had left, Phodus had a smile on his face. "You've done it! You got rid of them! Great work my friend!" I looked to where the shadows had been and they were, seemingly, completely eradicated. Even so, Solanus had a bit of a confused look upon his face which gave greater cause than my own to feel that Phodus' celebration was premature. Solanus looked to me and said, "Be prepared. I feel that we are not quite in the clear."

Upon Solanus finishing that statement, I looked back towards the direction that the shadows had once been. A few minutes passed by, as we all watched, and then the shadows made their final move. The section of ocean that we were sailing towards, at a given point, began to violently form into a whirlpool, and I felt it was a potentially deadly one, at that. Solanus stepped up closer to the ship's railing and said, "For the oceans' waters will churn, the Earth's lands will shift, the sky's very essence give way. It is under His guidance that the world's inhabitants shall learn to take heed of the tracks they tread. For, their footprints will last not on the surface of the Earth, but, rather, on the memory of His influence that they should look upon ever so attentively where it resides within the contents of their subconscious." "What is that from?" I asked. He said it was on a document that he

had found within the library, when Luna and he searched for the Dreamweaver's previous remarks about his time creating dreams. It was a quotation written not in the previous Dreamweaver's handwriting, but another, about the Dreamweaver's conflict with the shadows. Solanus didn't know who had written it, but he felt that it was probably another perceptionist, like himself. Either way, when I listened to it, I felt that the first part of the statement described the moment I was experiencing to the last detail.

As we sailed closer to the whirlpool, the clouds above grew dark and seemed to siphon into the circling water. They swirled with a violence, hitherto unseen by me, evoking terror within the mentality of all. Constantly they were being sucked down into the ocean second by second until a shadow creature, born of the most vile and terrifying thoughts and nightmares started to crawl out of the center of the swirling sea. As it crawled out, I could see only shadow, but the shadow had a definite form to it. At the front of it were two pincer like claws, like those you might find on scorpions, and its body had a form you might find on an octopus or a squid. Several arms, no, tentacle-like appendages, rather, shot out of its torso and they all moved in unison to help this, this leviathan move with speed unmatched by the shadows previously seen. It bellowed a deep, throat ripping cry that shook the ship, causing our course to shift to starboard with a startlingly violent turn. Luna, Phodus, Solanus, and I all fell to the floor of the top deck. I didn't know how the spirits inhabiting the ship were taking the movement, but fear overtook me enough to where I couldn't think about them for long. It was almost debilitating, the intense shock that the sight of this horrible monstrosity caused to swell within me, and its immense speed attempting to reach both us and the ship wasn't helping whatsoever.

Through this fear, though, I fought, and I fought to ask Solanus, "What else can I do? How can I rid the dreamscape of this horror? Is there something I can do here, in the dreamscape?" Solanus looked to me, shook his head, and said, "No. Only through the influence of another's dream, Deo. Only through the influence of another's dream..." Hearing this, and understanding what he was intimating, I asked him one last question before I was to commence my work once again. I asked, "How can one dream take down such a creature?" He sighed deeply and thought for a moment. "You must find someone," he said, "who needs your influence that has a great amount of influence themselves. You need someone like the doctor, who you helped at first, but this dreamer must have a greater pool of people to affect. What you need is...is...an artist. People, groups, crowds even, listen to others like that, and there are a few who will live and die by them. An artist is someone who can take a dream and the limitations of their imagination, mixed with the powers

of analysis natural to the brain's mental processes, to create something that can shake others of the human race at their very core. They can utilize that which moves them emotionally, mentally, and physically and infuse it within that which they do best whether that may be painting, sketching/drawing, writing, singing, producing music, sculptures, and more. That is who you must find and that is the only option for successfully tearing down the shadows that threatens us so at this time. One suggestion though: it might behoove you to have Phodus help you out on this one. Whether you knew it or not, he can produce nightmares within the dreaming subject's mind. Sometimes, with artists, it is the negative aspects within life that move them with greater effect than the positive. Nightmares can move mountains in comparison to the less mentally impressive and forceful dreams." After hearing this, I looked to Phodus and without saying a word, he nodded in silent agreement that it was a good idea for us to work together to aid this dreamer and that it was time for us to go.

