

THE UNIFIER

RICHARD SHEHARI

The Unifier

By

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Acknowledgments.

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Dedication.

Children of Tomorrow.

Chapter One: The Master.

The war torn world could not withstand the economic upheaval that had befallen it. Another religious faction or thought would surely bring everything to a final end. The world leaders needed to find a solution. A world summit was called and every ruler from president to king was urged to attend.

Arguments arose but each man knew that the only solution was a one world government.

A new world order was formed, and one of its critical task was the abolishment of worship of all entities that cannot be comprehended by the five senses of man. All gods, deities, masters and idols adored by man that could not be seen, heard, smelled, tasted and or felt, the knowledge of their existence must be totally wiped out from the minds and hearts of all men. For it was established and proven with facts, according to the understanding of men that these entities and gods or God which no man had had a sensible evident contact with, were the causes of all man's uncontrolled passion for a world beyond this world. Which many believed, was the root of all the lost humanity had suffered through the crisis, battles and wars that almost ruined mankind and the world at large.

Therefore, all books, scrolls, text, audio and video records, and materials that promoted or propagated the old religions were not only banned but confiscated and destroyed. The men and women who refused to turn away from the old ways were either imprisoned or killed.

It took many years to achieve, but it was accomplished anyway. It was the only absolute solution the government of the day could possible think of. And it worked; peace had come to the world, and all the nations prospered and none a poor person was found

among all the inhabitants of the earth, at least those whose beliefs were rooted in the new way of things.

The government of the day, known as The Unifier, headed by the wealthiest of all men; a man whose riches no king or kingdom had ever seen nor acquired, this man, known by all as, The Master, has achieved what no man thought was possible. This great man's dreams and ideas changed the world.

In order to satisfy the inner desires of man that craved for something greater than he to look up to, a one-eyed giant and magnificent golden statue of The Master that stood 6, 660 feet high was erected in the new capital of the world. Its eye, made from the rarest precious stones excavated from another planet, gazed at the rising sun. With its left foot on land and right foot immersed in the sea, this statue smiled with open arms facing the sea.

Sculptures, posters, and paintings of this great man, The Master, were mass-produced and distributed worldwide to be used in worship places and temples in all the earth.

In order to debar the dangers posed by the secret practitioners of the former religions which was known as the old ways, that brought disunity among men and all the nations at large; the government of the day through REL-POL, an agency created and given all the authority to deal with or bring to justice any individual, group, state or nation that refused to practice the new way, most find one man whom they believed was an imminent threat to the future of the world.

On the third annual festival, in a year not far from the present day, the leader of all the peoples; His majesty, Ethnocal Jessy Thuck, also known as The Master, gave a speech to all the nations. It was streamed live and broadcasted in all the radio and TV stations. "Fellow citizens of the world, we have come a long way. In love and great respect for one another. I honour you all as I usher you yet into another year of a new dawn. A new dawn of peace, love and joy. A new dawn of prosperity, progress and unity. I know, many a life we have lost in order to come to this greatness,

but I assure you, none of the efforts of these precious souls shall go in vain. Together, we have created not only a new world, but a better and peaceful tomorrow for our children, and our children's children. This temple shall stand as a reminder to us all, of the great men and women who have put in their best to make this day possible, and also to the beautiful souls lost in the battles fought to arrive at where we are today. We shall continue to celebrate the lives of these great men and women who have worked hard for this, and also those who are willing to help us maintain and improve our current standards. We shall consecrate this place and also a part of our heart to our founders and all those whose lives laid as the foundation of this great temple. As you all know, I, Ethnocal J. Thuck, your ever loving and concerned leader..."

The people began to cheer, some released doves and balloons into the air.

"Thank you! Thank you...Thank you very much." He said, "As you all know, I, Ethnocal J. Thuck, your ever loving and concerned leader, has one and only one thing in mind; bestowment of peace and prosperity in our time throughout the world. All nations under me shall surely flourish, it's no brag but you've all seen it. Can I get a witness, please?"

The people cheered one more time.

"All nations under my umbrella shall surely enjoy and rejoice in a better tomorrow than the best of today." He added, "So I urge each and every one of you to join me and let's diligently and desperately thirst for peace."

He turned and looked at his beautiful wife, who was standing behind him. He heaved a heavy sigh of relief and smiled, she smiled back at him.

"For those who believed that the streets in heaven are made of gold," he added as he turned to the microphone. "I wish they'd see what we have accomplished right here, right now! We don't need a heaven painted in the clouds by men who thought the earth was flat. We have created our own paradise down here on earth and

now; peace knows us by name! All that belongs to me I give to you all, all which is within my reach in this word and our galaxy I share with you all. But this woman, Mariah, you must leave for me!"

The entire people cheered and whistled.

"For she stood by me from the start, and so must be acknowledged and appreciated." He said, "Thank you for trusting me with this great task. Thank you for your encouragement. Put your trust in the new and only way! Peace in our time!" He threw a peace sign into the air.

"Peace in our time!" The people said in unison as they continued to cheer.

Mariah walked to him and hugged him. Two men approached the couple and led them to the inner part of the temple which was between the feet of the golden statue. The temple was blanketed by the shadow cast upon it by the mighty statue, made from The Master's image.

A lamb was brought forth and laid on a golden altar, The Master picked a golden knife and slayed the little lamb. A sacrifice was made, its blood ran down and touched the ground.

The Master was offered the blood of the lamb in a golden cup, after drinking it he gave a sign for the six day of feast to begun and to be observed. The footage broadcasted around the world in all the channels brought cheer and joy in the hearts of all the people.

During the festival, people who had come to witness the ceremony came from all nations; scattered in the sea on boats, ships and canoes, and also on land. There was celebration both on land and on the sea.

A large portion of the land was carved for the temple, ornamented for the festival with exotic trees, plants and flowers. A tremendous wonder of the world, the garden stood and blossomed. The surroundings gleamed in awe and beauty. The walls that surrounded the temple reflected the wealth of the new world; coated in gold, with a large piece of gem placed on top of each pillar that held the seven gates. These golden gates were placed to

denote the seven continents of the world and its walkways were made of gold. After the sacrifice was made, The Master and his wife made their way out of the temple.

Representatives from all the nations and bodyguards walked alongside The Master and his wife. Before getting into his white limousine, he turned to one of the men and said, "Have they found him?"

"Not yet, your majesty." The man replied, "I was on the phone with the chief of Rel-Pol, just minutes before you gave your beautiful speech and he said, 'In three weeks,' and that if he does ..."

"Three weeks?" The Master yelled, "Is this some kind of a joke? If I had waited for three weeks when asked to choose between how we live in lavish today and how things were and could've been, do you think any of you would relish and basked in the glory I've provided?" He stared at them with his right eye. "When those fools came for my life years back, I might have lost an organ of sight but don't take me for a jester," he paused. "Know that I see all!"

Some of the representative cringed.

