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BIRD OF PARADISE

by Claire Amber

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Dedication

For my mother and father, the most loving and supportive parents.

BIRD OF PARADISE

By Claire Amber

PART 1

Childhood

CHAPTER ONE

Another Happy Ending

Warm colors, bright light. Are those the gates of heaven? In it angels reside. Beings who know not of sin yet. Children seeking guidance. A voice to follow. Someone they trust to guide them out of the darkness of their ignorance. A cold, almost lifeless soul approaches. The xarrin, or priest to the common folk, entered the large establishment through big peach-colored stone gates that arched above a wooden door. He found himself walking in a busy hall with reception desks directing the people towards their desired destinations. Being a Violet, he couldn't see the colors surrounding him. From birth, Violets just like him are taught that colors are differences in one's personality. States of mind and emotions. They are not mere dots and strokes on a surface. Though it may be true, he was still missing out on an incredible, vibrant sight. The walls were made of the same peach-colored stone as the arch above the door and there were varieties of flowers and flora that hung from vases above him. Quite a crowd of people was surrounding his as well. With all that chatter, it wasn't hard for him to sense where everything was placed. He walked to the nearest marble counter and stood in line behind a Green and an Orange. As he stood in silence with a serious, annoyed expression on his face he remembered why he even bothered to come. It was all Anrei's idea. The archbishop, or vrispasha as the Violets call them, is a good friend of his. He was the one that talked him out of the ritual of passing. Anrei is the only one stopping him from passing onto the other side with a dignified and painless death since he refuses to conduct the ritual unless his demands are met. Fortunately, there was only one. Anrei told him to go to the Auroratorium and pick out a student he would teach and raise. Should he fail to find one, he will gladly grant his wish and be the one to send him off this world to sit by the side of the Divines. So, the xarrin came and was now standing in line at one of the reception desks, feeling the warmth of sunlight that was covering him from the window. When it was finally his turn, he spoke to the Blue with braided, transparent hair that he almost mistook for jellyfish tentacles.

- Good day, sir. Name and identification card, please. - she said.

- My name is written here. - the xarrin slid her his identification card across the surface. - You can keep it if you want. It's of no use to me anymore.

- I'm afraid I'm not allowed to keep it, Mr. Salavreech. But it checks out. What can I help you with? - she asked in a polite tone and crossed her palms and fingers together after she read his name off the card.

- I'm a priest and a scholar. Chemistry and psychology. - he replied.

- A Green would be your best match. Most of them are very polite and obedient. We've had very few reckless Greens. I'm sure you'll find a suitable student among them.

- I highly doubt it. - he added with a strict tone.

- I'll take that bet. - the woman grinned and stood up from her chair.

He glanced towards the Blue that seemed to be in her mid-fifties by the looks of the wrinkles on her face and thin fins. Her attitude puzzled him, but he didn't care in the least.

- Excuse me? - he asked, focusing a surprised glare in her direction.

- I've been working here for almost twenty years and if there's one thing I've learned it's that two kinds of people come here. Those who wish to teach children because it brings them joy and those who have hit rock bottom regarding their finances and are looking for a source of income. - she explained and crossed her thin, fleshless arms.

- I'm only here as a favor to a friend. Nothing more... nothing less. - the xarrin sighed and relaxed his shoulders with his head held up high. - Do you act like this with other customers or am I special in a way?

- My income depends on the satisfaction of the customer. Those who come in here without a smile and leave with one help me pay my bills.

- I appreciate honesty, but I'm having a hard time believing you or anyone else could bring me joy at this moment.

- Children are a blessing, Mr. Salavreech. They bring *everyone* joy. Now, if you'd kindly follow me to the Greens' section... - she added and started walking through one of the hallways.

They seemed empty at first, but the decor gave it a certain appeal because of its simplicity and colorful glow. As the xarrin walked though it next to his guide, he felt calm and was at ease. The spaciousness was doing his spirit good. He was enjoying the sunlight shining through the windows as he strolled, thinking about absolutely nothing, just listening to chatter and sounds of footsteps surrounding him as people passed by. Rorschet was a fairly slender man with short, coffee-colored fur covering his body. Violets usually have longer hair growing on their heads like the ones Greens, Oranges, Reds and Indigos have, but Rorschet would be considered bald if it weren't for his fur. His eyes are a brilliant, lime green color. Like in all Violets, who are the only ones with this particular feature, his scleras are dark instead of white. In addition, the abundant number of teeth that grow outside of their mouths give Violets their signature sinister and frightening appearance. Rorschet also bears an indigo mark on his abdomen in the shape of a swirl spinning in a circle while gravitating towards the center. It is details like this that make every man and woman a unique specimen.

- And what is *your* name, if I may ask? - he asked the Blue without glancing at her or turning his head.

- You may address me as Mrs. Cindel, Mr. Salavreech.

- Duly noted. - he retorted.

- They get under your skin, Mr. Salavreech. You may think you won't get attached, but many mentors find it hard to leave their creations when they turn twenty.

- I won't live long enough to experience that. - the xarrin said with a frighteningly serious tone.

They arrived before the green door and entered. Just in front of them was a magnificent set of merged rooms, each with a large fountain containing light, green liquid that ran down the stone. The little Greens were playing in and around them, scampering and prancing like colorful fairies and elves during one of their many festivities. They were quite young, around six to ten years of age. Many were still unable to fly and only happily flapped their wings when they needed to climb to the top of the fountain. There was so much laughter. It was pressuring the xarrin, but he stood calm and collected. He envied the little children for their carefree spirits and lack of burden on their shoulders.

- I am going to be in this office. - Mrs. Cindel said and pointed towards the nearby wooden door. - Whenever you are ready, please come see me. I'll leave you to get to know the children now. Take as much time as you need.

With those words, she left him standing next to one of the fountains. He nodded in agreement and sat on the edge as soon as she left. Without much else to do, he decided he was going to relax for a few minutes, talk to his guide and then leave. Though he wished not to admit it to himself, the atmosphere was very pleasant. The temperature was just right and a cool breeze was spraying little drops of water from the fountain towards him. He pulled up his sleeves, fixed his violet robes and played around with the green water, dipping his right hand in it for a minute or two. He raised his head up to glance over the children. There were some who were completely ignoring him and there were those who seemed to be afraid of him. They didn't play with the rest. They were just shyly standing behind the center piece of the fountain. The xarrin felt a little disappointed by this deep down. Still, he tried not to pay much attention to them either. Then suddenly, he felt a light touch. Something brushed up against his hand. He looked down and saw a little Green girl in a pretty white lolita dress. She was lying in the shallow water with a head of beautiful, brown locks with orange tips. The delicate wings on her back were as white as those of a dove, but had orange dots on the tips of her feathers. Her dress was wet from the water. Even though the water wasn't exactly warm, she didn't seem to mind. She tugged at his finger with her gray talons until the xarrin finally looked down. The small creature was staring back at him with a mesmerizing gaze. He was completely silent, as if he was bewitched by it. Her smile, the brightness in her big, indigo eyes... Despite the fact that he couldn't even see the beautiful light green color of her skin, he could still sense that she was bursting with energy. So full of life. He could tell just by looking at the light and sounds reflecting off her how her body was shaped and how round and innocent her face was, but what really caught his attention was the sound of her voice. When she spoke, it almost felt like he was a leech, feeding off her joy.