Phodus and I stood side by side facing the leviathan that was swimming through the ocean as fast as it could towards the ship, ascending and descending rapidly, moving with the intent of taking that energy which kept all spirits active in the dreamscape. Luna and Solanus wished us both good luck, with fear present in their expressions, as Phodus and I closed our eyes waiting for the inevitable dreamer to appear within my mind's eye. Luna and Solanus then took their leave to return to the bowels of the ship to keep the inhabiting spirits as content as they could be, given the circumstances, as Phodus and I did our absolute best to quell the demon hunting us all.

My eyes were closed for some time, as my nerves began to feel the stress building within me, and though I could hear the voices of the dreamers streaming through my mind, I never felt that I could hear the right one. Phodus, trembling in his speech, asked, "What's going on? Why are we still on the ship?" I answered with the explanation that I hadn't yet found what we needed. "Act quickly," he said, "for I know that we've no longer any time to waste. And we've got a whole god-damned ship, let alone a whole fucking world, that's existence is based solely upon our success." I told him that I was doing absolutely everything I could. There was nothing more that I could do to find the dreamer any faster. He apologized, saying that he knew that and that he wasn't trying to force me into anything; he just wasn't privy to the kind of mind-numbing pressure and stress that was present with this line of work.

Right as he finished, I heard a voice within my mind that I knew was the dreamer we needed at that time. As per what happened before, the voice's speech

was spoken backwards, as a tape recorder, rewinding to its beginning. My intuition told me that this dreamer was the perfect one, that he was the one who could, given a successfully influenced dream, produce the kind of artistic expression that would transform the dreamscape, our dreamscape that we sailed within, for the better. It was my only shot and I was absolutely adamant that I was going to take it. I did everything I could to succumb to my intuition's intent and transfer Phodus and me into the dreamer's world.

Finding that my actions were, thankfully, successful, Phodus and I were now viewing the artist in his natural habitat, in his place of creation and untempered thought. He was sitting in front of an artist's easel with a book, that I gathered he had written, by his side. He was talking to himself, seemingly trying to solve some issue that he had run into with one of his projects. What follows is his line of self-contained thought.

“What was the motive behind the character's actions? I created this man in hopes that...that my following would see him as an imperfect man trying to create something better for himself and his family. I created this man as a symbol of the human existent **will**, always surviving whatever may be thrown at it to bring it down and burn it to ashes. I created this man as a version of myself, yet, I gave this man different conflicts to deal with in his life than I ever had in mine. I felt that my fascination with these other conflicts would produce a far better and far more enthralling text to read than the problems I had encountered in my life, as my fascination with his issues would, in turn, fuel the kind of passionate writing needed to be compelling for the reader. Nonetheless, he needs a motive for his recently committed actions, otherwise, the actions committed within the tale would seem rather strange. No action executed within the world is done, I believe, without notable reasoning, therefore, he needs a reason. What did I do in the previous book with him? Why doth my memory fail me at such a time! Whatever it was, the people, they loved it...” His thoughts began to take a turn for the worse, presenting Phodus and myself with the outlying issue at hand for the man. He continued. “And yet, they abhor me with everything they have. Why? What have I done other than something for myself, for once? I have done everything that they have asked of me whether that means pictures with people, autographs, signed letters back to fans, special paintings for people, poetry for others, signed books, sketches of the main and supporting characters... Christ! I've done everything in my power short of cutting out a lung and giving it to them. What more must they expect of me?! Just because I thought that it was time to shift artistic mediums to one with a more visual context? That was why they burned my car and boycotted my art? I do not go

to their work and destroy their transportation, or try to actively get others to boycott whatever the product of their work may be... It, it, hurts. When I was young, I could take it. I could deal with the people who absolutely wanted nothing to do with me and who protested my works of art. But, now it's different. It's grown. And maybe this means it is time to hang it all up. Maybe it is time to put away the paper, rip down the easel, sell my home, since they know where I live, and find a new place... Find a new existence.”