"I don't want his resignation on my table if he fails, I want his head on a platter!" He yelled, "Get the message across to the chief. With all the modern technology in our possession, how long does it take to locate one man? One man!"

"Your majesty," said Jeremy, "The chief has been..."

"You said my speech was beautiful?" The Master interjected in a calm voice, "Do you mean that?"

"Yes, your majesty!" Jeremy replied, a bit puzzled, "Your popularity has gone up more than double, according to the PWG!"

"The People's Word Gazette?" He asked as he smiled, "Let me see."

Jeremy pulled out a device, browsed to a page and showed it to him.

"Mmm!" He responded, "I want more. I want more. Maybe next time I'll write the speech myself, she did a good job though."

I've got to give her that, but next time, I'll write it myself. You understand? These things have to come from the heart." He tapped his chest with his right hand.

"But your majesty, she took note of what you've wanted to convey." Jeremy added, "And I think she did a great job, and with the way you presented it to the people it was magnificent, some people were in tears, your majesty. Unless if we'd hire another speechwriter and fire her, like that young professor from the institute of..."

"Are you saying I cannot write a greater speech than the one I recited today?" He said.

The representatives and all the bodyguards went mute.

"I may not have gone to the best schools." He added, "But look at what I've accomplished; not only did I bring prosperity to the entire world, I brought peace! Peace!" He paused, "Do you know the price of peace, Jeremy? Does any of you thickoes have any idea what it cost to usher this world into this epoch?"

They all remained silent.

"I thought so!" He remarked.

"Honey, why don't you get in the vehicle?" Mariah said, "You'll need to have a little rest before the investiture!"

"If I want," he said, "I can decide to withdraw all that belongs to me at this point in time, and there's nothing you can do about it! And none of you will have a place to hide when the mottles come crashing down!"

"Baby?" She called again, "I want my man in the car, right now!"

"Give me a minute, darling!" He responded in a calm tone. "When this ceremony is over. Go back to your nations and sieve out this man, Palm Carlos, or whatever name he goes by these days. And if you don't, not only is the Chief of Rel-Pol going down, I'll make sure you're all replaced or imprisoned along with the enemies of our one and beautiful world. When the sweet juicy-fruits of my own labour stopped flushing down your gut, and you lose all those

shiny attires and beautiful mansions I've offered to you for free, then you might show me some respect out of fear, and maybe then, you might want to help me fetch out this traitor and threat to peace! "

He entered the limousine and sat next to his wife, Mariah.

The representatives of all the nations entered their own vehicles, in a convoy, they escorted The Master to his mansion.

"What have I not given them?" He lamented, "I have made men of all races love one another, I brought peace. I got rid of that eyesore of a disease they call religion; an invincible barrier that separated them and made them hate each other. They feed on the peace I have solely provided. I even made men from other nations govern other nations in perfect peace, who is like me? And the world economy has gone up far more greater than anticipated. I united all the nations and equally share the resources for the benefit of all. The people are healthier now. Not even God could do a quarter of what I've done so far, Mariah."

"Don't let their incompetence splatter anger on the big ocean of your beautiful heart, my darling!" She said in a soft voice as she smiled, "You have achieved far greater than all the kings of the earth. Maybe we need to be a little patient with them, that's all. To err is human, they say. Man's five senses form the walls of the prison that holds him; if he cannot see it, hear it, smell it, taste it or feel it, then he won't believe it exists. And that has been given to them through you, my love. They have no choice but to love and obey you."

The Master's heart was pleased, and he smiled back.

"But they don't appreciate my effort." He said, "They never did."

"They will, my love!" She gazed into his eyes, her big green eyes blazed like a thousand gemstones. She wrapped her right hand behind his neck and gently pulled him to herself, then kissed him. "Don't get irate over their incompetence. The idea of the creation of man itself was the only flaw in the days of creation, but you're

the perfect one. The world is yours now, always remember that, my darling.”

The tone of her voice sweetened his heart, his eyes were shut. She gently ran her fingers through his hair.

“The world is already yours, there’s none an attainment as great as this.” She added.

He laid his head on her lap.

“What can I do without you, Mariah?” He said as he heaved a heavy sigh.

She bent and kissed him.

Chapter Two: Dead or Alive.

In a cave up the mountains, Palm, watched on a tab an interview on a television station that featured the two assassins who made an attempt on The Master's life years back.

"I learned that today is your birthday, which also happens to be the day chosen to observe the annual festival throughout the world, which is meant to celebrate the peace we all savour in all the nations?" Said the TV host, she smiled, "Tell me, how does it feels like to be forgiven by the very most powerful man you've tried to kill? One who has the authority to have your life snapped out of you in a second?"

"Well, you're right, Margie!" One among the young men said, "My brother and I were blinded by well, this whole idea injected into our heads about a coming saviour that will fall from the sky; whom they said would come down and take us all into heaven, you know; lies propagated by those who perverted the truth for thousands of years. So we thought it was our duty to kill The Supreme One, whom we thought was a tool in the hands of the devil. We took it upon ourselves to take him out, but when we failed and were captured, we couldn't believe our ears when The Master ordered that we be set free! Little did humanity know that we need not look into the skies for a helper but down here on earth?"

"I know, right?" Said the host. She giggled, "I love the way you put it. If only those that are still blind and in hiding could hear what you just said!"

"Yeah!" He responded, "I mean, my brother and I could not even comprehend such mercy exercised upon us by The Master, a man we just attempted to kill. The world is blessed to have this

great leader. We are beings of high and great intelligence; we have explored and have travelled worlds and planets beyond our realm, time travel, you name it...and none a God or gods were sighted. Not only has science proven so but it exposed the mythos that caged man's way of thinking which in the long run limits and affects man's way of life. This is a new age, a new era of noesis that will thrust mankind into what was thought to be impossible or only attained by gods or God, or whatever the practitioners of the old ways believed in."

"I read from page 17 of your new book, the Light within the Tunnel, where you said and I quote, 'Man is God, for God is man!' can you shed more light on that?" Said the host.

"The truth is, man has been looking up to and for some super being whom he thought lived in the skies, you know, seated on a throne made of gold and all that," he said as he giggled, "but man of the old ways have failed to understand that he was actually looking for himself, and because he sought himself he never found himself. It takes the spirit of the new man to see that which the old sought for. It's like a dog chasing its own tail, you know, no matter how many times it goes round and round, it can never catch up."

The spectators laughed and applauded.

"Anyways, I don't want to say much," he added, "Wouldn't want to spoil the fun for the truth seekers. Just get a copy of our book, The Light within the Tunnel, it's more than an eye opener."

"I know, right?" She said, "What about you, Larry?" The host turned to the other young man, "What do you have to say about this?"

"Well, just like what Harry said; little did humanity know that we need not look into the skies for a helper but down here on earth," he cleared his throat, "I urge all the people in all the nations to show support to our great leader, The Master, who has ushered in peace and prosperity never experienced by the inhabitants of the earth. None a man we have seen that made so much sacrifice to us all like this man, our supreme leader, The Master."