- Hi! I'm uhm... really sorry to bother you and all... but aren't you bored of just swirling your hand around in the water? You should try to roll in this stuff! It's much more fun! - she raised her arms as she spoke and rolled around like a pancake a few times. - Like so!

- I wouldn't like to get my robes wet. - he replied whilst carefully observing her. - And it doesn't look particularly amusing. What's so fun about it?

- I don't know. - she shrugged and continued to playfully wave her arms around as if she was cursed with a spell that made her unable to keep still. - I just really love to roll around and lie in shallow water! It's like magic! And swings. I loooove swings! Sometimes our caretaker plays some music for us when we're in the garden and I swing on my swing, listen to the music and think about stuff at the same time. It's an awesome feeling! Especially when it's sunny, warm and windy. But not when it's just sunny. Then it's too hot and I get all sweaty.

The way she spoke was something different. It made him feel immensely warm inside. He couldn't find an answer or something to say. Thinking became impossible. He just smiled and chuckled lightly.

- You have a really nice dress by the way. - she grinned. - I wish I had one like that. The color is nice. Better than mine. Our caretaker said we need to be very careful with white because smudges don't come off them easily.

- Thank you. They're robes, not a dress. There's a slight difference. - the xarrin added. - May I ask, why aren't you playing with the other children? Wouldn't you rather be doing *that*?

- Oh, well... The other kids don't really like me. Sometimes the boys make fun of me and call me fat. But I'm not bored or anything. I can have fun all by myself anywhere! - she gave him a little saddened frown and rubbed her arm, but then switched back to the joyful grinning expression.

- Don't worry about them. Sometimes bullies like to exploit other people's insecurities to

hide their own. And besides, you're not fat. Don't let them make you think otherwise because you and I know the truth.

- Really? That kinda makes sense the more I think about it... - she thought. - Thank you!

- Don't mention it. - he flashed her another smile. - Would it be alright with you if you told me your name?

- Tangora. - she said.

- And your last name?

- Desjardins. Now *you* tell me your first and last name. - she demanded.

- Rorschel Salavreech. I'm very pleased to meet you. - he nodded lightly.

- So do you have a job or something? I mean, if you want to be someone's mentor, you gotta know something about something, right?

- I'm a xarrin, but I'm also a Chemistry and Psychology scholar. - he answered.

- So what do scholars do? - she tilted her head inquisitively.

- They study all there is to know about a certain subject, so to speak.

- And xarrins?

- You go to church every Sunday, don't you?

- Yeah...? - she puzzled, unable to figure out where he's going with this.

- The xarrin is the man at the altar who preaches.

- That's a xarrin? - she gasped lightly. - I thought they were called priests.

- They *are*. "Xarrin" is an Apahinatl word for "priest". We like to use those more often.

- And what would *that* be? - she asked.

- They are our ancestors. The civilization that lived over three thousand years ago. But you'll learn more about them in time, I'm sure.

- Uhuh. - she nodded. - Maybe sooner or maybe in a few years. I'm going to a regular school when I'm older unless I get a mentor.

- How old are you?

She raised her little hands and showed him six fingers.

- I've been here for some time. It doesn't feel good when you have to constantly be on the lookout for the boys that tease me. And when we play games with our caretaker, the boys never want to hold my hand or touch me. - she explained. - They don't really like me.

- I see. Unfortunately, hiding from them isn't going to help much. Getting along with some people can be a very difficult process which often takes a while.

- I guess... I wish I could just understand why they're doing it. - the little girl sighed.

- They don't have a reason. People tend to do things just because they can or feel like it. Many children such as yourself are forced to go through things like these. That still doesn't mean they have to go through them alone. - he smiled once more as he spoke.

- Yeah, well, I don't really have a friend to go through it with me. Some kids are nice to me, but when the boys come they just join them and start teasing me too. Maybe it's because they're scared cuz I saw them getting picked on before. I don't know. But that sounds logical, doesn't it?

- You're a very bright little girl, you know that?

- Thank you. - she smiled with her eyes closed and her rosy cheeks blushing a little bit more.

- May I ask you something?

- Oh! Can I ask you something first?

- Alright. - Rorschel chuckled.

- Our caretaker, Mrs. Brimley, she told us that Violets live for a very long time. Is that true?

- We can't die of old age and we stop to age once we mature into adults like myself.

Unless something or someone else finishes us off, we get to decide when we wish to leave this world. Then we hold a ritual of passing where the Violet that wants to die is killed with a special poison placed in his last meal. Of course, the death process is as painless as possible. You would just fall asleep and never wake up again.

- Isn't that considered murder? - she asked.

- The ritual of passing is an exception.

- What if you poisoned someone during a meal and claimed he wanted you to kill him?

- You'd have to have witnesses and special preparations made. It's not just a regular meal. Everything is set by the book. - he tried hard not to start laughing because of her reaction to such a grim topic.

- What if you paid the witnesses to be on *your* side?

- I don't think a Violet could be corrupted, but there are always exceptions.

- What's an exception?

- I can't say for sure that every single Violet is going to follow the rules.

- Oh, okay. - the girl replied.

- *Now* may I ask you a question?

- Sure! - she exclaimed joyfully.

- Would you like to be my student? - he asked politely whilst staring directly at her.

- Yes! - she smiled brightly again and barely found the strength to keep her happiness sealed away. - Thank you so much, sir!

- Not at all. I think you'd make an excellent student. I'll go deal with the arrangement then.

- Sure. - she nodded and then shouted back to him once he walked over to the door of the office Mrs. Cindel showed him. - Again, thank you so much!

As he stood before the door he found that he couldn't stop smiling. His whole face was paralyzed. He took a few moments to calm himself down from the warm feeling that seemed to have taken over before entering the office. Then he was thinking again. Thinking why he suddenly got this powerful will to keep on living. Somehow he had a purpose for existing again. What was so special about Tangora? Her voice was so sweet and jolly. She surprised him. Until this day, he hasn't met anyone quite like her. He felt good in her company. She breathes honesty. There is goodness in the air she exhales from her lungs. Of all the children, she was brave enough to approach him. This was not a coincidence. The Divines wish to keep him alive for something. He still has things they want him to do in his life if they created this being that was able to give him the will to live. Then the xarrin began to feel fear. How did it happen? How is it possible for a little girl to do this? Nevertheless, he knew he couldn't back down on his word even if he wanted to. This was nothing less than a miracle.

- Ah, Mr. Salavreech. Have you finished browsing? - Mrs. Cindel asked as he entered the room and closed the door behind him. - Please, have a seat.

Rorschet sat down on the opposite side of her desk, looking awfully stern.

- Your face tells me you are not too pleased. Or, if I'm mistaken, you're too proud to admit defeat, are you not? - she spoke and crossed her palms together as she sat all high and mighty behind her stone desk.

- You work at the reception and you have an office? - he asked.