This is when Phodus nudged me, “We can't let him do that. I can feel it. I can tell that that's not the right move for him and for us at this point. He leaves, all of his influence is destroyed, and the shadows have their day in the sun, so to speak, to take over everything.” I agreed with Phodus completely. Somehow, the plan was now to make sure that he didn't give up his craft. He needed to keep producing that which spilled so easily from his mind to give all others a direction, inspiration, a reason to continue searching their souls to make themselves better people. Like it or not, we had to make him realize that he was already home, that though the world may not support him or his actions affecting his own life, they would always support his art, whether it was exactly what they wished would happen, or not. I knew, in his heart, this man didn't want to give up his lifelong passion. I could feel the connection he held with his work from the moment we entered his habitation. To be honest, though, I believed the possibility of this dream pulling off was a little bleak due to his fans apparently lighting his car on fire and boycotting his work.

I turned to Phodus, telling him to look around the artist's room that we were in for any clues of what we might be able to use to our advantage when creating a dream...or a nightmare. We had no time to lose and we needed to find something fast. Strangely enough, as I was looking through some of the pages from his book that he had written, I looked back to the artist, who moved a painting hanging upon the wall aside. Behind it was a small safe. Phodus was looking towards the safe now as well. The artist accessed the safe by inputting the correct combination and, as he opened it, Phodus was given the gift of a demon suitable for a nightmare. The artist pulled out a needle that had been visibly used and was looking at it for quite some time. “No, no I cannot go back to that,” he said, “I can't do that to myself... I would be compromising everything I worked so hard for, everything I worked so hard to achieve. I just can't do that. Not again.” After some time he put it back, shook his head, and shut the door of the safe.

Now, it was up to me to find something that would be useful in creation of a dream for him. Unfortunately, moments after Phodus found the object of the artist's torment, the world around us began to ripple somewhat gently, stopping just as

quickly as it started, and I knew that our time was running out. It was time to act. I told Phodus what the rippling world meant and he had an idea. He said, “Why don’t I initiate his sleep cycle, the same way Solanus told me that you did it, and then I could produce a nightmare for him. Then, when he needs a place to escape to, a reality to rescue him from the mental torment I will provide to, shall we say forcefully influence him, you can take your turn with a dream to inspire him to continue his craft. This will also give you time to search for something that will help you in creating the dream.” I told him that I agreed that this was the best plan of action. I witnessed Phodus place his hand upon the artist’s head and the artist fall asleep quickly. Phodus looked to me and said, “I’ll stall him. Good luck, my friend.” The world around us began to ripple again, stopping shortly after, just as Phodus started to concentrate on initiating the nightmare for the artist.

Like a bloodhound with the scent belonging to a wanted criminal, I searched throughout the room for anything that might be used as an advantage to me. I found nothing. Sweat poured from every pore and my body began to ache. I was slowly, unwillingly, succumbing to the stress of all the events leading up to this point and the potential of the events to come. I needed to find something. Anything. Just one thing to utilize to get the artist back on track and help the others, who look up to him, to feel inspired to right themselves within their own lives as well.

Finally, an idea began to form. Beside the easel, where the book sat, there was a glass with a good amount of water in it. As I walked about the room and I hit a certain angle, looking towards the book, I caught a glimpse of the artist’s visage in the reflection of the water. I then developed the notion of creating a dream where the artist might be forced, gently, to dwell on his past actions and successes. It would be a kind of introspective moment that would take him out of the torturous present, for a bit, and into the pleasantries of the possibilities of the future. Though this seemed like an idea that might work, given that he’d be struggling for any reprieve from Phodus’ nightmare, I still felt that I needed something else, something that would really draw him in to a point where he would never look back to the place he was at now. I needed something artistic beyond compare, giving him a chance to be one with his artistic endeavors, if you will, and experience them like he would never have been able to in reality.