“Hmm! A small but heavy statement there, you’re not much of a talker, are you?” The host said. She then turned and faced the camera, “Anyway, you’ve just heard from the twin brothers; Larry and Harry Norchell, whom, years ago made an attempt to assassinate our great supreme leader, The Master, Ethnocal Jessy Thuck. However, his mercy made a believer of world peace out of them. Now they travel throughout the nations to preach, educate and orient converts on the new way of things. You can buy their debut novel, *The Light within the Tunnel*, at bookshops near you or just order online. We’ve come to the end of our show for today, I am your host, Margie Cantell, for UNG; the Unifier News Guardian. Peace in our time!”

The TV station switched to commercial. Palm Carlos switched off the tab, then plugged it to a small solar device kept at the edge of the cave.

“Would you need some water to shower, Palm?” A lady said to him.

“No, Tamara, I am okay!” He said.

“It’s been two days now, Palm,” she added. “Just because we sleep in a cage don’t mean we should live like cage dwellers!”

“But that is what we are, Tamara!” He said as he turned, “Cage dwellers, for now!”

Palm took a few steps and stood at the edge of the cave, overlooking the vales. The mighty statue on the shores of the world’s capital could be sighted from the mountains. The golden image of The Master stood still in its aura. Helicopters hovered around it as fireworks took the skies hostage, many ships and boats could be sighted with multitude of crowd celebrating in the city.

“If only they knew!” Palm said.

“Maybe you shouldn’t worry much about those who chose not to be saved.” Tamara said as she walked to him.

“I wish it is that easy!” He said, “He has placed a weight upon my heart; to never find peace until His people are set free from this thrall!”

"I've known you for years, Palm." She added, "When we first met in high school, I told you from the start that your compassion would plunge you into a gulf you won't be able to be rescued from. Now, look at what have become of us; we can't even live a normal life. You're being hunted like an animal. You've lost your dignity in the eyes of friends and relatives; wasting your time and energy trying to what...set them free? When the people are happy with their current situation?"

"You'll not understand, Tam." he said. "And I don't expect you to."

"Trust me, Palm." She added, "I do understand, and I also know that He has not answered any of your prayers ever since this whole mess started. I'm your wife, I know you deeper than you think. Maybe God wanted you to invest your time in us, for now, than trying to rid the world of what you believe has consumed or blinded it." She paused, "We should try and be happy, baby. Enjoy the moment." She sighed, "Even though our two boys were taken along with all the children of the world when that horrible sound shook the earth..." She wrapped her arms round him from behind, "When He's ready and willing to use you, He would come down or visit you...in your dreams as He used to, to give you His instructions, maybe."

"He's not coming back," Palm said. "Not down to this world, for now. All the children are safe with Him. Nothing delights His heart when He looks down here anymore." He sighed, "At least, that's what I think."

Palm turned and held her firm in his arms then kissed her.

"I know there's a prophesy upon you to bring an end to the reign of this thing the world believes it needs but look around and about, baby; these people are happy!" Tamara added, "You saw it over the news and even from here you can see and hear the sound of their jubilation! If I was Him, I'd let them all rot. I mean, if someone says they don't want you even though you know after you

walk away they'd suffer more than they had ever imagined, you walk the hell away and care less when they cry out for help!"

"You always forget that there are so many others in hiding just like us, who have refused to bow to this graven image, Tam." Palm said, "It is our duty to let the light shine in the darkest phase the world faces. It won't be easy but...it is our duty as children of God to let His will be done, here on earth!"

Tamara sighed.

The refreshing breeze whistled through the cave's lips, they stood silent in each other's arms to its anthem.

"I miss the taste of the good old wine, the smell of our home." She said, "The laundry. Ooh...my beautiful blue dress. Baby, you remember that one you got me from Europe?"

"Of course I remember," he replied. "When I sent you the picture you just couldn't wait for me to come home. I was a bit jealous! How can I ever forget?"

"It's only a dress, baby?" Tamara said, "Come on!"

"Don't come-on me, honey!" He said, "I was away for about a month and you wanted to get your hands on that dress more than you wanted to get your hands on me!" He giggled.

"Get out of here!" Tamara responded as she gently sank her teeth on his chest, "Grrrr!"

"I miss the boys!" He said.

"I really missed them too!" She remarked, "They all had your great smile."

"They had your face!" He countered.

"Well, they had your eyes!" She protested, "They had your body and your voice?"

"Yeah, right. And how's my voice like?" He asked as he gazed into her eyes.

"Like a Puma growling in the dark," she said, "Trying to whisper my name! Your voice made me fall for you the more back in high school!" She smiled.

"I should've known..." Palm added, "Imagine how many girls I could've toyed with!"

"Mmm hmm?" She responded, "Imagine how many would've been annihilated by my stare!" She stared into his eyes, "Grrrr! Tigress!"

"Your stare can only trap a man's heart," he said as he lifted her in his arms, "Not scary at all!" He kissed her.

"I love you!" Tamara said as she kissed him back.

"I love you too!" Palm responded, "You've gained too much weight, honey." He teased, "Don't you think we should do something about it?"

"Shut up!" She replied.

They both laughed as he took her deep into the cave.

They made love and later chatted a bit. Tamara couldn't stop talking about their two children. Palm didn't want to say much about it but he had to engage in the conversation. When she realised he wasn't comfortable with it, she left him and headed to the edge of the cave. Palm ignored her and decided to take a rest. He closed his eyes and sailed through the oceans of his thoughts, then her voice shook him off.

"Palm!" She cried out.

Palm turned and saw Tamara on the ground, two men in a combat uniform had their guns pointed at her. There were two more hanging on ropes by the entrance to the cave. Before he could make any move, a shot was fired by one of the men as Tamara tried to get up.

Tamara died on the spot.

"No!" Palm screamed. He got up and ran to where she laid, and held her dead body.

"No, baby?" He cried, "Honey, get up!"

"Who gave you the order to fire?" One of the men in masked asked as he got off his rope.

"She tried to move, sir!" The shooter answered.

“Fool! You just bought a ticket to your own public execution.”
Said the one who appeared to be the superior officer.

Palm lost control and got up, he noticed the tag on their uniform; Rel-Pol. He rushed the shooter to the ground but received a sharp blow on the back of the head with a truncheon. He fainted.

Chapter Three: A Friend Indeed.

“On your feet!” Yelled an elderly officer, “Put your back up against the wall! Now!”

Palm Carlos gently came down from the bed, the sound of chains shackled to his feet rang through. Palm walked towards the wall and stood on his feet, with his face lowered.

The Master approached the cell.

“Chief Deshawn?” The Master called.

“Yes, your majesty!” The officer responded.

“How many resistance have you in this precinct?” The Master asked.

“Well, your majesty,” said the chief, “I uh...I think about...”

