I dedicate this book to my wife who is my most avid critic, and to my two daughters who had to suffer my sleepless nights as I dreamt this tale.

And to all those who slept through the nightmare till it ended, you will remember your nightmares and it will be easier to confront them when they come again for you.

"A man must dream a long time in order to act with grandeur, and dreaming is nursed in darkness."

— Jean Genet

Prologue

John

He sat with his head bent behind the lattice of the confessional listening to the confessions of Mrs. Romano.

"Bless me Father for I have sinned" she says in a fervent voice.

"The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips that you may truly and humbly confess your sins" he draws the cross in her direction in the air "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Amen."

She starts to tell him about her son's wife, and her other son's girlfriend, she goes on about her sister in law, then at some moment he thought she mentioned some head of state of a foreign nation followed immediately by news of the Smith family his own neighbors.

He lost himself in her endless chatter, her words clattering the confessional as so much motes of dust.

He heard her in full and commented the occasional word or placed a pious advice.

Yet he was not really present in the cubicle of the confessional.

He was delirious with fasting for so long.

While she threw her words sacrificing others and their sins to prove her unlikely sainthood, he prayed.

He prayed almost all of his waking hours these last months.

He prayed for a miracle, he knew he shouldn't doubt its coming, that it was only a matter of time, but he was desperate.

He wakes up from his thoughts on her insistent question 'I finished Father, won't you absolve me? Father, won't you absolve me?"

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered himself to be sacrificed for us to the Father, and who conferred power on his Church to forgive sins, absolve you through my ministry by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and restore you in the perfect peace of the Church. *Amen*." He repeats the absolution from memory.

"The Lord has put away all your sins." He continues.

"Thanks are to God." Again she answers in the fervent voice, which he didn't hear but in the beginning and end of her confession.

"Go in peace, and pray for me, a sinner." he answers her back.

He really hoped she would pray for him.

She throws a thanks and hurries out of the confessional.

He goes on praying, while another penitent enters.

Adam

He stood in front of the mirror, arranging his hair.

He read from a book opened on the sink shelf as he arranged his hair.

He spent equal time on his studies of nuclear physics as he spent studying Christian apologetics; it was a hobby and mission of sorts. This book was not nuclear physics.

He had the conversation running in his head; he would humiliate Edward in front of his cronies, and he would catch one of the easy birds hanging around them.

He decided to open another button in his shirt; it looks more natural this way.

He exited the bathroom, grabbed his books and left his room.

"Hey Adam" somebody called after him; he usually jogged wherever he went, an old habit ingrained in his core by his father.

In a normal day, he wouldn't care to answers hallway calls; he didn't care for the company of people with lower IQ.

He knew even if they were the smartest according to society standards, they never reached what he was given through a good gene pool and what he gained through feverish pursuit of knowledge.

This day he stopped, the caller was not a regular student, it was Suzan Johnson.

He had to stop, her way of resuming life in a nonchalant way after what passed between them, deepened his sense of guilt.

"Hi Suzan, can I help you with anything?" he stood and turned, forcing himself to meet her eyes.

"I just wanted to remind you of the study group today at 2:00 pm, I gathered a total of ten" she had an undecipherable and perplexing innocence always pouring of her eyes, her smile and the way she hugged her books.

"I won't forget, I will be there" he answered her with a faded smile. "See you later Suzan"

He turns on his heels and walks casually towards the stairs.

What he should have done, was to sprint away from her and scream.

But he didn't and he couldn't.

He needed the money from the study groups, being the top of his class helped gather others for his secret bite sized lectures.

He had the nick to simplify complex concepts, and because of his eager studying of the personalities of his professors, he could predict the exams with an accuracy of 80-90%.

This was more than enough for most to keep their scores for their scholarships or a prospected career.

What tormented him was her willingness to help.

Whether it was him she helped or the students she gathered every three days for him to lecture.

They never came as regulars through the scholastic term, usually they came to put a few questions for a lecture or two, asking about parts they missed or were too complex for the professors to explain in a simple way.

Except near the exams, his predictions were coveted by most. He would receive a minimum of forty students in the last weeks before end of term exams.

He stopped thinking of Suzan and the study group and focused on his mission.

Two days ago the idiots at the Christ's Army challenged him for a debate.

He was the most outspoken atheist on campus; in a way crushing the so called believers was satisfying to no end; these challenges were chick magnets as well.

Every time he had a public challenge, he would get laid, and he kept his numbers.

He slept with fifty girls since he started college, he aimed to reach a thousand by the time he finished his masters.

He approached the meeting place to face Edward with a smile. He can forget that he had to see Suzan at the study group for the time being.

Ramy

He sat in the cyber café deliberately not looking around; he knew he had to avert his gaze from women.

One day he would get the courage to slap these discordant whores into righteousness.

They pretended to be wearing hijab, but the fleetest of looks would provide a man with a hundred means of sinning.

He could practically see the contour of the arm of the girl who attended the place, scandalous whore that she was, she had no shame.

And to top all this, he could feel her eyes looking at him every now and then, she really had no shame.

He was almost certain she was checking the other men in the cyber café as well.

Some might argue that she had to check what the customers were doing on the computers and that she was just doing her job, he would refute them; women should not leave their houses, work for women is a triviality if not even a sin that should be abolished.

He recited the al-Mu'awwidhitayn (the verses of refuge) asking forgiveness for his transgression of thinking of the girl attending the café.

He recited Al-Fatihah to start his work in the name of Allah.

He opened at least sixty tabs in the browser, thirty of which were Facebook pages and groups, twenty were forums and ten were blogs.

He considered himself a cyber jihadi, he pursued pages of Christians and atheists to show them the light of Allah the Almighty, he would ask them to repent and accept Islam as the one true belief; if they refuse he would attack them where it hurts.

Like the Noble Quran states "Fight them, Allah would kill them by your hands, to humiliate them and grants you victory over them to heal the hearts of the believers" 9:14 Quran (Surah Al-Taubah)

He gathered info about moderators, admins and bloggers, he hacked every facet of life they shared digitally.

And he either would report his findings to his superior Jihadi, or he would hammer them knowing that Allah would destroy the blasphemers and non-conformists by his hands.

He was following the Hadith "Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of Faith"

He used to only think it in his heart until Sheikh Abo Bakr Al Masry had embraced his weakness and enforced his soul and heart with the might of the righteous, the Mujahedeen in the name of Allah.

The Sheikh also gave him his new Jihadi name, Abo Al Azam, he treasure the name and knew in his heart that this was who he really is.

He dreamt of the day he would be deemed fit to join those who would change it with their hands, and then he would be insured a palace in paradise and seventy two virgins every night.

If only the Atheists and Christians knew how good is Islam and how forgiving were its teachings and doctrines; peace would cover earth because Allah would smile upon his slaves for how well they spread his truth.

For now, he had his work to do, and he had to finish fast never returning to this cyber café.

He took out from his pocket the notes from Sheikh Abo Bakr for refuting the deluded Christians who worshiped a man who was but a servant of Allah.

He also brought with him the notes of refuting the Atheists' prophet Dawkins may he reside in hell for all eternity.

Then he started typing very fast; copy, paste and repeat.

-1-

She walked fast, almost running; she headed for Boulevard Leopold III, 1110 Brussels.

It was almost 8:00 AM; she didn't want to be late.

She knew that being an intern means that you are at most dispensable, if not easily replaceable.

Her studies in security plus her half Belgian French and half Arabic lineage favored her for the internship program; she didn't plan to lose this chance.

Yesterday night was a mistake; she should not indulge in these activities again.

Yet, she didn't see Abeer her cousin for at least four years, it was a good enough reason for Abeer to go party with her in town last night.

Still, the hangover was killing her, and after one month of being the perfect intern, she realized that she probably would arrive late.

She actually started running while checking her mobile's clock, it was 8:10.

It was not uncommon to see young people rushing around for work, even if they were running, other people just made way for her, they assumed she one of the runners.

She punched in at exactly 8:28, she had two minutes to spare.

While she went up the stairs she was on the verge of laughter, another obstacle crossed to reach her ultimate dream one day.

Working for the NATO was only the first step, but one day her career would allow her to travel around the globe, one day not too far ahead.

"Good morning Edvige, I want you to input these files into the database, prepare for me a percentile growth report from them in comparison to the same period from ten years ago, twenty, thirty and forty years. I would like to see your primary report by the end of the day." Her superior handed her a box overflowing with files.

"What are those files all about?" she asked him.

"Terrorist attacks and cross border skirmishes of this and last year, if you could find the time, I would like you also to find a mean time for the attacks, seasonal variation, and racial significance. You know the whole deal we usually do."

She swallowed, on a normal day this would be a daunting job; today with the pulsating headache and the nausea of the hangover, it was mission impossible.

"You will have the primary report before the end of the day Alfred." She smiled and started with the file on top; she thought it will be a very long day.

-2-

"Jane, we will join for night in town, would you like to join us?" The speaker was a lean man with salt and pepper hair.

"I don't know Robin, I have to speak to my family on skype at seven, if you will meet at eight or eight thirty I might join you." She looked up from the computer to him, she knew of his interests in her, but she didn't need the complication in her life now.

"They will go from the office directly to center Copenhagen, but give me a call and will come pick you up." He looked too eager to comply, and it was worrying her.

"Will do Robin, see you then" she returns to watch the monitor.

He stood looking at her for a minute then left.

She didn't think he was not interesting, the man was a genius after all, and his type is her preference.

But she had a ten years old daughter back home, whom she knew was still hoping for her father to be back in their lives.

She was of average built, keeping her looks at forty to be still attractive to men.

She thinks it was good genes that kept her looking young after years of study, medical career and an abusive relationship of eight years.

She married Peter because he was traditional, she was pregnant, and so they got married.

For Peter this was logical, but not for her at the time, she just wanted for them to spend more time before they would commit to marriage.

But she was in love, or thought she was in love, so she said yes.

Follows the birth of Mary, who had her mother's coco with milk skin and her father's big green eyes; and she can't imagine life without her.

For Mary she withstood the verbal abuse of Peter all those years.

She thought she loved him in the beginning because of the way he blinks and turns red when he addresses her, but it was mainly because of his IQ.

She met him because they worked together in St. Francis Hospital, and she was lonely and far away from home.

He was also from Detroit like her; this was the first thing of many she thought gathered them.

But after the marriage, things grew; things like anger, resentment and the sense of entrapment.

This was what he used to tell her all the time.

The last year of their life together was showing to anybody who knew them that they didn't fit together.

The divorce even though it was a step they both agreed upon, was messy and long.

Afterwards, she couldn't keep on seeing him at work, it brought bitter memories.

So she jumped at the opportunity in the Global Health Observatory.

When school finishes each year, Mary joins her wherever she is at the time.

Rest of the year is covered through short trips to home and reaching her on the internet.

Her parents kept urging her to come home and settle beside them and Mary, but she was not ready for this yet.

She poured again on her work, a week ago Robin pointed out the alarming return of the eradicated smallpox.

Then she noticed a rising curve of precedence of nearly eradicated diseases like Poliomyelitis and Cholera.

Add to this at least one super virus, bacteria or fungus every month, sometimes every week.

She was working these past five days trying to correlate to epidemiology.

Up till this moment, there was no pattern to location, age or sex.

All considered factors had non statistical significance.

And she was trying to decide whether to push the matter higher or not when Robin came to invite her out.

She didn't want to cause a panic wave; she wanted to be absolutely certain of her figures.

She decided to postpone till tomorrow, now was time for her reason for living, Mary.

-3-

Edvige sent her final draft to the printer; it was twenty minutes before the working day's end.

She took the printout and headed to her superior's desk.

She walked fast; least Alfred would count her work not done by the end of the day.

She stands by his desk "Good afternoon Alfred, it is done" she hands him her printouts.

"The report is on the database?"

"Yes, you can log on to see all the figures if you would like"

"I will do that, I have to send the report up, I will check your data now. Thank you for delivering it at the last minute, now I have to stay after hours." His voice was dripping annoyance.

She almost grunted "I can stay and help in whatever you need me to do"

"No, you can go. One day when you will be in my place you will understand." He smiled

She respected and liked him; he was not what she expected from someone who she practically worked for.

He was nice and understanding, not to mention very handsome but sadly, very married.

"Thank you Alfred, have a good evening"

"You too Edvige"

She left the building and called Abeer.

"So where are you today?"

"Catching up with some friends; how was your day?"

"Long, would you like us to meet?"

"If you can meet me past ten, sure"

"Too late for me, can't repeat the same day all over again; may be tomorrow then"

"Sure, I will call you earlier to arrange"

"Ok have a nice evening"

"Bye"

"Bye"

She finished the call as she almost reached the Metro; she descended the stairs, and took the first one home.

At home she took a warm shower, brought out her pot of vegetable soup, warmed a plate and sat in front of the TV.

She popped "The Cabbage soup" by Louis De Funes and hugged her plate to watch. She loved this movie; it was her mother's favorite.

On some days, like this one, she missed her mother too much to just sleep it off.

Ever since she passed away she used to remember their nights together by popping a movie by Louis De Funes and she sat watching with a smile on her lips and tears in her eyes.

Her mobile rang; it seems it was ringing for some time. She must have fallen asleep in front of the TV.