- This office is free for all employees to use in order to discuss private matters with clients. We are not allowed to lock the door, however. There was an incident with two of my colleagues a few years back.

- That desk doesn't look very comfortable.

- I couldn't agree with you more. So, have you made a selection?

- I'll be honest. I was disappointed by the way the children reacted to my presence.
- Is that so? How did they react? - she leaned forward with intrigue.
- They looked frightened. Some of them just ignored me. I expected them to have at least *some* manners and respect for their elders. - he complained.
- There are those who are timid and I cannot blame them for being that way, but rest assured, we will correct the mistake regarding those who ignored you as you claim. - the Blue replied.
- I sincerely hope so. But... to my surprise, I have indeed found my student. - the xarrin's frown was immediately turned around and he grinned delightfully as he spoke.
- Well then, I am very happy for you, Mr. Salavreech. What is the name of the child that won you over? - she smiled back.
- She told me her name was Tangora.
- Little Mis Desjardins. You have exquisite taste. Her mother is a chiropractor and her father is a well-known artist. Surely you've heard of him. Of course, you must have already known about their supposed social statuses. Miss Desjardins wouldn't be here unless her parents were not able to pay for her stay or the child support you shall be receiving once we place her in your care. - she explained.
- There are many children here. How would you know who she is? - Rorschel inquired.
- Miss Desjardins talks to us and the caretakers more than she does to the other children her age. Everyone knows about her. She's a very nice girl and has demonstrated a thirst for knowledge. Always cheerful, but quite sensitive, I won't lie. Like I said, you have great taste. I think if someone else had a chance to talk to her before you she would be gone. It's like you're favored by the Divines. Well, it only figures if you're a xarrin.
- Perhaps. What do I need to do now? I'm unfamiliar with the process. - he said.
- Now... - Mrs. Cindel paused and took some papers out of the top drawer behind her desk. - You need to write down some information for me, sign a few papers and rate our services on a scale from one to five, five being the best and very satisfactory, of course.
- And then?
- Then I call the parents to let them know the good news. We arrange a meeting with them and if everything goes smoothly, you will be able to take Miss Desjardins home with you where she will be in your care until she turns twenty. At the meeting I will explain how everything works and give you a teaching manual for you to study. - the Blue explained whilst handing him a pen.
- The xarrin gladly accepted the writing stylus, wrote down his information and signed every paper that needed to be signed. Mrs. Cindel then made a phone call to Tangora's mother and father to arrange a meeting with her and Rorschel. The talk went well and the xarrin agreed for the meeting to take place in a nearby café called "The Onyx Armor" at ten o'clock the following day. He was escorted back to the entrance afterward. Before he left, Mrs. Cindel spoke to him one last time: - I told you you'd leave with a smile.
- You *did*. - Rorschel flashed her a light grin and left through the front door.

The next morning, Rorschel Salavreech was lying in bed, sleeping and dreaming. In his dream, he was walking through the gardens of the Flamma Rostro Abbey. It was spring and all the flowers were blooming, creating a heavenly circle of beauty and serenity around him. He was at peace. In the middle of the garden, he spotted a lonely Bird of Paradise and recognized its shape. It couldn't have been anything else. He had a painful urge inside him, telling him to pick it and to hold it. To feel it. He fought against the voice in his head, using

every bit of his strength to resist that urge. Ultimately, he fell down on his knees before it from his weakness. Without warning, the flower began to emit a strange aura. It was ripe for picking and it was the most magnificent feeling in the world for him. He touched its petals and caressed them gently, breathing in the wonderful scent of the heavenly flower. His long fingers glided down the green stalk and carefully pulled the flower out of the ground. A powerful surge of energy rushed through him once the last little root was pulled from the soil. It was wonderful and a bit frightening because it was so sudden and unexpected. It was still wonderful, though. Moments later, the xarrin woke up. It was a sunny morning just like the one from yesterday. For the first time in a long time, he woke up feeling overjoyed. He didn't even have an appetite. All he had was two apples for breakfast and couldn't wait to go to the meeting. He took a hot shower, placed a dental tablet onto his long tongue, fixed a few wild hairs on his ears and head, then finally put on his best violet robes with golden details and belt. He usually wore it only to very special occasions, but somehow he felt like this was one of them. Despite trying to convince himself not to make such a fuss, he still wanted to impress everyone at the meeting. If he is to be trusted, he needs to show everyone he's trustworthy. After spraying his favorite mango scent over his neck and chest as was usual for any high color, the xarrin walked out onto his dark stone, Gothic balcony and spread his demonic wings with which he caught rays of sun like an absorbing shield. His fur looked perfect under sunlight, which seemed to make the shade of it appear a bit lighter. Combined with his robes, Rorschel Salavreech resembled the high society noble xarrin that he was. What parent wouldn't want such a man with an abundance of knowledge and class to teach their child? By half past nine, it was time for him to go. He swooped down from his balcony and flew beside the stone walls of his small castle. The house was not too large for his taste and had a certain dark and monastery-ish appeal to it, just to his liking. Flying is not as breathtaking when you've been doing it since the day you were born, but this time it felt a bit different. His supposed euphoria made it a perfect way to release some of the joy before it became too powerful to keep inside. He flew across a few more houses that looked much like his. The differences were in small details, such as the stained glass and reliefs protruding from the walls. The neighborhood was not large and it was elite. Mostly Violets lived there, surrounded by a forest of Cloboko trees with a wide road on the hills where the houses were situated that enabled non-flying colors to come to visit. He would often take walks by that road when he wished to relax. It was a soothing sight. Either the world was getting darker or lighter, depending on the time of day. It reminded him of how death is not the end, but the beginning. That thought made his decision about the ritual of passing much easier. And though he hated to admit his defeat and swallow his pride, he knew he had greatly underestimated his dear friend Anrei and his ability to communicate with the Divines. Were it not for him, the xarrin would have missed this opportunity to obtain a friend whose virtues he greatly admired. As he was flying over Warmbury, the district of Charclay where most low colors lived, he thought of an answer to his puzzling queries. Perhaps what he thought was the twilight of his life was actually the breaking of dawn. Spring. What was once dead is reborn. All that he needed to wake him up was the morning song of a little bird. By now, he was already close to the center, also known as Glogmore. Having passed by some Greens and Violets while swiftly flying through tall buildings, the xarrin spotted the café with a large sign near the Auroratorium. He slowly drifted down to the ground onto the colorful circle in the middle of the plaza. As he got closer and closer, he carefully listened in hopes of hearing a certain voice in the crowd. A large fountain situated behind him was making it a bit difficult because of the water flow being so loud, but it seemed that nothing could distract him. Once he opened his eyes and fixed his robes, he heard the voice of his new friend calling out to him.

- Oh! Mr. Salavreech, sir! Hi! - little Tangora waved joyfully towards him with her hand.

The xarrin grinned towards her so that she would know she'd been heard. Then he walked over to them with his back straightened and his wings folded back, passing through a waterfall of flowers that hanged from ceramic pots atop the café, similar to those they had in the Auroratorium.