“You think?” Interjected The Master.

“Thirty three, sir,” another low ranking officer whispered to the chief, “Palm Carlos inclusive!”

“Only Thirty three, your majesty!” The chief said, “Yes, Thirty three.”

“Give me the keys to this block!” He said, “And the keys to the shackles.”

The chief quickly ordered one of his men to bring the keys, he then handed it to The Master as soon as it was given to him.

“Get you, your men and all the resistance in these cells out of the building.” The Master said, “I want to have a word with this man.”

“Are you sure, your majesty? Your safety is my number one priority!” The chief said, “This man could be dangerous, your majesty. If anything happens to you, I and my...”

“Now!” The Master yelled.

“Sure, your majesty!” Said the chief as he turned to his men, “Alright everyone! Evacuate! Now! All captives inclusive!”

The officers quickly formed a line behind The Master to shield him from the prisoners that might want to harm him. Some of the officers stormed in and pulled out all the men and women locked up in the other cells.

“Don’t get any ideas, you rats!” Said the chief to the prisoners, he stared at them as they were being moved out of their cells, “Don’t hesitate to shoot anyone who looks this way!”

The entire officers along with the chief stormed out of the precinct.

The Master heaved a heavy sigh. He used the keys and opened the cell block where Palm was locked. He gently walked in, stopped and then continued to step forward. He bent and unchained the shackles on Palm’s feet, then stepped aside and sat on the concrete bed. Palm acted as though no one was in the room with him.

“Who would’ve thought I’d see you again?” The Master said, “And there I was thinking that by this time, you’ll be the one person who would be by my side...To watch over my back. I guess I was wrong.”

“You had Tamara killed.” Palm said, “What wrong has she commit?” Tears rolled down his cheek. He was filled with anger. “I’d kill you right here, right now.”

The Master kept his head lowered to the floor.

“I’m so sorry, Palm!” He said, “I never ordered anyone to harm you nor Tam, I’m really sorry it had gotten to this.” He sighed, “I know you’d think...”

“You and your greed, and your stupid dreams knows no boundaries, Jessy!” Palm said, “Look at what you’ve done! An image? A giant statue of you?” He giggled, “God, Jes! What have you done?”

“Wipe your tears, friend!” He said, “I told you I didn’t ask anyone to harm your wife. They explained to me that it was an accident.”

“My tears aren’t for Tam, even though I’m still in shock over her death.” He responded, “I am shedding tears for you, Jessy. For the things you have done. God is...”

“That’s enough!” He interposed, “I’ve heard enough of you talking to me about Him every time we meet! What has He ever done for me? You tell me!” He got up on his feet, “I was looked down upon; trampled, mocked, abused and wrongly accused in all the years I’ve walked this earth!” He turned to Palm, “He took away everything I’ve ever had, everything I’ve ever loved. You on the other hand, you lied to me, you made me go to Him, and for more than eleven years I’ve prayed and cried to him. I’ve even fasted and prayed for how long? And did He look my direction? Did He, Palm?” He walked towards Palm Carlos, “At least He should’ve pretended He heard my cry. No one was there for me.”

“I stood by you, Jessy.” Palm said, “God was always there for you and by your side all along, you know that. He was there at all time but you chose not to see it and just wasn’t patient enough.”

“Don’t talk to me like that, Palm!” He yelled, “We’re no longer those little choir boys. This-is-the-real-life! Wake up. You told me He never forsakes anyone...but where was He when I cried all night with the thick clouds of shame over my head? I was Jobless and homeless!”

“I gave you the keys to my apartment, Jes.” Palm responded, “Your pride couldn’t let you stay. I stood by you more than a friend should!”

“Been more than a friend wasn’t enough!” He yelled, his eyes glowed with anger, “And before you even say it; being more than a brother wouldn’t have been enough either. It was easy for you, ’cause He made you stronger.”

“What did you want?” Palm asked, in a calm tone, “What was it you sought for?”

There was a deaf silence in the cell.

"Just...all I wanted then was just to be able to eat the fruits of my labour." He said, "But as little as that was, He couldn't even help me out, Palm. Yet your God claimed He owns everything? Well, did He deny me those little things on purpose 'cause He hated me? What have I ever done wrong to Him before I came to this world?"

"You and I were virtually passing through the same ordeal, friend." Palm said, "You of all people should know that. I hid nothing from you, hell, I used to get mad at God too, sometimes, over how slow it seemed, and we'd make fun of how He'd make people to hang on in wait, but I remember this...at the end of the day we've always had something like a sign to hold on to. He gave us hope. He was busy making us strong but, we wanted an immediate response. But that's okay, because God understands that."

"Yeah, and then you started seeing things in your dreams about the future," he said, "and then everything changed. You chose your God over a friend."

"Nothing really changed," Palm said, "I was just disturbed by what I saw; I was shown this thing you've become, and I warned you about it. And yes, you're right...I'll choose Him over everything."

"He never wove me with the qualities you possess, buddy." Jessy said, "I struggled through, I did want to try His big racking game of waiting...but all that was delivered to me were empty promises, Palm. I yearned to wait but, the closer I get the further the things I wanted to lay my hands on fly away. That ain't fair, you know that."

"He loved you just as He does us all." Palm said, "He loved you even more, and was ever willing to give you the desires of your heart. But you wanted things your way. God doesn't work like that."

“Well, I guess that’s too late now.” Jessy said, “As you can see, not only did I find the final solution to my own needs but of the entire world at large. And a single drop of His help isn’t a part of it.”

“At what price, Jes?” Palm said, “How much time do you have left? You know that the deceiver will giveth thee a thing with one hand and taketh something far more precious with the other. You made a deal with the wrong master, Jessy.”

“What do you know?” Jessy yelled, “Look at the world; look at how far we’ve come. Look at the little time it took me to bring peace and subdue poverty.”

“I still don’t understand where an old farmer plants different varieties of crops in his field...” Palm said, “...and you go to him and asks for some, and he says, ‘My child, be patient. This is all yours, once it’s ripe for harvest by tomorrow, you can take as much as you want from my farm, even for your friends and neighbours. And if you can’t carry that much, tell them about my farm, let them all come and fetch as much as they need.’ Then a thief comes when the farmer goes to clear his barn, and the thief plugs an unripe fruit from the farmer’s field and gives to you and claims he owns it, and tells you that the farmer hates you that’s why he refuses to offer his produce to you, and the thief says, ‘serve me; bow before me, be my slave, and I shall give to you more of this kind of good fruit and all the things your flesh and yearns for.’”

“You seriously think I have time for your silly allegories, Palm?” He said, “I’ve got the world in my hands, these things you say, to my ears, are like chaff blown by the wind.”

“Do you have any idea what you’ve put the world into, Jes?” Palm said, “You’ve encountered God. You know He was more than willing to lift you up and deliver you from...”

“From what?” Jessy said, “He denied me everything! Well guess what?” He paused, “I have more than enough now, and there is none a man as I; from a-nobody to...not only a king, I am more than just a god, I am God!”

