

Into An Eye

By: Cameron Dawson.

Technology is at its peak, and we can accomplish things only imagined not too long ago. It was then that these days, this future, would be so anticipated that the past would be forgotten for all its problems...what I would give to be born in those days. Don't get me wrong – a cure for every disease, sickness, mental illness, and even a household vaccine to eliminate common colds for years at a time. The thought of this would make any sane person content, and if time travel was possible...we would make the people from the past cry in envy. I say this with all honesty...because with technology comes power...and power brings all that's wrong. Cupidity (*greed*), need, lust, pride, lies, and yes, fear. *They* fear because if the power, *their* power, got in the hands of the enemy...evil would use it against *them*. So *they* make us believe the enemy is evil. The enemy is everyone and everything *they* can't control. The enemy...is who I was trained to eliminate.

1st Part

My earliest memory was years ago when I was around five—and I remember it vividly. The air was moist; I was in an oak forest and was trying to find a few others. We were playing that hide-and-seek game; hah, who would have thought that was part of our training?

My name is Michael, (I made it myself). Well, actually, my *companion*, Janin thought of it...as I did hers. Both of us being only fifteen, I would imagine I have some explaining to do. As I mentioned earlier—we are in a time of cloning. Mix that with power hungry leaders and you get us -- and not just us, but a whole army of us. Now that there are no recorded side-effects of human cloning that I would know of, it's quite common to see in the past two decades. As for the military's side of it...they train clones at a very young age, in hopes their soldiers will be combat-ready within teen years -- but why *companions*? Well people do fight better when they have something to *personally* fight for, right? They cloned us, me and Janin, ('J' being silent), at the same time and in the same lab. We're like brother and sister. Of course they gave us a different code-like name which I can't even remember...which is why we and many other cloned soldiers give each other names early on.

What is our specialty? Well most clones don't have a specialty; they just know how to wield a gun. But Janin and I were specially trained for hunting—tracking and spying. Covert operations...but technically we go together, it works better for us that way.

So where does a cloned soldier live? Well imagine a motel. A motel where the rooms are fit for only two people, (companions), and the doors are on the inside—with no locks. The only lock would be the main entrance and fire exit. I guess they don't want people to come in a kill us, (since clones are considered the lesser of man to many people). Not only that, but we do have a lot of assassins sent from the enemy—like a lock on a door could stop them anyway. Hold on...

Janin finally opens her eyes. "Mich."

It's too early for her to use both syllables of my name.

She repeats, "Mich."

"What?"

A few seconds pass. "Why are you narrating your life?"

"It's better than writing."

"Oh...but why?"

"I thought I'd make a story."

She goes back to sleep. "...okay."

A small chip that can snap onto your chin to narrate your life is the latest thing. Like in this case – I can even go back and add comments. But in the case of speech, it will automatically add something like 'she said softly', or 'he commented', and so on. In the case of the 'she goes back to sleep' and 'Janin finally opens her eyes' - I had to go back and edit that. It was originally, 'Female1 calmly says' and 'Female1 whispers'. In order for names to occur, all you have to do is change one of the 'Female1' labels to who it really is. Of course don't do it while they are around, because this thing can actually mix up female and male voices sometimes...especially in children. A new patch is supposed to replace gender in children with 'Child1' and so on. Of course in order to download patches, you'll need to subscribe or allow an ad to be placed in your story. You'd think buying the product for eight thousand Dals would be good enough.

"Mich."

"What's up sis?"

She sighs. "Stop it."

I check my watch - it was six morning exactly. If it were last week, we'd have to head to weapons training in thirty minutes. But that's not the case. The movement against cloning has passed, and we're no longer forced to fight in some war. And when I say 'we', I mean only the clones on this continent - everywhere else is fine. Our military leaders now view us without their bondage - but now that they can't use us, their shutting down our residence and financial support. With no parents, relatives, friends...where are we supposed to go? Not even the ones who cut our bonds will supply us with residence or even a little financial support.

I say to my sis, "We have to head for training in thirty minutes though."

"What?"

A cheap attempt to get her out of bed, I agree. But what works, works.

I smile, "So wake up!"

She turns over, "...nice try."

And so now I know, that doesn't work. Perhaps another attempt though? I couldn't resist; but, I guess it's in our training to encourage the lazy.

"...Sis."

An ignorant moan follows.

"We need to find work."

"...can't."

"Come-on sis, wake up."

"We need to train."

I ask, "What?"

I knew she was laughing, as far as tired laughter goes. It was hard to tell though...if she was serious or joking. Perhaps it was a shot at my gullibility - which is often wide open for shooting.

She turns over, "Alright! Up I go."

It's amazing how she can change so quickly. She tosses the covers to her feet and sits on the edge of the bed, then gets up and does a quick spine-stretch. There's a thin latex-like fabric that if put on first can actually remove the need for a shower or bath. We soldiers have to use this. And even though a lot of people still prefer the rain of hot water, and even though I would too, we've both gotten into the habit of the supplement. But it's not something anyone would watch their sibling put on.

"I'll be outside."

The walls of the motel hall were depressed with the dark shade of a pre-sun, which could only be described by a psychiatrist. The front door was in relatively good shape, without any holes, weird stains, or rusty hinges -- but the neighbourhood couldn't be anything but a ghetto. I lean against the wall, with my eyes set on the half-sand-half-snow ground at my feet. It was still cold out, but it could be just the lack of a temporary sun -- a sun that would rise over the distant terrain like an overweight smoker climbing a rope. Who knows when it may lose grip and fall back into yesterday.

From a holster sewn below my sleeve comes a knife into the palm of my hand. I hold it wondering if I will ever become who I was made to be. Will I ever know how it feels to suffocate below my shadow, and take the life of another prisoner of desire? There's another one of my *brothers* sitting down on the chilled ground, with his back against the wall. No, I'm not narrating this. But I wonder if he's thinking the same thing I am.

Janin opens the door and walks out. She turns to me and doesn't hesitate to comment...

"They said the snow would be gone today!"

I'm not sure if she meant that as a '*the snow will soon be gone*', or '*it should have disappeared by now*'. She said it with a smirk, but it may have been one of frustrating. I just nod.

She asks, "Any leads on where to check first?"

And my nod turns to a shake. "It's not like we're of hiring age, so the odds are going to be slim."

"Wouldn't it be great if we lived in the dark ages? Our only work would be farming, or smiting. And everyone would have something to do."

I ask her, "Are you still reading that Nordic book? Because I don't think the *real* dark ages were as written."

"But can you imagine if it were true?"

"...no, I can't."

To be honest, I could imagine a place like that. I've wanted to live in a place like that since my earliest memory. I just couldn't tell her that though. I want my sister to live a life without encouragement for false hopes. I didn't know what to do though - about work. I knew the odds were too far against our direction for anything acceptable. I can almost bet we'll end up buried in the basement of some retired fisherman. But who knows...some people don't consider us human, so a chef might...sorry, that's going too far.

So anyways, we set off. And to be honest I'm not going to talk about our long walk around the town, where nothing of interest happens. Instead, I'll skip ahead to three hours later, when we eventually find a fast food owner who doesn't ignore us after recognizing the bar-code inked on our forehead. The place was called '*Elebin's Burgers*'. The owner was Elebin; and wouldn't you know it, they sold burgers...mostly.

We walked into the place, Janin after me, exhausted from all the walking and turn downs. Although we tried not to show it, any human could judge at first glance. Someone already working as cashier slash customer service made the first word.

"What can I help you with?"

I asked, "Can I talk to the manager?"

"I am the manager."

I had to clarify, "No it's not a complaint, and we need work."

"Oh ok, hold on."

He went in the back where they make their fake goodness. There were three cashiers in total—two now. One was busy, but the other turned to us and asked...

"That number on your head—that means you're a clone?"

My sister answered, "Yeah, so?"

I could feel the eyes of people eating from close up to across the room. As common as we now were, we weren't very popular. Since we're used for science and military purposes, we're unable to venture too far into the public. Were those eyes of curiosity, fear, or hate?

The manager becomes visible, "*Come-on back.*", and waves his hand in direction. There was a vertical door on the left side of the counter. I lift that up and follow the manager *behind the scenes* to a half-ass-business table.

"I'm Elebin, the manager."

Janin foolishly asks, "Elebin?"

He nods. "*Is something wrong?*"

She quickly corrects herself, "No, nothing."

I thought that little comment would ruin our only chance, but it didn't. In fact the manager seemed a little amused...in a good way.

He asks, "*Do you have any past experience?*"

I look at my sister as we both shake our heads.

"No. Until a week ago we were both tired to a pole and told what to do."

He looks at me confused.

My sister corrects me, "*Not literally of course.*"

The manager pauses for a second and then smiles. "*Well if you have no problems taking orders, then perhaps you could do some good around here.*"

At that point I could only think to myself not to screw things up. I look at my sister, and she gives the exact same impression. The manager seemed like a nice guy, which I read somewhere was a rare find in a fast-food place.

Elebin looks at both of us. "*To be honest, I usually recruit real people. But lucky for you, this place has been low on employees for almost a week. I'd gladly hire you.*"

We are real people. I wanted to tell him that. My sister wanted to tell him that. We have a mother, just not a father. We were just grown in an immoral manner, and made as twins like all the rest. The manager looks at us, however, and notices he said something wrong.

"Can I ask you a question?", and he continues without waiting for a response...

"It's possible to get tattoos removed easily...have you considered getting rid of the mark on your forehead?"

I shrug. "I never actually thought about it. Where can they do this?"

"At any tattoo slash piercing store. It costs roughly 450 Dals."

I ask, "Then I hate to mention this, but how much will we be paid?"

"Your pay will start at 46 Dals an hour. Roughly nine hours a day, six days a week."

I work the calculations in my head, which come to almost 3,000 a week...each. It's not like I know much about currency and the average wages, but it seemed like a decent amount. I remember hearing my superiors say something about buying a pack of knives. I forget how many it was, but I remember working out the knives would cost about 140 Dals each. So I could afford about 20 knives a week with my pay...not that I actually would. I'm not a knife nut. I'm more into the sleek, light-weight, durable design of the ML-9 pistol. It's munitions is small and not very powerful—but the ML-9 made the rank of 'Most Accurate Pistol' three years in a row to date, and who knows how much longer it will keep that rank.

My sister knows I'm lost in my head at the moment doing my usual math, so she had to continue the interview without me. "When do you want us to start?"

With no delay, the manager insisted, "Tomorrow...seven in the morning."

"Thank you so much..." my sister adds, "...it will be no problem at all."

We get up and go to salute Elebin, but quickly realize a hand shake would be a better idea.

I say, "Thank you sir.", and leave with my sister. As soon as we get outside we look at each other with a huge smile of excitement.

She said to me, "I didn't think it would actually be possible!"

I had to agree as we walked home. From the start I thought it would be pointless to look for a job, but wow! We actually have work now. If we were of age, I would recommend going to an alcohol store. Then again, being hung-over on the first day at work isn't the best impression to give your new employer. What could we do though? We had to celebrate in some way. Everyone has to celebrate on the day they realize their childhood is over. It sounds depressing, 'childhood is over', but it's not, really. So many people say they'd like to go back and relive those days, but I think they're crazy. I think they just want to regain their ignorance, not innocence—so I'm told I'm cynical.

About a block down slope I saw something strange in the alley to my right. I stopped to get a better see, a better view of what was going on. Janin took a few more steps before realizing I had stopped. She didn't ask me what I was looking at; instead, she took her few steps back and helped stare into hell...or heaven. I cautiously walk closer, but someone grabs my wrist as I tried to approach. I look back and see Janin, stopping me from going any further.

Her maiden voice tried to shield me. "Come on, let's just go home."

I should have listened, but I didn't. No, I had to continue. I wanted to give meaning to my life, and perhaps I did. It wasn't long before I was a few feet away from it. And even though they saw me the entire time, I felt that this was where I was supposed to say something, but I couldn't even open my mouth. There was something in front of me, staring at me with its own yellow eyes. It, she, looked human, but who's to say? Her hair was long and would normally cover the sides of her head, but she was leaning against the brick alley wall in such a way for me to see a head without ears. The holes were there, and I'm sure she could hear, but I couldn't say how well.

I kneeled down beside her, and placed my hand against her wrist which was thrusting blood. In her other hand she held a knife, but not one to harm anyone but herself. She looked pale, and I'm sure if I stayed, I would have to see the candles inside her eyes fade and die. I didn't know what to do, to tell you the truth. I could help her overcome the thin odds, or I could be the warmth in her last few breaths.

Janin sits down, away from the blood but near me, with her hands gripped and arms around her legs in front of her. She asks me, "What should we do?"

My mouth still didn't want to say anything. I was thinking with what time I had. The thought that kept harassing me every so often would make its non-visual appearance, 'why not save her and think of what to do later?' This tortured life looked so wrong. Maybe she deserves to die?

Yet surely enough, she could still talk. "Hesans...you, wha?"

She smiled, but I couldn't understand what she was saying, other then it had been directed at me.

"You muss p..." She coughs three times. "...clun."

Finally, my blood has calmed, and I say not to her, but to myself, "Let's go."

I wasn't planning on leaving with Janin, I was going to wrap a tight cloth around this new arm, and carry this new body to a hospital...which was nearly exactly what I did. It would have been a long walk to the hospital. And although people don't usually stop to pick up a walking corpse, someone eventually opened the door of his car for

the three of us. I promised the driver that I would pay to remove the blood from his car's fabric, but he didn't seem interested in anything from us.

Soon enough we were at our destination. Someone grabbed the girl and rushed her inside before I could even make it to the door, which I guess was good. We weren't allowed to follow her all the way, and were recommended to go home, since the condition she was in would ban her from visitors. So we walked home, which had taken us more than a few hours. It had proven to be the longest walk for me to date, since I could only think of if she was going to be ok, and if she would hate me for rescuing her.

The night ahead would be cold and painful. Usually people feel better after helping someone or even saving their life...but for some reason, I didn't. Perhaps I understood why she wanted to end her life. And perhaps I am regretting it. Something felt horribly wrong inside of me—like a bond fire being smothered with grass and weeds. It wasn't the fire I felt, or the heat, but the smoke and ashes of new life was scalding my insides. It didn't feel right at all.

Summary,

Michael and Janin find a job working for Elebin at a fast food restaurant. On their walk back, Michael spots a girl in an alley that recently cut her wrist. They decide to aid and take her to a hospital.

2nd Part

It's tomorrow. Janin and I have already arrived at the hospital. At first we thought this would go over smoothly. That we could just see this mystery person and see how she was. Of course, we were wrong.

"I'm sorry; you'll need an adult with you."

That was a secretary at the front desk. Apparently we need an adult to see a patient. I could only shake my head at her and say in a calm voice, "We don't have an adult."

She had to speak up, to make the room hear our conversation.

"If you don't have an adult, you can't see the patient."

I feel embarrassed. Why didn't she just say to the now half-staring crowd, 'Hey everyone! Look at the freaks!' But, she didn't. No, people on the job are much different than those not. Workers have their own little conspiracy going on. Subtle and feminine, they indirectly say things with such hostility to get you out of their ugly face.

My sister though, says with the same attitude and volume in her voice, "Listen. We're the ones who brought her here. We expect to see the life we saved."

Not all females have to talk feminine all the time, so I've learnt.

She just has to follow the book though. "I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do."

My sister doesn't give up, I hoped she wouldn't, since she has better people skills than I. "Nothing you can do? Ok, here's how simple it is. Take that pen you have in your hand, and put a check mark beside the 'has as adult with them'. You...can manage that...right?"