- We are glad you made it, Mr. Salavreech. - Mrs. Cindel stood up, shook his hand and sat back down. - Please, join us.

The xarrin responded with a silent nod.

- Cyrameen Desjardins. It's a pleasure to meet your acquaintance. - the mother reached out towards him with her yellow talon and spoke with glee.

Rorschet shook her hand and that of her husband.

- Likewise. I feel glad to be privileged with this opportunity to speak with the famous Nallun Desjardins. Forgive me, but I must compliment your work. There are those who would pay millions of balvas for a few scribbles and a triangle. I believe your work has a greater value. Your skill is extraordinary, but most importantly, you have a vision. Anyone can draw a few lines and call it art. I take it Tangora has inherited her imagination from you.

- Well, I'm flattered. If only there were more people who are as smart as you, Mr. Salavreech. - Nallun chuckled whilst leaning back into his chair. - I think abstract art is a complete joke. A mockery even.

- Of course, we've heard many great things about you as well. - Cyrameen added. - We heard you're a close friend of vrispasha Anrei.

- That is correct, but it's not about his status. To me, he is just a man I have known for many years and I would trust him with my life. - the xarrin replied.

- Nevertheless, we are honored that you have chosen to teach Tangora. We would have never expected an esteemed gentleman such as yourself to be looking for work as a mentor. We are very lucky. - the mother gave him a loving smile.

The resemblance between her and Tangora was remarkable, but as much as she reminded him of her, the little girl's smiles and laughter seemed much more pure and honest.

- Why don't we start before Mr. Salavreech changes his mind? - Nallun spoke with a tone which indicated that he was joking, but was actually very impatient, for he had to wake up for this meeting earlier than usual and could only think about returning to the soft sanctuary of his bed.

Tangora didn't seem to have anything to say. She didn't want to bother the adults while they spoke. While sitting quietly next to her mother, she rocked her legs back and forth with her palms gently resting on her lap. The xarrin listened to the others' voices surrounding her and noticed she had a puffy little dress with layers of tulle underneath. She even had a big bow tied around her waist to match. Her brown locks of hair looked well on her. They were somewhat a symbol of her bubbly personality. She kept looking around and just couldn't keep still for one second. Once in a while she would stop when she would see something that fascinated her. Then she would open her mouth with a bright smile across her face and stare at the object or person her eyes were fixated on. It was fascinating to observe. Mrs. Cindel was talking about the rules on the contract while his spirit was absent. To his fortune, it returned just in time for the important things he needed to pay attention to.

- Should Mr. Salavreech decide not to teach Tangora or have her in his care any longer, she shall be sent to a regular school and continue living with her parents, namely you. Tangora will be in Mr. Salavreech's care until her twentieth birthday. They will live under the same roof and he will be receiving money from you each month as compensation. The quote is four thousand balvas. The money can be transferred to Mr. Salavreech through direct deposit, by writing checks or other preferred methods which will be discussed a bit later.

Miss Desjardins has a choice between two subjects she can study over the years. Chemistry or Psychology. By the time the essential studies listed in the manual you and Mr. Salavreech shall receive are dealt with, she will have to choose one of those two subjects. Regarding visits and holidays, you are always welcome to visit and see Tangora. She may even come home to stay with you for the holidays. If you have any more questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

- Which documents are we required to give to Mr. Salavreech? - the mother asked.

- Documents such as birth certificates are to be given upon request when needed.

However, Mr. Salavreech will be required to keep a document signed by both parents which will state that you approve of his responsibility for your child until she is twenty years old. - Mrs. Cindel explained.

- Are you thirsty, Mr. Salavreech? I'll call the waiter to get you something. - Nallun added.

- No, thank you. That won't be necessary. - he smiled back and nodded lightly.

- Alright. Where do we sign? - the Orange asked.

- You know, Tangora was very excited when we took her home to pack her things. -

Cyrameen chuckled lightly after trying to make her stop tugging at her arm in order to acquire attention.

- Now, Tangie, remember everything we talked about. Hygiene, safety and all that. And study hard. I want you to make us proud. - the father stated.

- Yeah, I know. Brush your teeth, all that stuff. - she talked back and rolled her eyes whilst facing him.

- Tangie, don't speak to your father like that. - her mother scolded her.

- Forgive me for commenting, Mr. Desjardins, but I believe you give Tangora very little credit. She seems like a very bright girl. I see great potential in her. Trust her. I'm positive she will not disappoint you. - the xarrin assured him.

- You are absolutely right, Mr. Salavreech. But you gotta understand me too. I just wanna make sure my baby girl is going to be okay.

- I *completely* understand. And you know you may visit us whenever you wish.

Tangora's eyes began to sparkle while she stared at her new mentor for a few seconds. She was just so glad that somebody was on her side and understood her. Then she looked back at her parents and spoke: - So when do we leave? I already have all my stuff here.

- As soon as we sign these papers, honey. - Mrs. Cindel said.

The papers were signed and the deal was sealed. However, it was still too early for departure. Mr. and Mrs. Desjardins wanted to get to know Rorschach a little better. After Nallun ordered a round of drinks to celebrate this occasion, he and his wife started thoroughly questioning the xarrin.

- You live nearby, Mr. Salavreech? - he asked.

- Archanvein forty-two. Most houses there are fairly similar, but you will easily notice mine. It's the only one with vines surrounding it. I do tend to them each year, but I like to leave some of it on the walls. It looks beautiful in summer and spring. The others cut everything off when it starts growing. Personally, I think it gives my house much more appeal. - he answered.

- I heard it's a very nice neighborhood. It must be very peaceful when you're isolated from the city with a forest. - Cyrameen added.

- But it can also be quite lonely for people who are used to leading rich social lives. Everyone wants big, spacious homes. I'm not so keen on hosting festivities for people who I've barely spoken to. Fortunately, I was able to find a smaller house because nobody else wanted it. It's not as large as the other ones in the neighborhood, but that's what I like about

it. It's easier to maintain and I don't really need a housemaid. Of course, I do have one that comes over every Monday. She does the chores I haven't been able to do myself over the course of the week.

- I think I speak for Cyra and me both when I say I'd welcome you to the family if Tangie was old enough for marriage. - the father commented and everyone laughed harmoniously.

- That's not funny, dad... - the little girl mumbled to herself and stared down with an annoyed and angry expression on her face.

- Well, the least I can say is that I'm honored to have your blessing. But believe me, I'm not as perfect as you think. If you are to trust your daughter with me I feel I should be honest with you at all times. I have less than a handful of close friends. I'm not not a very social person. I prefer not to spend most of my time in the company of large groups of people. - the xarrin said.

- There's nothing wrong with that. It just means you have more time to focus on more important things in your life. Having people over can be very exhausting and time-consuming. Especially when when only one person has to work the entire night and the others just sit, talk and drink. - the mother glanced angrily at her husband who chuckled lightly and took a sip of his wine.

- You have a wife, Mr. Salavreech? - he inquired.

- I did. Sadly, death has chosen to take her earlier than anyone could have expected. - the xarrin sighed and glanced to the side so he wouldn't have to look at their faces.