This something was found behind his easel and across a desk that ran along the side of the room, next to the door that led out of the room. It was one of his books that he had written, bearing a couple prestigious awards on the cover, and a small piece of scratch paper with a sketch on it and a couple notes. On the piece of scratch paper was a sketched image of the main character of his book and next

to the character were the character's name and two notes, one being a question to himself. The notes read, "Possible character for graphic series related art production," and "Think he's strong enough for it?" I opened the book, after reading this, and read several pages of it to learn more about the definition and the history that he had given this character. I read several of the character's given dialogue moments and gained an understanding of how the artist defined the character's speech. It was utterly fascinating to me, to be honest, and I was lost within the beauty of the language that he used and the way he used it. With the discovery of these works by the artist, and the ease with which both of the pieces not only held my attention, but enthralled me so as to make me forget about what I was there to do, I found these items to be the other half of my reflection based solution for the artist.

My plan was somewhat simple. Now that I had harbored an understanding of his art and what his intentions were with it for the future, I was going to attempt to cause him to get lost in his own work and, basically, inspire himself through self reflection.

I would bring him into my imagination, building a park around him within my mind. This park would be completely empty save for trees, plants, other commonly seen foliage, and a massive fountain that would constantly spout water from its center back into itself. I would place him near the fountain. I would then imagine one of his books was sitting on the side of the fountain, which would give rise for him to walk over to the fountain, sit down on its side, and reflect upon his work. The reflection on his work, I would hope, would cause him to look to the water just below where he sat, and reflect upon himself as a whole. Though I knew that he would grow introspective given the circumstances, whether he looks into the water or not, or even sits down by the fountain due to his work being there or not, doesn't matter for the major effect of the dream. For, there is another piece of the puzzle that I wished to bring in: the book's contents itself and their effect on his audience. As he sat on the side of the fountain, I would imagine his main character, in full form as defined by his sketch, walking up to him and beginning a conversation with him. As they talked about whatever the artist wished, (for, I would utilize his inquiries of his own character and his conversational line of thinking to define answers the character might give), I would then bring in other elements of his book, that I read, to further ingratiate the man into the brilliance of his creation. As he basked within the creativity that he, himself, produced, I would bring in random, everyday people, to walk through the park, visibly enjoying and lauding every bit of the artist's creation. Ultimately, enjoying the moment alone with his creation **might**

inspire him to continue working and producing art for the public. But to bring his audience into his dream to show him how much they support and love his work? To me, that would **ensure** the continuation of his creativity.

Whether it would work or not was up to the hands of Fate. Phodus rose from his seated position and said, “Alright, I’ve done what I can. Mentally, he’s begging for a dream to whisk him away. I won’t bore you now with the details of the nightmare, as I know time is of the essence. So, good luck, and I’ll be waiting right here for you.” He finished his well wishes and, as he did so, the world around began to ripple as it had before, only with greater force than before. “The time is now, my friend. I’ll see you soon,” Phodus urged. I walked quickly over to the artist, placing my hand upon his head, and initiated the dream sequence I had imagined for him. I did just what I described to you and he took to it much more easily than I would have expected. Phodus’ nightmare broke him down so far that anything I did seemed to work. In the end, he did not end up looking at himself within the reflection of the fountain’s water, though he did sit and he did begin to reflect upon his past work. Amazement and astonishment reigned supreme when his book’s main character walked over to him and engaged in conversation. As more and more of his book became a reality within the limitations of the dream, positivity soon took over in his countenance and the overall way in which he carried himself. The fact that he saw his fans basking in his brilliance didn’t hurt either. It was after several moments had passed where he had seen the happiness he evoked within his audience that I had to end the dream, as the world around him, and eventually me when I arrived back within his art room, began to ripple more violently than it ever had in this trip with Phodus. “So? Did it work?” Phodus asked. “I don’t know as of yet,” I said. “Let’s get back to the ship and see what we’ve done, if anything.”

I imagined Phodus and myself back on the ship at the ship’s top deck railing where we watched the leviathan still surging toward us with malintent dripping from its lips. “Does this mean we’ve failed?” Phodus asked worriedly. I tried to reassure him that what we did would work, even though I didn’t know if it would, to calm him down. Fear was beginning to creep up within me, once again, and I hoped with everything in me that I hadn’t failed myself, Phodus, Solanus, Luna, and the world.