“Jessy!” Palm said, “What have gotten into you?”

“Yes! You heard me!” He yelled, “I give to the people whatever it is they want and never asked for anything in return; all my riches and wealth. All the precious stones and gold, and silver I mined from these planets I-share-with-everybody! Why won’t you tell me job well-done for once and acknowledge that I have tried?”

“The flesh is a servant to sin, Jessy. How long is the deceiver willing to let you rule the world before he takes over?” Palm said, “How much time do you think you have left?”

“Does it matter?” He replied, “The thing is I did what no man has done! Not even Jesus when He walked the earth. We have sank money into great research, our technology has improved beyond the dreams of our forefathers, go and see for yourself...the blind see, the cripple walk and the deaf hear. We don’t need to bruise our knees days and night on grounds filled with thorns, crying to some guy seated on some big mighty throne who is so consumed by Himself He thinks everything is alright with us down here, telling us to wait a little more all because things are alright with Him up there! How long shall we wait for a drop of blessing that our enemies would devour before it even reaches down to us?”

“You knew about this, we read it in the good book and we talked about this several times!” Palm said, “You’ve literally spat on God’s grace and mercy!”

“I’ve always faced the consequences of my own actions,” he said, “You’re right, but you see; when Jesus said he’d be betrayed by someone very close to Him, it never stopped Judas from turning his back against Christ, did it?” He giggled, “I don’t even know why you so much love Him, what has He ever done for you anyway? Where was He when your wife was killed? Where was God when you didn’t have enough money to have your mother treated over the dreaded disease that cost her her life?”

“My mother suffered, yes, but even in her pain she never stopped loving Him,” Palm said, “You were there when she prayed for the both of us the very morning before she passed away.”

They stood still for a while.

"God cannot afford to let you befoul the souls of His people," Palm added, "And for Tam, you took her away from me."

"You got that wrong, friend." He said, "God did, if He cared enough He could've stopped it from happening." He paused, "Come with me, Palm. Let's put the past behind us. Join me and let us rule the world together. You can have any woman you want, hell, you can sleep with as many women in a day as you want. I can have an image of you be made standing next to mine and the world will worship you. The one you call a deceiver will make you rich beyond your wildest dream. You think God gives a damn? Well, I've got news for you, buddy; in the end, He will walk away from all of these just like He always did from things that are imperfect, and create a new world. He will abandon this one. And all of this people. God has abandon the world, Palm. You and I know that."

"You sound nothing near the fragrance of truth, friend!" Palm said, "He made perfect that which isn't. God never turns his back away from those who consider themselves His own, and He never walks away from anyone who wishes to know Him. He's always with those who put their trust in Him, and just because we're passing through trials don't mean He doesn't care. It's call life, Jessy. When He walked the earth in flesh, He Himself suffered for our sake, to show us the way. A good shepherd always walks with his sheep; be it in the mud, dust, under a heavy downpour or the scorching sun. That's true love, Jes. And even the harshest of storms cannot stand against it. But He cannot dwell in the heart that harbours evil, He cannot walk the path of the wicked. This freedom you claim to have given the world..."

"Do what thou wilt!" He interjected, "That is the only law man should savour, total freedom. Everybody gets to be free! No strings, no rules, no guilt! The world is happier than it had ever been! Can't you see? Why be its enemy?"

"God showed me what will become of you, Jessy." Palm said, "In my dream I saw an unhatched egg fast falling from a tall tree,

around the roots of this tree lied rocks floating on hot lava. I then tried to save it but the Lord told me that it was too late, that the egg left its nest at will and rejected the warmth shelter of its mother therefore, it cannot be saved nor stopped from self-destruction....and the Lord told me that you, Jessy is that egg, and the nest signifies the protection and love He offered to you under His wings but you chose the world. He who bites the fruit watered by the world the world devours! I then asked the Lord about the people of the earth, and He told me that they still have a chance because you helped the deceiver to cozen them. However, as much as the entire people of the earth allowed themselves to be deceived out of *sheer* ignorance into worship of this graven image, the world will not go unpunished; the earth shall be ruled by the dark one for a while. The dark one who made you think he owned the earth will come soon, and he shall seek and snatch that which you've traded, and shall he take away also all these emptiness you've embraced...and he won't stop there, no...he shall first torment your soul even before he takes it, and because you have been instrumental to the opening of the portals that God himself kept closed for ages, a stool made of fire and brimstone placed next to the chamber of the ruler of darkness himself awaits you. And God commanded me to tell you that the woman you thought was your wife isn't really Mariah, Jessy. Because of the deal you've made, Mariah's soul was snatched by your new master and is now trapped in hades. Because she knew you were about to fall and never warned you. It is her body, yes, but whom you sleep with is no one other than the whore of Babylon herself; she is your handler, and when the time comes, the deceiver will take over your body and he and the harlot shall rule the people, then, and then the gates of hell shall be opened and its terror and the gruesomeness of the damned shall be poured upon the inhabitants of the earth, and they shall be tormented until the second coming of our Lord. You have no idea what you have incurred upon yourself and the world, Jessy."

Jessy stared at him.

"I offer peace to the world!" Jessy bragged.

Palm opened his mouth to speak but something held down his tongue. "Yes you did," Palm said, "Because the enemy of Adam's seeds has decided to withdraw his army, thereby creating this illusion you call peace. True peace can only be found in the bosom of the Lord. If the devil makes an offer to you in exchange for your soul, you should be able to know that your soul is far more valuable than whatever it is the devil is willing to let go off just to lay his hands on your soul." He sighed, "You offered the world a lifetime of agony under the devil's reign. Though the years of his reign shall be short but to the flesh it shall be like eternity, for the remaining years he'll rule after he takes over from you, earth shall become hell itself. I am your friend, and you know that I have never lied to you, and have no reason whatsoever to. And that thing I told you about the woman in your house, when you go home, while she sleeps; look under her ears. There shall be an opening like a branchia." Palm said, "She is not Mariah."

"You can't get inside my head anymore, Palm." He said, "This isn't like before, my brother. The people want you hanged, Palm. You openly opposed me the day we observed the first annual day of sacrifice. Yes, we were friends, but standing up to me is same as standing up against the new way which the people have embraced."

"You pleased them by putting me in prison," Palm said, "and I believe..."

"Yes, I did, my friend." He interjected, "And Tamara begged me to set you free, which I did, but we had an agreement. We agreed that you'll stop talking to people about Him," he giggled, "Few days later...somebody went about organising small gatherings and before you know it, Rel-Pol almost got overwhelmed. You can't blame me for sending the dogs after you. Because if I don't get rid of the shepherder, there will be too many flocks dropping faeces everywhere, my friend!"

"You had an agreement with Tam, not me," Palm said. "I do not fear you. I know who wants me dead, that woman in your house wants you to have me killed, I know."