"Hello"

"Hello Edvige, this is Alfred, sorry for calling you at this hour"

She looks at the wall watch; it was a little past midnight. "It is ok; was there anything you wanted to talk to me about?"

"I will send you a car to pick you up; you have to return to the office"

Now she was alarmed "Is there a problem?" she didn't know how to respond otherwise, she was trying her best to wake up.

"We will discuss it when you arrive" And he clicks the phone off.

She jumped off the couch, rushed to brush her teeth and put on some clothes.

By the time she was putting her shoes, the doorbell rang.

-4-

Isamu was a freak, he self-declared this to all he met.

He loved his job in an unhealthy way, if he could, he would marry his job and raise its babies. He declared this to several friends over a glass of scotch.

He was a seismologist, he studied earthquakes.

And his home country Japan was the mother of earthquakes, he spent most of his waking hours reading seismographs, comparing global events and generally wasting not a second in anything. Isamu was troubled, last three months he started a pet project of sorts, he collected seismographs from every spot on the planet.

He studied them for patterns, environmental factors, human presence and magnitude.

He was aiming to devise an algorism that would make it possible to predict globally where and when an earthquake will happen.

They had the means of doing that of course, only difference is that his algorism would predict it one year ahead.

He sat in front of his computer and reentered everything again, the results were impossible.

He stepped away from his computer and called the only person who could aid him in some way, he called his sister.

"Hi Haru, are you busy?"

"Just finished, why?" Haru was following on her brother's footstep, she was studying seismology like him, and she was as meticulous as him.

"Can you pass by my house? There is something I would like to show you"

"In ten minutes I will be on my way big brother."

He left the computer and stood by the window, his view was another building, and he loved it, it reminded him of his favorite game ever "SimCity".

He leaned back to stretch his back from so many hours in front of the Computer.

He started to sing old children rhyme, and then stopped himself.

His habit on stress was to sing certain children rhymes to relax; problem is he did it in an extremely loud voice.

He paced in the area away from the computer for a few minutes; then he couldn't help it and sat again in front of it.

His phone rang.

When he looked at the caller, it was his sister, he answered her.

"Hello"

"Hello, Big Brother, I am waiting outside your apartment"

"Just come in Haru"

She entered and he led her immediately to the computer.

She knew of his project, even though she doubted it could be achieved.

"Read the incidents over the last year, and then look at the magnitude curve, lastly read the projections." He directed her then stood to a side watching her while he hummed a rhyme.

After ten minutes of total silence, she turns to him.

"This is genius big brother, without recalculating and revising your program, I think it is accurate even though the result is scary."

"Well, what do you think I should do?"

"Recheck the data you entered, check the program itself, maybe you put a wrong line or code."

"I did, three times, and third time started from scratch, same projection."

"But that is impossible, it can't be"

"I think it is"

She bites on her fingers. "You should report it then; this can't be kept a secret"

"Report it how, should I just say to them, hey I have some news, half of Asia will be leveled to the ground in 4 months and hey, the planet will drown?"

"Yes you should, it is a global cataclysmic event Isamu, and somebody would know how to deal with it."

"I will do as you advice sister, let us hope somebody does know how to deal with this."

-5-

John stepped out of the church; he walked without looking at his path.

He was praying, continuously, it seemed to him he prayed more than he ever did in his entire life.

His feet led him to the children hospital; it was his daily route for the last six months, yet it seemed like he did this every day of his life.

The reception staff saluted him; he blessed them as a matter of habit.

He eventually reached the oncology unit, as usual he found his sister siting in the room of his nephew.

She turns; her once beautiful eyes were sunken and red.

"Hi Carol, how are you and how is Paul?"

"As good as can be expected, God's peace is upon him today"

He was amazed at her acceptance and her strength, he was praying for a healing miracle, while she prayed only for peace.

His nephew was diagnosed only one month ago with kidney cancer, and it was late for surgery, maybe even late for any human intervention.

He knew she was the one with the stronger faith between them, especially after the death of their mother and the agonizing years with their father.

He believed in redemption and salvation, it was his hope that their father received them.

Their father was an alcoholic and he never admitted it till the day he died, he claimed he was a true believer.

John never felt it in him, he felt through him a desolate existence and because of him he joined the service of God.

But his mother was the one who really was a Christian to follow with no exaggeration, through her he had seen the work and felt the touch of God.

Their mother was a gentle soul who gave all without waiting for anything in return.

He was not as powerful a believer as their mother or as Carol, he thought he was more like his father, and it made him scared.

He doubted God will ever answer his pleads for Paul, and he knew that this doubt might destroy his faith and therefore destroying him totally.

He touched the hand of the sleeping child and prayed, he prayed not to lose his faith, he prayed for a miracle, a miracle that would save his faith.

He prayed more for this trial to end; he almost reached his ability to deal with pain and sorrow.

He knew it would break him soon, if it didn't break already.

-6-

Adam left the debate victorious, as it should always be.

He sat to a side sipping on a cold soda while he remembered the discussion.

Edward started by welcoming him to their meeting then he said "You claim that there is no proof to the existence of God, let's just accept that. The fact remains that you can't prove that God doesn't exit."

He continued "It is like Schrodinger's cat, it exists in the realm of probability, both alive and dead."

He inhaled and continued "You can't decide its state unless you open the box to see the cat, a case that would never be achievable with God. You would have to be an equal entity to God to view his box and open it; hence the probability dictates that God's existence and nonexistence are 50-50."

He concluded with triumph in his voice. "This would refute your argument as an absolute for the nonexistence of God."

Adam smiled, Edward had done some research over the internet; this would be fun.

"An unquantifiable probability is never 50-50, and the Schrodinger cat paradox doesn't apply, unless God is subjectable to laws of causality and quantum mechanics."

Adam speaks in a calm reaching voice. "You claim that God can't be proven of nonexistence beyond doubt, but your argument actually shed considerable doubt of his very existence.

According to you there is a 50% chance he doesn't exist"

Adam smiled and said. "I respect your research and trying to find means to refute me via certain blogs, fact remains, that you drove an argument against your own cause."

"So, I would now offer my own argument for you to consider." Adam continued.

"If God does indeed exist, why would he not give evidence of his existence? I mean belief without touching and seeing is good and merited, but wasn't Luke doubtful himself? Wasn't he allowed according to scripture to touch the wounds of Jesus? What factor would prevent God of giving the same chance of proving beyond doubt his existence to all of humanity? Why wouldn't he just strike me down this instant to prove that he indeed exists? Why wouldn't he show us the flames that wrote the Ten Commandments?"

Adam inhaled "I don't need an answer, the debate is over my dear colleagues, and I just leave it to you to answer these questions."

While turning to leave to the protests of the gathering he said. "I give you a week and we meet again to debate your answers."

Suzan approached him while he sat sipping his soda "So, ready for the study group?"

"Sure, let's go now" He stood up and walked beside her in silence.

He was trying to erase the events of that night two months ago, and her helping him makes it worse.

The memory is ever present, always waiting for any trivial reason to surface.

It was the party after the homecoming party, a party to lose yourself into booze without professors present, too much booze and drugs, he was barely standing.

And then she came to dance with him, he was not sure now whether he loaded her up to mock her later, or what.

But by the end of it all she fainted in his room.

He still doesn't know why he did it; it was some primal evil inherent into him.

Maybe the long years of watching his father rapping his mother night after night had a factor, or maybe he just inherited an evil gene from him, or maybe he was just evil without reasons.

He took off her clothes, first to clean her of her own vomit, but then he started to be aroused.

He should have stopped then, but he didn't.

She was a virgin to his surprise

He cleaned her thoroughly afterwards not to leave a trace of his deed.

He even applied some of the anesthetic cream his roommate uses for his piles on her privates.

He felt ashamed and guilty.

Now as he walked beside her, he just wanted to confess it all to her, the guilt was tearing him up.

But he needed her presence in his life, and deep down he knew it was not just for the money, he needed her because she was the purest person he ever met, she was full of goodness that her mere existence proves that there might be a God.

They walked in silence beside each other.

-7-

"Ramy, come down to help your father." His mother called from the stair well in a high pitched voice.

He was annoyed, he didn't like the name Ramy, but he couldn't let his blasphemer family know his new name, Abo Al Azam.

He rushed down the stairs to take the shopping bags from his father, albeit a little more violently than he intended.

He saw his father as a spineless cuckold, who refused to force his mother or sisters to wear the hijab, furthermore he allowed his mother to work in a place filled with stranger men and he didn't even feel ashamed for this.

He dropped the bags on the floor of the apartment's entrance and rushed to his room; he turned on the air condition, moved his mouse to bring his computer out of hibernation and sat in front of it.

He jacked the sound up to cover the filth his sisters were watching, he couldn't fathom how they could listen to those songs knowing full well they were an affront to Allah, or how they watched these serials with almost naked men and uncovered women.

He was not really listening to the lecture about ethics of Islam, yet the very loud sound helped him not think of his sisters' sins.

And to add insult to the wound, his father usually joined them in their sinning with his mother; he was abiding his time with this family.

Akin to the people of the prophet Lot and their horrendous sinful lives, he was Lot and his family was Lot's people, he was waiting for the order from God to just pack and leave.

"Ramy, come out of your room, lunch is ready." His mother called for him.

He thought while he stood up, how dare she raise her voice like that, didn't she know that the voice of women was obscene?

He joined them at the dining table, they had takeout again.

"Again takeout" he mumbles

"What is your complain? It is food from the best grill house in the city." His father looks sternly at him.

"We should eat homemade food by the hands of mother or my sisters." He answered

"And why didn't you do it yourself if you are so eager for homemade food? Your sisters were out the whole day at school, and your mother has her job." The father's voice was having anger floating at the edges of his words.

"I am a man, I should not cook." He answered in a loud voice.

"Says who? What gives a man relief of house chores? Who made you a man anyway?" the father was now at the top of his lungs.

"Allah Said. His Prophet said." He was now standing up, waving his arms and almost foaming at the mouth.

"Lies spread by your destructive fanatics, God never said that, and Prophet Mohamed Peace be upon him, was feeding our lady Aisha, and ordered his son in law to find a maid to help in house chores if he was not willing to, because a woman is not a slave. You are an idiot hanging with other idiots claiming they have only truth, and son; no human has the right to monopolize the truth, even if he was sent by God." The father was also now standing and waving his arms.

"You will all burn in hell. You are lost, may God take me out of this unjust village." By his last words he stormed out of the house.

For half an hour he walked aimlessly, then he started heading to a seedier part of town.

He had to meet Sheikh Abo Bakr, only he will grant him peace.

-8-

Edvige entered the office and walked towards Alfred's office, she found him with two other men, and one of them had the distinct look of military about him.

Alfred looked up from the computer to her. "Hi Edvige, these are General Steven Roger and Mr. Alan Dubois."

She felt numbness in her finger tips and cold sweat at her nape, she said in a small voice. "Hello, pleased to meet you."

"When I passed your report up, they were very interested in it." He continued.

"Hello Edvige, we went through your input with Alfred from top to bottom, it is correct."

General Steven addressed her.

She frowned, and said. "I am sorry; I don't understand why I was called back here"

"We passed your input through the projection programs, the resulting projection is quiet alarming" Alan addressed her this time.

"Alarming in what way? And what does the projection has to do with me if the input was correct?" she was a little bit scared and totally frustrated.

"First you have to sign these two papers then we can discuss with you the details." Alan handed her a sheaf of papers.

She scanned quickly though the lines. "These are non-disclosure and secrecy agreements, I thought I signed those before I took the job."

"What you signed was an abridged form, this is the one administrative stuff sign; it is more full and binding. Breaking this agreement is considered an act of treason." The general answered her.

"What if I refuse to sign it?" she had her hands at her sides to keep them from trembling and to dry the pouring sweat.

"I think you have to sign it, you really should not question it Edvige." Alfred had pleading in his words, his eyes were looking too red, and he also looked like he was just in from the rain. He looked too tired and stressed.

"You will void your internship and leave now Miss Gerard." Alan told her in a calm voice.

She took a pen from Alfred's desk and signed the papers, then handed them back to Alan.

"Now that I have signed, what is going here?"

"World War Three Miss Gerard; that is what we are looking at in four to eight months." The general ushered her to sit.

-9-

"Hi baby, mama misses you like hell, can you give me a kiss now?" Jane sat in front of the computer holding away her tears as she talked to her daughter.

Mary blew a kiss and smiled "I miss you mama a lot, especially on Tuesdays."

Jane laughed "I miss you all the time honey; but why especially on Tuesdays?"

Jane's father moved into the camera frame. "Hi jane, how is everything?"

"Fine Dad, I miss you all, otherwise, fine" Jane looked at the camera with anxiety hidden in her smile.

"You have snow there mama?" Mary asked.

Jane laughed even louder. "Of course we do, I think they have it almost all year round baby. So why do you miss me more on Tuesdays?"

"Oh, Tuesdays; I have science on Tuesdays. My teacher Mrs. Sarah reminds me of you when you were explaining how things work, it makes me a little sad that you are not around to explain things like you used to do." Mary answered her mother; the smile faded from both their faces.

"I will come in a few weeks baby, I promise I will."

"I will be waiting for you. I will come with papa to the airport to pick you up." Mary looks about to cry.

Jane forced back the smile. "So, how is school, what did you learn new?"