- I'm sorry for your loss. - Nallun added with sympathy in his voice.

- Our deepest condolences. It must have been awful for you.

The Blue that sat next to Cyrameen nodded in a agreement, keeping silent like she did most of the time. She was required to do so because her primary goal was to let the parties get to know each other better.

- Thank you, but many others have been through worse. You see, we had an arranged marriage. I *did* have feelings for her, but I don't think she felt the same way.

- Sir...? Would it be okay if I asked... How exactly did she die? - little Tangora stuttered lightly as she spoke, hoping her curiosity wouldn't hurt his feelings.

As sunlight was hitting her face from a particular angle, Rorschel could see she had a very concerned expression. And as sounds on nature reflected off her, he could perfectly picture the innocence of her face and frowning lips. Her head was bowed down lightly and she was looking up directly at him from her chair. The xarrin even forgot all about Nina and her terrible demise when he was listening to the voice of that child. She sounded like she knew the question she asked was a bad one and was terribly sorry for bringing it up. It showed that she was a good person inside. Someone who would never hurt anyone on purpose.

- Tangora, I don't think Mr. Salavreech would like to talk about it right now. - her mother warned her.

- It's alright. The past is in the past. Whatever emotions I choose to express regarding the subject *are* and *always will be* a simple need to purge myself from psychological pain. - he defended Tangora. - Her name was Ninafae. We were married for about two years. She was... strange, but I respected all of her wishes during our marriage, including her request for us not to consume our marriage until she was ready. She also failed to tell me she was suffering from an illness until things turned for the worse. And to answer your question, she had a parasite manifestation in her lungs. The doctor called it *Turbula rettel*. Apparently, you can acquire it if you disturb a patch of moss on which one of its colonies are. The parasite becomes airborne and you simply inhale it into your body. It is easily mistaken for dust,

which is why no one ever thinks of visiting the hospital to have themselves tested. The symptoms are also very unclear. Just minor coughing from time to time. A faster heart rate and lack of energy. She never complained to me about any of that. I never would have guessed she was sick until one night I woke up and heard her coughing. She wouldn't stop, so I had no choice but to go see if she was alright. She was coughing something out. In panic, I immediately suspected that it was blood and called for an ambulance, but... she died on the way to the nearest hospital. I was told that she shouldn't have died like that. She should have passed on in her sleep, without suffering. According to one of the doctors, for some reason her life had lasted longer than it should have. The colony was so large that it was capable of killing her, but her lungs were still able to get enough oxygen into her blood, just a barely sufficient amount for her organism to continue functioning. Then it grew to a point where it began to destroy the tissue. The last thing she said to me was: "Please, forgive me. I did it all for you. Now you too shall know what it feels like to be loved."

- You're a very brave man. - Cyrameen told him.

- I agree with Cyrameen. It takes courage to be this honest with people you've just met.

- I'm really sorry about your wife, sir... - Tangora apologized to him.

- Thank you for your sympathies. - he gave her a light smile. - Mrs. Cindel, it's almost lunch time and I would like to return home with Tangora so that she may get settled, if that's alright.

- Should we bring this meeting to an end then? - she asked the parents.

- Agreed. - the mother replied and stood up along with her husband. - It was a great pleasure to meet you, Mr. Salavreech. Would you mind if we stopped by your house in a few weeks to see how things are going?

- Not at all. And before we leave I'd like to ask you to write down my personal number. - he requested.

Nallun took out his phone and wrote down the number Rorschel dictated to him. He left the money for the drinks on the table and they walked back to the car to get Tangora's things.

- We'll give you and Tangie a ride back to your place. - the father added.

- I appreciate it. Thank you.

Tangora sat in the back seat and Rorschel took a seat next to her.

Mrs. Cindel shook hands with them one last time and they took off. The car started to move and little Tangora seemed very confused. She had no idea where to look or what to do with her hands, so she just kept them firmly placed on her lap while her legs rocked from one side to another.

- So, Mr. Salavreech, would it be okay if you maybe told us your thoughts on the new laws they think of incorporating? I'm very curious about your opinion. - Cyrameen asked from the front seat, much to Rorschel's dismay.

He did not wish to converse with her about politics and similar subjects. He just didn't particularly care for it and was disappointed to conclude that there is a very little number of topics the majority of people wish to talk about. Even most children he's met seemed to have fallen into that category. Tangora, on the other hand, refused to be a part of it. It was refreshing to converse with her and that's what he wanted to do. The ride was not going to be short, but he knew he would have plenty of time to talk to her once they arrive to their destination.

- I don't bother myself to think about things that don't concern me. I'm not a politician. - he sighed and gave her a clear answer.

- The Indigos don't need reserves made for them. Just where do they think the money's gonna come from? Taxpayers' money! And what do we get in return from them? You tell *me*.

- Nallun argued as he drove through the roads between the thick forest of skyscrapers in

Warmbury.

- Like I said, it is not my concern. I'd rather not talk about them. - the xarrin's eyes stared sharply and almost angrily out the window.

Tangora could see a form of hatred emitting from him. It made her feel a little uneasy. In order to help him, she tried her best to change the subject.

- Mr. Salavreech, sir, can I ask you something? - she spoke up with her sweet voice.

He looked down with her and the serious frown on his face melted into a light smile. He certainly didn't want to upset her.

- Of course, child.

- How old are you? I mean, Violets live for a very long time, right? - she inquired whilst staring up at him endearingly.

- Compared to you, I'm quite old, but compared to any other Violet, I'm also young. Most Violets live up to one hundred and fifty years. Some even longer. I'm going to turn sixty-eight in the tenth moon cycle. - he said.

- So if you weren't a Violet you'd probably look like grandpa Horkun. - Tangora playfully waved her talons around and sat back deeper into the comfy seat.

- My eternal youth hasn't exactly brought me bliss so far.

- Why? - she asked.

- Never mind that. It's a complicated issue. - the xarrin replied.

- I love complicated stuff! - she smiled. - Like those movies where people invent new races and they have to make up their religions and culture and stuff like that. It's much more fun than watching real people do boring stuff.

- Yes. A dull hobby, but we cannot judge others by their taste. Still, why pay to watch others do what *you* do each day when you can simply go outside and observe your own kin for free? - Rorschet grinned and raised an eyebrow while gazing down at her.

- Exactly! Finally someone who gets it! - the girl spoke with excitement in her voice.

- Tangora, calm down, please. - her mother scolded her.

She gave her an angry glare, pouted a bit and crossed her arms, sitting in complete silence.