"I ordered for you to be searched but not harmed," he said. "Mariah has nothing to do with this."

"That's not what the Lord told me," Palm said. "Go home, Jessy. Do as I've told you; look underneath her ears, maybe it might open your eyes."

"I've seen the devil, and may not really know him," he responded, "but Mariah, I know. So do not tell me anything about my woman."

"That's not her, Jes." Palm said, "She's the whore of..."

"Enough!" Jessy yelled as he turned and angrily grab hold of Palm by the neck, he held him up against the wall. His eyes turned red with anger. "Do not speak such of Mariah, you hear me?" He yelled, "She was there for me and by me all the way while you were busy trying to meddle in my affairs. So, shut up! Who are you trying to save anyway? God-never-cared!"

"He wanted the two of you to have a good relationship, but you were more interested in what He's got to offer to please your flesh than more of Him, which would delight your soul for eternity." Palm said, "He loved you...but you broke His heart. If you had stood your grounds, all other things would've been added to you, Jessy."

They both panted, and stared into each other's eyes.

"What happened to you, my friend?" Palm added as tears fell from his eyes and unto Jessy's cheek.

Jessy turned his face away and gently let Palm down.

"I am so...sorry," Jessy said.

"Jessy, you need to stop." Palm said, "Don't be an instrument that's being used to drown the people in an ocean of deceit."

"You're too soft to be called a man." He remarked, and slipped his hand in his pocket. "No wonder He was able to toy with you even though He made it clear He has given you free will." Jessy

paused, and sighed. "Don't say I didn't try; if you want to rot in here then be my guess. Goodbye, friend." He turned to walk away.

"Jessy..." Palm said, "You need to put an end to this madness."

Jessy ignored him and walked out of the cell.

Palm moved to the bed and went to his knees in tears.

"Father, I can't do this." He cried out, "If it is your will, strengthen me Lord."

As Jessy stepped out of the precinct, all the officers, bodyguards and the prisoners could tell he was upset. No one had ever seen him in such a state. He called the attention of the chief. Jessy wore his sunglasses and entered the limousine.

"No one should know about his location, not even my wife. Feed him well and have him properly looked after." He ordered, "Not a scratch on his skin. And I want the head of the man who shot his wife."

"Yes, your majesty." The chief said as he trembled, "It is my nephew. My late sister's son, Derick. It was an accident, your majesty. Exercise mercy upon him. I'm all he's got, that's why I let him join the force. To teach him something I felt would make him feel useful, his mother passed away when we weren't in good terms. Please forgive him, your majesty."

"Send him on exile." He said, "I want him away from the capital!"

"Consider it done, your majesty." The chief said in tears, "Thank you! Thank you, thank you very much, your majesty."

Jessy ordered the driver to drive off.

Chapter Four: A Familiar Face.

Jessy got home that night but looked disturbed. His wife, Mariah was not happy with his behaviour. He was quiet. After taking a shower, he sat down in the diner with his two hands on the table and stared at the meal placed before him.

"Is anything the matter, darling?" Mariah asked as she poured some red wine in his glass. As if she could read his mind, "I've never seen you this worried, would you like to talk about it, baby?" She sat on the chair next to him.

Jessy gently raised his head and gazed into her eyes, she smiled and turned her head the other way.

"Darling," Mariah said. "I am here for you." She placed her warm hand on top of his, and smiled in a concerned manner, "I want you to be happy. You deserve to be happy, they'll find him. Do not let..."

"I'll be in the study." He responded, "Got a speech to write for this meeting coming up with these African leaders, darling. Will join you in the bedroom once done." He got up, kissed her on the forehead and walked away.

"It's your favourite; lobster covered in egg on a bed of fried potatoes, darling." She said, "Are you sure about..."

"I'll be fine, dear." He responded.

"Okay." She said as she sighed heavily, "Love you!"

"Love you too." His voice faded.

Jessy took his time in the study, he waited until he was sure his wife was asleep. Around midnight, he walked into the bedroom and as usual, gently lied beside her. Mariah was on the bed; the right side of her face rested on the pillow. Jessy was behind her, he switched on the bedside lamp on his own side of the bed and

picked a novel that was kept next to the lamp. After a long thought, when he was sure she was dead asleep, he gently brushed her hair as though trying to kiss her, and with his thumb he cautiously lifted her left ear. As Mariah turned, Jessy kissed her, she then buried her head in his chest.

He could hear the sound of his heartbeat.

Jessy was terrified with the glimpse of what he had discovered. Palm was right.

"Goodnight, my king." She whispered.

"Goodnight, Mariah," he responded.

It took him a while to shut his eyes. Jessy's mind wandered in fright. He tried to remain calm so she wouldn't notice.

The following morning, Jessy dressed up and was about to rush out when Mariah woke up.

"Darling, where are you going?" She said, "What's going on lately, I don't understand you. Is everything okay, my love?"

Mariah got off the bed in her night gown and walked to him. "I told you not to worry too much," she wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. "The Rel-Pol will find him."

"There has been some disturbances at the temple, I think some resistance tried to destroy the altar according to the message I received."

"Let the police and the temple guards deal with it, you can't go about showing up every time something goes wrong, relax." She said as she bit her lower lip seductively, "But if you insist then let me get dressed and follow you."

"No, my love," he interjected. "I don't want you putting too much pressure on this sexy body. You just stay home okay, you've really tried, you know, been with me throughout the festival and all. You're a queen and should stay close to the throne." He kissed her on the forehead then her lips, "Hmm! Your breath, just like jasmine." He tapped her on the bum, "Your eyes, they always make me feel like my heart is riding on the fastest horse!"

“Aww!” She responded, “Alright cowboy...just one ride before you leave then.” She bit his left ear, pulled down her nighty and seductively walked backwards to the bed. She laid on her back and spread her legs to the delight of his sight, “Come, baby.”

Jessy stood there for a few seconds, then walked towards the bed.

“Take-off-your-shirt.” She commanded, “You naughty boy.”

He took his clothes off.

While they made love, she could tell his mind was far away from where his body was.

Jessy didn’t hesitate to leave as soon as they were done. He kissed her, got dressed once more and quickly walked out of the bedroom.

Jessy arrived at the precinct in his white limousine. As usual, he asked his driver to wait behind. On sighting him, the officers were about to leave as they did the previous day but he ordered them to stay. He collected the keys to Palm’s cell.

“How do I get her out of Mariah’s body?” He said.

“You can’t. That body must be destroyed before she vacates it.” Palm said as he stood to his feet.

Jessy could not look him in the eye.

“You were right.” Jessy said, “All along I thought...”

“She’s your handler.” Palm said, “You don’t make this kind of deal with the enemy of man’s soul and expect to be in control of everything. You are a great asset to the kingdom of darkness, Jessy. So they made sure the right person to manage you is placed right next to your heart. This thing you did is no joke, it’s not some dream you’d wake up from. I wish it was.”