The secretary seems a little annoyed. She doesn't even reply. In fact, she does one step better. She picks up the phone, and says in a calm, yet scared voice, "Can you bring security up here please?", and then the dreadful, "Thank you."

I ask, "Is that what you call being a secretary? Why are you so scared of us? How are we supposed to bring down the whole system with four hands? We just want to see a patient."
"And I'm telling you, sir. You cannot see a patient without an adult."

That's when security came. They took both me and Janin by the arm and lead us outside. We were both disgusted at how we were treated. One of the guards went back inside, but before the other followed, he openly spoke to us.

"You're the ones who brought in Theara. She recovered, and was taken next door."

Of course we didn't know what was next door. Unsure of what to expect, we didn't make any attempts to understand fully. You see, like I mentioned earlier—we're clones watched closely in bondage. We don't know too much about the outside world or society. And honestly, I could have done without the disappointment of seeing the worst. Next door was a place where they put, as defined, "crazy people". Theara was crazy because she wanted to kill herself. They had no proof of that, unless she told them. I mean, we found her in an alley with her wrist cut, and statistics would have to favour against suicide.

As soon as we opened the door, there was an immediate malaise of pain in the air. My sister was the one in command this time. She approached the front desk with me staggering behind. I was looking at the environment, or at least pretending to. Really I was scared. I've never been in a place like this, and didn't expect anything within imagination. Janin waved to me to follow her. It looks like we've been given permission to see her. We follow a male nurse through a one-way door, and into a room near the *start*. This was the room Theara was sleeping in. There was another person, a young adult male at the front of the room, also in his bed. He was watching us the entire time, but we didn't pay much attention to him at first.

The nurse said to us, "She's been sleeping all day. I don't think she'll mind being talked to by some friends."

We nodded. I don't know about Janin, but I was planning on waking her up to find out more about her.

"If you need me, I'll be just outside."

And on that note, he left us alone with her. I looked at Janin. She looked back at me with the same look in her eyes.

She shook her head. "You found her, you wake her up."

I continued to look back at her for only a few more seconds before I looked down. She had a point. I know this doesn't seem like such a big deal, but it kind of is. After mentally killing yourself and going through lots of medical

abuse, the first friendly face you see will be branded into your brain. I would know.

I walked to the side of the bed, and placed my hand on Theara's cheek. My thumb grazed below her eye as if I had a connection with her. Along the way, my thumb noticed something for some reason my eyes couldn't catch before. I looked closer at her face—below her eyes. It looked like tear marks, but ones which would burn skin. Her face moved and her eyes opened as I snap my hand back to my side. Hopefully she would not know I was touching her face while she was sleeping. My sister knew, and I just noticed she looked curiously at me for it.

In a brittle voice, Theara spoke to me first. "I know your face."

I could only smile at her. She knew my face! I was a part of someone's life!

She continued, "What is your name?"

I could only answer, "Michael."

She smiled and turned to Janin. "And yours? What is your name?"

My sister nodded and told her name, "Janin. He's my brother...or should I say I'm his sister?"

We almost got a laugh out of Theara. But it soon faded until the more serious matters were spoken.

"Why did you help me?"

Naturally, I had to say, "Killing yourself isn't the answer."

But to be honest I didn't know. Maybe she had a good reason to do it, maybe not. Her neighbour was obviously disgusted with my answer. He laughed a short laugh only to get our attention.

Theara asked me in a calm, non-offensive voice, "Do you even know me?"

Janin quickly answered with a little more hostility. "Should we? Did you have any idea how everyone else would feel if we didn't save your life?"

She turns to my sister. "Like who? I know two names, and I learnt them only when I awoke today. Three, if you count the nurse."

I ask her, "You don't have family?—friends?"

She could only shake her head. I've surely upset her, but we still did the right thing. Perhaps she's just lonely, and needs people like me and my sis. Janin looks at me with a look of concern. Like she's telling me this Theara is bad news. My Janin is good at looking under people's skin, but I just couldn't accept it. I wanted to help Theara. Just look at her...she needs me.

Her neighbour comments, "You should have let her die. Then expect her thanks. But now, you've ruined it."

Theara just lays there unsure of what to say, but my sis walks over to her neighbour and learns her arms against the end of the bed. "Now how is this any of your business?" She replied to him, which quickly shut him up.

Janin walked outside of the room for a minute. Theara and I kept looking back at each other, waiting to see if the other knew was about to happen. Sure enough Janin came back with two nurses with her. They took our neighbour away to give us privacy for a while.

"Theara..." I said in a relaxed voice. "Can I ask you why?"

She replied, "How do you know my name?"

"Sorry...the secretary told us."

She smiled, feeling stupid. "...Of course."

I brought the subject up again, "...but why?"

"Well, I didn't even expect the secretary to know."

I shake my head as Janin covers up a smile, realizing Theara is still recovering blood. "No, I mean, why did you try to kill yourself?"

"Oh..."

I waited. I so waited for a response, but it looked almost like she was getting ready to sleep again. She had closed her eyes to look like she was ignoring us, or the question. That was when she opened her mouth.

"I told you earlier. You don't know me."

She raised her voice and finished by saying to me while opening her eyes. "You have no right to control my fate."

Fate. That was an odd word to use. She considered suicide fate? She considered dying in an ally...fate? If she was anyone else, I would have left. But then again, if she was anyone else, I wouldn't have saved her in the first place.

I asked, "Then who are you? Tell me, and then I'll make the judgment if you should live or die."

"Oh. So now you want to know me. You want to know me because if you like me, you won't let me die. And if you don't like me, you won't mind if I climb the ladder to hell...right?"

I shook my head. "No...because I'm curious. I want to know who you are."

She didn't say anything, but she looked like she was regretting something.

I ask, "Why are there burns below your eyes?"

She laughs in a sad way, holding back crying. When she spoke, it was only with a sharp strain in her neck. "Why?" She wanted to say more, but couldn't.

I could only ask, "Please."

She covers her eyes with one hand, and then places it with the other already sitting on her gut.

"You're a clone. You should know what it's like."

I answer with a question. "You're a clone too?"

She doesn't nod, but continues. "Not all clones are a success. Some are born mutated, some are born conjoined, and some aren't even born. I was one of the failures—a mutant. I think they planned on killing me, along with five other failures, but they saw something in me, some different kind of mutation. They said it was rare, and valuable. So I was raised much like you."

Janin asks, "What's so rare about you?"

A moment passes before Theara turns her head to my sister and asks, "I want you to promise not to tell anyone. If they catch me...I don't want to go back."

It sounds like something serious. And by the sounds of it, the military still wants control over her. I'm a person of my word, but it's hard to make a promise when you really don't know what you'll be promising. I know I would never turn her in to them, I will never hand her over. Janin I know would agree with me on this. We both know how to keep our words.

Janin comforts her with the right answer. "You have my word."

Theara looks to me expecting the same, and that's exactly what I sent her. I nod and repeat Janin, "You have my word."

Theara asks me, "Can you shut the door please? I don't want anyone other than you two hearing this."

It sounds excessive, but I do as she asks and close the door. Theara gathers her thoughts while I return to the side of her bed. At one point she almost looks like she was about to say something. I just wanted to hurry her up, before someone finds out the door is closed and walks in, ruining our chance to discover something about her.

Theara looks into my eyes once more, but doesn't say anything. She knew she had to show us what it was, rather than tell us something we wouldn't believe.

She spreads her arms toward us. "Give me your hands."

With no hesitation, I place my hand over hers. Janin does the same.

Theara looks directly at me. "Whatever you do...do not let go of my hand."

At first, I wondered what she was doing, what the meaning of this was. But that was before my eyes started to water. The room started to wave back and forth like a mirage in hot sand. My focus was at the barred window across the bed. There was a white bird outside, cleaning its wings. The bird jumped on the edge of the window, and walked through. It flapped its wings and started flying around the room—slow enough for my vision to follow.

Theara's voice broke the silence. "Have you ever seen the world fall apart?"

The bird flew slower, and slower. It was then, that its feathers fell from its wings. The bird grew hot, and a flame started to burn its body.

"...or see something unimaginable?"

The bird dropped to Theara's lap and lay motionless. Its flame spread across the bed sheets, and soon covered the entire room. Theara was in the middle of hell's fire, but was not affected, nor was I. I could see only flames and ash, but could feel no heat. Theara releases my hand, and the fire disappears. But everything didn't return to normal. The sheets were burnt, the walls blackened, and a dead white bird still lies on the bed.

She finishes by saying to me and Janin, "All you need to make something burn is heat, fuel, and oxygen."

The door opens and a nurse comes in. He slowly walks towards us, cautiously investigating. A foot away from me, and staring at Theara...the centre of what appeared to be an extinguished fire; he asks calmly, "What the hell is this?"

I couldn't think of anything to tell him. Theara couldn't think of what to say. Janin had no clue of what just happened. Theara's side of the room was burnt, but there was no smoke, no fire, and so smell. Theara finally thinks of what to say.

"I think you should sound the fire alarm."

He nods and moves to the door. His hand pulls the alarm. I don't know why. There was no fire left, but I guess he panicked.

Theara climbs out of her bed and whispers into my ear. "Hide me."

I promised to keep her safe. Well, it was more of a moral promise that I didn't actually say to her. But like I said, I keep my promises, vocal or morale. I grab Janin's still stunned hand, and pull her along with me and Theara. The nurse was already gone, probably talking at the front desk about what he saw. It was easy to leave the building, and even easier to sneak home with her.

We were late for work that day, by a few hours. I don't know why our boss let us keep our jobs. Perhaps he felt sorry for us, or really needed the work. I'm sure you could gather what, or rather who, I was thinking of the entire day before leaving for home. Theara was sleeping when we arrived eight at night, but soon opened her eyes no longer bored or tired.

We could only talk all night, me and Theara. She told me everything she could about what the military did to her, and what they're planning on doing. She told me there are three others like her, and that the military called the four of them *elementals*. Two of them could create fire, and the other two—wind...hence, elementals. Unfortunately, the military says, they can't yet build clones for metal or liquid.

Theara was 18. Her companion Ocau, a fire elemental, managed to escape with Theara. The two met a family who took care of them for a few days. But it wasn't long before the military discovered their hideout. Ocau was captured, but Theara was able to hide and only watch hopelessly at her companion's attempt to fend off weapons of the army. That was when she vowed not to let them catch her—which meant death.

I must have fallen asleep because when I woke up, Theara was gone. Or at least I thought she was gone. I almost panicked, but the truth was she was just in the restroom, and I was uncomfortably lying uncovered on my bed. Janin was already prepared for the second day at work, and assured me she was about to roll me over to get me back alive. We only had a few minutes before we had to head out, but the deadline proved not to be a problem. We arrived at work on time, and once again, I thought of Theara.

Summary,

After a night's rest, Michael and Janin return to the hospital to find Theara, the person they saved, was a clone just like them. However, unlike them, Theara was locked away from the public because of a DNA disfigurement which allowed her to create fire from the simplest of things. After witnessing her doing so, they escaped from the hospital and returned home. Theara was no longer with them the next morning when Michael and Janin went to work.

3rd Part

Apparently today was a continental holiday. Along with a lot of other restaurants, our healthy fast-food got to close early. But things still needed to be done, and the floors cried for attention. As punishment for our late arrival yesterday, we were told to stay back and work a few more hours. I attended to the floors while Janin did the fryer, grill, and holders. We immediately made the assumption that this place hadn't been cleaned in a while. I wonder if Theara is alright. I mean, medically and mentally...she would have to still be recovering after losing so much blood only days ago. Perhaps I should tell Janin to go check on her while I finish up here.

I shout, "Janin!"

Not hearing a response made me suspicious and worried. My first thought was to wait a little longer, but a few seconds felt like too much already. I walked around the place but couldn't find her anywhere. That was when it finally came to me to check the restrooms. Naturally I could assume she wasn't in the men's room, so I knocked on the women's.

"Sis', are you in there?"

At first there was no response, or at least a response that I could hear. On that note, I heard faint whimpering, suffocated screaming, and feet thumping against the ground. By instinct I open the door, and find my sister's hands bound, beaten, and mouth gagged. I was such an idiot—I didn't even check the rest of the room before going to her aid. That is what the military calls a *fatal mistake*. After clearing the cloth from her mouth; the last few moments of memory before I black out was hearing Janin scream, "Behind you!" My chin was grabbed while my mouth and nose was covered with a damp cloth.

I couldn't remember anything after that, not even my dream before waking up in a metal cage. Janin was in the same situation I was in, except a little more severe. Her clothes were lost somewhere. She had but a hygiene suit to hide her skin. I checked my holster, and the knife was still there. In the current condition we were in, I decided to hide the knife until it would be of some use.

Her face wet with tears, she could only choke on her words, "Welcome to hell."

"What is this? Where are we?"

She shook her head, "We're lost. We're trapped. I'm as confused as you, but..."

I ask, "But what?"

"I know who did this."

"Janin, tell me. Who did this?"

She coughs and hides her face on her knees, and below her arms. There was no need to ask her again. Because that's when a wooden door was opened and shut behind whoever just entered. I could hear two feet stepping down the concrete stairs until they finally reached the bottom. The room was dark and I couldn't see anything farther than the bars in front, behind, and to each side. The footsteps finally stopped in the middle of the room, and a roof-light suddenly lit the place up. It was too bright at first, but my eyes would never leave the blurred figure. As seconds passed, the figure began to look more and more like...Elebin, our manager.

His cold voice made the room shiver. "Oh. You're already awake."

"What do you want with us?!"

He looks angry and disappointed. "...Nothing from you...just your sister."

I ask, "What do you mean?"

His feet lead him closer to our cage, and from his pocket, he pulls out a cloth. His hands unravel the cloth as he crouches in front of us. There were two cookies in his hand.

He says to me, "Take them."

Pulling out my knife now might ruin everything. It would work if I could grip his wrist and do it quickly, but if I failed... I grabbed the cookies from him, but didn't take a bite.

"Don't be greedy, hand one to your sister."

I hesitated, but eventually handed one to Janin. She was smart enough not to consume it, but Elebin picked up a wooden rod to threaten us with. It was nothing at first, until he brought it closer so we could see the small needle built into the stick's tip.

"You don't want me to use this, so just eat the cookies."

We should have just gone along with it, but I guess we're still young, and inexperienced.

He said to me in a confident voice, "This is why I brought you along."

Stepped a little closer to the cage and continuing, "Because I don't want to use this on your sister."

He shrugs, "It would mess up her good looks."

My sister shakes her head. "Please, don't do this."

She screams as the stick thrusts between the bars, its needle driven into my left shoulder, and forced out again.

"Now...eat up."

Janin quickly swallowed the cookie, barely even chewing. I waited a little longer, but knew it wouldn't accomplish anything. I eat the cookie. Elebin smiles, and walks away. He pulls a seat not too far from our cage, and watched.

I asked him, "Are you going to kill us?"

"When my brother arrives in a few days; but until then, I can do whatever I want with you."

Janin asks, "What are the cookies for?"

His eyes filled with concupiscence (*lust*). "It's hard to rape a girl who's kicking and screaming. Enjoyable...but, I'm not as young as I used to be."

I look at my sister and back at Elebin. "You're sick."

"Don't blame me, blame medication cost."

"...I'm blaming you."