"We are learning now about environment, did you know that weather changes are melting ice in the North Pole? And did you know that a small ball of ice when falling grows to a thousand times its size, even a tiny snow ball can cause this." Mary was barely sitting in front of the camera from her excitement to share what she learned with her mother.

Jane touched the monitor" I love you so very much and I am very proud of you Mary, You are my treasure."

"I love you too mama." Mary kissed the camera.

"Mary, time for studying, say bye to your mama and go to finish your homework now." Jane's father addressed Mary.

Mary looked to her grandfather. "Can't I spend more time with mama, please papa."

"No, you can do it after lunch if your mother would allow." He nods to the camera; Jane understood that he needed to speak tom her alone.

"Go baby, I will contact you again in four hours, give me a kiss before going." Jane blew her daughter a kiss to receive the same, then Mary left the room and Jane's father sat in Mary's place.

"I needed for Mary to leave to speak to you." He said.

"I understood that dad, and I think I know what subject you want to talk about." Jane adjusted her posture.

"You have to consider coming back for good Jane, Mary needs her mother."

"I know dad, I will come for a week by the end of the month."

"Don't play with me Jane, you know I meant for you to come and settle."

"Dad, I knew you meant this, but it is not time yet, I still have to finish my contract. You know this"

"I do, I just wanted to ask you not to renew it."

"I will see my options when the time comes, I might relocate to home by then."

"I don't want to push you, just consider the need of your daughter."

"Trust me dad, I know. Hell, I need her a lot more than she needs me."

"Ok, I have to go now. Bye Jane." There was vivid disappointment on his face, and she knew he was ending the conversation for it not to turn like last week into an outright fight. They caused Mary to cry for two nights over their fight.

"See you soon dad." The video call was disconnected.

She sat in front of the computer silent, then her tears start running down her cheeks.

She felt the emotions increasing inside of her threatening to engulf her whole and just washing her away. Just like the snow ball effect Mary was talking about.

She tried to control her tears, cheering herself up by remembering the conversation with Mary.

Then it hit her, she opened again her files to check the data.

It is a snow ball, and it started rolling months ago.

On this new light she finished her figures and forecasts, opened her email and attached the files to a message to the head of the WHO.

It was titled Global super multi-agent infection pandemic.

She wrote in the body of the message: Attached files forecast a possible Global pandemic of various infectious agents most probably resistant to antibiotics. I fear it would be on a scale of the Black Death, only global. I send this email for urgent and immediate attention.

She sent the email, and stood shivering alone.

-10-

The United Nations Secretary General's senior management group convened in an emergency session.

The head of the meeting declared. "This meeting is called for to discuss three disturbing reports that all came yesterday almost at the same time."

He paused then continued. "We received affirmed reports of three world ending events from certifiable persons, the reports had been revised and affirmed for their content by our own scientific team. The time frame is very tight; we have maximum six months for the disasters to fall in."

He asked his aids to pass papers to the convened members. "The situation is strange, we have an affirmation of a third world war jump started by simultaneous terroristic acts aiming for nuclear facilities all over the globe enticing military action from all the major forces of the planet in defense of their own sovereignty and populace."

He continued. "We also have reports of a global pandemic of super infections unresponsive to antibiotics, and the main issue is that it is expected to be a multi organism attack."

"The third threat is multiple earthquakes of epicenters on the Eurasian plate, the Arabic plate, the north American plate and the south American plate. It is unprecedented to happen, the report mentions major tectonic shift across the globe initiating the event. The earthquakes will propagate along all the fault lines to reach a massive event expected to reach ten on the Richter scale. The resulting tsunamis would drown almost 60% of the land mass of the planet. "He inhales and exhales.

"What we are facing would sound like the biblical apocalypse."

One of the security detail members left the room quietly. He walked away from the crowded areas until he reached the exit.

He held his mobile and called. "Hello, this Armand. The horsemen have been unleashed."

He listened to the answer while rubbing his ring on his middle figure of his right hand.

It had a red ruby which if it caught the light at the right angle would show a glowing eye.

"I will travel to Spain tonight; we must open the door and locate the trinity."

-11-

In a converted mosque from Andalucía era, thirteen men and women were sitting around a round table to discuss.

"So it is time." A man with silver hair said.

"First time for our world, and if we act in time, it would not be the last" a woman with distinctive features and bright red hair to his right answered.

"Had the archiver been notified?" a woman with dark blond hair sitting opposite the silver haired man said.

"He is on his way right now; the guardian and the speaker are here, awaiting his arrival to start."

A dark skinned man with mid-eastern features said.

"Should we give the order to move the members into the hiding vaults?" asked a chubby man with brown curly hair.

"I would not advise of taking this step right now, the apocalypse is still a chance not a fact." The silver haired man said.

"I don't think the vaults would help, the news of the three global destructive events is what seeped through and could be interpreted by people. The reality would be far more devastating."

A man with a full beard said.

"You think he let these news seep through by intention?" asked the red haired woman.

"Could be a possibility, he is after all a God of sorts, at least for our science levels at this time."

The silver hired man said.

A short bald man holding a briefcase enters the meeting area, followed by two men.

One of them was the security detail member from the UN, the other a diminutive man with sharp features and a matching set of tattoos on both hands.

The tattoo was of a bird in flight while an arrow tied to a chain piercing its wings.

The silver haired man stood up and took the hand of the balding one. "Welcome archiver, we have been waiting your arrival. Please have a seat, all three of you."

"You understand the reason we called here for?" the silver haired man continued.

"Yes your eminence, the end of the world is upon us" the archiver paused a second then added "again."

-12-

He swam in darkness, totally separated from everything.

Only the rhythmic sound of heartbeats was his companion, and they were his heartbeats.

Recently, he felt it was recent, because in his isolation time meant nothing. He felt that the rhythm had changed.

His continuous dream was disrupted, he felt that he was about to wake up.

And this meant only one thing, he was about to die.

He molded the dream so that waves would seep through, because if he dies, so would the world.

In his long existence, nearly a millennium, he grew fond of humans.

After all, he only dreamt of them.

-13-

"The ritual predates any form of written history; it is believed it even predates Homo sapiens. It has been translated over the ages into a hundred languages. Yet the only time we know of that it

was actually performed was in 1006 A.D." the Archiver held a parchment to be seen by the thirteen gathered people.

"So, can we begin it yet?" the silver haired man asked.

"I am not sure. In the most recent translations, including the one performed in 1006 A.D. is mandating it to be performed only on the six hour of the six day of the six month. It might be an inclusion because of the Christian belief involvement of the era. But I would not risk it; it can only be performed once per lifetime of the congregation involved. This means if we fail, nobody on earth can perform the ritual as long as any of us is alive." The archiver answered.

"I see, so we have to wait for another day then." The silver haired man said.

"I think this would be a wise decision, plus we need to perform the location ritual for the chosen three, the trinity must enter his realm within the same lunar cycle of opening the portal. This means according to the lunar calendar, it must be within a week from tomorrow."

"And can we start this ritual now?" the red head asked.

"Yes, I will need elements of body, soul, blood and sin of the off spring of the thirteen founding families. Soul I think means a breath, the ancients believed that every breath contained a part of the soul. For the body, I think hair or nails would do. The blood is just that, just one milliliter of each of your children would suffice. Last is the sin, again the ancients believed the human excreta to be sinful, so this is what I need. If you can procure these items for me, I will start the ritual with the guardian and the speaker."

"I think we can provide all these before nightfall." The silver hired man said.

"Till then we will retire to our rooms." The bearded man said.

They filled out of the meeting place, leaving the three new comers alone.

The security detail said. "What would you prefer to order Pizza or local?"

The man with tattoos answered "I am sick of pizza, order local for me."

"I will try local food as well." The archiver said as he pulled a package of cigarettes and drew one out.

-14-

Isamu was flown over night to New York, and he had to attend United Nations Secretary General's senior management group on arrival.

He was received by the group and introduced to a Doctor Jane Charles, Edvige Gerard a French woman by her accent and an English man called Alfred Gilbert.

He was told that he and the other three were flown to attend this session to assert their information.

"Please Doctor Charles; we will need you to tell us about your theory and what can be done about it in your professional opinion." The Secretary General of the UN addressed her.

Jane stood up, inhaled and began. "During the last ten years there was a rising curve of super germs, bacterial agents unresponsive to normal antibiotics. The pharmaceutical companies re supplying new generations of existing antibiotics every year, and within months, new bacteria appear with resistance to these new antibiotics. The phenomenon was not alarming to us since the curve was almost stable, one or two new agents a year, even though this was a danger to deal with, it was within human technology handling."

She drank from the glass of water placed in front of her. "This changed the last three years, pharmaceutical companies have reached the summit of innovation for evolving generations of antibiotics, and they are yet to invent new families all together. And to top this sudden blockage, three years ago we had six super germs, then last year twenty; this year until now we had forty. If the number crosses sixty agents, a multi agent pandemic will commence, I estimate for us to reach this point within 4-8 month at most."

"And what measures do you suggest?" the Secretary General asked.

"I don't really know; United Nations Secretary General's senior management group knows, the protocol is usually using antibiotics combinations, but I don't think this will be any effective. But don't take my opinion; I think crisis management teams who dealt with prior epidemics would provide better solutions. I think you should consult one of these teams." She answered.

"Thank you doctor Charles, we already did, they are devising a scenario for this as we speak. They had scenarios of super germ pandemics, only it was usually against a single agent." He concluded then he turned to Alfred.

"Mr. Gilbert your team predicted world war three, can you please elaborate."

"Miss Gerard compiled data from the last year for terroristic attacks and cross border skirmishes globally. Then we put these inputs through a projection program that predicts percentages of future terrorist attacks and possible cross country transgression. Usually we build the projection on patterns over a period up to fifty year in the past, and this is what miss Gerard did."

He continues. "We noticed that the recent year attacks were heading away from heavily populated cities as the usual these attacks targeted, instead they were heading to heavily guarded las, military facilities and power distribution stations. And for the most part, they cost us heavily in life and facilities."

He swallowed and said "The projection predicted a chance of 78% attack on at least five nuclear facilities across the globe. The immediate effect in nothing compared to what these attacks will cause; they would cause a chain reaction leading to the launching of the tactical war heads automatically from the world's most powerful arsenals against each other."

He shifted from leg to leg. "We ran security simulation measures, putting in account doubling, tripling and quadrupling the security details of around 120 power plants and experimental plants globally and the several war head storage warehouses across the globe. We still got a 70% chance of multiple attacks succeeding, enough to reach the same result projected."

"Thank you Mr. Gilbert." The Secretary General assured him to sit and faced Isamu. "Doctor Isamu, you invented a new program that uses meteorological, environmental and seismic events of the past in an algorism that predicts future seismic activity. Am I accurate in my description?" Isamu stood up "Yes Mr. Secretary, you are."

"Would you please tell us about how accurate your program is and what was its predictions."

"The algorism behind the program should be accurate, it was never tried before of course, but I estimate its predictions to be around 90% correct."

He pauses then continues. "When I first tried it I fed it data of the last hundred years, to be a base for all future predictions. "

He continues. "According to the resulting predictions, a major tectonic plate shift is about to happen, four of the seven plates will move almost at the same time, the Eurasian plate, the Arabic plate, the north American plate and the south American plate to be specific. The fault lines involved in the tectonic shifts will erupt into at least twenty epicenters simultaneously with earth quakes of around 10 on the Richter scale. Aside from the immediate devastating damage, a mega tsunami will drown around 60% of the land mass of earth. And if the prediction is correct, this is the end of the world."

"When will your predictions take place?" The Secretary asks.

"In about six months from now." Isamu answers while looking around him in disbelief.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you were called together to listen to each other's predictions. You predicted the end of the world, three times over. In a logical functioning universe, this is impossible. Before you rise up to defend your intellect and reputation, I assure you I don't doubt you. And to further prove my words, this assembly had spent the entire night with the best the world could offer in your individual fields of expertise. They couldn't prove you wrong." The Secretary General paced the meeting hall.

"We have to accept your predictions for what they are, the apocalypse." He paused.

"These events are impossible to comprehend and near impossible to deal with, hence the reason we called you all in." he stood at the head of the table.

"You have a choice, or rather a moral dilemma to deal with; you can spread the news, and humanity will descend into anarchy nullifying any effort to save even a minor percentage of the earth population, yet enough to save the human race. Or you help us by keeping your predictions secret, help us to prepare for past apocalypse, and you and your loved ones will be granted places on the human arc, the proposition which we will discuss today."

They possessed brilliant minds, yet the unspoken decision the UN staff was taken, the apocalypse predictions will never reach the public.

He gave them an hour to decide, some things were too precious to be left to individuals.

-15-

The speaker stood in a large circle drawn on the floor of the meeting place, furniture was moved for the purpose.

The circle had three sections each had drawings of plants and animals different from the others.

Strange symbols were drawn round its outer parameter.

Inside the circle beside the speaker were a bag of balloons, a bag of collecting sealed cups, a box of blood vials and a bag of hair clippings.

The speaker stood with raised arms and started to loudly spoke words in sing song rhyme.

"Enoch, Shatan, Melek of time and air, enemy of man. Hannisama. "He repeated this sentence three times.

Then he started to wave his hands down and up.

"Of the soul I donate" and he popped the balloons inside the circle.