“Mariah.” Jessy responded, “What...where is she, how can I get her back?”

“You can’t,” he answered, “She’s trapped on the other side.

“Is she going to hell?” He asked.

“I’m not the one to judge,” Palm said, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And all shall witness Him in His

glory. He'll pour His mercy upon the righteous and they shall be one with Him. When it's all said and done there won't be need for a human body, for it is like a tent. The children of God shall inhabit new heavenly bodies."

"She'll make it. I know." He said, "Do you think he'd ever...forgive me?"

Palm sighted, walked to Jessy and placed his hand on Jessy's shoulder then looked straight into his eyes.

"I understand," he said, "Palm, I now understand why she wanted you dead. You're the only one I trust; if I was the ship, you're that anchor that always secure me at the shore. Your words have always been a keystone to my heart. But I have failed you, and I've failed Him. It's now I see why He placed you in my life; to support me and also to hinder me from making the wrong decisions. He placed you in my life so I'd learn from you. You always put your trust in Him no matter what, even when death visited you, you called out to Him. I didn't take advantage of such knowledge, I refused to learn anything from it."

Palm hugged him. They held each other and cried together.

"I'm so sorry, Palm." He said as he sobbed, "I am sorry about Tamara, I know I can't bring her back or undo any of these foolish things I've done. I know it's unforgivable in His sight but, you have to find a way to forgive me. I'm sincerely sorry."

"Say no more, Jes." He said, "Say no more. I'll pray for you."

"Now, how do we kill this bitch?" Jessy said.

"I'll need any type of liquid once we get near her." He said.

"Let's go and pay the whore...in her own coins then!" Jessy said, "But first, I want to pull something to its knees!"

"You don't have to," he said.

"Do you know what I'm talking about?" Jessy asked.

"The statue." He said, "It won't fall, yes it was erected by men but shall not fall by their hands. It'll stay erected until the second coming of the Lord."

"But I'm done with this shit, Palm!" He said, "This thing ends today, friend."

"No, Jes." Palm said, "It won't just end like that."

"What do you mean?" Jessy asked.

"When you traded your soul for all of these, there were pages in the contract that'd stretch to ends of the earth you didn't pay attention to, and won't be able to even if given a thousand years to read." He said, "You're to lose your own life on the day of your awakening, which might be today. I am not sure. The deceiver himself will take charge of your body and continue to rule the people."

Jessy was quiet.

"And once you go against her, he'd come because she'll send a distress signal." Palm added.

"How do we stop her?" He asked.

"We can't, no one can!" Palm replied.

Jessy turned his back on Palm and walked towards the bar.

"So, if we kill her...he'll come?" Jessy asked.

"I think that's what might happen." He responded, "If we make an attempt to kill her, he'd come down, take over your body and rule the worlds with his queen by his side."

"I don't get it." He said.

"This is not about killing her or stopping the reign of the dark one in our realm in flesh." Palm said, "There's no stopping what is to come, it's only a matter of time."

"I cannot stop anything." Jessy said, "I can't stop them, the dark one can't be killed?"

"Not by any of us," he said. "That's Jehovah's work, not ours!"

Jessy sighed and placed his hands on his head.

"He will not forgive me, God?" He said, "I've deceived His children."

"Even some of the elect!" Palm said.

"I just want to see Mariah, again." He said, "I want to go and see my Mariah. I thought that woman was her, I was happy because I

thought I've finally made Mariah happy too. She came from a poor background just like me, you know. Will the Lord ever let me see his face once again?"

"You will see the Lord on the day of judgment," Palm said, "Where every knee shall bow before Him in praise. That day, even those who reject Him shall see Him in His glory and shall experience the pure love and peace in His sight. Then He shall separate His own from the rest. The gates of mercy shall be shut against those who refused to accept His son, Jesus."

"What about you, Palm?" He asked.

"I'll lead the people here on earth, those who refused to bow to the wicked one." He said, "For the dark one and his entire army shall torment the souls of men, as they prepare for the last battle with the angels and sons of God."

"You'll lead the resistance." He said.

"Something like that." Palm remarked.

"Your affliction prepared you for leadership," he said as he sighed. "Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go ask the whore to send the telegram. I've had enough of this flesh..." he looked at his hands as though they do not belong to him, "It feels heavy, this body...It's like my soul can't wait to fly out of it. I went about pretending to be happy all along, but all the while it's like the weight of the entire world is placed upon my shoulders. Now I understand why." He turned to Palm, "I'm ready, when you are."

Palm walked behind his friend, Jessy, as they stepped out of the precinct. The chief of Rel-Pol arrived in time to meet them.

"Your majesty, I didn't know you'd come this early." Said the chief, "Forgive me, I was..."

"His nephew was the one who shot Tamara," Jessy interjected, "I ordered him be sent on exile."

Palm stared at the chief then turned to Jessy.

"Pardon him." Palm said, "Let him go."

"You never change, do you?" Jessy responded, "See, this is why I never wanted to be like you."

Palm smiled.

"Your nephew is pardoned." Jessy said to the chief, "What do you have to say?"

The chief ran and knelt before Palm and kissed his feet. Palm moved back and told the man not to repeat such a thing.

Jessy and Palm entered the limousine and zoomed off.

"You didn't have to make him do that." Palm said.

"You have no idea how it feels like to command men!" Jessy said, "It feels good to order them around and have the whole world kissing your ass." He giggled, "I can't lie, I like it. I don't expect you to understand."

"I'm not judging." Palm said.

"Yeah, I know." He responded.

Jessy ordered the limousine driver to take them to the beach.

"You can't put the statue down, Jessy." Palm said, "It's being held by a legion!"

"I'm not trying to," he said. "Today's my birthday, our Mariah would want to throw a surprise party in my name, and I love the big entrance. I am a big man, friend. I should go down in a big way! I want to watch the sun go down for the last time."

The driver took them to the beach. Jessy pulled out a cigarette from his pocket and lit it. Palm's heart became heavy, tears rolled down from his eyes again. He cried for his friend, because Jessy didn't seem to be bothered about his fate.

Chapter Five: The Shadow cometh.

As the sun set, Jessy puffed his last cigarette. He and Palm watched the sun go down, they never said a word to each other.

“Let’s do this,” Jessy said as he flung the filter. He ordered the limousine driver to go home. Jessy got into the driver’s seat and Palm took the passenger’s side.

“I know you’re wondering; why does he act like he doesn’t care?” Jessy said, “I do care, but when it dawned on you that you really, really messed up?” He sighed, “You’d just want the shit be over! You have been a good friend, but as you can see, I have a mind of my own, buddy, and I so love to use it. Pride goeth before destruction, they say.”

“What’s driving you to do this, is it fear?” Palm asked out of curiosity, “Or is it what you’ve found out about her?”

“I don’t know.” He said, “I was thinking you’d tell me.” He turned and looked at Palm, “Maybe it’s because...I don’t know.”

Palm Carlos never said anything.