My ears started to ring. I tried to bring my hand up so I could clean them, but my arm dropped back to the ground. I tried my other hand, but it did the same. The pervert was saying something, but I couldn't hear a word. He then got up and soon opened the cage door. I tried to move, but he grabbed Janin and shut the door behind them before I could move any further than an inch. It's not that he was so damn fast; it was me being so damn slow. I didn't watch the entire thing. I turned my head and cried for the first time in years after seeing holes being cut into Janin's suit.

My tears lasted 35 minutes—the duration. They stopped when Janin was pushed back into the cage, and Elebin's footsteps lead him out of the room. I'll kill him for this.

The night passed; but of course, we couldn't sleep. It was at the exact same time that Elebin once again stepped down and stabbed the needle into my thigh this time. Again we gave into the poison, and again I turned my head to block my direct vision of the devil. It ate me up inside that I could do anything. I wanted to take out my knife and slit his throat, but I couldn't. Instead, I could only wait until he finishes, hides his face upstairs, and leaves us here with no food or water. He was killing us.

His next visit was six hours later, midnight. He came with two more cookies, a needle twice in my leg, and only an ID (primitive) state of mind. The cookies he gave us had almost no effect. He pulled down his pants and stood against the cage. This would probably be the least painful for Janin, considering what she's already went through. But I had a plan.

It didn't take long for me to realize I could still move, so I said to Elebin, "Let her be."

Janin looks at me confused but thankful. Don't worry sis. Today's our last day.

"Let her be? That's a brave move by you. But tell you what. If you want to do it so badly, then ok. Today your sister I'll leave alone."

His unsuspecting eyes watched as I got closer. I turned to Janin and smirked as I took hold of what he gave me. He didn't expect a thing and I'm sure Janin was as confused as he was...up until the point when I pulled out my knife and placed it on top of what was in my hand.

"Open the door or it comes off."

He tried to pull back but my grip was too strong.

"Warning number one..."

I slid the knife just enough to cause blood.

"Warning number two..."

The knife slid the opposite way again and again more blood.

"Warning number..."

He yelled, "Ok...stop!"

His hand trembled as it opened the cage door for us. I turned to Janin but didn't even need to say anything. She rushed outside and grabbed the stick now stained with blood on its tip.

"Fatal mistake..."

I couldn't stop myself from doing it if I tried. The knife pushed down in a swift cutting stance. There was a loud scream of pain from the victim, no, the deserving. A needle tip stick then managed to find its way to the back of Elebin's legs. He fell to the ground as I scurry out of the cage. I planned on killing him, but I doing all of the work would have been almost meaningless. I could only trade weapons with Janin, and wait by the stairs until her revenge was satisfied.

It's hard to explain what one feels after two days and nights without food or water. Your organs shrink, the need for protein goes to the extreme—eating away at your liver, gut, muscle, and brain. This basically means pain...a lot of pain, cramps, and eventually intelligence is depleted. I don't think were yet at the stage where our brain is directly affected by it, but we've, or I've, long ago passed the stage of hunger. At least I know the difference between being full and being forced a loss of appetite. This is all excluding the effects of long-term dehydration; which include, fainting, muscle contractions, headaches, and more cramps.

Five minutes later, when the screaming stopped, Janin fell to the ground crying. I rushed to her aid, but she only needed to let her eyes dry. I pick her up and climb to the top of the stairs where we found the kitchen. We rummage through the fridge to find our necessities. Bread, carbonated water, and even some chocolate. It all went down in less than a minute. We then open the front door of the house; but, we were miles from anywhere. This time, the elements of a dark forest still wounded by winter did not lie to us.

The first idea that our starved minds could come up with, is to follow the gravel road away from here. Seeing my sister shiver, I give her my clothes. Only a hygiene suit at mid-night would make anyone shiver, me included. She wanted to give the pants back; but honestly, what brother would leave their sister only half-covered? Although, I may just have kept them if that pervert hadn't cut holes in her suit.

An hour into our trip I remember falling, and pounding the ground.

"We could have taken his truck! Or some clothes!"

But an hour of walking anywhere, away from or towards hell...you don't exactly want to turn around. The good news was our famine had worn off completely, and the bad news is we soon found ourselves with another problem in front of us. There was a fork in the road and no signs to tell us which way to go. On the other hand, either way may lead to a city or town. But on the *third* hand...a town of red necks may not be a good idea in our state. Unless there's a clothing shop. Shit! I just remembered that my knife is still in the basement. I could blame Janin for that. She had it last, why did she have to drop it? Oh well, what's done is done. I guess carrying a bloody knife around would be kind of suspicious anyway.

Janin asks, "High road or low road?"

"And which one would be the high road?"

She shrugs. "Right will be high."

I nod and resume walking. "In that case, let's go left."

And left we went, although something didn't look right about the whole thing. For one, blood-orange sun was just appearing over the horizon, but no buildings or pollution in the far distance. We couldn't have been taken that far away from the city. This guy worked daily, and early, he wouldn't have his residence more than twenty minutes away. And you can usually see a city at less than twenty minutes of driving, or a quarter-day of walking. We did see something in the horizon though...smoke from a fire. We were pretty much inside of a large forest, so it was unconvincing to continue...but we did. Now why would we do that? I have a saying that someone had probably already made semi-famous. 'Move one way, but look the other.' -- Which basically means, 'whatever path you choose, always keep your focus on the path you did not.' Now how does that apply here?

The closer we came, the more it didn't look like an uncontrolled fire. Eventually we were able to label it a camp fire...a rather large camp fire but it meant people none the less. We both knew that people could be both good and bad, especially when temptation waves out to them. It was cold, however, and we were tired. Which meant we weren't going to turn back now. We needed warmth, food, water, shelter, and the works! A camp fire could supply one of those needs, and the camp itself could supply the rest.

Finally, after nearly an hour of more straggling and fainting, we came within spying distance of the camp. Not like we were in the mood to spy, and the camp surely wasn't in the mood to be spied on. It was them who first saw us, even though we were still a few hundred yards away.

Without knowledge, someone yelled out to us from behind, "Hands in the air!"

At first I didn't think Janin understood the concept when she dropped to the ground. It wasn't long before I realized she had just fainted again. With my hands in the air, I turned around and faced the adolescent wielding a Y-10 rifle. He held it like he had experience, so my first thought wasn't to worry about an accidental bullet into my skull.

"Look at us!—where could we hide any weapons?!"

The Y-10 is a cross between a sub-machine gun and a rifle. It reminds me a lot of the once famous M-4 Carbine. On a more serious note, the adolescent stood there talking to him-self or perhaps a radio. He was too far for me to hear what he was saying, but close enough to see him nod.

"Okay, keep walking to the camp."

He allowed me to kneel down to Janin and wake her up. The best way is usually to call their name and hope for a response -- lucky that she did respond by opening her eyes. I helped her up and let her lean against me for the rest of the duration.

The camp was nicely designed. It had a wooden gate with un-barbed wires running across – three of them connecting the wood poles diagonally. There was no gate, just an open spot, and two more adolescent guards with the same type of gun. They lead us to a small building, closest to the fire. It was there that we met what we thought would be our destiny.

A bunch of people were in the building. Talking, eating, and drinking. I wanted to steal their food and drinks; but, before I could do anything, I was approached by a man around the age of 20. He seemed to be the oldest here.

"Why do you wear only a hygiene suit?"

I was hugging myself to keep warm. As if that wasn't enough of a hint, I guess I had to explain.

"We were kidnapped. And we haven't eaten or drank anything for days."

He turned to a guard and nodded. "Aid them please."

We then followed the guard to a sub-room where we had a selection of clothes and even a new hygiene suit for Janin. Unfortunately, it was too small for her. When we left the room with our new clothes, the same guard led us to a table with food already prepared. It was creamed potatoes and peas, with plain water to drink. We didn't know it, but the table we were told to sit at was occupied by the man we met who seemed to be the leader. Well, him and another, girl, about the same age as him.

We weren't imposing...I think he wanted to investigate us, because the next thing that was said was by him. "So where are you two from?"

Janin was the first to swallow her food and reply, "We're from the city."

He asks, "I assume you are...clones?"

Janin replies, "Yes, sir...we are."

"You said you were kidnapped...by whom?"

"Our manager, sir...he's dead now."

He asks, "Was he a clone as well?"

Janin shakes her head. "...No, sir."

The man laughs.

Trying to sustain my anger, I ask, "What's funny?"

"Have you learnt not to trust humans yet?"

I shake my head, "He was a bad example. But I'm sure they aren't all like that."

"In time you will learn their flaws."

Janin asks him, "What do you mean. Aren't you human?"

He shook and smiled. "I'm a clone, just like you. So is everyone here. Our foreheads are no longer branded with human hands."

I looked and Janin and she looked at me. It felt like fate had brought us here. We weren't even completely sure what these people stood for, or what they plan on doing, but they had let us in already. We once again looked at the leader with peeked interest.

He said to us in a confident voice. "I'm Stagg.", and pointed to the girl sitting next to him, "This is my companion Linier. If you join us, you will soon find out that she is not the easy-going leader."

Looking back at Janin, and without words, I ask if she wanted to join. She nodded, so that was it—we joined. As Linier continued to eat, Stagg showed us to the sleeping quarters, which was like something you would see in a military school. He informed us that we had just joined Sense 6...which was an activist group with a simple goal of supplying residence for tossed away clones. He said they first tried living in the city, but were harassed daily by the incompetent. Legally, we have no right to live here; so naturally, we need the guards.

The first thing I noticed and loved about this place was the friendly feel it had on me. Within hours of socializing, we got to know a large chunk of the residence. Some had companions with them, but it's sad to find out that most had

lost their companions in some army related assignment or accident. I told a few people about how Theara was still in the city, and she would really appreciate living here. But they didn't talk too much about the matter. Later, we had both gotten our bar-codes removed, which at first seemed like a breeze. All they did was damp our foreheads with a cloth, which soon became cold and dry. It wasn't until a few minutes later that we felt like a fire had started above our eyes, and what looked like blood was seeping out. They assured us it's what happens, and it's not blood. The damp cloth was too react with the ink in our heads, and was just pushing it out of our skin. It lasted only a few more minutes, but it still burnt, and we were both made aware of the huge rash it left for the rest of the day.

The rest of the day...that would make four – four days with only Theara on my mind. What could possibly have happened to her in that time with no one to get food or water for her? I hope she wasn't caught, and taken back to captivity. I hope she's ok.

Summary,

After staying after-hours in their new job, Michael and Janin were kidnapped by their boss, Elebin, and tortured for being clones. Michael and Janin managed to kill their captor and escape from his house away from the city; however, they had to venture down a dark gravel road. On this road, they met up with a camp populated by clones just like them where their wounds were healed.

4th Part

Janin's voice struck me from my bed that morning. "...Mich!"

It was still dark.

"Mich, wake up."

I blink my eyes at her, so she can say, "Something's happening. Quick, follow."

It was weird to for once be awoken by Janin. It's usually me who has to wake her up, but I can see that something was serious. With just a hygiene suit and a cotton blanket wrapped around me, I followed my sister into the night, and stopped at the entrance to our camp. Two guards were holding someone who I've never seen before. He looked to be late adolescence, and seemed angry at something. He was giving the guards a hard time trying to free him-self, but the guards were just too tough for him.

Stagg, not too far in front of the lunatic, spoke in only a calm yet tired voice, "I just don't know what you're talking about."

The hostile screamed back at him, "Shut up you liar! I know it was you! You're people came and took her away!"

"And how do you know it was our people?"

Still yelling, he laughed, "Check your count then! I managed to kill one of the fuckers."

"Resorting to murder now are we? We'll your tribe certainly has lowered its standards."

"Kidnappers!—I thought we had an agreement!"

Stagg shook his head. "My dear friend, Ocau; we were never at an agreement."

He nodded to the guards who took the man away. That name, though, for some reason rang a bell. Ocau?

"...Janin?" I asked, and she looked back at me.

"Yes. That name, don't you remember?"

I shook my head, "No."

"Ocau is Theara's companion. He must be talking about Theara."

No! Theara's companion is worried about my Theara being kidnapped? And by us? Why would we do that? If it's true though, perhaps it would be good news that we have Theara now, instead of the army.

Janin grabbed my arm, "Come on."

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to talk to Ocau. And find out what this *tribe* thing is all about."

We follow the guards to a building. A prison with actual bars and a key-locked door. A part of this camp that I hadn't noticed earlier or perhaps I just ignored. Before we were able to enter though, the guards pushed us back and said to us, "Sorry. We can't let you talk to the prisoners."

We were both annoyed with the remark. We're a part of this camp, right? But it was ok in the end, I think. Stagg from behind us said to the guards, "...It's ok. Let them find out everything they want to know. And let them choose on their own."

Before he left, he said to the prisoner, "Ocau. I can assure you, that we did not kidnap Theara. You will be released in the morning. Just don't burn down our prison, and we'll even throw in a goodbye breakfast. We are on the same side, please know that."

His speech did not convince Ocau, but it looked like he was beginning to calm down. One of the guards took off, probably to *guard* somewhere. The other I guess was a jail keeper—he stayed and sat on his comfy wooden chair. He was good though, and never took his eyes off the prisoners, or me and Janin. By the way, I would like to apologize for all the times I've said '*me and*' instead of '*and I*', it's how I talk. Although not correct, I think it sounds better.

Janin and I approach the bars, and I ask in enthusiasm, "Your Theara's companion?"

He answers, "Don't talk to me, Sense scum."

My sis', tired as she must be, could only grunt back at him. "We saved Theara's life once...and we just got here, so you have no right to say something like that."

"You saved my Theara?—When?"

I answered, "She tried to kill herself. She cut her wrist in an ally, and we took her to the hospital."

"The hospital?—why didn't you bring her home?"

I replied, "We didn't know she had a home."

Ocau pushes himself in the corner of the one and only cell. It didn't look like he wanted to talk. It was then that our second leader, the infamous Linier walked into the room. We had never heard her talk before, or even seen her after the meal. When she placed her hands on the cell bars, Ocau took a glimpse at her, but soon looked away.

Linier said to him, "It's really you."

But Ocau didn't reply. He glimpsed once more before turning away again. He acted like a stubborn child through my eyes.

Linier continued, "I never thought I'd see you again. How have you been?"

She said it kindly. I don't think she disliked this Ocau as much as anyone should. Perhaps he's just misunderstood. Perhaps there's a mature Ocau hiding inside an immature body. The fact that he didn't want to speak a word to Linier was noticeable. But it didn't seem to bother her.

She asked with a smile, "Still shy?"

He finally replied, "You want to hear me apologize. That's the only reason you're here."

Linier asked with confidence, "And what about you? Why are you here?"

"You're backstabbing tribe kidnapped Theara! Stagg doesn't know because it was you. This is your revenge, isn't it?"

She shook her head, "No, Ocau. I am sorry for what happened to your companion, but we had nothing to do with any of it. What would it accomplish if we did?"

When Ocau didn't reply, she said to him softly, "What happened? I thought we loved each other."

Linier walked away just as Ocau whispered below his breath so she didn't have to hear him say, "I'm sorry."

When she was gone, Janin asked, "You were in love?"

He nods, and my sister asked again, "You were in love?!"

"Yes, I was! What's it to you anyway?!"

She asked, "Well...what happened?"

"It's none of your business anyway!"

"You're trapped in a cell. As long as you're here, I'm going to ask, and try to repair that love."

I looked at Janin. Was she a pro at this sort of stuff? I've never actually seen her in love before, so I wasn't sure that she knew what she was talking about. Of course, she was a girl, so naturally I'm sure she would know more about it than I would.

Ocau said to her, "If you do that, I'll light you both aflame."