"Of body I offer you." He piled the clipping in the center of the circle.

"Of blood I carry towards you." He emptied the blood vials over the piled hair and nail clippings.

"Of sins I commit into you." He dumped the contents of the collection cups on top of the pile of bloody hair and nails.

"I plead of you to bring forth the likeness of the trinity into this realm." He lighted fire with a match to the pile of offerings.

He fell to his knees as a bright light erupted from the mound of offerings; the entire attending group shielded their eyes.

A distinctive sulfurous stench filled the hall and the light subsided, leaving behind three busts of three men.

He stepped out of the circle and addressed the silver haired man. "These are the exact statues of the candidates; I think we can access our police and traffic security cameras around the globe to locate them."

The security man from the UN took photos of the statues and rushed outside.

-16-

Jane held the phone to her ear, and spoke quietly.

"Dad, you have to come, please I can't tell you why, just take Mary and come to New York."

From the other end of the phone call came the voice of her father. "I have to understand why Jane, this is too sudden and you refuse to give me a reason, I can't just accept this. Mary has a school day tomorrow, what are you thinking?"

"Please, I need both of you here. I already sent the tickets. I also called Bobby and he is coming with his family."

"Bobby is coming? What is going on Jane? Why are you gathering the family?"

"Please, trust me dad. Just trust me. Take a leap of faith for me."

"Are you OK jane? What is going on with you? And why don't you come to us?"

"I will explain when you arrive. I promise to explain it all."

"I am not comfortable with this, but ok, I will come tomorrow with Mary."

"Thank you so much dad, I love you." She was on the verge of crying and was holding herself by sheer power of will.

"I love you too Jane, see you tomorrow then."

"See you tomorrow dad."

She ended the call and looked towards Edvige, Alfred and Isamu.

They were having the same kind of conversation with their loved ones, Edvige was sounding as if she was having a fight. She didn't understand their tongues of French, Japanese or Dutch.

These were the languages they were using respectively, yet she could feel the flow of their phone calls.

Emotions had a language that any living human can understand.

She felt their fears, their anger and their negotiations with their loved ones.

Alfred put down the phone. He carried a look of sadness that spoke volumes.

She knew that one or more of his loved ones refused the journey.

Isamu was having glee in his voice while he was finishing his phone call, she could almost hear the acceptance from the person he called.

She looked again at Edvige and waved her hand in a questioning sign.

She answered her by swinging her hand from side to side on its axis, meaning maybe or not yet.

They gave them forty eight hours to inform and bring their loved ones; after they all accepted the offer of the Secretary General.

The Secretary General notified the heads of state of all the member countries, and the Security Council was deliberating how to prevent the predicted war, yet the negotiations were running extremely slow.

Some countries were preparing for doomsday scenarios, America had one hundred vaults built under desert mountain areas, and Germany had the same.

China had a metropolis built underground, while Russia had one under the seabed.

All over the globe several countries had some kind of shelter for at least fear of nuclear attacks.

The total space of all these human shelters, or arcs to pass the apocalypse could house a total of one hundred and fifty million people, to be able to sustain them for up to one hundred years.

If the Security Council could find a way to evade a nuclear war, the period of close up should shrink to thirty years only, allowing for three times the number of people to be saved.

The names and numbers were never planned, and this was what the people from the UN were negotiating with countries holding these shelters for how much they will allow replacing their own citizens.

The UN people were trying to cram inside these shelters every scientist of renown in every available branch, every artist of productive, imaginative or performance arts, and economists and inspirational figures.

Again these negotiations were very slow.

Jane sat and she tried to bring her breathing to a normal rate, she started to grasp the idea of the end of the world, and she was terrified.

She could sense the urgency in the movement of the people around her; most of them knew they will never be part of the human arc.

Yet they worked against time to insure the arc received the core of the new humanity.

She felt it all, and it was choking her.

-17-

The thirteen sat while the guardian, the ex UN security, presented them with the locations, details and means of approach for the three candidates.

He used a projector to explain to the assembly.

"The first one is Father John Clarke, an American catholic priest of Irish decent; he is suffering a family crisis because his nephew was diagnosed with terminal kidney cancer. He lives in New York, and we will use one of our members from the catholic clergy to lure him to chase after miracle healing of the nephew, we are arranging for this right now. We think he is desperate enough to jump onboard."

He pressed a button and image changed.

"The second one is Adam Brown, a British post graduate student of nuclear physics. He is an outspoken atheist, who is rather proud of the way he challenges believers of any faith and wins. He is known for an exaggerated ego when it comes to these challenges. He is also having a serious problem with authority; he had several clashes with campus security. We think we can exploit this and his eagerness for religious debates and call him over for a supposed international debate that runs against the wishes of the church."

The silver haired man started. "He is an atheist? Are you certain, shouldn't all of the candidates be men of faith?"

"The archiver actually has an explanation for this." He pointed to the archiver.

"Atheism is the lack of faith, but in the case of Adam with his pursuit to prove the falsity of other beliefs he actually became a fanatic believer in atheism, hence he is actually a fervent man of faith." The archiver concluded.

"Interesting, but should not the candidates represent major religions? Shouldn't they be faiths that are fast propagating and persistent in their believer practices to be considered human psyche corner stones?" the silver man asked.

"Adam is not a lone example, atheism as a movement had never seen such flourishing in numbers as after the millennium. Furthermore, it has people of every race and background propagating its teachings and apologetics. It even has figures akin to prophets of other religions. I would call it at least the second most powerful religion on the planet now."

The silver haired man seemed convinced "Ok Guardian, proceed please."

"The third candidate is Ramy Hassan, an Egyptian Economics studies graduate, unemployed, coming from upper middle class. For the last three years he has been a member of one of the Islamic jihadi movements, and is very active in attacking and defaming figures of other religions over social media and personal blogs. He has taken the name Abo Al Azam, and he expressed his wishes over several posts and comments to join the fighting for faith physically and to attain martyrdom. We already set in motion a series of events to lure him in. we arranged for him to come to Spain on the pretense of returning Andalucía to the glorious age of Islam, our retrieval team had been dispatched one hour ago to bring him here."

"Good, you are keeping the appropriate pace. Is the speaker ready for the Opening Ceremony?" asked the Silver haired man.

"He is ready your eminence." The archiver said.

"Was the anointing easy then?" asked the Silver haired man.

"Well he is a strong man, yet cutting two fingers from each hand and bathing in your own boiling blood is beyond the power of any man. But he is a resilient man and he readies now your eminence." The guardian answered.

"So, do we miss any ingredient from the needed ones?"

"None you eminence, although finding the blood of a matured female virgin, meaning above twenty one was not easy." The archiver said.

"So, can we start then?"

"We have to wait two and a half hour to start your eminence, has to be GMT."

"We wait then."

-18-

Adam reread the email for the tenth time.

Something smelled wrong about it, but they didn't ask money or propose investment or offer sex or love.

And it was not in his spam folder like most of these emails usually end; still it had a fishy smell to it.

He knew he was nobody, he might act cocky around campus, but this was on a totally different level.

He searched the words again for a hidden meaning or an unseen message.

He found nothing but what the message offered, it read "Mr. Adam Brown, we are sending you this email in hope to engage you in public debate to be live on YouTube for the entire length of it. We are not sanctioned nor affiliated to the Catholic Church; in fact we are acting against the church authority. Your position is well known by us and well noted, and this is precisely the reason we are contacting you. If you would dare to take our challenge, we will send you plane tickets for Spain where the debate would be held in front of 5000 attendees, beside the audience on YouTube, estimated at one hundred thousand. If you should agree, just send us an email with your acceptance. In return we will send you a non-endorsed plane ticket; you put your own data through the airline company.

Looking forward for your response, best regards.

The First Templar Church."

He decided to ignore the email for the time being, he was intrigued but still felt it was a scam.

He would have jumped to the chance if his financial status was better, but last fight with his backward fanatic catholic father, meant he could only depend on very high grades to finish his studies.

The study groups helped, but not enough to pay for the tuitions.

He heard knocks on his room's door. "Come in please." He said.

Suzan entered holding a medium sized box.

"Happy birthday Adam." She gave him the box and smiled.

"What Birthday? My birthday is in October, we are in the beginning of June." He looked in puzzlement to her.

"Yes I know that, but I might not be around to give you the present." She played with stuff on his desk.

"Still, from now till then, is a very long time." He insisted.

"Yeah, but I would not be here by the end of the week." She sat on the single chair not having books on its seat.

"Where are you going?" He asked her, anger rising in his gut.

"As a start home, I am going back to Blackpool." She answered quietly.

"Why would you do that? You are top of the class; you are the one with best chances for being hired by the University of Edinburgh. I don't understand why you should act this stupid." His voice started to rise with every word, ending in a near shout.

"Please calm down Adam, I am not trying to hurt you in any way. But I will tell you why I am leaving. I don't belong, I am dying slowly here. Back home I was never the silent outsider, here I feel like an outcast." She held the chair leg bending down almost reaching fetal position.

"I am the same Suzan; I actually feel the hatred in the others' eyes following me wherever I go.

Yet I will not just let them cut me alive, I will never allow them." He pleaded to her.

"Adam, you chose this alienation, you challenge whoever seeks to approach you and rub his nose to the floor, on daily basis. I never understood why you tolerate me, but I doubted that I am your charity, your sick puppy found at the threshold of the door." She bent lower and pulled her legs up towards her.

"You are not the charity, I am. Without you I would be penniless, without your arranged study groups, I would have been the one leaving here." He reverted again to loud voice.

"Yes I m a charity case Adam" she suddenly screamed. "I am broken, I am broken" She started to cry.

He approached her timidly, he was always a failure when it came to dealing with human emotions, and he was emotionally crippled.

He didn't know if he should touch her, pat her back or hug her.

He had seen these things in movies, but he never experienced them firsthand.

Finally he started patting her shoulder, she leaned on his arm and he ended up in an awkward hug.

She pulled him nearer and cried on his shoulder.

Muffled by his shoulder she said. "I went to a gynecologist two days ago, I had problems, infections, and she told me I should have washed with a vaginal washing solution after my first sex." She whimpers in his shoulder for a few seconds. "Adam, I never had sex, not that I know of."

He stood hugging her totally silent while his guilt was burrowing a hole in his core.

She released herself from his embrace. "I think someone rapped me, or at least assaulted me, while they roofied or drugged me."

He croaked "Who and how?"

"I don't know either, and I am not willing to pursue this. I told you I was an outcast; only an outcast would be merrily violated like this." She returned to hugging her knees.

"But maybe you were drunk or stoned; maybe you put something in yourself while under the influence." He mumbled, unbelieving what he just said, it was lame and cruel.

"I don't do drugs and I was drunk only once in my life and I ended up in my room." She answered and he remembered that he carried her to her room that night.

He thought fast. "Look, I am going to this debate, I will be back in a week, promise me you won't leave till then."

"Why, what difference would that make?" she asked him.

"Just do this; I might come back with the answer." He tried to believe this himself to be able to convince her.

"OK, I will stay one extra week, just for you Adam." She smiled to him.

He left the room with her, then he went out of campus, he needed to scream.

He reached the fence of the airport, and he screamed.

He just felt how much of a coward he is.

He started walking back, he has decided to go for the alleged debate, and he needed time to think how to face her when he came back.

He also needed to escape, escape was always an option.

-19-

John walked from the church, as usual he didn't think, he just headed to the children hospital.

He reached his nephew's room and entered.

He said to his sister. "Any change today?"

"No hello? No how are you sis?" she smiled to him.

"Forgive me Carol, I am sorry, how are you?"

"I am fine John, but I am worried about you"

"I am fine, don't worry about me, I am just worried about Paul."

"Paul is in the hands of God John, if it is his will he will heal, and if it is his will he will have him in his kingdom." She smiled a sad smile while she caressed the head of the sleeping child.

He couldn't answer; he just knelt by the boy's bed and started to pray.

He finished his prayer and stood up. He almost lost his equilibrium.

"John, have you eaten anything? Aare you even sleeping, you look tired."

"I am fine; I just rose up too fast."

"John, go home please, eat and sleep well, you are a shepherd responsible for a whole flock, not just your family." She stood up urging him to go.

"But I wanted to spend some time with you and Paul"

"You are always with us and I know we are in your prayers all the time, go home john, please."

He relented and rationed that he can pray anywhere; God will eventually pay attention to him.

He started to ask forgiveness for his wrongful thoughts while he walked out of the hospital.

He decided to pass by the church on his way home; he needed to get his sermon book to prepare for tomorrow's mass.

He didn't have a sermon prepared to preach; he needed to prepare one or at least choose an old one to give to his congregation.

He walked slowly back the same route he took every day to the hospital, on the way he saluted Mr. Rogers the owner of the flower shop by the corner, blessed Mrs. Martin who asked for a blessing to help her fight temptation.

Mrs. Martin was seventy six years old and never got married, yet she claims the devil comes to her each night as a different man to tempt her.

He never understood why she chose the title Mrs. Instead of the correct Miss.

He finally reached the church to find a man sitting in the darkness on the base of the column by the front door

"Hello?" John questioned the sitting man.

"Hello John, come nearer, I missed you my son." John recognized the voice; it was father Michael, his mentor from the time even before he chose the service of God.