Solanus and Luna arrived on the top deck a few seconds later to wait with Phodus and me and see what the outcome of our work with the artist would produce. “Why is it taking so long?!” Phodus yelled. Solanus very calmly said, “Everyone is influenced within their own time. This time is multiplied when it comes to the necessity of a dreamer’s influence to influence another. Be patient, and

in time, you will hopefully be rewarded.” Whether he believed that, or he was just making it up to pacify Phodus, he never took his eye off of the leviathan. Neither did I. Soon, I was growing even more concerned as the creature was still heading our way, showing no signs of slowing down.

It was too close for comfort and it was now or never. If we had done nothing to affect its stride, the sea demon was within range to grip us within its tentacle-like appendages and tear away at the ship with its pincers ripe and ready for death and the destruction of the energy based beings aboard. In a shift too quick for the human eye, the leviathan ceased its charge and instead leapt from the ocean onto its back, slamming down on the sea below. Immensely large waves were produced from this shift in movement, and it took all of us hanging onto the railing to prevent our falling down or falling into the ocean as the ship rocked and weaved. Though we could not see the creature above the water, one could hear its bellows, its cries, its suffering emanating from the ocean below. The sound was deafening. The creature slowly began to float back up to the surface, close enough for us to see the eyes of the monstrosity defined by the gradients of the shadows that formed the beast. By the look of its eyes and the fact that it was tearing at itself, like the previous shadows had done based upon our successes in previous dreamers’ dreams, Phodus, Luna, Solanus, and I knew that we had succeeded. We had taken down the evil that was so adamant at destroying our existence. We had ridded the spirits onboard the vessel of the fear of fading that was ever so present.

We watched, in some ways very uncomfortably, as the creature writhed and twisted, ripping the tentacles from its body one by one, and then moved on to sections of its torso and finally its head. It only lasted a few minutes and when that time was up, not one shade of darkness was present within that section of the sea where the creature had been. Instead, after it finally faded away, I was able to create a sunset, via my active imagination, to bask the ocean and the ship in the serenity of the sun’s rays. I felt it was the perfect calming mechanism to soothe our weary minds as we were to relax in the ecstasy of our work well done...

We returned to the bowels of the Titanic and continued with the work that was at hand: influencing the minds of all through dreams and nightmares so as to give the world a chance to improve and become a better place for all. It is a goal that is quite daunting, but it is a goal worth reaching for, striving for, and arriving at. And we are the ones up for the challenge, no one else. We have succeeded and continue to do so. We have failed, and in some ways, will continue to do so, for that is how we learn to succeed. All in all, we were and are only human, and it is through our experiences that we learn to extinguish the possibility for mistakes, as much as we

are able. It is this aspect of the human condition that pushes us to succeed, to thrive, and to grow for the better as a whole...

I wish to speak a few last words before I leave you to return back to the realm of reality that you reside.

It was not just quick thinking and quick action that vanquished the evils that you now know as the shadows and the leviathan. It was not what we as a group did. No. It was, instead, **how** we did what we did as a group. It was the courage that we demonstrated, standing up as one, pushing against a seemingly unstoppable force in the face of Impossibility. Due to that situation and the events to come for us all, I wish to say the following. Stand up with or without your brethren, with or without fear, with or without trepidation, with or without anxiety, with or without support whenever you think that sitting would feel so much better. People's lives never changed and the world never got the chance to improve from someone who chose to sit and watch the world turn on its own. People's lives changed and the world improved when someone, in turn, decided to try and make the world turn for the better, even if that person stood alone. Given the inspiration of one standing, others will follow and stand as well. It is the only way that we may evolve as a society and as a whole.

As I return to my place of work and of creation, the very last thing I wish to say to you all is this. You are always welcome wherever I may exist, or reside. Whether it is within the dreamscape on the Titanic with myself and the others in the midst of a hurricane, or in your reality, in the lockets of your mind, I welcome you. I welcome you to never feel alone, to never feel isolated. I will never turn anyone down, nor stray from someone who needs help. We're all in this together and it is through joining as one that we will succeed. Take heed of that, for truth emanates from it.

And with that, I must take my leave. Fear not, my friends. You have not, as of yet, heard the last of me. I shall return and we shall speak again. But, until then... Farewell for now.