"So why don't you?" She asked.

I said in a panicky voice to my sis, "Maybe we should listen to him..."

Ocau answered her question, "Because I'm not a murderer."

"But you said you killed someone already...one of the people who took Theara away."

Ocau looked stunned and mad. She got him in a corner, making him realize that he was indeed a murderer. I was still scared, since I didn't trust this guy yet. I saw what Theara could do, and he was her companion...so who knows-perhaps he's telling the truth.

He said something under his voice. Janin asked, "What?"

"Thank you for saving Theara. I'll repay you somehow."

I didn't believe it! The smug child actually managed gratitude...a thank-you!

Janin asks, "So you're a fire elemental?"

He smiles with a scary look in his eye. "...Yeah."

"If we let you out, can you take us to where Theara was last? We can help find her...it's sort of our specialty."

"I don't need your help getting out of a wooden building. I could burn this place down."

The guard laughs. "No you can't. Not here."

I turn around and ask him, "What do you mean?"

He answers, "All you need to make fire is fuel, heat, and oxygen...right?"

I nod as he continues, "Well. Where is he going to find heat? It's practically winter, there's no heat here."

He's right. Well as far as I know, he's right. I turn back around and see Ocau still hiding in the corner. He looks worried, and I think he knows that he can't get out of here alone. He's not the type to admit it though. He looks at me to swallow his pride.

"They let me out on sun-rise. Meet me at the entrance when they do, and I'll show you the way."

After I nod and turn around, the guard changes his attitude. "You know. Technically it is morning."

I repeat my previous question to him, "What do you mean?"

"He's allowed to leave in the morning; I don't think Stagg will mind him leaving now. It's not like we're at war with each other."

He pulls a key out of his pocket as he walks towards the cell. The door opens and Ocau bumps into his shoulder as he leaves. What a child! He was just granted his freedom and all he can do is act ungrateful. I plan on leaving and

forgetting about him as soon as he shows us the hint on where Theara may be. So we follow him. In the chill of midnight, we set foot down the road we came from. It all seemed painfully familiar, walking back towards our recent hell. When we got the fork in the road, and noticed that we weren't going the *other* way, that we were actually going down the road that led to the pervert's house, I had to stop for a second. Both Janin and I did. He turned around and walked close to us. "We can't stop. There was a murder not too long ago. It could be the same people who took Theara."

I ask, "Was the murderer an old man, who lived in a country house?"

"How did you know?"

We didn't reply because we didn't have to. Ocau looked at us and immediately knew who killed the man.

"Why did you do it?" he asked.

I shook my head. I didn't want to share with him our experience.

"Look..." he said, "...I don't care, and I didn't know the guy. But there are mountain lions and wolves everywhere. We're the perfect prey for them, so we need to keep moving. Now come, it's not too far from here."

The way he said it didn't convince me to trust him. But right there we had only two options. The first was to pull back. Forget about him, forget about Theara, and walk back to the camp where we were happy. The second was to just trust him. Since that was the only way we could find Theara, we followed along.

He wasn't lying. There was a small forest trail just around the corner. It was no wonder we didn't see it the first time. The trail was covered with snow and footprints, or both man and wolves. Along the way, we noticed a rabbit trail leading into the forest, with the wolf tracks following them. Only a few dozen paces from there, we heard a voice from above say to us, "Welcome back sir."

We looked up and saw a guard covered in white armour facing down at us with a motionless wave in his hand. Ocau waved back as we continued to walk, and gradually noticed that we were actually inside the camp. It was brilliant, amazing, stunning! Like a child's playground. There was; of course, a wooden wall to keep the predators out, but it was hard for us to even see. There were tree forts, but not many. The woods soon revealed large open spaces, and we were now standing in the middle, facing a large fire pit with a few people sitting around it.

Ocau takes a left, down another trail in between more trees. The trail was very short, and came to a wooden building.

He turns to us and says, "This is where Theara and I live. This is where I chased them into the forest."

He points to the wooden wall, "I managed to shoot one of them as they climbed over the fence, with my sister."

Janin asks, "Did you find anything out about the one you killed?"

He shook his head, "Only that he was a member of Sense 6."

"Stagg assured you he had nothing to do with it. Even Linier..."

He shouted, "They're lying! Those fucking liars kidnapped my sister, and now they will pay!"

Janin tried to calm him down. "Ocau, please...we didn't notice anyone new enter that camp yesterday. Let us follow their trail. Don't do anything that may break your alliance just yet."

The way she said everything made me almost believe she'd been aware of this rebellion thing for a long time. She wouldn't lie to me, or keep anything from me, so I knew it was just good people skills as usual. Ocau looked mad, and didn't act like he bought anything my sis' said to him. It was only when he extended his arm towards the fence and asked us *politely* to continue, that we knew he was just being childish. I think my sister found that a cute feature about him. Hopefully later she'll grow old of it, and realize what a bad decision it would be to become involved with this one. Everything about him made me uncomfortable.

I asked him, "It will be hard to follow at this time. We'll need light to do this; and like you said, we'll need to watch for predators."

He shook his head and checked his watch. "We'll do it in two hours, when the sun becomes visible. Until then, I suggest you get a weapon and some armour. Go to the centre fire and turn left down the trail, the armour is right there."

"Thank you, sir."

He acted childish, but I understood him. I understood that he was worried about his sister, and was very protective about her.

As we went towards the fire, he shouted, "Hey!"

We turned and he said to us, "When we find her. We're going to kill everyone who was involved."

We nod and continue to the armoury. A new person had joined the party around the fire. People must wake up early here; it was only four-thirty morning. A few of them looked at us as we walked closer to where they kept their weapons. Possibly, they were just being cautious. But lucky them, they had a guard! No, don't worry; I wasn't

planning on doing anything stupid.

The guard nodded as we approached. "He already informed me. There's someone inside if you need any assistance."

We entered, but were disappointed. Their selection was poor, and most of what was there were assault rifles. I personally have little experience with an assault rifles or sub-machines, same as Janin. On better news, they did have two good types of pistols. What I was mainly looking for was a knife to replace the one I left behind, until I go back and retrieve it. I'm sure the cops have already taken it as evidence though. So I just took a pistol. Before leaving, I said to myself, 'what the hell', and grabbed a rifle. Janin managed to find sub-machine gun with a small scope on it. We were well prepared for whatever we may find at the end of the search.

We left the armoury and were shocked to find a fox walking nearby. It growled at us and slowly backed away. It was scared of us, but what shocked me was the guard next to the door did nothing. He was looking at me in a calm way. The fox bolted away into some trees.

I asked the guard, "Why didn't he growl at you?"

"She hasn't seen you yet. You could have been a hunter in her eyes."

I ask, "She? You know the fox?"

"She has a family here. Her den is under the armoury. No one's been there for a while, so you entering must have scared her."

Janin asks him, "How many animals live in the camp?"

"Not many. Other than the fox family of six, there's a raccoon family of four. We put food by their homes so they don't go through our garbage."

She asks, "You've trained them?"

"Not trained. They only live with us because we live with them. Just be sure not to leave garbage or food lying around in your residence."

It was unbelievable! I've never actually seen wild animals live with humans before. Foxes and raccoons were terrified of people, how could they possibly live here?

He continued, "We once had a mountain lion that came in here at night. He killed one of our dogs, and attacked someone who tried to scare him away."

I asked, "What happened to him?"

"Well, the dog died, and was carried away. The person who helped can no longer use his right arm. We hunted the lion down, and killed him to make sure he wouldn't come back."

Janin said to the guard, with fear in his eyes, "Oh my god, I'm sorry to hear that."

"We built a larger wall, but doubt it could hold back a wild cat if it wanted in. We don't usually fear the animals; they don't usually attack groups of people, but lately..."

I ask, "What?"

"...lately, animals outside have been acting weird...almost as if they were frightened."

"Of what?" my sister wanted to know.

He shook his head. "I wish I knew."

Janin places her hand on his shoulder to calm him. I walk to the fire, but Janin stays to talk more about the matter. I met some interesting people at the fire. It was almost like this camp was the same as the one we came from. It looked a little more *active* in the arts of war, by the weapons and armour they had, but I don't think they were the type to fight for a wrong reason. Janin soon joined the party, but it was when the sun started to rise. We had a long day ahead of us.

Summary,

Mich and Janin were awakened by Theara's companion, Ocau, who was blaming the camp of kidnapping his sister. He was sustained for a while but soon lead the two to another camp where they would track the location of Theara.

5th Part

The longer the sun looked across at us, the more belligerent (*eager to fight*) we became, until Ocau signalled us to start. We started by climbing the fence and dropping from seven feet into the snow on the other side. The tracks were still fresh, and would be easy to follow. Though the only human tracks were the ones merging into horse tracks, I don't think it will be hard to find where they fled. If there were horse tracks; though, then the trail may lead a very long way. Far from here, anything could happen.

Tracking anything engraved in snow to us, was almost like a dog tracking a scent. Then again, in our case, we couldn't be let off by hot pepper, or even a river. Usually at a river, the ones you're tracking will walk in the water one way or another to try and disguise their path. With two people, you can just scan the other end of the river in each direction until you find their path once again leading towards our objective. No rivers yet though. We did; however, find a cliff a few dozen yards in height. That was where the horse paths lead in different directions, but at a different pattern. It seemed suspicious, and may have lead us on the wrong path if Janin hadn't found a rope ladder down the cliff.

We climbed down, and were once again presented with a human trail. What we didn't expect was to drop in front of a wolf cave. It was empty, but the stench of fresh meat flooded the air blowing out from it. From then on, I held my pistol in caution for the return of skilled hunters. They did not return though, but we did find the end of our trail. This time, it did not lead to a cliff, river, or cave. It leads to a camp. The camp was occupied with many people, and in the centre was a large flattened rock, with blood-stained snow around its vicinity. Janin pointed her scope at the rock for a better look. She then lowered it, and looked at me. I could tell in her eyes that it was Theara on that rock.

Above the rock was a pure dark cloud, slowly lowering itself onto the corpse. When it got close enough, the people of the camp surrounded the rock. I've heard of these people before. They call themselves Natives of Faith, when really all they are is Satanists. In the past few decades, they've been multiplying, but keep themselves secret. Their camps, or dens, are extremely hard to find, even by satellite. A lot of people are honestly convinced that they have a curse of concealment. In every town, city or organization, you can find a Satanist – if you look hard enough.

We had to stop this. I pulled out my rifle, and Janin held her sub-machine. We walked towards the gathering with Ocau following behind us. He had only a pistol and a few fire-bombs on his belt. The crowd saw us approach, and allowed us to minimize the distance between us and Theara. It was too late, we were too late. Theara had been long dead and rotting on this rock. I couldn't explain the anger that filled my heart and clouded my mind.

Ocau had all intention to explain my anger to the Satanists. He lit a fire-bomb and tossed it high into the air. The spectators ran with fear as Ocau quickly took hold of our wrists, grasping hard to never let us go. The fire hit the rock and shattered into the air, onto our clothes, and covered the ground. It reflected from us, just like it did when Theara first showed us her gift. The fire spread throughout the camp like a volcanic explosion. We heard screams...many screams that remained in the air, mixed with the crackling of a massive flame, and ones that would not be silenced. Ocau must have made the flame just right, to force the longest possible pain onto the ones who killed his companion. I would do the same.

When the screams did eventually stop, the flame imploded back over the rock to burn Theara's body into boiled skin, into a skeleton, and finally into ash which blew into the air and fire-crippled trees. He let go of us when we thought it was done, but it wasn't done yet. It was then the corner of my eye had caught Ocau raising his pistol. He knelt on the ground with his head down and pistol planted against his right temple.

Janin had stepped in a grabbed the weapon before he could react. He wasn't angry at her, nor did he lash out to regain his suicide ale. He didn't even move. I'm not sure if he was actually going to kill himself, if he had just wanted to make things more dramatic, or if he was just realizing what a stupid move pulling the trigger would have been. I still don't understand why or *how* he's the leader of a rebellion – if he makes such hasty actions. I kind of wanted to ask him what his plans were, but why would I anyway? I'm not a part of his rebellion, I don't exactly like him, and no matter what he said, I was still going to live on with my life.

"Okay.", he said as he returned to upright balance. "Let's go home."

Interest. That must be the reason why I stay near him. I always wanted to see what his next move was, and why he always surprised me. But, *yet's go home*? Didn't he care about his companion? Did he finally snap? Did he not know what he was doing? Whatever it was, I could only look confused at Janin and her to me...perhaps a little scared as well. What was I to do though? What was I to do about losing Theara? I didn't know her that well, but I felt a connection with her. Whenever I was near here, I felt a feeling of warmth inside my chest. More specifically, a painless burning sensation around my heart. I wasn't sure what love felt like...perhaps that was it?

It took us about an hour to find this place, but only two thirds of that to return to our camp. Ocau retreated to his villa, not allowing us to follow him in. He looked either depressed or fatigued...perhaps he does have remorse for his Theara after all. Alone he was, and probably with another gun available to him. So if he was going to carry though, tonight would be it.

The guard in-front of Ocau's villa had asked us, "Did you find Theara? Is she safe?"

Fortunately, that was after Ocau was safe inside and couldn't hear him. It wasn't a bad thing that he asked that, anyone who was concerned would ask. But I didn't want to explain to his hopeful eyes that Theara had been killed in the eyes of the devil, and that her innocent soul may be at risk. I could only shake my head at him in sympathy as I walk to the centre-fire. I was going to go to my room...if I had a room outside of the building I was currently forbidden to enter.

I asked around, if anyone had or knew of an extra bed to sleep in – first for Janin, and then me. Someone by the name of Bou had an extra bed for Janin, and Forrn had one for me. Of course it was still mid-day, and many hours remained until it became dark, so this was just a precaution if Ocau still didn't want us in his quarters. I thought about walking back to the Sense 6 camp. Though it wasn't as nice as here, it felt like I had an actual life there. All this place could offer was the memory of Theara. And the talk of joy around the fire was wearing on me. I had to find someplace quite for just me and my thoughts. It wasn't long before I realized that we were in a forest. But the only place of loneliness here would be hard to find, and when you're looking for peace, you don't want to look long.

I went around back of the armoury. There were pine needles spread completely across the ground, but I didn't care, because there was no one there. I sat on the snow and supported my back against a pine. I don't know if you've ever sat below a pine before, but it's not the most comfortable thing to do. That was what I thought about for the duration – the pine. I sought a place to think of Theara, yet here I am, focused on something unrelated. I'd like to say that it was my subconscious being elusive, but I was completely aware of it, so it couldn't have been anything but my own decision. My own...unrelated, unreliable, unsatisfactory decision.

Theara eventually found me, to truncate (*cut short*) my suffering. I missed Theara and wanted her beside me, to the point where I would hallucinate her talking to me, and know it wasn't really her.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"...Just thinking." I replied.

"...About me?"

"Yes."

She had to ask, "Why?"

"Because I miss you...I've only known you for a day, but I miss you."

"I don't think I'm your type."

"What? Why?"

She smiled, "Because I'm dead."

They say that severe depression can cause you to see and hear things. But I don't think that was the case. I actually believed I had just communicated with Theara's dead self. It was then I heard something sliding down from the roof of the armoury. It continued to slide until it finally fell, and landed an inch from my hand that was relaxing on the snow. It was a knife...and lucky me it had missed the flesh – for the problem with being stabbed in the hand is all the bones that it rubs against as it enters and exits. Bones aren't nerves, of-course, and they don't *hurt*, but it feels awkward and scary when something is abnormal about them. Our minds are more concerned about bone structure than a wound.