"Hello Father Michael, I missed you too." John pulled the older man up and hugs him.

Father Michael looked intently at his face then said. "What's wrong John? You look weary."

"I was thinking to come visit your church for the last week; I just couldn't find the time." John smiled softly.

"Well, I am here now John, I am happy to help if I can." Father Michael patted the back of John.

"Thank you Father Michael, I appreciate your help but first, and sorry for my question, but what brought you here?" John stood facing his mentor with a smile.

"I actually came to ask you something." The smile faded a little from the older man's face.

"Why don't we get inside? It would be better over coffee." John smiled and opened the doors and they entered.

They sat in the sacristy amongst the robes, candles, bibles and communion tools.

"So, what did you need help in John?" Father Michael adjusted his seat in the corner.

"I wanted to ask you to pray for Paul, Carol's son. I don't think I am enough." A sad cloud passed over the face of John.

"You are all in my prayers John, but why did want to come to my church in the other side of town for that?" Michael answered with concern in his voice.

"Paul is having terminal cancer, they are keeping him sedated almost all the time now, and I need a miracle." John said it with force.

"Don't you mean he needs a miracle?" Michael asked skeptically.

"Yes, I meant that. I need your prayers father." John said quickly.

"This is rather strange; perhaps it is a divine act." Michael carried a cryptic smile.

"What is a divine act?" John was puzzled.

"The reason I came seeking your help is an order from the church to test a miracle healer in Spain, one that has garnered the attention of the church. I was asked to perform the testing, like I did five years ago with the woman healer in the east side. But I amold john, I need help, this is why I came to you, I want you to accompany me." Michael said firmly. "And I will arrange for father George to replace you for the few days we will stay in Spain."

"This can't be a coincidence, it is a divine act. I will gladly accompany you Father." John felt hope, even though he was afraid of hope, it filled him.

-20-

Edvige sat at a café not far away from the UN building; it was located at the meeting of two streets.

She sipped slowly on her coffee and watched the passersby.

She wanted to lose herself to the moment, her father refused to come even though she begged him; he never took her seriously enough.

A woman stood by the corner of the street wiping the face of her small child to his protests.

Her cousin is on the way so as her uncle, her sister will come tomorrow.

A man stopped in front of the café to look at his phone; he smiled, answered and continued walking with a smile on his face.

She tried to convince her father's wife to bring her half-brother as well, she of course clang to her father and refused.

A man rounded the corner and waved to a woman, they met mid-way to look longingly to each other, then he held her hand and they walked away.

She had many regrets, but her biggest was her futility in it all, she couldn't convince herself they were allowing her in their arc for her uniqueness, she thought it was just a decent bribe to silence her.

A woman who looked out of place with the finely dressed people around this area of town approached the waiter and whispered in his ear, he nodded and rushed inside then came back with something wrapped and gave it to her. The women kissed his cheek in thanking then left.

She sucked in every aspect of life that ran in front of her, and she fought down the hardness building in her throat.

A woman approached the café, stood waiting for something then sat on one of the corner tables. Minutes later a man did the same, he turned around to look around before he sat then he held his phone and called. The woman's phone rang. He stood and walked towards her, she smiled and nodded, and he sat beside her.

She felt enriched by this afternoon, yet she felt she was cheating; all these people will never now till it hit them.

-21-

Ramy left the Metro station and rode a toktok which is a tricycle transformed into a tiny taxi.

He told the driver of his destination and sat back.

He hated that the toktok driver played vulgar songs on very high volume, yet he endured because he was on his way to meet his Sheikh.

He paid the driver his fare and walked on, he had to walk because even a toktok would not be able to run the streets in this corner of town.

A woman and her child hit his shoulder in walking without a pause; he felt anger boiling up his veins.

Usually his beard gave him some dignity, especially in these areas, but that rude woman didn't give him an inkling of respect.

He turned from street to alley and from alley to alley.

He was only a hundred meters from Sheikh Abo Bakr's house.

This is when he noticed a sister of their cause, like a queen she was totally covered in black cloth from head to toe, she signaled him with her head and a slight movement of her hand to go away.

He pretended to check a street vendor who spread his vegetable merchandize on the ground then he turned and walked slowly out of the area.

When he reached again the main street, two men grabbed both of his arms from each side and started walking fast.

Before he could break free the man on his right whispered in his ear. "Relax brother Abo Al Azam; we are trying to get you out of danger's way."

He relaxed a little and they loosened their grips.

They walked around five hundred meters then they entered a pass between two buildings to get out on the other side to an alley.

This was the nature of these areas, called by the authorities, random neighborhoods.

In reality it was populated by people who just took the land and built on it their homes, Ramy admired these people.

The locals didn't really think of streets or services when they built their neighborhood, they just used the space between the random buildings as roads.

They entered a building of only two floors, went up to the second floor then the guy that whispered to him knocked on the door in a rhythm of five, three then one knocks.

The door opens to a younger man.

"Alsalam aliekom wa rahmet Allah wa barakatoh brother Hamza." The guy who whispered to Ramy said to the young man by the door.

"Wa aliekom alsalam brother Abo Gehad, please come inside, we need to talk." Hamza ushered them inside.

The three men were around their twenties like Ramy, yet he noticed certain electricity they possessed and he didn't.

"The dispatch from Andalucía arrived?" the other guy who grabbed Ramy asked while they walked into the inside of the apartment.

"Yes brother Abo Islam." Hamza answered and pointed to the seats in the living room for them to be seated.

Abo Gehad pointed to Ramy. "This is brother Abo Al Azam; he is one of our vultures over the internet, one of the favorites of Sheikh Abo Bakr."

"The honor is ours brother Abo Al Azam." Hamza saluted Ramy, and Ramy answered the salute.

"We are sorry for the way we brought you here brother Abo Al Azam, but our Sheikh was taken by the police this morning, we had to grab you fast before they noticed you around his house."

Abo Islam addressed Ramy.

Ramy was chagrined "This is terrible news, what will the brothers do about it?"

"We already sent him five of our lawyers, they are the best in the country, and we will do our best to get him out of their clutches." Abo Gehad said.

"But this is not the really bad news, our noble Sheikh was to lead our brothers to a series of attacks that would shift powers in heathen Europe and give hope to the Muslims prosecuted there." Abo Islam said.

"I don't think we can do anything about it now, we have to wait till our Sheikh is out of the tyrants' prison." Hamza said.

"We might forget about the whole thing then, we had a very tight time table." Abo Gehad said.

"Why can't we do it without the Sheikh? Why can't we just follow through with the plan?" Ramy asked eagerly.

"Because he was the only one with good English enough between all the brothers plus he had the fairest skin to pass for an American." Abo Gehad said.

"Forgive me brothers, but what was the plan?" Ramy asked slowly.

"We were to travel by boat from Libya, the Sheikh would help smuggle us with a liaison in Spain. Then we will place bombs in ten most prominent churches in Andalucía, specifically ones that were mosques originally. Then we would rally our hidden cells there to revolt against the heathens." Abo Islam said.

"Brother, I can test the honey of paradise on my tongue just hearing your plan. I am proficient in English and I am fair, I will replace the Sheikh." Ramy ventured.

"I don't know brother Abo Al Azam, we know you are devoted, but you are not of the Fedayeen, your field is behind the keyboard." Abo Islam signaled by his hand for patience to Ramy.

"I think we can cut the doubt brothers, we shall pray Estekhara prayer and ask God to enlighten our hearts. Let us pray brothers." Hamza said.

They all went to wash for Woodho' in preparation of the prayer.

They stood headed by Abo Gehad and prayed.

After they finished Abo Islam said. "I feel lightness in my heart, I agree to Abo Al Azam plan."

"Me too, I feel Allah has chosen him to be his hand on earth for this endeavor." Hamza Said.

"I feel it too, so it is settled, brother Hamza, take Abo Al Azam to the photographer and replace the picture of Sheikh Abo Bakr with his. He must travel in eight hours."

Ramy was floating above the world; at last he gets the chance to die for Allah.

-22-

Alfred stood in bed switching the TV channels while his daughter and son played a game of hide and seek around the hotel room.

His wife was sleeping out of exhaustion, he wished he could sleep as well, but he was too weary to sleep.

In the morning they will send all of them to one of the vaults in England, and he was a claustrophobic.

Every time he closed his eyes to sleep, he just saw himself in this tiny room underground with no way to get out and his eyes would just snap open.

But he had to go in the vault with his family, his children deserved a chance of life, this is what he thought to counter his terror.

He also thought of his only brother, he had been calling his entire brother's family numbers and none were answering.

He knew he went on vacation in Egypt, he expected for him to call him back soon.

Yet he was terrified if the morning came and his brother didn't call back, it meant he would lose his brother to the coming doom.

His wife tried to convince her brother to come to no avail, the fact that they were not allowed even to tell their families the reality of the situation was making them to sound like raving lunatics.

He felt guilt for his own worries, when he thought of the number of people about to die he felt ashamed.

His daughter screamed, and he reacted immediately "James, stop pulling the hair of your sister, now."

His firm order was met with the usual mutiny, "But Ann pulled my hair first." The six years old stood to confront his father.

"Stop this Jean, and you too Ann, your mother needs to sleep. Otherwise no TV and you go to sleep this instant." Alfred said firmly to his children, knowing full well that they would forget he even said a word five minutes from now.

The two children mumbled a bit then went back to playing hide and seek.

Alfred sat up on the bed, looked long at his children playing, and thought that a cage would be heaven as long as he had them with him.

A chance to live should never be wasted, this is what was important.

-23-

The speaker stood in the center of a drawn circle three meters in diameter; he wore long black robes with arcane symbols.

The circle was cut by three lines to make three perfect thirds on each of the lower lines stood the guardian and the archiver, the first wore red robes and the second wore yellow ones.

On the circle's outer rim were drawing of plants, animals and people all twisted into impossible angles, and in the middle of each third stood an urn with intricate carvings matching the pictures on the rim.

The thirteen stood on the pictures circling the rim of the circle.

The speaker raised both of his hands which were missing the middle and ring fingers, the matching tattoos now looked as if the bird was not chained.

The moment the speaker raised his hands the thirteen begun to hum.

The hum rose to fill the big underground chamber, it was primal, strong and eerie.

The speaker dropped his hands and started chanting. "I have no need of your wealth; I spill your wealth to spoil, for I am the lord of decay." Then he moved north and crashed the contents of the first urn, jewels and gold chunks fell to the ground.

The humming rose in pitch.

The guardian chanted. "I have no need for your virtue; I sunder your virtues and rule you with temptation, for I am the lord of trials." He moved to his left and crashed the second urn, bright blood spilt over the ground.

The humming became feverish in tempo.

The archiver chanted "I have no need for your hunger for life; I will snuff the life from your bodies, for I am the lord of death." He moved to his right crashed the last urn releasing hundreds of dead rats, mice, snakes and insects.

The humming became alive and vibrating through the bones of everybody in the huge chamber.

The three men face the center of the circle; each draws a knife from the insides of his robes and slits his wrist spilling the blood on his third of the circle.

The humming grew discordant; there was a scream and a howl joined later by sounds of bone crunching.

The three men started to move towards the rim, in the center the ground fell leaving a black growing circle with cloudy swirls inside it.

As they reached the rim, so did the hole in the ground.

The humming was now a cacophony of sounds.

Suddenly there was a flash of lightening coming from inside the hole and the swirling clouds cleared out showing an image from another place.

The image was of a huge chamber with stairs leading downwards from all directions and in the center there was a murky glass ball of at least five meter dimeter.

Something was clearly moving inside of the ball, a hand suddenly pounded its glass like surface from within.

The speaker stood to a side while members of the thirteen were ministering the cuts on his wrists and of the two other men.

He turned to the hole and said. "It is done; the gateway is open to the realm of the dreamer."

-24-

Isamu stood in the balcony of his room, watching life going by from above.

In a way it resembled a top view computer game, a simulation.

He imagined the characters of the game to go on their predestined ways, just code in a program, and when disaster stroke, they just followed the code to rebuild and settle.

Only problem in this image was that those characters below were real people, and they had no chance of facing the oncoming disaster.

He usually ran to games to drawn failure, disappointment, depression and fear.

He couldn't bring himself to start the laptop, he knew if he did he will just go over and over his algorism, and he would be descending more in his well of self-pity.

He tried to think of his family surviving with him in the vault, a place where the art works of humanity would keep them company, even masterpiece computer games.

Then he swallowed hard, he was a claustrophobic, and the image of being trapped ground for the rest of his life, or at least the largest portion of the rest of his life.

He tried to look again down the balcony imagining the people as characters of a game, he failed totally.

He rather felt guilt, he thought by making his algorism he would be helping people, he would be always remembered and immortalized for his aid to humanity, but the reality had nothing to link to his hope.

He stood helpless, just a harbinger of doom with no power to stop his own message, he was nothing more than a dull tool.

He failed to see how humanity, if it actually survived, would remember him.

He left the balcony and went for his laptop and started it.

He went again through the code of his program, this time he will search more carefully.

-25-

The guardian entered the area of the hole; it was now covered by an air seal tent.

The archiver stood consulting some documents.

"The trinity is here, and at this moment sleeping gas charges are going off in their room in preparation to moving them to the compound." The guardian addressed the archiver.