“Have you ever felt cheated...by yourself, Palm?” Jessy asked, “Was this predestined or I just messed up?”

“A great friend once told me that we all make choices; some appear right, some appear wrong.” Palm said, “The only thing that’s always right is when we own up and face the consequences of our own actions.”

Jessy giggled.

As they maneuvered through the city, they could see the giant statue as it glittered from afar.

On reaching his estate, Jessy pulled upfront and got out talking to himself. He opened the big golden doors to his mansion. With Palm carefully walking behind him.

“Surprise!!!” A crowd shouted.

The lights came on and Mariah made her way to hug him, “Happy birthday, my...” She paused as she sighted the man standing behind him. “Palm Carlos?”

“Uh huh!” Jessy responded, “They say if you want the job done right do it yourself, darling. So, I got out, searched, and guess who I’ve found? My one and only buddy, Palm!”

Mariah stared at Jessy.

“He should be put to dead!” She said.

“No, I think we should celebrate!” He responded.

Mariah made a scene as she began to rant, Jessy ignored her and walked to a table with many champagne flutes filled with red wine. He picked one glass and walked towards Palm.

“I am not sure about this...” Jessy said as he stared at Mariah. “But I am just tired of sleeping with a whore...you know” He handed the glass to Palm.

The people who came to celebrate with them were shocked by his statement. They began to murmur and grumble.

Palm placed his hand on top of the glass and whispered a prayer, the red wine turned colourless. On seeing what he did, Mariah then squealed and jumped into the air like a demon and flew to his direction, Palm quickly poured the liquid at her and she fell to the floor screaming.

“You descendant of mongrel!” She yelled, “I’ll get you! I’ll kill you all!” She cursed as she rolled on the floor.

They watched as she shape-shifted into a green fearsome creature; she had teeth so long they curved backward, with cloven hooves and large green hooded eyes, a snout, and an exposed arteries trailing along her tail. She flicked her tongue out and two tines of fork dispersed. She then squealed and raised her hand, the entire furniture left the floor and crash-landed as she oozed mucus out of pores along her body and repeatedly projectile a hot phlegm at them as she discharged a foul-smelling, poisonous substance from glands beneath her ears.

“You’ll pay for this!” She spoke in many tongues.

Jessy, who couldn’t stand the stench that saluted his nostril puked on the spot.

The hideous monster repeatedly stamped her hoof on the floor, like an earthquake, the entire house began to shake and chandeliers fell and smashed as they hit the floor. The people were terrified by the sight of her. She crossed her arms on her chest and began to chant as though talking backwards. A powerful force like the wind came out of her and swept Jessy and Palm off of their feet, and the entire people who came to celebrate the birthday were pinned to the wall. The wind was so powerful it crushed the skulls and bones of all the people pinned to the wall. She knelt down and hit the floor hard one more time.

“I beseeched thee, oh master!” She commanded, “Come forth! It is time to take your place!”

The entire roof of the mansion and all the rooms above the ground floor ripped off of the building and was soaked into a portal that appeared above the mansion. Palm and Jessy were still lying on the floor.

“Ha-Ha-ha!” She laughed, “You’ve rendered your service, and you have rendered it well, Ethnocal Jessy Thuck!”

Terrified by the size of the portal, Jessy and Palm looked up as many demons fell from the portal, and scattered away and into the city.

A heavy shower of blood fell upon them. The monster knelt down and began to lick the blood.

A dragon descended from the portal, majestically flapping its wings, drenched in blood like a new born from its mother’s womb. Jessy ran to one side and Palm ran to the other under the heavy pour of blood. The dragon landed and walked to her and she bowed in reverence. The dragon then turned to Jessy and Palm.

“Bow before me!” The mighty dragon said to them.

The terror in its eyes sent a shiver down their spine.

“Bow! And I shall spare thee!” It commanded as it stared down upon them.

The heavy downpour of blood from the portal ceased.

“Not to you!” Palm said, “I do not fear you!”

The dragon took a step towards him, it lifted its arm and delivered a blow, but a force field blocked its effort. A shield like a transparent dome appeared and covered Palm from its strike.

The wicked dragon tried to force itself through but its scales got burnt, it let a cry out and moved back. The dragon then turned to Jessy.

“Jessy!” The dragon hissed, “My boy...Job well-done! I’ll be more than glad to take it from here. You cannot trick the trickster, boy!”

The dragon lifted its right arm and a force like a whip came out and tied Jessy, and suspended him in the air. Jessy let a cry out as a mysterious fire sparked from his feet and blazed his entire garment. He cried in pain as his skin began to untie fast like a twisted fibre. His blood, bones and skull and all his organs were exposed and crushed. The power from the dragon suspended his remains in the air. The dragon wove the pieces of the body back again, blood poured upon it from the portal and Jessy’s naked body fell to the floor, in the pool of blood. The dragon transformed into a ball of fire and flew into Jessy’s body through his nostrils.

All these, Palm watched in fear. He looked around and there was no one but him and the hideous monster who was busy licking the blood on the floor. Few seconds later, he watched as Jessy’s body began to twitch. The deceiver had taken charge. Like a feather, the deceiver stood to his feet without any support from his hands, and walked to the hideous monster. She was still on her knees. He touched her and she transformed back to a human form, she was naked and her hair became darker and longer. She kissed his feet.

He turned and faced Palm then let a cry out as he ran naked towards him.

Palm flinched.

"Jesus!" Palm cried out.

The deceiver had broken the shield that protected Palm, he raised his hands to deliver a blow when all of a sudden, a bright white light appeared and snatched Palm from his presence.

Palm Carlos found himself falling down with his face facing the sky, he plunged in a body of water, and sank deep under water. He struggled against the current then swam to the bank, and laid down facing the sky as he panted. It was noon on that part of the world.

"Now what?" He whispered as he coughed out water.

"Now we wait for the dark one to show the earth and its inhabitants his true nature!" Said a deep voice.

Palm quickly stood to his feet because the voice he heard was unlike that of a man. And his instinct was right; it was a mighty lion. It roared and walked towards him.

"Do not be afraid, Palm, for I'm a friend." The lion said, "My friends and I have been commanded to stand by you until the time is right!"

"Your friends?" Palm responded.

The lion stopped and roared.

More lions and lionesses gallantly made their way out of the thick forest behind the first lion that appeared to him. They surrounded Palm, then they all bowed once as a sign of respect.

"Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high," the pride spoke in unison. "Blessed be His name, for He commanded the footsteps of His children and keep watch over all those who look up to Him. Blessed be the name of the Lord, for He is good. Glory to His name!"

They let a powerful roar all together one more time.

To be continued...

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Richard Shekari.

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Richard Shekari is a writer, singer, rapper and a poet from Abuja, Nigeria. A Humanitarian with the National Emergency Management Agency, Nigeria. He is an alumnus of the Federal University of Technology (ATBU) Architecture department Bauchi State, Nigeria.

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