Theara once again appears around the corner of the armoury.

"Mich. What are you doing here?"

"Thinking of you..."

She flirts, "Me? What do you mean?"

"Why couldn't you fight them off?"

She asked, "Who?" ...as if she didn't know who I was talking about.

"...The ones who killed you."

"Mich?"

An electric pain snaps through one eye, and then to the other. Theara once again disappeared, or rather morphed into Janin while my eyes were shut. It was good; she looked almost real this time. At this point I actually realize how crazy I am. What am I doing, talking to a ghost? Seeing illusions? There are medications and focus groups for things like this. I choose not to believe what remained in front of me, and ignored Janin completely. But she wouldn't leave.

"Mich, are you ok?"

Actually, I think this one was real.

I smile and reply, "Sorry. I'm not feeling so well right now."

"Get up. I think you should rest. We haven't really had a complete sleep in a while."

I nod as my sis' helps me up.

She asks, "Did you find somewhere to sleep?"
"Yeah..." I pointed to one of the small villas. "...That one right there."

She gave me a quick one-armed hug and a, "Sleep well.", as I head inside. It certainly would be nice to have a place to call home. I guess I could actually go home, to that army apartment building. I wonder if it's still there...or if they finally kicked the clones out. And where would the clones go? I wonder how they're doing on their own. Or maybe they joined an organization. Well, I wear my hygiene suit in my bed today...since it would be awkward to be naked at a camp like this, and in a strangers home. I know it damages the suit, but one night should be fine. Too bad it takes me forever to sleep. And I wasn't really tired right now anyway. I just kept closing and opening my eyes at abstract noises outside. I kept turning from one side to another, and every so often would stare at the dark wood ceiling. I haven't seen a building made a wood in a while.

Eventually my eyes open to see a dark room. I must have fallen asleep a few hours ago. To my left I saw Fornn, who was also sleeping in a bed across the room. The fire crackled outside as some people continued to talk late into the night. I roll back over to face the wall but end up seeing Theara's eyes next to me. She had made herself comfortable under my covers while I had my back turned. I panic and push my upper half upwards to realize that fear had once again forced myself out of a dream. It was the same time of day as in my dream, and my roommate was sleeping, though he was snoring in reality. Theara was not beside me. A dream...dreams I can handle. It's amazing how in dreams you can capture what's really there, like another person sleeping in the room – scary almost how well you can do that in your dream...yes...scary.

Putting that experience aside, without fear for a returning nightmare, I lay back down in bed facing the direction I once saw Theara's face. When I was all comfortable, and eager to once again dream, my hand came across a cold object where Theara once was. With my other arm, I raise the covers and bring the object to clear view. I was stunned at what I saw – a knife. The same knife that had fallen from the armoury roof was now under the sheets of my bed. I don't remember putting it there, yet there it was...mocking me. I look back at Fornn in hopes that this was still a dream, but it wasn't. I've never before had two related dreams stacked side by side. In other words, I've never *dreamt* of waking up. And never before had a knife just appeared out of nowhere without any memory of how it got there. Someone must have put it there while I was sleeping. Why? Who knows? But that was the only explanation. And I still didn't feel well, my head, I think I had a fever. And on that note, I once again fell asleep.

When my eyes once again opened, the knife was still where I had put in beside my bed. Fornn wasn't sleeping any more. He must have already left. It felt like it was late morning to mid afternoon, meaning that I slept...a lot. I suppose I should get up now. I do want to do something other than stay at this camp, let alone sleep the rest of my life. So...what would my plan be? What should I do for the next few hours, or even days? Perhaps Janin or Ocau have an idea. Janin would want to do something like travel. And I bet Ocau would want to do something like seek out and destroy the Satanists. Of course, if we oppose them, we'll surely lose.

Have you ever apposed someone you knew you couldn't win against? Or you knew you couldn't lose? Morale seems to work in weird but understandable ways. I remember back in training, we had a competition against each other with blunt weapons once a month. The objective was to incapacitate the other opponents until you were the only one left standing. It was all one match with about a dozen other clones in the same skill level. I was never a great fighter, and knew it. In fact, one month I *knew* I wouldn't win the competition. I *knew* I would be the first to be knocked out. I was demoralized. I finished the top of the competition that month. It was like no one could touch me. Next month I *knew* I had the skill to do it again...and I was the first to be knocked out. What I'm trying to say, is if you *know* you can't win or will do poorly and yet you try, something comes into play and helps you out. Yet, if you're full of yourself and think you're going to win, and you still try hard...chances are you'll lose. This isn't a lesson, this is just my experience.

'One who knows thy sin has no sin--' another riddle that I am fond of. I heard it a long time ago, but it kind of makes sense. If one (you) realize you have sinned and that you have done wrong, you really have no sin at all. Sin is just a word to brand us as bad or good people. But how can you be a good person if you don't realize any of your sins, or is a bad person still bad if they realize what they do is wrong? Sure, there could be exceptions; but, the basic philosophical concept is there.

I'm sorry for trailing off like that. What I meant to say was, the day was cold and the fire was warm. I wanted to just curl up by the fire and hug someone. Does that sound silly? Well, a lot of people were doing it. It seemed everyone around the fire was holding someone. It made me feel like an outsider to not have a hugging partner...even though I was an outsider in the first place. I could feel their eyes glancing at me every now and then, as if I didn't feel unwanted enough.

What makes us 'fit in' and feel wanted is socialization, and socialization is really just conformity (being like everyone else). How can anyone be a part of society if they don't conform? Everyone thinks' they're different, and we are...but to what extent?

Far from the fire, I saw Ocau by his villa talking to someone familiar. They didn't talk long, or from what I caught.

They agreed of something before Ocau went back inside and the visitor came towards the fire. In order to get anywhere in this camp you always need to head towards the fire, which was the centre of it all, with four paths leading north, east, south, and south-west. The south path was the exit, north went to the armoury, east was Ocau's villa, and south-west was residence.

I remember that visitor! It's the leader from the other camp, Stagg! I rushed towards him to see if he remembers me. Even though it's only been a couple days.

"Stagg! What's up?"

He looks at me and smiles. "Hey. How do you like it here?"

"It's not bad." That was the best answer I could come up with.

He nods. "If you change your mind, you're always welcome at Sense 6."

Knowing I would stay here, I had to reply, "I'll think about it."

"I have to go; Mich...matters to attend to."

Curious, I ask, "Does it have something to do with Ocau?"

"Yeah...we're going to war."

War? It must be against the Satanists who killed Theara. Yeah, them...the ones with endless amounts of soldiers and weapons. Sane fight, oh yeah, good choice. No! That's not why I left the army! That's not why I came here! To die? As Stagg walks down the southern path without witnessing my expression, I ran off in all directions in search for Janin. I had to tell her that we're leaving. To where? It doesn't really matter. Living alone in the city is better than going off to war. When I find her, she was still sleeping in her bed. No, I'm not lying...sleeping. I thought I had slept late, but it was now 2pm.

I ask her roommate, "When did she go to sleep?"

He was busy doing something, like a card game on his bed; nevertheless, he answered, "Oh! Uh, let me think..."

He paused for a few seconds while fingering his eyes, then re-answered, "I think it was around 9:30."

"...This morning?" I asked.

He shook his head, "No...yesterday."

"So she's been sleeping for more than 16 hours?"

He asks, "Is that abnormal for her?"

"Yeah, a few hours more..."

"Oh. Should we worry?"

I answer, "You shouldn't worry about her. You have bigger matters to attend to." referring to the war he was about to enter.

He looks confused and frustrated at his confusion. I tap Janin on her cheek. When that doesn't work, I squeeze her nose. She started breathing through her mouth, but remained asleep.

"Janin..."

No reply.

"...Janin!"

Still nothing. She was never easy to wake up, but this was exceeding the limits. I could only think of one other option. I must force her eyes open. It's impossible to continue sleeping when your eyes have been opened. When I place my index and middle fingers above and below her right eye, I felt her hot forehead. She had a serious fever! I couldn't even hold my finger there for too long or it would eventually burn! Janin, what's wrong? She was fine yesterday.

I turn and ask the roommate, "Did she look okay when she went to bed yesterday?"

"Hmm..." he thinks and soon answers, "Yes, I mean, no! Well I don't know completely."

Irritated, I ask, "What?"

"There! Look!"

He points at Janin who was now curled in the fetal position, and turning from one side of the bed to the other. She would occasionally cough and really grab the sheets with all her strength.

Her roommate continued, "She was fine when she went asleep. It was at the same time as I got into bed, but before I could close my eyes, she started doing that."

"Why didn't you call a doctor?"

"I thought it was just a bad dream." he answered.

Really annoyed with this guy, I ask, "Well then where can I find one?"

"In Ocau's house...but she's more of a physical doctor."

Ignoring his ignorance, I run to Ocau's villa. The guard didn't mind me coming in this time, so Ocau must be feeling a bit better...or worse. I wasn't exactly sure where to find the doctor, but logic tells me she's in the room with the

big red plus symbol above the door. Sure enough, there she was at her desk looking bored. There were a few beds in the room for patients, but none were being used. Lucky her, she gets a new patient.

I ask, "You're a doctor?"

She looked like late twenties...but how could that be? She couldn't be a clone – human cloning was allowed for only two decades.

She asks, "Is something wrong?"

"Yes. I need you to come with me. It's my sis'."

She was really confused at something, and I didn't know what until she asked, "You're sister?"

"Yes. Please, follow me."

She gets up. "Ok, lead the way."

We had to run back to my Janin. Somehow I don't think getting there any sooner would help that much, but it made me feel* a bit more confident – even if I was blinded with fear. Janin seemed normal when we returned to her.

The doctor turned to her roommate as she asked me, "Is he acting up again?"

Her roommate laughs, "Sorry Miss Lis. Not this time!"

She asks him, "You're feeling alright then?"

I cough to return her attention. "Hello?"

Turning back to me and focusing on Janin, she asks, "Is it her then?"

She approaches Janin and places her hand on her forehead. She checks her eyes, mouth, ears, and chest.

"Well then..." she ponders.

"...I don't know what to say. It's a fever to quite an extent. I've never actually dealt with something like this."

"...What?" I ask, "You're a doctor and you have never dealt with a fever before?"

She shook her head. "I'm sorry, no."

I calm down a little. "Well what can we do?"

She picks Janin up gently, and answers, "I'll watch her carefully in the hospital and tell you if anything happens."

This doctor didn't seem all that med-savvy, (and if that isn't a word, I'll be sure to make it one). She acted like she cared to whatever extent allowed her to; I suppose that's all that really mattered. I'm just afraid my Janin may have something that can be treated, but won't.

"Hey."

Her roommate tried to get my attention. I looked at him expecting a sarcastic or inconsiderate response.

What I got was, "Do you think it has something to do with the animals acting weird?"

I didn't know anything about the 'weird animals', so all I could do was shake my head. Shrugging would have been a better response, but I can't just do both now. I decided to follow the doctor who gently held Janin, but I couldn't follow her the entire way. Disappointed I must say there was something going on at the fire. Almost everyone in the camp was there, but they weren't surrounding the fire, no, they were looking at Ocau who was about to make a speech. I tried to sneak around the group since it didn't concern me, but Ocau started too soon. He spoke into a small microphone which probably sent his voice to the villas and other areas of the camp.

He simply said, "Everyone come to mid-camp please."

Like I said, most everyone was already there, but a few more, the remaining gathered round ye' old fire. Ocau wasn't alone. Beside him were two others, one male, and one female. They looked important; perhaps they were the eyes and ears of Ocau, or the ones who make the actual decisions. If Ocau was in charge of it all, this camp would be long extinct. When everyone was there, and making sure I couldn't leave! He continued...

"Good to see you all!"

He waved as the crowd clapped. It wasn't a big enough of a crowd for sociological-invoked cheering, (people feel weird if they stand out in a crowd, especially if it's a little one).

"Thank-you all for coming. I wish I had good news to bring; but, as most of you know, Theara is dead."

There was a saddening silence in the crowd and Ocau's voice.

"She did not die of disease or illness. She did not die of animal attacks, freak accidents or suicide. No, she was

killed by the hands of Satanists.”

Chatter broke within the crowd. ‘Did he say Satanists?’, ‘Are we going to war?’, ‘Why would they do such a thing?’

“I know a lot of you were good friends of Theara, my companion and lover. Her death has taken us by surprise, and effected us all greatly.”

Did he say Theara was his lover?

“We have destroyed one of their camps, along with the Satan worshipping scum who were in it, performing their sick ritual on our Theara.”

He was a true speaker, in my opinion. This must be why he leads them, because they sell out to his every poetic word.

“I am afraid that whatever they had planned for Theara has not satisfied their lust. And they will return, and take one more of us.”

He then raised his voice to regain interest. “Tell me, rebels. Will we allow them to pick at our society as fish in a barrel?”

The crowd yelled, “No!” along with a few other responses, but all leading towards ‘no’.

He spoke again, “I have the military allegiance of two other rebellions. Sense 6, Unknown the Unbound, and let’s not forget the Mirror Rebellion!”

The crowd cheered this time. They put a lot of emotion into this, even though they weren’t completely sure what was going on yet.

“I say to you. If it was your companion, your lover, what would you do?!”

The crowd said a lot of different things, I couldn’t understand them all, but it mainly merged into a ‘seek revenge’ kind of feel.

“Today, we will rest and prepare. For tomorrow, we attack!”

Enthusiasm filled the crowd. What’s wrong with these people? You don’t take hundreds of lives to replace one. Haven’t they ever heard ‘an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind’? I needed to get out of here, fast...but Janin. Acting like I still care about Ocau and his war-hungry tribe, I wave and smile to him as I run to the hospital.

There was Janin in a comfy bed, as the doctor said. She was the same as before though. Her forehead burnt and appearance hurt. Don’t die on my sis’. I don’t know what’s wrong, but I’ll be by your side as long as it takes.

Summary,

Mich and Janin follow the kidnapers’ trail to a Satanist camp where they find Theara killed in some ritual. Ocau burns the entire camp and everyone in it. When they return, Janin falls into a deep sleep while Theara’s dead spirit tries to convince Mich to kill himself so they can be together. Ocau and many of his allies prepare for war against the Satanists.

6th Part

The figure of Theara was next to me in the hospital. She had her right arm around me as we sat on a bed, leaning against the wall. I was getting quite used to her surprise visits. The appearance of a ghost at first will always be frightening, but once you start talking, you start to relax.

I ask, "What is death like?"

Her sweet voice replies, "Like a dream you have complete control over."

This was a dream, and I knew it.

"Were you scared?"

Her arm leaves my back and returns to her side. "I don't know."

She sounded like she wanted to say 'yes', but was too shy.

"Did you love Ocau?"

She looks down and smiles. "I love you."

My Theara...you are everything I want, but I'm afraid I have to leave. The sound of someone yelling outside gave me an early wake. He was walking around the camp shouting things like, 'Get up!', and 'Wake up!' and so on. Ah yes, I had almost forgotten I slept in the bed next to Janin that night. Sadly, she was in the same condition this early morning.

"Wake up people, come on!"

So I leave my warm bed...back to reality, I suppose. Theara smiles at me from my bed as I leave the hospital. Still wearing the clothes I had forgotten to take off before sleeping, I ask the guy who was yelling if there was a change room, or someplace I can get a new hygiene suit.

"The armour has hygiene suits. And the armour there as well, will replace clothes." he replied.