"Good, we have eight hours before the gateway closes. I will call the others; you should go and wake up the speaker." The archiver left the documents he was reading.

"I wanted to ask you something, you are the most knowledgeable of the dreamer and his mythology amongst us and you would understand my confusion." The guardian stopped him to talk.

"Ask away my friend." The archiver faced him expectantly.

"In the ritual to open the gateway, I had this sensation of being minute, like a mote of dust in a tiny cloud on earth which is itself a mote of dust in the galaxy which in turn is a mote of dust in the universe, the sensation is not leaving me, and it is troublesome, is this usual?" the guardian had a plead on his face as he spoke.

"Well, you were in the presence of a God, you just got a sense of your mortality, and yes, it is quite normal." The archiver had a haunted look on his face, he remembered the same feeling.

"How is he a God? He is dying isn't he? This is the reason of the apocalypse and everything we have been doing to avoid it, right?" the guardian asked.

"He is a God who was once a man, Godhood is but a job, and his nature is that of any man, once he realizes his own mortality, he dies." The archiver said slowly.

The guardian looked at him for a second then broke out in laughter. "You really have a way with words, I am now more perplexed than before, you just managed to make me put the thought into the shelf named forget about it in my mind."

The archiver smiled and said. "It is like belief, any belief, you have to suspend your rational mind a little to grasp it."

"So, in reality it is just another mystery of the great beyond." The guardian said in a mock theatrical manner.

"Not really, hypothesis and theories about the dreamer had been pushed all through human history, from the extreme evil to the extreme benefactor of mankind. Any of the theories cannot and will never be proven, as are a lot of things in our lives that we practice and accept on daily basis." The archiver smile was wide and lighted his face.

"Now I am intrigued, I would like to hear some of those theories." The guardian was hoping to hear more.

"Incredible, I thought you attended orientation like all of us when you were raised to be the guardian, seems you didn't focus at all." Before the guardian could protest what the archiver declared, he was urged by him. "We have to inform the others, wake up the speaker and send our welcoming party to the trinity. We are running out of time."

They both left the huge hall.

-26-

John woke up groggy and his mouth tasted of bitterness, it tasted as if he had eaten a shoe.

He walked dizzily to the bathroom when his door knocked.

"Just a minute." He called out; he brought a bottle of water from his handbag, opened it, sipped then went and opened the door, by the door stood a priest who looked like he was Spanish.

"Hello, I am Father Matias Garcia; I am here to talk with you on urgent matters." Matias stood by the door holding a leather document holder.

John welcomed him inside "Please come in and have a seat."

Matias sat on the single chair in the room, john sat at the end of the bed.

"I am sorry I have intruded on you, but time is of the essence, and we need your immediate help." Matias started.

"The apocalypse is almost upon us, and even though it might seem unlikely, you can save the world." Matias continued.

"What apocalypse? And who are we? Is this some kind of a joke from the local church or something?" John was still trying to wake up, and he was not sure he heard Matias correctly.

"The end of the world, this is what I came to ask your help with. As to who are we, let's just say that we are guardians of the human race for circumstances like this one." Matias bent forward in his seat.

"I am sorry; I think I am still dizzy with sleep, what end of the world?" John thought he was talking to a lunatic.

"Please check the documents inside this envelope; they are top secret reports from the UN."

Matias opened his document holder, brought out an envelope and handed it to John.

John took the envelope, opened it and went fast through the documents inside.

After a minute of fast reading he returned back to the first page.

After five minutes he looked up from the documents to Matias. "This looks authentic, the language used also sounds scientific enough, I am not an expert to really judge, yet I can't just believe it at face value. And I still don't know how I can help, if these reports are true, we should all search a secluded place and start praying."

"I assure you they are authentic, and we did pray, you and two others were the answer." Matias went back in his seat.

"I don't understand, is this some kind of elaborate trick?" John started to get angry.

"This is an issue we can handle easily." He hands a mobile phone to john. "Do you think your mentor Father Michael would send you for a trick journey half way across the world? Call him through this phone, it is secure."

John brings his own phone from the nightstand and calls Father Michael, ignoring the phone Matias offered.

After three rings Michael answered. "Hello John, I know why you called me."

"There is no healer Father, is there?" John asked Michael bitterly.

"No John, I am sorry for that, but what Matias told you is all true. You have to replace the dreamer."

"What dreamer?" John shouted.

"Allow me to explain" Matias signaled him to give him the phone, which john did.

"Thank you Michael, I will take it from here." Matias ended the call and placed the phone on the table in front of him.

Matias turned to face John. "In another place, call it another dimension or maybe another reality there lays the dreamer. As he sleeps, the world is safe, if he wakes up he dies, and if he dies the world dies with him."

"Still, why do you need me, according to your reports, your so called dreamer is awake." John calmed down but was still puzzled.

"No John, he is about to, this is why we need you to enter his realm and keep him asleep in his bubble."

-27-

Adam woke up to somebody shaking him and calling his name.

In his sleep he thought it was Suzan, his mind reeled at the possibility of her following him to Spain.

He woke up with a start almost jumping out of bed.

Kneeling on the bed was a very attractive blond of about his same age.

"Who are you? And why are you in my room?" John said firmly.

"Please relax Adam, I am here to help." She had a melodious voice which lilted the words a little.

"Help with what? How did you enter my room?" he moved away from her in the bed till he descended from it.

"Help you in achieving immortality; help you with saving the world." She stood up and moved to the room's single chair.

"Nice, you are one of those religious freaks. How did you enter my room?" He stood in his boxers facing her.

"Actually I am an atheist just like you; I will talk only of proven scientific facts." She responds to his insult, she added. "I entered your room with the key of course."

"Oh really, I am intrigued then. Do talk then." He was clearly mocking her.

He moved to get something to wear from his suitcase.

He decided on a T-shirt declaring "God is light, that is why nobody has proof of his existence, he is way too fast" on its front and on the back "Warp 10 Mr. Worf". He put blue jeans to fit the look.

"Ok, fact; you can't say universe, because it implies singularity, rather say multiverse, another fact; imagining what another dimension beyond our own three dimensions is as impossible as trying to explain line to a dot, fact; passage into afore mentioned other universes would require immense amounts of energy not attainable to us, fact; a thousand years is the life span of some of the trees on the Amazon river, fact; these trees comparatively to our life span are immortals."

She smiled then added "These are the facts I will build upon, if you are still interested, we can go for the real deal."

He chuckled. "Actually dear who's her name; most of your facts are not facts, they are just hypothesis with strong probability."

"You are partially right, because we have achieved to open a gateway to another dimension, and whoever is there would be relatively immortal. And my name is Christina by the way." She crossed her arms over her breast.

"You claim something, but can you actually show it?" he crossed his arms as well.

"I will, in a few moments, we will leave this room and go there in less than five minutes. But you first have to hear me out." She stood to face him; she was at least a head shorter than him.

"Ok, present your argument." He moved to lean his back by the vanity.

"I will not argue, I will just tell a small story." She noticed he was not as comfortable to her presence as he tried to show.

"Ok then, tell me the story." He waved his hand at her in a theatrical movement.

"The story starts by this envelope, which contains reports form the UN, if you read them carefully you will know it is real." She moved to his nightstand and retrieved an envelope from behind it and handed it to him.

He opened the envelope and started reading.

In a minute he looked at her. "The material looks authentic, why are you showing me this?"

"To continue the story; you can stop all of this if you go through the gateway and replace the man staying there for the last one thousand and something years." She returned to sitting down.

"Now this is a prank, there must be hidden cameras around here somewhere." He started to violently throw things around the room.

"I assure you, there are no cameras, and this is not a prank." She sank in her chair to avoid the flying room paraphernalia.

"Fine, I am going to the manager of this hotel to give him a piece of my mind for your presence in my room." He stormed the door before she had a chance to respond.

He ran to the right hand of the corridor to find that it ended in a dead end, so he ran to the left end to find the same.

Adam panicked, there was no elevator or stairs, and he was trapped.

He sank to the floor trembling.

Christina approached him. "You didn't let me explain; you were removed from the hotel last night and brought here near to the gateway."

"So I am kidnapped." He looked up to her with hate.

"Not at all, please stand up; I will get you out of here after you see the gateway." She offered her hand to help; he ignored her and stood up on his own.

She walked to the left end of the corridor, and then she brought out her phone, and called a number. "Please open up; we would like to go to the gateway."

The wall slid up and they walked into the huge hall underground.

-28-

Ramy woke up, went to the bathroom, took a shower then headed back to his room.

He headed towards the cupboard to get fresh clothes; this is when he noticed the man rolling a rosary in his hand sitting on the single chair in the room.

"Who are you? What are you doing here? How did you enter my room? Start talking, now."
Ramy stood trembling and shouting at the top of his lungs.

"Please, calm down brother Abo Al Azam, I am the one you are supposed to meet." The man signaled Ramy to calm while he spoke.

Ramy relaxed a bit, he thought that the Egyptian police could never have followed him here, they had no jurisdiction.

He also thought that if his papers had any doubt to arise the local authority he would have never made it past customs.

And last, he was not a known figure in the Islamic state movement, to be sought after by the Interpol.

He decided he can at least talk to the man. "So you are my liaison, can you please tell me your name."

"My name is not important, but you might recognize my blogging name, I am Al Nasser Ledeen Allah." The man spoke quietly and calmly.

Ramy was in awe, he knew the name. "You are one of the biggest defenders of the Islamic beliefs on the internet; you are an icon for all the doubting and lost souls."

"I am but a man; I just do what I can to help young people not to veer too far from the teachings

of Islam." The man stood up.

"I am ready Sheikh, I can almost taste the honey of paradise, and I yearn to gain martyrdom."

Ramy spoke like a lover to his beloved.

"Allah gave you a huge task brother, you are not to die; you have to live, live for a thousand

years." Al Nasser spoke with passion, and Ramy almost swayed to the words.

"I will do anything Sheikh, just give me the order, I am ready to fight and die for Allah." Ramy

spoke with passion.

"There is no fight Abo Al Azam, the world is about to end, and you have to save it, you will give

your life, but you will also live." As he talked he grabbed the arm of Ramy and took him out of

the room.

"What do you need me to do?" Ramy asked him as they exited to the corridor.

"You will have to sleep for a thousand years, and because of your sacrifice, Islam will live." Al

Nasser patted his back as they walked.

Ramy felt it in his core; he was finally going to gain martyrdom.

-29-

The trinity stood in the air seal tent around the hole, all had varied expression, and all acted somber.

In the last twenty minutes they all received a fast briefing of the nature of the problem and the suggested solution, it brought thing into another perspective for all of them.

With them stood the silver haired man almost at the flap of the tent, the guardian and archiver behind the trinity and the speaker in front of them right at the edge of the hole.

The hole looked clear and placid, as if looking through the clearest lake.

The speaker starts speaking "Gentlemen, what you see before you is the realm of the dreamer. We know that the last time humanity faced a similar danger was in 1006 AD. The gateway was opened then also, three men descended into the gateway and the dreamer returned to his dream and humanity lived on. Today, you three will go down the hole for the same purpose, the dreamer must not be allowed to abandon his dream. This is the entering ritual three at the gate and one waiting by the final door, and three witnesses and on witness waiting by the final door." He pointed to the trinity then the hole, and then he pointed to himself the guardian and the archiver and last to the silver haired man.

"One day somebody is going to give a scientific explanation to the whole fantastical phenomenon you just described" Adam spoke and the surface of the hole vibrated to his voice.

"Does it really matter? You can see and experience the hole by yourself, and I don't know about you two but I feel the gateway calling me, I have to fight to stay with you and not to jump in."

John said what he felt, he was actually holding hard to one of the poles of the tent.

The hole in the ground vibrated as well to his voice.

"I don't understand the presence of the priest. How would a blasphemer save the world? And why did you choose him to join us?" Ramy was angry and bitterness filled his voice.

The gateway rippled to his voice.

"We don't choose anybody, the dreamer is the one who chose all three of you, and we don't have control over the process. Accept this all please." The speaker was worried about the effect their presence was doing to the gateway.

"You know Abo, you are hilarious in your prejudice against the priest, and I can only smile when I think what you would do if you realized what I am." Adam faced Ramy with a large smile.

The gateway was having now a continuous ripple to its face.

"My name is not Abo, Abo means father of, or in the context of my name it means the one who has. So my name, Abo Al Azam, translates to the one who has the will." Ramy faced Adam with disdain, he was now almost certain that Adam is a Jew, the forever enemies.

Now there was a low whine emanating from the gateway.

"I am a Christian, I think it shows, Mr. Abo Al Azam is a Muslim, he has the Arabian name after all, and you don't strike me as a Buddhist Adam, which as far as I can tell are the three major religions of the planet. So what are your beliefs Mr. Adam?" John turned and asked Adam.

The whine was almost now sounding like a word.

"I have no beliefs priest; I think I am the representation of the rational portion of the planet."

Adam sniggered.

There was an inaudible whisper coming from the gateway now.

"An empty vessel, there is always room for improvement for your kind." Ramy gave an insulting smile to Adam.

The whisper from the gateway was like a lover's, it said repeatedly "Come to me"

"How interesting, the one who believes without questioning or even searching for evidence calls me an empty vessel, this is ironic. Anyway, see you on the other side Willy." Adam imparted his words and jumped into the hole in the ground.