Her teacher turned his head forward once more and tried not to show any emotions. The way Tangora's mother spoke to her made him a little bit upset. Why would she be using that tone of voice? The little girl was just expressing happiness. For the sake of his relationship with them, he decided to keep quiet until he was alone with Tangora to ask her about the whole situation. As the car drove on the path taking them through the forest and approaching Archanvein, a song Tangora was very fond of started playing on the radio. She was staring out the window when it began to play, kneeling on her seat and facing the glass while her head rested on her arms. Rorschet kept still, hearing her movements. She was lightly rocking her head from side to side. Then the whole world was silenced. There was nothing but one sound he could hear. A sound that made him feel an incredible light feeling of serenity and beauty. It was soft and the sweetest, most innocent of all. As if Diva Canitia and the Divine Brothers were there with him in those moments, filling his soul with their holy presence. The little girl sang: - *My tears are rivers, but my soul doesn't cry. You push me away when I hold you, like any other guy. I can hear the silence creeping in and the thunder that comes with the rain! A flower I may not be, but I'm still silent when I'm in pain...*

The xarrin leaned back and turned his head to face the glass beside him, staring out into the wilderness with his window half open. The wind blew ever so lightly onto his face. It was a wonderful feeling for him, thus he continued listening and trying not to fall asleep.

- *What am I if not a rose? I will not fight, I will pray. Another woman you chose. In shadows I'm left to decay. Does my beauty not show? Why do you keep away? In the night I*

shall glow. I'll keep waiting for the day. I'll keep waiting for the day... - she sang, smiling at the world and the trees. - Every day is like a dream! But my innocence I shame. Sometimes I see you return. Just to see what I became. Another one you hold in your hand when I'm left all alone in the storm. I too long for the touch of a man, I too wish to keep warm...

Rorschet's eyes slowly started to close as he was drifting between worlds. There was no pain. No sorrow. No loneliness. That voice was enough to fill the empty void of his heart and make him understand there was still something worth living for. Tangora. Tangorita. Tangerine on a branch. Little sphere mimicking the sun. Tangerine on his lips. Nectar so ambrosial. Taste so divine. Tangerine between his fingers. Not a spot of rot. Only a light, soft core protecting the tender goodness she holds within. Tangora. Tangorita. Little Miss Desjardins. Tangerine on a branch. Honey for a bruised, violet heart.

- What am I if not a rose? I will not fight, I will pray. Another woman you chose. In shadows I'm left to decay. Does my beauty not show? Why do you keep away? In the night I shall glow. I'll keep waiting for the day. I'll keep waiting for the day...

Soon enough, the girl lowered the glass of the window and let her hand play with the wind that blew. She felt the cool breeze on her face and flowing against her chocolate-coated curls with orange tips that matched the brightness and warmth of the sun's rays peeking through the branches of the trees.

- Touch me, hold me. I beg of you, please, take my heart. Never have I felt this lonely, when is my fairy tale going to star? - her voice created numerous melodious sounds.

Rorschet was smiling with his eyes closed, barely breathing. So still, as if he had left the world and was finally at peace.

- What am I if not a rose? I will not fight, I will pray! Another woman you chose. In shadows I'm left to decay! Does my beauty not show? Why do you keep away? In the night I shall glow. I'll keep waiting for the day! I'll keep waiting for the day...

Tangora sat back down on her seat and fixed her little dress with bows and lace. At the same time, the xarrin slowly opened his eyes and took a steady, deep breath, still smiling.

- We're close. - he spoke softly.

- Is that the one? The one with the vines, like you said? - Cyrameen asked him whilst pointing towards it.

- You can park on the clearing across the road.

And they did. As soon as they arrived at their destination, Nallun parked the car like the xarrin told him. They got out and went to get Tangora's bags from the trunk. The parents said their goodbyes and shook hands with Rorschet once again. Nallun offered to help carry the bags, but the Violet assured him that there was no need. After a few more hugs with their child, they left, so Tangora was finally on her own with her new mentor. As they were walking towards the house, she couldn't keep her big, indigo eyes off the beautiful rose window in the middle and all the other amazing stained glass windows. The vines decorating the outside walls gave the house a more vintage feel as well.

- Your house looks amazing! - she exclaimed joyfully. - Do you have a room in that big, round window? Can I sleep in the room with the big, round window?

- Unfortunately, that's *my* room up there. But don't worry, your room has a window that is just as good. You'll see. - he chuckled lightly as they walked.

- Is it colorful?

- Very. - he replied and placed the luggage on the floor to unlock the large wooden door.

- How was anyone able to build all of this? - the little girl asked while gazing up at the carved stones above the door.

- It took a lot of hard work, to put it simply. I'm very glad you like it. Others usually describe our typical architecture as something frightening.

- Spooky can sometimes look beautiful. No matter if an image is pretty, scary or anything in between, when you get a feeling on wonder inside of you, you know you're looking at the goddess. - she rose her hands up high and slowly separated them to mimic the shape of a canvas or rectangle.

- Do you know anything about the Divine Brothers and Diva Canitia? - he inquired and unlocked the door.

- A bit. But you're a priest and all, so I'm guessing you're gonna teach me all about them. - she smiled back at him and entered the cathedral-looking house. - Oh wow! This is awesome!

- It's nice to know at least someone appreciates my taste in decor and art. - he added.

- No seriously, your house is the most beautiful house I've ever seen. It kinda looks like a church, but I think churches are the prettiest of buildings anyway.

- Thank you. I can take you on a tour after some lunch if you'd like. Also, now that you're staying with me you'll have to get me better acquainted with your likes and dislikes. - he spoke, left the luggage by the door and walked towards the kitchen while his faithful student followed along. - For the purpose of feeding you something you would enjoy.

- I love chocolate, but my mom doesn't really let me have any, so we don't have it at home. - she looked down and lowered her head a bit in sorrow.

- My way of doing things is a bit different. I follow a strict code that clearly states you can have anything you like as long as you act responsibly and never go too far. You seem like a very nice little girl. I think you can be trusted. - the xarrin turned his head to the side as he walked to flash her a grin. - Correct me if I'm wrong.

- No, *sir!* I would never do anything bad on purpose. I don't like being yelled at. And don't worry, I won't touch anything and I won't break anything... On purpose. - she assured him.

- I believe you.

- Thank you again for letting me stay here, sir. I promise I won't make any problems for you. - she spoke and kept nodding repeatedly.

- Relax, child. I know you won't. - he chuckled again. - Now, I haven't had time to make lunch yet, so I was hoping you would assist me.

- Okay. - she smiled back.

They walked into the small kitchen where the long, wooden table was surrounded with walls on three sides. The chairs were also very nicely carved and attached to the wall behind them. On the other side was a small kitchen with fairly new appliances. Everything looked that way, but was designed to mimic the Balastignan period.

- Since this is your first day here, I think it's only fair we make something you'd like. So, what would you like to eat?

- I really like quinoa salad. I don't suppose you have any. - she answered.

- Your mother must be really picky about your diet. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but only if you're happy with the decision to eat healthy.

- I *am*. Most of that stuff is actually pretty tasty.

- Unfortunately, I don't have any quinoa at the moment, but we can go to the market tomorrow to buy some groceries.

- Thank you, sir. - the little girl said and rocked from side to side with her hands behind her back.

- Think simple. What else would you like? - he asked whilst looking inside the fridge.

- Well, mom made me grilled cheese sandwiches once. Those were really good.

- I think I can do that. - the xarrin replied and took out the necessary ingredients.