Ah great, my day is set. New hygiene suit, armour, weapons, marching, battle, death. Death. I wonder if it will be as Theara said...a dream of my full control, and will she be in it as well? I still feel like I'm dreaming, yet I know I'm alive, and this is real. We all know that feeling.

Theara once again appeared in the armoury when everyone had left.

She asked me, "You're going to war?"

"...To avenge you."

She shook her head, "No, I have been avenged. Everyone who fights will die, and you cannot be killed."

"You keep giving me a knife, what do you mean by that?"

She again lowers her head, hesitates, and answers, "You won't be able to find me if you're killed. Only if you sacrifice yourself will you be with me forever...in a perfect world."

"...You mean kill myself?"

She nods, "Is it really so hard?"

"What do you mean I won't find you if I die any other way?"

My Theara, she leaves me now. Why? I'm alone again, in the armoury with half a suit of armour and a knife once again in my hands. I look at the knife, I wonder for a second. Why does she want this so much? The knife is placed where it should be, in a holster next to a hand-gun. I finish putting on the armour, do a quick unanswered prayer and return to mid-camp. I suppose running to Sense 6 will do no good...Janin's still in her coma, and they're in on this too anyway.

How many times have you just sat by the fire and watched the flames as your reality disappeared into memories? This is my first. When I looked at the flames, I could see only darkness. It felt like I was slipping away from life, losing the tight grip of my once controlled halo, it felt horrible. I remember when it was just me and Janin. We would even find a way to enjoy military training; but now, I fear I've lost everything. When I really needed her, Theara, she wasn't there. The only way to once again be with her was to...

"Michael! Is there a Michael here?" someone shouted out towards the crowd.

I look around and soon see him near the hospital. Without emotion, I walk towards him.

"You're Michael?" he asks.

"Yeah, that's me." Wish it wasn't.

"The doctor wanted to see you, it's about Janin."

With new joy in my face, "Thanks!" I rush inside to the hospital.

As predicted, it wasn't bad news at all! My Janin was awake again, talking to the doctor who looked like she was taking notes. I stop next to her bed. She opens her arms waiting for a hug and was not disappointed. She had tears in her eyes and was covered in sweat.

I had to ask her, "What happened?"

She shook her head and answered, "I couldn't wake up. I tried pinching myself, sticking my head under water, but nothing."

"So you were dreaming?"

She nods, "I was dreaming such horrible things. It was like a nightmare that would never end."

The doctor asks, "Can you tell me what you saw?"

She looks at the doctor expecting remorse, but none was given. Her nightmare was exposed.

"It started rather well. You and I had ran away from everything, and built our own camp. But someone was following us the entire way. And soon, the darkness came. The sun fell onto our land and burnt everything, except us three."

I ask, "Three?—the stranger?"

"Yes, he didn't come out of his tent, but I knew he was still in there. I had a feeling he had something to do with this, so I opened the door to his tent to see myself in chains. I looked at a mirror to see my body was now Theara's."

This all seems frighteningly familiar.

"I leave the tent with a knife in my hand, and try to kill you Mich. I kept trying to kill you because if you die, Theara would no longer want my body, and I could once again be free. I would never do this to you in real life Mich! It was just a dream!"

I reassure my Janin with a nod of understanding. "I know sis, I know."

"Eventually I managed to drive the knife into your neck. I watched in tears at what wrong I've done. When you fell to the ground, I could see a halo of light around you sink below the earth. Mine soon followed. I left my body and followed you. I followed you into hell Mich."

My crying sister held her head on her knees and between her arms. No one wants to be watched while crying. I didn't know what to say, so I left the hospital. Outside, it came to my attention that the world was on fire. Flames were burning the entire camp, homes, trees, even the air. I've heard of that. When the fire becomes so hot, even air becomes its victim. But this wasn't real, and my imagination soon fades back into reality. The flames disappear, the air returns...what is wrong with me?

"Are you Mich?"

I turn to a guard talking to me next to the villa.

He continued, "Ocau wanted me to tell you its best if you stay back and look after Janin."

Confused, I ask, "What? Why?"

"I'm not sure. I think he likes her."

"And why are you here?"

He almost laughed. "Me and three others...we're always here to look after things."

I never really did get a straight answer if Ocau used to like Theara or not, but I guess it wouldn't matter. On a more relevant note, does it bother me that he may like my Janin? No, not really. I can't say I didn't sort of see it coming. At least, I knew Janin liked him, I just didn't know what the defensive team of one was thinking. Knowing how stubborn he is, I bet somewhere along the lines he'll ask me to ask Janin what she thinks. Until then, I should focus on that dream she was talking about. Who was that man following us from this camp?—or to our new home? What is happening to us? Alright, that's it. We're leaving. Let's see who tries to follow us, and stop them before it's too late.

Looking back now, that was a hasty decision to make – also very stupid. You can use those two words in my definition to some extent...hasty and stupid. Back in the hospital I sit next to Janin who was no longer in tears. The doctor was still standing next to her. I tell the doctor to give us some privacy, and she obeys. Uneducated, but at least she knows when to leave a couple alone. Janin looks at me still paranoid from her sleep.

"Janin...I think we should leave."

She sounded negative in her response. "Why?"

To be honest I didn't know. I didn't know why we should leave or where we would go. This place seemed fine.

"I'm just thinking we're better off someplace else. This place seems a little too war hungry."

She asks, "Shouldn't we join them?"

"...join them?"

"Yes!" she answered, "Someone needs to put an end to the Satanists once and for all."

I shake my head, "This isn't our fight."

"But they do such horrible things to people. And what else do we have to do?"

I sat there and thought about it while she continued to explain her theory.

"Don't you want to accomplish something? I feel like the world can do without me. And I know you see yourself the same way. Why don't we prove them wrong?"

Still unwilling to die, I answer, "There's so many of them."

"Mich. There's so many of us!"

Is she right? Do we stand a chance? I still hated war and wanted nothing to do with it...but I think she's making sense. This may be the only way to be a part of a meaningful existence. Although meaning will be lost once the war is over, but the memory will stay, good or bad! She already knows she convinced me. She sees it in my eye. In fact, she already knows what I'm going to ask next.

"I'm fine, Mich. I say we catch up to our army, and join them."

My encouraged face could only nod as she got out of bed.

She asked me, "Can you get me some armour and a gun while I dress?"

"I'll be right back then."

That was probably the only time I ever ran to an armoury in excitement. It was indeed a weird feeling. But at the armoury, I realized something. In Janin's dream, she said she tried to kill me. I wonder if this is it...if this is how she will do away with me. She had convinced me to go off to war, and it's so easy to die in war. She knows this as well as I. Should I trust her?

I brought to her the armour and weapon she asked for, but I had a plan as well. Janin doesn't want to die, but she stated she wants to accomplish something. So, if I tell her I will not join her in the war, I will find out just who's side she's on.

"Janin..."

She starts putting on the armour, only to reply, "Oh no..."

What a weird response. "What?"

"You've changed your mind, haven't you?"

I do a small nod, trying to replace a verbal answer.

She shakes her head and comments, "I can't do this without you."

"I'm sorry Janin, but I can't."

She sighs. "Alright...well there's no point in me going then."

I knew it... "Don't let me stop you sis. I believe you're right, that we need to make a stand. But I just can't be a part of it. So please, if you want to, then go."

Convincing, but she had already made up her mind. "No. I'm going to stay with you."

I couldn't explain the sadness which followed. Someone wanted me dead, and has manipulated my sis against me. No! No that's ridiculous. Why would anyone manipulate someone to do something against another who could have been manipulated just as easily? My sister wouldn't try to kill me. It was just a dream, and nothing more.

I turn to my sister in a different state of mind. "You know what sis, I'm sorry. You're completely right. Let's go, and help the revolution free of Satanists."

She smiled once again – this time feeling a little more confident that I will not back down. So, here we are. The army couldn't be far then a few minutes of running. We are sure to catch up to them, find them and join them. We began to run in their direction. They were easy to follow because of all the footprints they left behind. Sure enough, they were only a few minutes away. None of them really paid much attention to us being here, but I think we shouldn't tell Ocau. He wouldn't want my sis' to get hurt. I wonder if I should tell her Ocau's thoughts towards her, or if I should let her find out for herself.

Summary,

Janin awakes from her dream of hell and betrayal. She and Mich then follow Ocau on the path of war.

7th Part

I speak to you again from a quickly built resting camp after many hours of conformed walking. This is where we will sleep for the night. I'm told the first enemy is just an hour of walking from here, which we will complete in the early morning. That's an old military strategy...works really well as a surprise attack. At this point, our army has joined with Sense 6's...which increased our size dramatically. This camp is about the size of a sports field, perhaps larger. I don't like the feel of this group. I think that it's all the Sense 6 being close to us...I'm not sure on their history, but it doesn't feel like they like each other all that well. I wonder how that will work in battle.

Ah, I see Ocau in the middle of this mass. I've never actually seen him sleep...I wonder if he does at all. It looks like a scout has just returned to him from checking out one of our enemies. That would be a cool job to do – scouting, spying on people for a living. Ocau looks displeased with the scout at something. He starts yelling, or perhaps it was cursing – I was too far away to know. The scout bows and retreats to a tent, but Ocau stands there still disappointed at something. There are a few people around him who look confused after hearing what they did. Ocau informs them of something just before he walks off into his tent. I guess the people he told were advisors or something... They spread out to pass the news to people all around. It must be really important; but, I could hear voices of disappointment – some of them yell at the advisor...as if blaming them will solve the problem. One of them was getting closer to my side.

Before I could hear him someone beside him started screaming, "What the hell are we supposed to do?" He continues, "We walked an entire day!", "Who do you think you are?!", and my favourite, "I came all this way..." The advisor comes closer, and when he reaches my line of ears, "Return to your homes! We have no enemy to fight."

He stops by our group to reply to all of the 'whys'. "The Satanist camps have already been destroyed. There is nothing left."

He walks away and continues to spread the information. He would not know what I need to know, so I run to where the scout retreated, carefully trying to avoid being found out by Ocau. I get to his tent and enter without having to deal with any guards. He's sitting on some cushioning.

Surprised to see me, he looks up. "Who are you?" Getting right to the point, I reply with a friendly, "What's going on?" "Both Satanist camps are destroyed."

I ask, "What do you mean? Someone else got to them?" He shook his head. "I don't know. Everyone is dead, but their camp is perfectly intact."

"Can you show me?" His voice becomes a little shakier, "No. No, I can't."

"...Why not?" "I'm not going there again."

I act understanding, but I'm really just confused why he sounds so scared. "What's wrong?"

He looks dramatized. Forget him, I'll ask Ocau. Knowing we won't be fighting any more, I doubt he'll be mad. I turn and just before I leave the tent...

"You know that feeling when your true love breaks your heart?"

I look back at the scout. "I do."

"How about that feeling when the public stares and laughs at you...throw things at you, to harm you."

"I can only imagine."

He coughs, clears his throat, and continues. "When I saw everyone dead, I wanted to go closer, and see what had happened."

I ask, "What did you find?"

"The closer I got inside their camp, the more these feelings took control. The deepest, most emotional things I have ever felt had taken me, and were burning my heart and soul. Those Satanists accomplished something...and whatever it was, it destroyed them. Both camps, gone...everyone, dead."

Wanting to know, I ask him, "Where is the camp?"

"It's a ten minute jog down the path before the fork. Take the right, and immediately you'll see a small forest path."

"That's all?" I ask.

He nods when someone enters the tent. It's Janin. She must have followed me from our group.

"Janin, Ocau might want to see you."

She looks at me. "So?"

Oh of course! I haven't even explained to her yet that I was supposed to keep watch on her while the army...this army went to war without us. How should I explain this to her as simple as possible...

The right words come to mind, "I was supposed to look after you while he was gone."

She laughs, at first acting like it was a joke, but soon realizing I wasn't pulling her tongue. "You're serious?"

I nod.

She smiles. Well, I better leave, and check out that first camp. This whole thing seems weird and untrusting to me. I'm sure Ocau already sent some other to check on the scout's accuracy. Janin soon follows me.

"You're going to the Satanist camp?" she asks.

I nod. "Yeah...coming with?"

"Not this time, no. I'm going to stay behind, see what Ocau is up to."

"Alright...I'll tell you what I find."

She shouts to me as she runs back to the camp, "Have fun!"

The way the camp sounds, it may be hard to feel any evidence of *fun*. I start to jog down the path in the quickly chilling forest road. The moon was blue in the distance, and in the shape of a crescent. After a few minutes, I started to wish Janin had come with me. I had a fear of the dark woods...I think everyone does. It's not like I had a bad experience in the woods before, or even in the dark, but it's like a *natural* instinct for humans to fear the woods. I wonder why though – we're dominant. That dominant feeling could sure be helpful now.

Sure enough there was a fork in the road. I turn right, and yes, there was a small forest path just there. Before I entered; I heard the sound of leaves and twigs being stepped on from behind me...perfect timing – a new worry, fear and unsettling feeling just before I get to walk in the narrow woods towards dead bodies. I'm regretting doing this now. I should have waited until the morning, and not let my impatience overpower me again. But it's too late anyway, so I continue through the forest path. Every step there was something else for me to crumble or crackle, and every dozen steps there was a noise from somewhere I couldn't see. It would have been smart to at least bring a shoulder lamp or flashlight. I'm sure someone in that camp had night vision as well, possibly even thermal. But thermal vision is more for prey – prey that needs to know if anything is out there. Other than the enemy, everything is dark blue, especially at night. So it wouldn't help me here.

Crack! Another twig in the forest has just been stepped on. Snap! The dead branch of a tree has just been unbound to the ground for it to be stepped on like the others later on. This was all shivering to my already fragile bones but they were just building up for the climatic sniffs of a predator nearby. My heart aches, my veins throb and my pupils expand to five times their size. As my eyes grew larger, I could see more and more of the forest growing lighter with each passing second. Though my eyes only did so much, the brightening of my surroundings continued to an unnatural level for the night. The light finally stopped to a day's brightness, despite a sun or full moon.

My first instinct was not to look at the dead bodies and village straight in front of me, no, it was to look around for what was making that sniffing sound. Nothing was found, so I managed to regain control of my primal instincts and finally see my destination. The scout was right – dead bodies everywhere, yet no sign of wreckage or a flag to indicate who will take the responsibility. As I walk closer, my throat cuts itself as if I were about to cry, though I didn't. Next was my heart, which ached and shrunk to a smaller size. I don't know why I continued towards the centre of the camp, perhaps I wanted to see whose blood was covering the sides of the sacrificial stone. My lungs followed, and filled with water to further my pain. The last thing to come only came when I was aside the centre stone staring at the body...my memory of Theara. No, it wasn't her on the stone. The person on the stone was someone I had never met before. Wait. I have seen this one before. I don't believe it...it was Stagg, from the Sense 6 side! He must have been caught after leaving our camp, and sent here...but why?

"Mich."

Theara's voice from behind me forces me to turn and backup almost onto the stone itself. There she was again! My Theara!

She says in an angry voice, "Mich! You haven't come to see me! What are you doing here?!"

My smile fades into a saddened face. My lungs, heart, and throat for some reason returned to normal when she had appeared before me.

She orders again, "What are you doing here Mich?!"

I ask, "What's going on?" in hopes that she may know.

She smiles and replies, "Mich. Don't you want to be with me?"

I nod knowing that I would live to be with her. She's dead though.

She gets angry again. "Then why are you still here?!"