Ramy rushed to the hole to look for Adam, the gateway shown him nothing, the scene beyond its surface was empty except for the bubble of the dreamer as it was before.

There was no sign of Adam down there.

"Where did he go, how did he disappear like this?" Ramy shouted to the speaker.

The whispers grew in pitch and urgency.

"The realm of the dreamer is immense, it spans the size of our entire planet, it shows to us only the final destination, where the dreamer sleeps. When you enter, you have to trek a journey of trials to reach the dreamer." The speaker answered Ramy.

"Whatever, I am going after that rude atheist." With this Ramy jumped into the gateway which became turbid for a second then cleared.

The whispers were not whispers anymore, everybody heard them clearly.

"This is strange; I thought I would be the first to go." John smiled. "Before I go I want to ask you a favor, my nephew has end stage cancer, and I realize you have huge resources, I want you to try to aid him." He addressed the man with the silver hair standing near the flap of the tent.

The voice from the hole was now ordering, demanding, hungry.

"I will see to it personally Father John." The silver haired man said to him.

John waved his hand to the four men left behind then jumped into the hole.

"So, the trinity entered, now what?" asked the guardian.

"Now we wait and hope. If it goes well, the entire planet except us four witnesses will forget the entire events of last few years, and the apocalypse would be averted." The archiver answered.

"And if they don't reach the dreamer in time?" the silver hired man asked.

"Oh, they will reach him in time, for them a moment is a year till they reach the dreamer. The problem is whether they will remember who they were and what their purpose was when they reach there. We have also to hope they don't kill each other before they reach him." The archiver said.

"I don't understand, how can they forget who they are?" the guardian asked.

"Are you sure you attended the orientation Armand?" the speaker turned to the guardian.

"Yeah, of course, I just don't remember." The guardian answered sheepishly.

"You were not paying attention guardian, they have to literally pass through hell to reach the dreamer, their identities would be stripped away from them, they would assume their nature as

an identity and every time they meet their senses would be distorted; the other place favors the end of life, and only the dreamer's presence keeps it at bay." The silver haired man opened the tent flap as he spoke.

"So now we wait." The guardian followed the others out of the tent.

-30-

Shadow stood watching the horizon; he had been hunting for flesh the last four days.

He crossed miles of scorching desert after the beast, but he had to consume its flesh and blood to continue his journey towards the sun.

He was always chasing the sun, it was something he never understood, but he felt the urge to go east throbbing inside of him like a lover's call to untold desires.

He went down on all four and started to taste the sand, the sweat of the beast permeated the sand in this spot, and he must have rested here at most this dawn.

He stood up and pointed his huge double handed blade towards the spot of sweat. The sword vibrated and rose up to show the direction the beast went.

He stood up and started running.

The sun never left the sky, in his bones was a memory of its absence, yet he was not sure if this was but a trick of his tortured body or if it was a real memory.

He weaved on through the sand dunes, he sensed the presence of something to his north, but it didn't give the stench of the beast.

He ignored the presence, unless whatever was there tried to claim his beast, he had no business with it.

He crossed another scorched ravine, he knew if he dug a few meters in it he would find the bitter sweet water of the desert, but this delay might mean the loss of his prey.

He suddenly stood still then he crouched and started to crawl around the high dune in front of him.

There he was in all his foul glory, the beast had dug himself a trench to rest.

The beast usually went on all four except if it was chased, its huge hind legs gave it advantage when running on two limbs.

He noticed the rhythmic breathing of the beast, it was a healthy one.

He pounced up and flew to the beast with his sword high above his head.

The beast tried to escape, but the stroke was inevitable, the beast lay panting its last breath.

He knelt by the beast, placed the handle of his sword over its forehead and said. "The Lord has put away all your sins."

He then separates the head of the beast from its body in one stroke, he put his mouth on its jugular and drank then he bit a mouthful from the beast's neck and thanked the Lord.

-31-

Vulture waged his way through the blizzard, he felt that his coat was frozen the last twenty leagues, he had to find shelter to melt it.

His sharp eyes searched forward, he knew how to find what he needed in the continuous static of the blizzard, and he always knew how to sculpt snares out of the snow for his unsuspecting prey, the ice crows.

He had to go north, continuously chasing the star in the perpetual night of the blizzard, he knew that if he could reach the summit of the highest mountain he can and will stop the blizzard.

He didn't actually hate the blizzard, it was just another part of his life, but his purpose was to make the star shine bright for all.

He paused after his last thought, where are everybody anyway?

He had the vague notion of being amongst a lot of others like himself, and then there was a big silver hide wolf, or was that a dream.

Recently he thinks that the blizzard caused his nightmare to take substance.

He couldn't really sleep for long, the blizzard eventually covered any shelter he found, every fire he lighted and every carcass he killed for food.

He had to keep moving not to freeze to death.

The blizzard cleared for a second, it was enough for him to locate a cave in the huge wall that covered the valley of the blizzard.

He went with renewed hope towards the shelter.

To his surprise there was a twig outside the cave; twigs were the rarest thing to find in the blizzard.

He entered the cave, took off his coat with difficulty, it was like removing a slab of ice from his shoulders.

He pulled a sliver of precious paper from his undergarment, they were precious because they were his main source of fire starter plus they wormed his nether areas nicely.

He shredded the thin paper around the twig, brought out his favorite flint rocks and started a fire.

He propped his coat by the near wall to the fire and waited, eventually one of the ice crows would venture towards the fire exploring its curiosity.

He stood still for a while, in the meantime his feet moved furiously under his galabia pilling the snow to shape a dome, slowly the dome covered his feet reflecting the light of the fire to the entrance of the cave brightly.

The ice crow hobbled on its feet towards the brilliant light, Vulture stood like a statue not even breathing.

As the crow came in and to peck at the dome, Vulture's hands came like lightening, he caught the crow and he brought his flint and cut its neck.

All the while he whispered his mantra "besm Allah alrahman alraheem"

He cooked the crow on his tiny fire and started to eat it, and then he sighed because he was falling asleep.

Soon the blizzard is going to find him.

-32-

Shrew dropped in another bog; he crawled through the muddy water till he reached semi dry land.

He walked forever through the swamps, his target always taunting him, a silver trail on the surface of the water that faded every time he claimed a minute of rest.

The perpetual fog surrounding the swamp made it impossible to tell whether it was night or day.

He walked endlessly in twilight chasing a mirage, he considered quitting several times, but every time he thought about quitting an animal would rush in front of him to hunt.

He was ravenous hungry all the time, whatever the amount of kill he devoured, he needed more.

The hunger was always there, pushing him forward, taunting him and guiding him.

It was his torture and his solace, his only and constant companion.

He ate insects, crawling creature, and strange fish from the bogs, flying creatures; he even ate the occasional unfortunate crocodile that crossed path with him.

He fell again in the bog, which was fortunate, a crocodile rushed to devour him.

He pretended to be dead or fainted till the crocodile was at arm's length.

Then he snaked around it, hugging its body and closing its mouth, he started to bite and eat on its belly as it thrashed around.

Before the animal's heart stopped, Shrew had already devoured half of its body.

He pulled the rest of the animal from the bog and sat to strip all the meat from the bones.

He threw the bones in the bog, wrapped the remains of the carcass around his body and marched on.

Doing this had the advantage of attracting bigger animals to him, and fulfilling the hunger as he munched on the dangling bits near his mouth.

The silver trail appeared to his south, he rushed to follow; he had the notion that the trail ended at the end of the swamp.

He just had this annoying thought that thrashed in his mind like the late crocodile, which was that he promised somebody to come back with answers, only he couldn't remember who the person was or what answers they expected.

All he thought now was the hunger, the forever never-diminishing hunger.

He pushed down the thought and munched more on the front limb of the carcass, he still saw the trail, which meant he was on the right track of food.

He walked on, he had to beat the swamp or be beaten by the hunger.

-33-

The thirteen convened at their meeting table with the archiver, the guardian and the speaker.

The speaker had both of his hands bandaged till the elbow.

"The trinity entered the other place almost a day ago now, what should we be expecting now?"

The silver haired man addressed the archiver.

"Nothing in our archives really describes the journey of the trinity down there, we just know some aspects of the place which we were all told when we were elevated to our posts; otherwise your guess is as good as any." The archiver had a pile of papers in front of him.

"On another matter, I noticed that you are handling the lists of entrants into the vaults, how are things going?" The red haired woman asked a little bit too anxiously.

"We are building quite a list, the thirteen families and all their aides, our team of scientists and historians, our team of administrative support, and all kinds of handy men and craftsmen and cooks. It is almost the population of a metropolis." The archiver waved towards the pile of papers in front of him.

"In your opinion, would the vaults actually save us?" the mid-eastern man asked.

"I don't want to be pessimistic, but the reports of the triple apocalypse from the UN are really just the beginning, we should consider the book of revelation a near enough description of what will happen."

He finished and ushered one of the aides to give him some papers from another stack on a table nearby, the aide gave the papers.

"We are to expect a possibility of suddenly reversing the polarity of earth because of the mega earthquake, this might strip the planet of its atmosphere, hence no chance of life out of the vaults. So, life in the vaults for maybe a hundred years, then humanity dies." He placed the papers aside from the first pile.

"And our space travel is primitive to say the least, the trinity has to succeed." The silver haired man continued on the answer of the archiver.

"How long before we should know of their success or failure?" the red haired woman asked.

"We don't really know, and if they succeed, nobody will know." The archiver answered then went back to his lists.

-34-

Vulture climbed the mountain as fast as could be done in a blizzard.

For a long time, maybe a week, he couldn't find shelter and his coat was now more of a punishment than a protection.

Yet he went on, he knew that if he stopped, he would die.

He brought out the last shred of paper and started to chew on it, he almost tasted the words written on it.

Yesterday, if there was a yesterday he felt that he ate the word Proof, the day before he was sure it was Denial.

The one in his mouth tasted of Hell.

He chewed on it to savor it while he climbed, in another day or two he would reach the summit.

The blizzard felt like it was trying to push him away; this only caused him to fight harder.

In another day or maximum two he will starve to death, or he will reach the summit, or maybe he will die on the summit.

He continued climbing.

-35-

Shadow was seeing the end of the desert; it would take him another day to reach there.

In the last few days, he almost died twice, once by quicksand another by the beast.

He no longer hunts the beast, it hunted him now, and it proved rather difficult with the quicksand pits sprouting out of nowhere anywhere he stood more than a minute.

He lost his mighty sword in his last encounter with the beast, somehow the beast grew far more intelligent and it also was five times the size Shadow was accustomed to.

He was tired and depleted, without the blood and flesh he felt empty, hollow and weak.

He knew that he would make it to the end of the desert, only problem is at the end was a raging ball of fire, he still didn't know how he would deal with the sun he had been chasing his entire existence.

He didn't have much of a choice; he either died by the fire or by the beast.

He almost fell in quicksand again, but he kept going on.

-36-

Shrew was dying, he was sure of that now.

He was out of the swamp and walking on hard concrete for the past half a day.

The problem was that here was nothing for him to eat, he felt his organs dissolve while he walked, still following an almost faded silver trail.

His hands were numb, his feet were soft and his head was ringing continuously.

He walked till he found stairs; he started to go up the stairs even though the silver trail was almost gone now.

At the end of the stairs he found himself in a huge cavern like room and in the middle of it floated a ball of greenish brown.

To his left came the sound of shuffling feet.

He stood swaying with hunger waiting to see what followed the shuffling feet.

A huge creature that could feed him for at least five days dragged itself inside; there was a bird like quality to it.

The creature noticed him and it said. "This is the biggest rat I have ever seen, or are you a man rat?"

He was surprised, food rarely talked, in fact he was almost certain it never talked.

A whine of hunger escaped his mouth while he tried to respond. "A man? What makes a man really a man?"

"This is easy rat man, his belief." The bird man answered.

"You might be right bird man, can I eat you?" Shrew danced on the balls of his feet.

"I don't think so; at least not until the star shines." Vulture jumped backward.

"Fair enough, can I eat you after the star shines?" Shrew was miserable; he needed to eat, soon.

"You can try, I am Vulture."

"I will, and I am Shrew."

They both looked at the bubble high above their heads suspended midway between floors and ceiling.

"This is the star, it will shine soon." Vulture volunteered.

"I am sure it is not a star, it is store of never finishing food, you can see through its silver trail."

The Shrew said with confidence.

Before vulture can counter another creature jumped from the southern stairs, he entered with a shout.

They both looked at the newcomer with interest.

Vulture was annoyed at its presence, it appeared to be just a wrap of cloth around wisps of smoke, and he thought such darkness should not occupy the same room as his star.

Shrew was sensing nothing from it, he wondered if he can eat darkness.

The newcomer looked bent as he panted from his jump, and then he turned and noticed the others.

"My Redemption is near, I see two beasts, I will sly them, drink their blood and consume their flesh." He crouched down after he spoke.

"Darkness monster man, are you edible?" Shrew asked the strange question, even to his own ears, because his hunger was driving him insane.

"I don't think you should eat this filth, how dare this rotting cloth enter the presence of the star."

Vulture spat at Shadow.

Shadow thought quickly, they did look like the beast, even though one had feathers and the other was looking like a famine escaped rat, and they talked, the beast only roared or grunted.