Following his instructions, Tangora placed two plates and two glasses on the table. After

that, she took some homemade apple juice in a glass bottle and poured it into the two glasses with great precision, afraid to spill any on the beautiful lace tablecloth. She sat down and patiently waited for him to finish cooking. The smell was brilliant. As soon as it hit her, time just started ticking away more and more slowly. Then once the meal was finished, Rorschach placed the grilled cheese sandwiches onto a bigger plate and brought the meal to her.

- You have a beautiful singing voice, by the way. I really enjoyed hearing you sing in the car. - he gave her a compliment after having sat down.

- Oh, thank you so much. - the little girl thanked him while shyly turning her head away a bit, fearing to look him in the eyes out of embarrassment.

- Did anyone teach you to sing like that? You're almost as good as a Violet. - he spoke and took a bite out of his sandwich, piercing the bread with his large fangs.

- No. I just like to sing sometimes. I dunno. It's fun when you really get into it. - she gave him a smile and started eating like a hungry little bear.

- It is. I, as a priest, am required to know how to sing, but I still enjoy it very much. Though, I doubt people would tell me I'm good if they heard you sing.

- Do you do other stuff? Like, in your free time? - she asked with her mouth filled with food and her hand covering it.

- I play the piano and the organ. Does that count?

- That's really neat. Especially since most people I've heard of can only play the guitar. I don't really think it's that great. It's just not special when a lot of people do it. - the little girl commented.

- Which one's your favorite?

- The saxophone! - she exclaimed. - However you play it, it always sounds awesome!

- That's understandable. It does sound nice. Just try not to talk with your mouth full, child. I wouldn't want something bad to happen to you on my watch. - he smiled and warned her.

- Oh, sorry. - Tangora spoke and swallowed her food. - So what are we gonna do today?

- Like I said before, I'm going to give you a tour of the house and show you to your room so that we can unpack your things. If there is any more time left, we could do whatever you'd like. However, I'm going to have to ask you to stick to a certain schedule from this day forth. Under normal circumstances your bath time shall be at eight o'clock. That includes brushing your teeth as well. You need to be in bed by nine.

- My mom usually brushes my hair after I wash it, which is twice a week. And then she curls it up with little spiky tubes. I can take them off in the morning and my hair looks like this after that. We have to go cut it a bit every four or six months because if it grows too long it gets heavy. Then the curls don't stay up long enough and straighten pretty quickly. - Tangora added.

- Your mother knows best and I agree with her completely. But, if I may just ask, wouldn't you like a different hairstyle? It seems to me that your mother really likes it, but I want to hear your opinion.

- It was her idea and I like it anyway. I think it looks great. Do *you* think it looks alright? - she inquired softly and a bit shyly.

The xarrin grinned and reached for a delicious, green apple from the fruit bowl in the middle of the table.

- It suits you perfectly. - he replied and sank his large fangs into the apple.

Tangora observed him with curious eyes as he was sucking out the fruit's juices. Once he was finished slurping, he looked back at her and chuckled: - Why are you staring at me like that?

- Oh, uhm... Sorry. - the little girl shook her head. - I've just never seen anyone eat like

that.

- It's understandable. Only the Violets have this habit. We can eat anything like everyone else, but during the evolution, we adopted this habit of feeding mostly on nutritional juices. What's even more interesting is the fact that each color evolved from one species that somehow managed to gain traits from others. They say the main species, with whom all of us share genetics, lived in different environments and copied the adaptability of others living in its habitat. The Violets are most likely the result of it living in caves and copying the abilities and physical traits of the bat to survive. - Rorschet explained.

- So each color is like a mix between two types of creatures?

- To put it simply, yes.

- Just one question. Uhm... What are "environments"?

- They are the surroundings in which a being lives or operates in. - he answered her.

- Oh, I get it! Okay. - she flashed him a smile and continued eating.

The two were silent for some time as they were eating. Tangora still had a ton of questions she wanted to ask her mentor, but was just too hungry to stop chewing her food. After finishing her meal, leaving only crumbs on her plate in memory of the noble gilled cheese sandwich that once did lay upon it, she drank some more apple juice. Rorschet then took his plate and Tangora quickly and anxiously grabbed hers as well, following his lead. The xarrin sensed her fear very clearly. He felt saddened by her reaction a bit. It was as if she was scared something would have happened if she hadn't picked up her plate. She simply placed it into the sink and ran back to get the glasses and everything else that was left on the table.

- Tangora? - he sighed with his hands folded down.

- Yes? - she turned her head after placing the fragile cargo into the sink.

- Thank you. - the xarrin smiled lightly.

- Oh, no problem, sir. - she smiled back.

- I believe I promised to give you a tour of the house. - he walked towards the arc that led out of the kitchen and back into the hallway. - But first, let's go get your things to your room.

- I'll go get them. - she said and turned towards the door where her suitcases were.

- Don't worry, I'll carry them. We'll be able to move faster since I have more strength to carry them with. - he stopped her and took her suitcases up the stairs.

- Makes sense. - she thought and thanked him. - Thank you.

- Don't mention it, child. Your room is fairly close to mine, so if you ever need me, no matter what time it is, you can always go look for me in my room.

- Okay. - the girl retorted.

Rorschet took her to a room near the master bedroom in which he slept. He placed one suitcase on the floor for a moment in order to open the door and went in afterward. Tangora was happily skipping and following his path.

- Looks pretty neat. - she commented as she was walking around and inspecting the furniture. It's really small and cozy.

- From now on this will be your room.

- Question. Why do you have stairs? I mean, you can fly. We have stairs because dad doesn't have wings, but you're the only one living here *and* you have wings.

- I'm impressed with the way you think, child. - he spoke and placed the suitcases near the bed. - You seem to pay attention to things most people wouldn't even notice.

- Thanks. - she smiled. - So are you gonna tell me why you have stairs?

- In case I ever have guests over. Those that can't fly.

- How did you afford all of this? Do priests really earn this much money?

- Currently I am earning a living as your teacher, but I also own a pharmaceutical

company which was given to me by my stepmother who has chosen to pursue a different career path. I receive monthly income and pay my cousin to run it as the CEO so that I may have more time to do other things. - the xarrin elaborated.

- That was really nice of her.

- It was. I'm very grateful for that.

- So... is there anything else I should know? - she asked with anxiety creeping in on her.

- Such as?

- Well... rooms I shouldn't go in or stuff like that. I don't like being yelled at when I do something bad.

- Child, you needn't be afraid. A bad little girl would have never said something like that. I have no reason to suspect you would disobey me unless it was for the greater good. - the xarrin gazed down at her with a trusting smile. - There is no room in which you are not allowed to go. You may do as you please.

- Okay. So should I start unpacking now?

- If you wish.

The little Green struggled a bit to lift one of the suitcases up on the bed. Rorschach noticed it, walked over to her and offered his assistance.

- Let me help you with that.

- No! I can do this. - she stopped him from touching the bag and kept on stubbornly trying to lift it.

After a few minutes she was still going at it, but without any success. She just couldn't push it over the low, wooden rails on the edges of the bed.

- Would you like some help *now*? - the xarrin inquired.

- Yes, please. - she sighed in shame and ceased with her efforts.

Her master then took both of her bags and placed them onto the soft surface on the bed with lavender-colored sheets.