Before I could answer, or ask a question to raise my morale a little, she threw a knife to my side and evaporated into the air. I wonder if anyone can see her. If it's just my imagination, then why does her knife she keeps giving me feel so real? I pick up the knife and go to place it in my belt before I realized that the knife which used to be in my holster had disappeared. This knife she gave me must have been the one I was wearing! More importantly, if

she wanted to see me, thus I would have to be dead, why doesn't she kill me herself? Why do I have to do it? Nevertheless, I'm still not convinced to end my life for her. Not while Janin is still alive and by my side.

Sure enough, the aches, pains, and stress in my lungs, heart, throat and now liver had returned as quickly as they came. I ran to get out of there, but stumbled over a body while doing so. As I regained my footing, I was brought down again by a force of wind. The voices of dead souls filled the air and tried to bring me down with each of my attempts to run out of there. The voices became louder and louder the further I made it to the borders of the camp.

*"It's easy."
"Follow your heart."
"Escape the pain."
"Be free."
"Just once."
"Forever."
"Like us."*

As soon as my feet make it across the border back into the forest after being knocked to the ground over and over again, the unnatural lighting fades back into a calm yet eerie night. An animal was once again sniffing somewhere out there. My fear took over and so I ignored everything I was taught about avoiding being a predator's prey. I ran. I ran as fast I could through the dark forest to the fork in the road. Making sure I wasn't going the wrong way, I head down the same path I came, still running. Please legs, don't fail me. Don't let that thing catch up to me. I can make it if I run, but I have to run faster!

It was predicted an hour's walk to that camp, I jogged there in what was it, twenty minutes? Well, I returned to the camp not more than five minutes later. The problem was, when I returned, the fear in me escaped and brought back to me the feeling of fatigue and pain. Falling to the ground, I black out to the startled voices of a few nearby.

As darkness dominated, dreams could only pass the time into a haven. My feet were taking me down a gravel road which didn't seem to lead anywhere. Along the sides were all sorts of autumn trees full with a rich hue of reds, yellows, and greens and orange. It felt so relaxing and passionate; but, above all, the road had found its end. It was Theara! She was sitting on a bench waiting for me with a smile. The road did continue, but this is where I shall stop. I sat next to Theara and put my arm around her.

"I'm glad you came." she said to me.

Before I could reply, Theara's body began to blur. She looked frightened as she was slowly being pulled away from me. Her body flowed in the direction of my sis', Janin, who was not too far in front of us. She was pulling Theara away from me.

Theara looked back at me in fear, *"Help me Mich! Help me!"*

I lunged out and tackled Janin. *"What are you doing?"*

Unfortunately it wasn't that easy. My sis' had disappeared and reappeared behind the bench, once again pulling Theara into her palms. I tackled her again, only to see the process repeat itself.

"Janin, stop it!"

She looked at me with an evil smile but didn't reply.

"...Janin! Enough!"

Theara's face was no longer visible, but her voice called out to me, *"Mich! Use the knife!"*

From my holster I assist Theara's knife she had put into my hands so many times. I lung at Janin and thrust it into her heart. The sound of my own screaming wakes me out of my dream and pulls me to a startled sitting stance in a bed. The stench of sweat covered the sheets...but I remember this place. I must be back in the hospital of our camp. There were no other patients occupying the beds, so I was all alone in here – excluding Lis, the doctor, who came to aid.

She said in a calming voice. *"Are you ok?"*

I feel abnormally rested; yet, my eyes still wanted to sleep. The first thought that came to my mind was to ask where Janin was, but my question was interrupted by my throat with forcefully decided to clear itself. A few coughs before my new concern.

I ask the doc, *"Why am I in a hospital bed?"*

She placed a chilled cloth over my forehead to accompany her counter-question, *"What do you last remember?"* The answer was easy; I remember everything before I blacked out. *"I was really exhausted and fainted after*

running. It was at our temporary settlement, after we found out the news that the..."

She interrupted, "Yes. That was a few days ago."

"...A few days?"

She nods. "It's five in the morning now, so...two days and about ten hours."

"I've slept that long?"

"I'm afraid so."

Surprised as I was, I grew aware towards Janin's experience with this. A haven turned into hell...and us trying to kill each other. It can't be a mere coincidence that we both had similar dreams like this, and for such duration. Someone was trying to tell us something. But more importantly...why did she want to get rid of my love, Theara?

The doctor asks, "How was your sleep?"

At first I thought it was sarcasm. Then, as I knew she was serious, I thought it was ignorance. Lastly, I realized she was asking what my dream was about.

"The same as Janin's.", I replied.

"How so?" she asked.

"No offence, but I'm not going to explain my dream to you."

She starts to get angry. She gets angry at me because I'm not going to share with her my secrets that I want to keep to myself.

With a frown in her eyes, she asked me, "Why not?"

I tried to get onto a different subject. "Where's Janin?"

But it didn't work. She asked again, "This could be a serious thing, don't you want to share with me?"

"No.", I shook my head, "I don't."

I knew I was being an ass, but she didn't have to take it so personally.

"Then I have work to do.", was her reply as she left me to sit on her desk chair. There we no papers in front of her, and the hospital didn't seem incredibly active. So she was lying. Well enjoy your work then, I'm off. It was still too early for Janin to be awake, but I figure finding her would be a start. Her returning to the hospital to find me missing and have the doctor probably give her false advice on my condition wouldn't be the best thing. So I have to remain here, somewhere within Janin vicinity. I have some questions for her when she wakes up anyway.

No matter how many times I notice it, leaving a building and seeing the beautiful snowy trees and a camp fire burning a halo of heat; it's just such a wonderful feeling. I wonder if people from the city or even a town can experience this. Even those living in the country probably have junk everywhere to ruin the unconscious realization that one of the few and only pure beauties in life is still out there to be found.

Now, if I remember correctly, Janin should be sleeping in the second hut, on the right, from the entrance path. The one with a dark blue paint around the door, I believe. My steps were careful for some stupid reason. Somehow I felt the need to walk like an old man after going days without opened eyes. Though, this was easily fixed, my destination was interrupted by Theara's voice, once again.

She said softly into my ear, "I'm growing impatient."

I was more than just simply disappointed when I turned around. She was not there, and she did not talk to me. It would seem, speaking sarcastically, to my convenience, that a mountain lion had found its way into our camp. Used to these frequent occurrences of fear, I was not the least bit afraid of its presence. The undomesticated feline, used to the expansion of progress into its habitat, it showed no caution to the environment. It calmly roamed our vicinity, staying clear of the fire and investigating every home it passed. Lucky for the residence, it did not enter their homes. But, it did steal the food from their garbage. How smart was that? This one person left their garbage outside, on the ground, in the middle of a forest with known predators. I didn't know mountain lions fed on garbage. They struck me as more of a true predator than scavenger; but, I guess it couldn't resist a free meal.

The sound of garbage being torn apart and eaten had made the foolish person inside aware of the danger he was in. The lion didn't seem to have any intention of killing anyone, but that didn't stop the frightened witness from yelling at the creature in hopes that it would run away. I don't know what's dumber...leaving food outside your home in the forest, or yelling at a preoccupied predator only feet away from you as an easy prey. The yelling managed to cause the predator to jump back, nearly pushing itself into the fire; but, the problem was far from solved. I was expecting the creature to protect itself by eliminating the yelling threat, but it continued to surprise me. The lion, finally showing caution, slowly backed away from its eye's focus.

By now, most of the camp was awake from whatever they thought was going on. The expressions on their faces as they opened their doors to see the scene...anyone could notice their rush of adrenaline to protect in worse-case-scenario. A lot of them participated in the yelling to scare away the predator. Some even threw objects at it. The

truth was, the predator did not show very much fear, if any. And it had no intention in leaving without a meal. Continuing to surprise me, it took another lung at the garbage, but was once again hit with an object. Anger now took the predator as he looked in my direction. He was surely getting ready to run towards me, but not at me. I looked behind to see Janin who was now watching the creature build its rage against the collapse of an unspoken predator-prey truce. Now seeing it sprint towards my Janin, I quickly make a weird decision of jumping in-between her and the creature. Perhaps I should have pushed Janin back inside the hut and shut the door, but instead I for some reason stood there almost in a shocked stance. Before I could see what the predator had in mind, it was thrown to its side and soon onto the ground it collapsed. A rifle had been fired to stop the lion, and succeeded with no flaw or casualty, on our side.

The lion had a few last moments of breath before the life soon left it. Why Janin? Why was she the creature's only concern? Still heavily breathing and fatigued with fear, she gave me a welcoming hug...or possibly a thank-you hug. Either way, I was glad to see her again, even though it only felt like an hour in my mind.

"You're awake!" she said with an apathetic smile.

I stood there now realizing how close I came to not death, but serious injury. Something tells me that creature wasn't going to kill me, but would do anything to get at my sis'. I guess if I knew he was aiming for me, I might just have blacked out again. But that's not the case, and Janin looks at me questionably, probably wondering why I'm not saying anything.

Now with a more serious voice, she asks, "Was your dream like mine?"

Avoiding the question to direct us towards what's really on my mind, she hears me say to her, "What do you think of Theara..." who wasn't too shocked at the question.

"She was okay, dead though, but a nice person for all I knew."

Something in her voice was a give-away hint that she was lying. She did that thing with her hand while speaking. You know what I'm talking about – where they unconsciously do a half-shrug with only one arm, and no shoulders are involved.

Feeling like her fib was revealed, she ponders "Why do you ask?"

I think for a moment for the perfect counter-question, and soon reply with a, "No reason."

She struggles to regain her smile and so do I; but, they eventually return. It was just a dream, so, why should I take it seriously? Exactly! I have no good reason to be disappointed or angry at my sister. She did nothing wrong, nor did I...that I know of. Still, it burns a hole inside of me to suspect a tension between Theara and her. Someone was trying to tell me something about it. And I don't want it to be too late before I realize what was meant for me to hear.

I tried to forget about the whole thing. "We've gone quite a ways in the past week."

Janin slowly nodded, agreeing completely while looking downwards. "Yeah, we have."

As her fear wears off, she looked more and more tired. "You can go back to sleep if you want. I'll be fine."

She one-armed hugs me, says a "...thanks.", and goes back into her hut. She is a sympathetic and nice person most of the time, but is not one to ignore sleep when sleep is needed. Oh, what should I do? If suicide is a sin, then, why doesn't this greater being everyone is talking about give me a word or two to save my so-called soul? – If a clone has a soul. What if it was all a lie? We all want to believe in an optimistic future for ourselves, and by nature, we have to believe in a downside to it as well. But, what if a few people in different time periods wanted to force their opinions on others by making up stories? It's not hard to read about a *myth* and expand it to make yourself look important and knowledgeable. What's hard is making a decision on faith and belief when there are so many people in the world to complicate it. I remember reading this poem many months ago...

*'Decision set by you, and continued by all.
No mistakes, no worries, lead summer's fall.
Nothing passes, leaves, nothing gained.
Faith alone, hooked and drained.'*

I never really thought about what it meant, or what the writer was thinking when they wrote it. Still only guessing, its meaning could be very simple. This is the best I can understand...

*'The choices made by me for only me,
will go without doubt for years to come.
But when nothing changes, I finally realize,
I have lost my faith.'*

Has it come to that point? I look at the knife given to me by Theara, and ask in my head, is this that decision that will change my life? – Or has it already changed my life? Sitting down by the fire now, I try to think of my next move. Suicide isn't an idea that blows over easily, and for all logic, shouldn't be. The problem with my case is I lack detail, or physicals of the other side of the *promise*. If it meant I could see my Theara on the other side; well,

something seems suspicious. I have to go talk to Theara...again. Every time I talk to her she goes on about what I need to do, but fails to mention what will happen. She leaves, hands me a knife, and thinks' that's all I need. I'm going back to that destroyed camp I last met her at. The one just before I went into a deep sleep. Right, off I go.

Summary,

The attack on the Satanists had been cancelled due the already destroyed enemy. Mich goes to investigate the enemy's camp to once again find the now irritated Theara, telling him to end his life. Mich run's back to his allies to faint into a deep sleep where he dreams of Janin pulling Theara away from him. He wakes up two days later where he sees a mountain lion inside the camp...who charges after only Janin. The lion was killed before harm was done.

8th Part

Returning to this place, unsurprisingly, doesn't feel all that welcoming; though, it didn't seem the same either. I could now walk freely anywhere without the malaise of before. It was like the place was just a regular camp, destroyed, and nothing more.

I yell for miles to hear, "Theara!"
When no one answers, I again yell, "Theara!"

But it's no use. If the feeling is gone, there's nothing here.

Whispering now, "Where are you..."

I sit on the sacrificial stone, not knowing at that point in time. If I did, I wouldn't be so stupid...or disrespectful.

Continuing, "...when I need you?"

My Theara I only want to talk with you. Why do I have to do what you want for us to be together? Oh, damn it! Why the hell did she have to come into my life anyway? Nothing but bad things had happened since she left. Maybe that's why I want to be with her again...because in that brief area of time when she was with me, and Janin, I was happy.

"No need to shout, Mich."

That sweet voice! I look around in excitement to see my Theara soon sitting on the stone next to me. It was then I had realized where I was sitting, but now it didn't even matter!

I say to her so happily, "Theara! You came!"

She didn't look too impressed, however. That look in her eye, I remember it from before, last we met.

"Theara, what's wrong?"
She shakes her head and answers, "I could ask the same of you."
"What do you mean?"

She finally shows an acceptable, understanding face, no longer irritated at me, I don't think.

"Oh, Mich...I can't keep coming back. Sooner or later, I won't be able to see you anymore."
"Why?" I ask.
"You refuse to leave this world, Mich. It's not easy to keep returning like this."
"I'm sorry, Theara. But I don't know if I can do it."

She looks confused, like this was a simple matter to her.

She asks, "Why not?"

I think about it for a while, trying to grab some words out from an opaque plastic bag covering my head. It soon hits me, why I can't go. It's an embarrassment I didn't know this before a ghost unwillingly opened my heart.

"I won't leave Janin."
She quickly responded, "But she has Ocau now."
Curious, I ask, "How do you know?"
She smiles and looks me straight in the eyes. "I know a lot of things."

Her presence was relaxing yet unsettling...though that makes no sense. Her eyes were mesmerizing, her breath was sweet, and smile...perfect. Yet, something was wrong. She didn't seem like herself, even though I didn't know her that much to begin with. But the Theara I shortly knew was a depressed, shy, and paranoid survivor of pain. Well, maybe not a survivor...she did try to kill herself.

"Is that all then?" she asks.
"What do you mean?"

She moves closer and wraps her hand around my back, holding onto my arm on the other side.

With her head against my shoulder, she answers, "Janin. Is she all that's stopping you?"
Not taking too long to reply, I say in a bold voice, "I wouldn't call it *stopping*."
"So what is it?" she asks.
Not waiting for an answer, she continued, "You know, she hates you."

"Don't say something like that."

She pulls her head back and looks at me again. "I wouldn't lie to you."
My eyes stare at her in suspicion. "How would you know something like that?"

I can't believe I even asked what I did. That's beyond the point that she would even say something like that about a relation that can't be scrambled with lies and deceit.

"You'd be surprised."

"Surprised at what?" I ask.

She sighs and gets up from the rock to clean herself, not looking at me at any point. Finally, she stares at me, but only to drive another nail into my heart.

"Mich, I have to go."

I get up to stop her, but her extended arm ends up stopping me. "Wait!"

"You know where my love is, Mich. But you haven't shown me where you have yours."

I say to her as she turns and walks, "You know where my love is."