"Are you beasts?" Shadow asked the other two.

"I am a man, at least I think I once was, this one here I think is a man rat." Vulture answered with disgust.

"I am a man, I can even prove it; I know how to cook bird eggs, no offense Vulture." Shrew looked at Vulture waiting his move, if he attacks him he would be allowed to eat him.

"I am Shadow, I think I also was a man, I traveled far in search of my beast, and I was chasing the Sun." he points up to the bubble.

"It is an animal store; it left me a silver trail to follow."

"No, idiots it is my Star and it will shine soon."

"Are you both blind, it is the scorching sun, it burns my skin for being so near."

"The sun is a star, which means you are both wrong, it is an animal store."

"A rat would not be the one telling me what is wrong from what is right, and any way you both are below me."

"Maybe you are beasts after all; you are too stupid to be men."

"I am very hungry; I will just bite a piece of your arm"

Shrew bites on the arm of Vulture who screams hitting Shadow while trying to push away from Shrew.

They were fighting, biting and screaming at each other, it was chaos.

Suddenly a shout vibrates through their bones. "Enough."

-37-

The bubble sprouted tendrils which wrapped around the three combatants separating them from each other and dragging their bodies in the air.

"Remember who you are." The voice came from nowhere yet it touched something in the core of the three.

Shrew whimpered, he remembered, he was not a man; he was a cowardly rodent afraid to face the only person he loved and in his ignorance, destroyed. He was always consumed by the urge to prove himself better, smarter, more powerful, and in the process he lost his humanity and only the urge, hunger remained.

Shadow cried in bitterness, he too remembered. He was a shadow following the steps of men and women, never really being one of them. He killed his ambitions, his desires and his passion. He had once a gift of music, but that too was lost. He was a husk that believed that by starving his senses he would kill the beast within. He used the communion as an excuse to murder his last remnants of humanity.

Vulture shouted at everything, at his past rushing back in his mind and at his foolish present. He could have been human, but instead he pecked and devoured the pains of those who loved him. He searched for prey online night and day. He never chose the strong, only the weak, the afraid and the dying of despair. He sought death to destroy what was left of his humanity.

The bubble released them gently to the ground.

"Welcome Adam." The Shrew knew now his name, he is Adam

"Welcome John." Shadow stepped forward and half knelt in gratitude.

"Welcome Ramy." Vulture knew that this is his true name not the other he used to terrorize.

"Thank you, I am indebted to you for making me remember that I am Ramy."

"Can I ask who are you? Or what are you?" John said with reverence.

"I have many names, yet none are true, I am Lucifer the morning star, I am Beelzebub, I am Shaitan, I am Satan, I am the fallen one, I am the rebel and none of these names describe me."

"You are the dreamer." Adam Said.

"Yes, but can you guess what I dream of?"

"You have the worst nightmares of humanity." John answered.

"Yes, you john have dreamt in this place of the desert, it is the nightmare that you escaped by becoming a priest."

"I was afraid to end as my father, living amongst others but in reality living like a hermit in the desert, shunned by all and revered by none." John fell to his knees holding his head.

"And you Adam, you were following a fake trail in the swamps with vicious creatures all around, forever falling and forever pulled down."

"I understood, I created a life filled with enemies of my own making, never succeeding in getting out of the pit I put myself in and never appreciating love or purity." Adam also knelt.

"Ramy, do you understand the blizzard, and the pursuit of the star?"

"I do, I chose a medium of high distractions, the internet, to call my home, cold and forever separating and blinding me from those I seek shelter in, my family. And in my cold loneliness I searched for death, as a means to end my sorrow existence." Ramy knelt beside the other two.

"It is good to know one's own nightmare, it makes it easier to confront among the other nightmares."

"Dreamer, why did you choose us?" Adam asked.

"You three were chosen of all of humanity to carry my burden. You have been chosen because you all destroyed your lives rebelling against your fathers, for your view of life that hurt you and hurt all around you, even you John, it hurt your mother that you chose priesthood, she knew you were not built for it. I chose all three of you for you enduring ability to keep pain and anguish to yourselves, you only passed to others less than a thousandth of what you carried. I chose you for your minds, always smart and seeking knowledge. And last I chose you for your ability to teach, to sacrifice your wisdom to benefit others and for your preference of a concept over your own lives. Your presence here and your succeeding in crossing the nightmare plane prove that my choice was wise."

"What are you? Are you a God?" Ramy asked in fear.

"No, I once was like you, a trinity of brave souls willing to save humanity. Now I dream of humanities worst, for it not to happen."

"Why do you have to dream?" John asked.

"The moment intelligent life appeared on the planet, so did faith and belief. People bring forth from the realm of the possible into the realm of real existence through their beliefs. This brings

not only the good, the guiding or healing; it also brings the bad, the deceiving and the destroying."

"When my first predecessor was created, I don't know why he was created, maybe some wise cavemen thought of him, he existed in chains, forever dreaming of the worlds end. They imagined him to be the ultimate evil, for all the evil to leave them and be only his. They thought of him as a dreamer who dreamt for a thousand years, so that their nightmares never came true. For them a thousand years was incomprehensible eternity."

"And thus grew the dream that created the dreamer, he had to have a separate realm from the rest of humanity. He had to be of three opinions for everything least he decides to break out of his prison. And then at some point of time others worshipped him or one of his successors and made him a God, they invented rituals to call him and rituals for choosing his replacements and even rituals to open a gateway into hell, his home."

"I don't know what is my number as a successor, but I know that I am waking up, if I wake I die and the world dies with me. If you accept to replace me, I die but the dreamer lives and the world will be saved."

"By choosing to replace me you cease to exist, you were never born, any deed or action you have done would be erased from existence, including any consequences or repercussions."

"Before you decide, know this, one of you will be the body that is agonized by its needs never having them, another would the shell that chains the body, forever feeling the push of the dreamer to break you, the last of you will be the soul, the suffered dream of pain, but all will survive and all will have a vote what dreams would be let out and what dreams should cycle forever in the shell."

"You should also know that you will have the power to alter reality, remove a birth from history or a death, or a love, or you can add your own, only condition is that it doesn't affect the dream."

"Can we heal?" John asked.

"Yes"

"Can we prevent the loss of a belief?" Ramy asked.

"You have to keep intact all beliefs, unless humanity decides to abandon them, you will be bound not to interfere with free will."

"Can we give meaning to life?" Adam asked.

The dreamer laughed "You can try; it is actually tailored for each human differently."

"You spent here one human day, for you in the hell plane it was a lifetime, here in the hall of the dreamer time passes slightly slower than on the human realm an hour there is a day here, but once you become the dreamer you can change that if you wish to."

"I give you one of my days to decide your fate, live here in pain for a thousand years or die with the rest of humanity in five months."

"If you do accept, millions of lives would change forever, erasing the memory of the last hundred years and replacing it with a new memory of a better world, one that is not under the threat of annihilation. This would be your first dream."

-38-

Edvige walked fast to reach her office in time, even though she worked with her father, she still had her pride.

She crossed the road towards his importing company.

She entered her office and sat in front of her computer, she had a ton of calculations to audit, and she also had to forecast the buying trends for the next financial quarter.

She poured some coffee from her thermos in her "Best daughter employee" mug and started crunching the numbers.

It was not a bad life, but she always felt something missing.

She adjusted the picture of Luis Du Funes that reminded her of her departed mother, sighed for the load of work, sipped from her coffee and began working.

-39-

Alfred sighed as he sat checking the exam papers; he has to take part with him home for marking.

His wife would not be happy, but his was the life of a teacher, you always gave more than you received.

He brought out his sandwich lunch and started munching while he marked.

He didn't complain much, and he believed he did a good service for society, still he felt lacking of something.

He decided he would pass by the Syrian sweets shop on his way back home; he would have to bribe his wife with her favorite, Cheese Baklava.

-40-

Jane ran again from one end of the track to the other, she had to be back in shape by the end of the week.

Being a special instructor in Quantico was not an easy career, yet she did something to the community, her goals in life always involved giving back to her people.

She was thinking of applying for field work by the end of the year, she had her masters in clinical pathology; they need people like her anywhere.

She finished her laps, took a shower and went back to her place.

She started he lap and messaged her father in Detroit.

She stood waiting for him to answer; she needed to talk to him face to face about Mary.

Her lawyer just informed her that she might lose the custody case; she had to ask her father to pull some weight with his ex-colleagues in the court.

She enjoyed helping people, especially preparing others to help people, but she always felt like she lost her destination somewhere along the line.

She went to the fridge, took a bottle of cold water and went back to wait in front of the computer.

-41-

Isamu finally finished it; he called his sister on the phone. "Hi Haru, it is done. Come now."

"Ok, big brother, I am coming"

He stood on his recliner with bliss enveloping him; this game would rock the world.

He was always into games, so it was natural to study their programming.

He some opportunities to work for some of the big names in the industry, but he had greater ambition.

He wanted to be immortalized in game making history, with his new algorism for the engine Artificial Intelligence he would enter history for sure.

The game was a simulation taking place in modern day, it was a city building game, but what it differed from all others was the disasters.

It created cascading problems along the course of life of the city, eventually ending with a cataclysmic event; the player should learn to always plan ahead preparing for the game's doomsday event.

The beauty was that the game learned as much as the players, the simulation people inhabiting the city would act in accordance to the gamer's playing style, whether bad or good.

The door knocked, he rushed to open, and he knew it was Haru.

He pulls her inside to put her in front of the computer to play.

He watched her face change over the course of the next three hours; she was lost in the game.

He left her playing and went to his bedroom; he reached the nightstand and took the bottle on its top.

He took one pill and swallowed it; he might be brilliant having a good life, but his depression and sense of loss was always there.

He went out and took two bottles of juice from the fridge, opened them and handed one to Haru.

He sipped slowly on the juice, it helped with the pill and the pill helped him feel almost normal.

-42-

Suzan ran fast to catch the lecture, she was slowed down by here many friends on campus, she always suffered lateness because of her popularity, but she also loved it, she practically lived for it.

After the lecture she had another study group to share ideas with, study groups were great for making new friends, she didn't really need the scientific input of the others, but she liked to share what she had anyway.

She slowly and quietly entered into the lecture and crept to a chair near the door and sat to listen.

She loved everything about her life, her only problem was that she was searching for love in a person that was not born yet, at least this is how her friends described it.

-43-

The silver haired man, the archiver, the speaker and the guardian sat on the furthest corner in the café.

"So, it happened, we saved the world." Silver hair said.

"Yes, we felt the effect of changing the dreamer, and we saw the consequences." The speaker said while taking a spoonful of ice cream mix from the chalice in front of him.

"And because of the changed realities, most of the human race is suffering now of depression for the lives they were forced to abandon, I think in this new reality we should consider studying psychology or psychiatry, it should be the most profitable career." Silver hair laughed.

"It will pass within one generation" the archiver looked at a passing red head and winked.

"I still think it was strange that we are out of the order, we were crucial." The guardian munched on a cheese cake as he spoke.

"It was expected, in the new reality we had to be out of the order not to draw the attention and resources of the order to the phenomenon." The archiver moved the tiny spoon in his espresso.

"At least we kept our families, and most of our fortunes, and we are still doers in the world."

Silver hair drew hard on his straw; the strawberry smoothie he was drinking was very thick.

"I don't understand a bit, how would the order keep the information on the trinity and the change for the next time it happens?" the guardian asked.

"I took care of that, I placed a time capsule with the whole experience at the basement of the order basement, it would only open in a hundred years, and it would release a special concoction

of hallucinogens enough to grant attention." The archiver sipped on his espresso slowly, savoring the flavor.

"The team of UN who calculated the apocalypse are out of circulation, I searched the names and only trivial Facebook accounts and twitter came up, this is rather sad." The speaker said.

"You shouldn't worry for them, they were made for greatness, wait till the wave of changing reality recedes, they will shine a lot more than before; I give it a year." Silver hair said.

"So I suggest we meet her again in a year, to celebrate the day we saved humanity and to check the news of the UN team." Silver hair signaled for the waiter to bring him the check.

"Agreed, we should do that." The guardian finished his cheese cake.

"And no regrets or turning back" the speaker dropped the spoon in the chalice, he should be the one to regret the most, he lost four of his fingers, and this didn't change when the new dreamer started his dream.

"Of course, we saved the world, who can regret that." The archiver finished his cup and stood up.

The waiter arrived, silver hair paid her with a large tip enough for a week's pay, and he made her day. They all stood up.

"Nice knowing you gentlemen." The guardian starts, they all shake hands and leave.

After all, they were not part of any order anymore, and they still had their lives to live.

The world was saved, and they decided rest was a good option.

Epilogue

The dreamer swam in darkness, the three heartbeats very strong and rhythmic.

The shell vibrated. "It was a nice touch letting them go their separate ways, even though I voted on killing them."

The body convulsed. "They did save the world, a good deed deserves another."

The dream muck around the body slouched round "Thank you guys for saving Paul."

The dreamer dreamt on, of wars, of famine and pains unimaginable.

And as time passes the three would mold into only one, and then starts the decay and deterioration.

And one day the new dreamer would be old, in need of a new trinity.

One day one of the replacement trinities would fail.

And the world would definitely end.

But until then, the dreamer dreamt, and he dreamt long.

The End.