- Being stubborn like that can be a good thing, but also a bad personality trait if you're too proud to admit defeat and confess to yourself that you cannot do some things on your own.

- Sorry...

He looked down at her again and noticed a little frown creeping up on her face as she was facing the ground with her fingers entwined. Feeling responsible for making her feel this way, he placed his large, clawed hands under her arms and helped her climb onto the tall bed that was almost as tall as her.

- Are you mad at me...? - she asked with a frightened look in her eyes.

- Of course not. Why would I be? You did nothing wrong, child.

- I could have lifted that bag.

- I believe you. But I just wanted to speed things up a bit. I hope you're not upset about what I said. I'm sorry if my words hurt you, but it was never my intention to do so. What I meant to say was... You're not alone and you don't have to be. If you need help you should never be afraid to ask for it. - he smiled at her and tilted her face up. - Look me in the eyes, child.

Tangora hesitated for a few seconds, but then decided to look up.

- I only want what's best for you and I think knowledge is one of those things. Someday you'll understand that none of my words or deeds are meant to cause you harm. At least you of all the people I've met don't deserve it. You're a good girl.

Tangora replied to him with silence and a bright smile across her face. She didn't have to speak. Her expression told Rorschach everything he needed to know.

- Others may try to hurt you and some will succeed. You might have already noticed that

back in the Auroratorium.

- Yeah... I still don't get why people do that.

- Nobody can fully understand the reason. What I can tell you is that you mustn't stoop to their level. There will be times when you will be tempted to get revenge or even do some mean things to others, but I believe you will have enough strength in you to fight that urge.

- How do you know that? - she tilted her head to the side in confusion as she sat before him.

- Indigo is my secondary color. Those with indigo in their blood are gifted with certain levels of intuition, depending on the amount.

- Indigo's my tertiary color! - the girl exclaimed. - That's why my eyes are indigo. And I guess orange is my secondary color. I have orange spots on my wings and the tips of my hair are orange.

- Can you tell what color *my* eyes are? - he grinned.

- Green, so green's gotta be your tertiary color, right? Mom told me you get your primary and secondary color from your parents and that your tertiary color is chosen by the Divines to tell you about your destiny.

- It is believed to be so, yes. I just wish there was a way of knowing what our eyes say about our future. - the xarrin added.

- Oh, by the way, are you gonna teach me how to fly someday?

- Your wings are still not strong enough to support the weight of your body. They will grow into proportion around age ten. - he told her and helped her fold her clothes neatly into separate piles.

- How am I gonna be able to climb up onto the bed on my own until then?

- I'll help you and tuck you in every night to make sure you're not up past your bedtime.

- Okay. - she smiled at him.

While unpacking, Rorschet came across a little, crocheted doll that resembled a voodoo doll with buttons for eyes and stitched lips. He held it up and showed it to her.

- Is this yours?

- It was in my suitcase, of course it's mine. - she giggled and took it from his hand, then pressed it tightly against her chest as if it was something very dear to her. - He's my boyfriend.

- And what would the young gentleman's name be? - the xarrin played along.

- Pirry. - she gazed at him whilst hiding the rest of her face shyly behind the small body and big head of the doll.

You could almost see her rosy cheeks blushing atop her light green skin. The end of her smile was visible as her big, indigo eyes met the two emerald marbles placed into the eye sockets of his skull. It was a beautiful sight for him. He even forgot what they were talking about for a moment, thinking how he would be able to see that pretty smile brighten his day over and over again for the next fourteen years.

- You two certainly look like a sweet couple. - he complimented her.

- Thanks. I just wish he was real so he would kiss me back...

The xarrin was quite interested now. He thought a child her age with a doll would pretend that the doll was a living being, but Tangora was willing to acknowledge that Pirry is just a soulless plaything. Not only that, but she openly admitted to him that she had an urge dwelling inside of her quite untypical for a 6-year-old girl.

- At least he's never push me away.

- Why would he want to push you away? - Rorschet asked, intrigued by her statements.

- Back in the Auroratorium, I really liked this one boy... and... I tried to hug him, but he pushed me away and told me not to touch him...

- You are past them, child. What you are feeling the need for is what they are yet to develop. Boys at that age tend to be... strange, to say the least. - he explained to her. - Girls mature earlier than them and boys get scared of that attitude even though you mean them no harm.

- Yeah... well, it still doesn't help my situation. I wish they'd let me hug them and hold their hand. - she sighed.

- For some things, you simply need to be patient. And besides, you are still much too young.

- I guess.

The continued sorting the clothes and Rorschach could feel nothing but serenity and glee both blended into a smooth mixture as they continued their discussion. Tangora's dresses all looked very expensive, but that was not what piqued his interest. Most of them were puffy, little lolita dressed with bows, laces and virtually anything that screams female sweetness, similar to the one she was wearing. They had a variety of soft, creamy colors. Tangora seemed more of a pastry project than a person now, but he didn't complain. No child he knew of looked or acted quite like her. He felt the need to exploit her beauty and show his prized pet student off to the world so that they may bask in her light as he enjoys doing.

- Okay, so every type of clothes is a world of its own. Each has to be in its own pile.

- I'll put them in the wardrobe for you. - he volunteered and took the big pile of dresses first.

- No no no! I'll do it. You don't know how I organize stuff yet. - she refused his proposal and jumped off the bed.

- You'll tell me where you want me to put them. Does that sound fair?

- Okay, I guess. I'm too short to reach those knobs on the wardrobe anyway.

- You'll grow very quickly. Don't worry about that. - he told her and started placing the piles of clothing where she wished to see them stacked.

Soon enough, both suitcases were unpacked, the clothes were put away and things such as her toothbrush and hair comb were placed in the bathroom a few doors away.

They spent the rest of the afternoon touring the house. Rorschach kept his piano in the living room and Tangora was very excited to fiddle around with it. She spent a lot of time trying to create a melody that would sound just right. Afterward, they made a chocolate milkshake blend for dinner and enjoyed each other's company. Rorschach explained to her what he would be teaching her over the course of the following few years. The curriculum would include what they call "common knowledge subjects", which are Math, Sheshki, as it is their mother tongue, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, Logic, History and Biology. Although, he is only going to be teaching her the basics. The real complications come at a later time when she shall be studying her primary subject in depth, be it Chemistry or Psychology. During the first lessons he plans to teach her a little bit about psychology so that she may choose between the two more easily when the time comes. After dinner, Tangora had a bath and washed her hair. Once it dried, the xarrin sat with her on her bed and carefully brushed the precious, glimmering strings that gently glided through his fingers. He was very careful not to cause her pain by being too harsh. He soon realized how much he was enjoying brushing her hair and that he just wanted to keep on going. To his dismay, the little girl began to yawn repeatedly and he finished his work by curling it with the curlers they brought from the bathroom. He then tucked his little student in and said "goodnight" one last time before leaving her to rest. The evening was quiet. Not even the animals made any sounds. He could hear Tangora breathing softly from his room as he was getting ready for bed himself. For the second night in a row, his nights were a torment no longer. The sounds of the little girl's heart beating rhythmically lulled him to slumber.