But she doesn't stop. I could only hear a few final words coming from her mouth, followed by the sound of a large blunt object cracking against the back of my skull. There was no time to turn around – I've been knocked out the moment the sound wave had breached my ears. I've always been amazed at how the human body reacts in situations like this. Losing consciousness after being smashed over head...what's the point? I mean, I wasn't raised with science books, but I'm sure it's a result from inflammation of the brain. My point is why doesn't our human body stay conscious? It could be to prevent almost certain agonizing pain. After years of random thoughts...that's all I could come up with. Sorry to disappointment you like that.

As I slowly regain feeling throughout my body, the world around me becomes a little more clear and translucent. The scene which looked all too familiar was far from anything to keep me awake; unfortunately, my body wants to keep me awake in fear. Yes, this cage...I know it all too well. The rather new blood stain on the concrete floor, and yes, even the wooden poker with a nail strapped to the end of it...also blood stained. The only thing that's missing to make this a true déjà-vu would be Janin by my side. There was another guy around my age sitting in the other corner of our cage. But, we killed the rapist, me and Janin, so why am I here again?

A friendly voice from the one sitting next to me was a quick reminder I wasn't actually alone in this. Let's hope it turns out to be a good thing.

"Hello.", he says to me.

"What are you doing here?" I ask trying not to sound too demanding or light of the situation.

A shrug from his shoulders was the only answer I got from him. I looked around the basement some more, but nothing new had changed.

He points out to me, "You seem calm."

I continue looking around the room while replying, "I could say the same about you."

He nods, "I'm not afraid. Linier will come to our rescue."

I turn to him confused. "...The rebellion leader?"

"Yeah...and for the record, we aren't rebels."

I smile in doubt. "What makes you think she even knows where we are?"

"...she just does." he answered.

But that was it. He had no answer any different then doubtful simplicity...and I could have used some reassurance then. It wasn't long before we looked at each other in horror at a creaking sound of feet making their way down water-logged basement stairs. With each passing step, my heart increased a beat. At that point, my entire mental thought could only focus on '*please don't be Elebin, please don't be Elebin*'. Never occurring to me that anyone could be just as bad. Shoes soon became visible, then jeans, then a muscle shirt and finally the full body of my ignorant relief. It wasn't him, it wasn't Elebin. He looks at me with his ugly face and places himself a few yards from the cage.

"Do you know what you are?!"

Neither of us in the cage have the courage to reply.

"You're a soulless lab plague that needs to be stopped before you spread!"

Strong words for a redneck. I fail to give him gratification by looking frightened...which really seemed to piss him off. He picks up the spear and walks closer. I push myself against the back of the cage which seemed to stop him. He didn't look in pity or remorse, just appreciating that I'm now fearful of his cowardly ethics.

Finally the one next to me speaks in almost tears of fear...he's never been in a situation like this before? "What's your problem?! What did we do to you?"

The redneck looks at him, almost pleased by his response. "All you people do is rebel and kill anyone who gets in your way. I've got nothing against you personally...", and then he looks at me, "...other than you."

"What?" I ask, "Why me?"

He spits at the ground in front of me, probably trying to hit me but without good aim, "You've been here before, haven't you?"

When I don't answer, he continues, "You killed my brother and I'm going to make you suffer dearly for it."

Elebin was his brother? Well this makes sense now – why I ended up in this same place twice...but at least Janin is still concealed from him, hopefully. He pulls a gun out from the back of his pants and aims it at the kid next to me. In response, the kid pushes his back against the cage. Although he didn't make any progress, his legs continue to push...but he doesn't stop.

"No!" he screams, "I didn't do anything!"

Tears run down the sides of his cheeks as he quietly cries out Linier's name. Elebin's brother looks at me with a grin.

"Look behind you." he says to me. All the time sceptic of what he'll do next, I turn around and see a glass half full of blue water. "Drink it, or I'll kill your friend."

I look at the guy next to me, and back at Elebin's brother. He nods persuasively, but I shook my head, knowing anything could be in that glass. He Points the gun at me.

"Alright..." he says, "...drink or I'll kill you."

Disappointed at myself, I grab the glass and examine the water inside. It smelt and felt like alcohol, but a kind I've never seen before. I look at the gun-wielding-redneck in almost a state of mercy. I didn't want to, nor did I expect to, but I was afraid for my life once again. There are two options that I have – drink the liquid and accept whatever comes, or pour it onto the ground. Either way, we're probably going to die. On one hand, pouring the liquid onto the ground would leave me able and awake, on the other, he probably has more of this liquid...so I guess that wouldn't accomplish much. I take a deep breath and drink what tasted like ordinary water. When the glass was empty, I say what I thought to be my final words...

"You'll end up just like you're brother."

The muzzle from the .38 calibre pistol shocked the walls of a sound-confined basement, like two hands had just been slapped against each of my ears. Punctured flesh had spit blood on the entire right side of my body. Bits of skull and brain had covered the cage, and I was now alone in here. The sadistic hell-bound points the gun towards me with a certain amount of satisfaction in his smile. When he sees no reaction from me, I can bet rage filled his veins...but as I knew he would, he placed the gun back in his pants. He wanted me to feel pain, not a quick and painless death. I guess this isn't something to hope for, but when you have a gun pointed at your head; it's the lesser of two evils.

"Flunitrazepam..." he says in a calm, accomplished voice.

"...What?" I ask.

"...or more commonly known as rohypnol."

He pulls a chair not too far from the cage. The smile on his face made me want to vomit. Or maybe that was the gore and smell of what now encircled me. What he said sounded like a drug. He was referring to whatever I had just swallowed.

"Very easy to get." he continued.

Not yet feeling any side effects, I ask, "And what does it do?"

He laughs. "It's a very common date rape drug! Dissolves in water, has no taste or colour. You'll feel the effects in about twenty minutes. I think I'll go watch the news until then."

He gets up from the chair and walks towards the stairs.

I say to him before he leaves, "So you're sick like you're brother then."

He turns towards me with a smile. "Yes, we both enjoy saving humanity."

"No..." I correct him, "...I mean, you're both rapists then. You have no power so you take it out on the weak."

"Hah!" he laughs again, this time really pissing me off. "I have a wife and children. And even if I was a rapist, I'd aim higher than a child let-alone a clone."

Thinking I'm finished, he continues making his way towards the stairs. I waited just perfectly to say what I had to say...just before the first step where he will be ignorant to the situation and focused on walking upwards.

Loudly enough, yet quietly for him to ask again, I state, "You're brother was a paedophile."

His foot made its way onto the first step but then stops. He waits a second before looking at me more mad then confused or eager to learn about a family secret.

"I'll make you regret ever saying that, you sinning bastard child."

I smile, finally feeling a little revenge. If I don't live after this, then my only revenge can be done in the process. He climbs the stairs and shuts the door, hard. I scurry to the cage's lock and look around for something to help me pick it. This wasn't a skill I've been taught, but it's worth learning at a scenario like this. No glass, no nails, not even a small bone. I could mean that last part literally if I wanted to. The truth was there's nothing here to aid my escape, if I escape, and I'm not going to dishonour the body next to me by tearing it apart for a toothpick-sized bone. If there was some way I could escape from the cage, I would have puked to get rid of *most* of the poison I took in. But since there wasn't a way out, I did the only thing that came to thought...I waited.

At least fifteen minutes later, my head starts to spin. The world was turning around, lifting, floating, and sinking. It's a fun feeling...that alcohol must have been really potent and this guy knows how to have fun, I guess. I lift my hand in front of my eyes to watch it replicate itself and blend into the air. It was hard to lift, and I could hold it up for only a few seconds, but much worth the effort. I felt torpid, (*numb*), as my hand fell down so heavy it broke the ground. Just kidding – it was a hard slap against the concrete, no pain was felt though. My arms began to twitch occasionally, but not often. I wanted to sleep, but couldn't close my eyes for more than a few seconds. I tried to think of why I was here, but couldn't come up with anything.

It was then some guy came to the cage and opened the door. Oddly, I never even saw him come down the stairs. What was he doing here? Why was I in a cage? Well, he pulled me out, forced me to my knees in front of a pot filled with water, and let me kneel there with a drugged smile on my face. The water was magical – from it came heat onto my cheeks and nose, small pockets of air would form from the bottom of the pot and rise to the air, which also made the air above it translucent. The air actually looked like it was being pulled upward and then disappear again. Now, why was there a pot of water in front of me?

Something grabbed the back of my hair and dunked my face into the pot. With my nose and mouth submerged, it was hard to breath, but I could see the water like I've never seen it before. My eyes were tingling and feeling a little weird, but I could see the water change to almost a red shade – it was amazing! My head started to throb, my skin felt like it wanted to leave me and I was getting nauseous, but why? A lot of things in life don't make any sense. And why is it every time I breath, my stomach wants me to throw-up? My head was pulled back out of what appears to be water. I wanted to look around and see where I was, but instead my body unleashes my breakfast onto the floor. I only threw up once, but continued to cough afterwards until my lungs felt close-to-normal again. When I finally got to look around, I was a little confused at what I saw. The world looked so blurred and red to me. Before I could turn fully around, something had forced my head back into a pot of water.

Summary,

Mich reaches Theara's still impatient spirit to be knocked out and wake up in the same cage as before. Mich is tortured by Elebin's brother.

9th Part

I awoke in horrifying pain this...night I believe. The sounds of crickets were outside, along with a continuous ringing in my ears. My eyes wouldn't stop tearing and for something reason, they added a red hue to everything I looked directly at – like the pieces of flesh next to me, on the other side of the cage. It had a horrible stench to it, but looked only a day fresh. This place...seems kind of familiar. Oh, right. I was hit in the back of the head and ended up here. That was yesterday, I think. I remember now, the guy with the gun who shot the guy who was next to me. I remember the glass of alcohol...oh god, my head! Being synonymic, (*similar to a metaphor*), this is like a hangover after a pint of rubbing alcohol without any sleep afterwards. Taking into consideration, this is about as humorous as I can be right now. To be honest, I wanted to bash my head against the metal bars until I black out and hopefully this aching will just pass over while I'm in a coma.

As my skull continued to splinter into my brain, metal wires used to bind my hands and feet had exposed blood around my wrists and ankles...and in a place like this, I would get gangrene in a matter of days. As a result, my wrist, ankles, eyes, cheeks, nose and forehead all burnt. I couldn't see or feel my face, but skin was surely hanging in areas, peeling off and exposing more sensitive, not fully developed layers underneath. On a lighter note, I was now feeling a cold breathing on the back of my neck. It could be anyone, but anyone would be good. I turn around, cheerfully unsurprised.

With an 'I told you so' attitude, she asks me, "How was your day, Mich?"
"I don't remember." I answer.

She backs up a bit so her back is against the wall and feet are against the bottom of my cage. The distance between the wall and the cage allowed her legs to be bent just a little to fit herself in-between.

"I pity you, Mich."

I ask, "And, why is that?"

"Well. You could have avoided all of this. You should have done what I had told you to do."

Two needles of air had just punctured into my eyes and forced me to cry out in pain.

Completely unconcerned, Theara advises, "Quiet Mich, he'll know you're awake."
With my eyes still closed, I stutter for a word which came out as simplistic as, "Shut!"

Theara watches me suffer and squirm for an imaginary relief.

"I could always end your pain." she comments.

"It's easy." she continued.

"And fun!" she adds.

I shake my head and open my watering eyes at her. Everything was still blurred, and there was a red glow around Theara; but, when I moved my focus, the red glow was everywhere. What did that psycho do to me? And as luck would have it, the sound of his footsteps upstairs hammered into my ears.

As serious as I could accomplish, I say to Theara, "Give me the knife."

Sure enough she hands me a knife and unbinds the wires around my wrists and ankles. It hurt even worse when the binds came off, as they took some of my skin along with them. Theara somehow finds it amusing and I could hear her laughs just as she disappears so the intruder wouldn't see her. I hide the wires and with a knife now in my hand, I go back into the hog-tied position so he wouldn't suspect a thing. The door upstairs opens and he walks down. With a chair pointed at my cage, he stands beside it and smiles a gratified smile. He was wearing only a house coat and black boxers.

Covered in hair and with a red glow around his ugly face, he says to me, "Kind of late for screaming is it not?"
"Do I have to shut you up until the morning?" he continues.

Going unanswered and unacknowledged, he gets mad and pounds his feet to the cage door and opens it. When he reaches inside, I grab and stab his arm. The knife stays in my possession and slides out from his as he stumbles back out of the cage. Before I'm too late, I follow him out and quickly slit his throat. A lot of people think you die instantly when your jugular has been punctured. No, you have to stay there and watch as they breathe in their own blood with two eyes opened and staring at the light closing in on them. Eventually, their movement stops, and all that remains is a slow, steady stream of blood pouring onto the floor. How many humans have to die in this basement before the house's thirst is quenched? I stagger to the stairs, but Theara appears in front of me.

"Where do you think you're going?" she asked.

"Get out of my way!"

I walk through the ghost and up the stairs. Lucky I remember this place and can find the exit easily; however, this

time I'll burn it down. Knowing the house belongs to a country man, it's likely to have a gas and oil tank outside. Conveniently enough, they're both beside the door. All I needed was the gas, so that's all I took. I opened its cap and poured it onto the floor of the kitchen. When it was depleted, for the heck of it, I tossed the oil jug on the other side of the mess. Now, where are the matches?

"You don't realize what you're doing Mich."

Theara wasn't in her physical form, but her voice still found its way to me.

I reply, "Yes, I do."

Eventually, I come across a room with a fireplace. Beside the fireplace were a dozen long matches. I grab a few and go back to the kitchen.

"You're a liar, Mich. I have grown impatient of your ignorant love for this whore."

I yell in response, "Shut up!"

My hand strikes the match against the door which lights the tip into a flame. I drop it onto the kitchen floor but the piece of junk turn into smoke before it hits the ground. I light another, it does the same thing. I light the last two at the same time and slowly place them against the floor...but they too go out before contact. Now impatient, I make a run for the fireplace room again but slip on the soaked ground. My back hits the floor and head soon after. Just perfect! My splitting headache returns to me and now I'm covered in the stench of gas. I try to get up, but my legs don't work. I try to push myself up, but my arms don't move.

"It was so simple, Mich! So simple! And you couldn't even do it!"

Terrified, I try to redeem myself. "Theara...I'm sorry. I was afraid!"

She repeats my words in a sarcastic girly way, "I was afraid!", and now yelling, "Give it up! Theara's dead!"

"What?" I ask.

"How stupid are you, Mich? Do you really think Theara even liked you?!"

"She did!" I implore, "She loved me!"

"Wrong-o!" she answers, "But, how can you even stab yourself while crippled? Now I have to rely on the guy you killed."

I hear footsteps from above my head. Theara's body stands next to me, and goes down on one knee beside my head. She looks at me with revenge in her eyes.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"You know, Mich. You have a strong will inside of you that always seems to appear at the worst times for me. I

failed at destroying that will, and you, I failed. But..." she smiles, "...I will succeed in making you suffer."

She gets up and walks away. "Good-bye, Mich."

I closed my eyes, forced them closed. If I dare open them, I would become aware of reality. A crack in the near distance hums by my ear and hits my foot. The aurora of oxygen rushing to supply fuel and heat was the start of my panic. My breath became rapid and light as a stench of burning flesh reached my nose. I won't do it! I will not show suffering or even resistance. Theara! You left me here to die, Theara, why?

My eyes finally opened to see smoke which blackened the room, darkened it, and made everything disappear. Oh, maybe that's not the smoke. Maybe that's...

The End