

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

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Original Prose is brought to you by [Lurk and his friends](#)

The four of them awoke in a narrow stone cell.

They were unbound, and soon had explored the limits of the small room. They weren't much.

It was about eight feet by ten feet, there was a narrow stone bench running on one of the narrow sides, and the opposite wall was made of iron bars in which a metal door was placed.

Lurk tried to pick the lock, then gave up in frustration.

Abraham was struck by a thought and turned to Rushell. "Could you try to magic the door open?" he asked.

Rushell shook his head. "I tried, but cannot perform magic here: I think she must have constructed this cell in such a way that spells cannot be cast from within."

"There must be some way to escape," Heather said.

"What do you think this is, a fairy tale?" Lurk scoffed. "You think I'm gonna just lean against the wall, and somehow push on the exact right place to hit some secret switch?" he said, folding his arms and leaning against the wall. Lurk was so intent on what he was saying, he didn't notice a small stone that moved slightly under his weight.

"And then, some hole is going to open in the solid stone wall," Lurk said, while a hole opened in the stone wall right beside him. "And if that actually happened," Lurk went on, completely oblivious to what was going on right next to him. "I suppose you'd expect me to go right on talking, completely oblivious to what was going on right next to me!"

"Lurk?" Rushell said, trying to get his attention.

"Don't interrupt me when I'm talking at you!" Lurk snapped. "Where was I? Yeah, that kind of thing happens all the time in fairy tales, but this is real life!"

"Lurk!" Abraham said.

"That sort of thing does not happen in real life!" Lurk bulldozed on. "You and me will go through our whole lives, and never see anything like that!"

"Lurk!" Heather barked.

"Oh shut up, I'm talking here!"

Abraham, Rushell and Heather exchanged a glance, then turned and walked right past Lurk into the secret passage

"Where you goin'?" Lurk exclaimed, then did a double-take. "What- hey, wait for me!"

As soon as he was through, the secret door shut, leaving no sign that the prisoners had ever been there.

THE LEGEND OF ALEX FLYNN; CHAPTER 1

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This little story of ours, Charlotte, begins with a young boy whom goes by the name of Alex Flynn; Alex Flynn is just your average lad with scruffy black hair and hazel eyes, an average lad who's not too skinny but also not too thick-skinned. He's the second son of two loving and hard-working parents alongside three different siblings of varied aspirations. Perfectly and utterly normal, in other words...

But Alex Flynn also has the common problem that tends to plague most young minds in which he has absolutely no idea what to do with the rest of his life. Unlike his other high-achieving siblings, he has no clear or bright future, no laid-out plans, no high ambitions, not even dreams...

All of that changed however, when Alex closed his eyes one day and realized he could not wake up, well, not as easily as he used to...

What do you mean by that? He couldn't wake up as easily as he used to? Did- Did he- I mean... Did he pass out or something?

Well, not necessarily so... I think it would be much better and far easier if I simply tell the story already instead of mucking about with nonsensical explanations.

Okay then... I guess- I guess I'm all ears...

Wonderful! So let us begin the tale of Alexander Flynn by delving into the very mind and eyes of the titular young man...

It all began with a whisper, as quiet as the slumbering night itself...

“Awake...”

“Huh?” I slowly opened my weary eyes, completely unsure of what was going on, only to be greeted by the confusing sight of nothing but complete darkness. “What? What the-? Where- Where am I?”

“What's going on? Where the hell am I?” I tried to move my head, my body, my arms, anything I could remotely think of, but it was all ultimately in vain as I felt like I wasn't going anywhere in particular, no matter how hard I struggled to move.

There was not a single sound, not a single object to be seen or heard except the blinding darkness around me. I closed my eyes out of the false hope that it could somehow make everything normal again, but I quickly realized it made absolutely no difference at all. The deafening silence around me painfully continued to the point, I could even hear the sound of my very own heartbeats, repeatedly drumming along in fear and uncertainty.

I swallowed my throat, a sense of nervousness coursing throughout my entire body as I do so. I struggled to calm myself down but alas, it was in vain as my body breaks out in a cold and painful sweat.

I couldn't take this anymore... I just can't... WHAT IS GOING ON?!

ALEXANDER FLYNN

“What the hell was that?” I hastily opened my eyes out of shock. A daunting voice suddenly echoed throughout the blinding darkness, calling out for me by name.

LISTEN TO ME, ALEX FLYNN.

LET IT BE KNOWN.

I AM NOW A PART OF YOU.

AND YOU ARE NOW ME.

The echoing voice sounded like it was right inside my head but also at the same time, strangely somewhere very far away from me. It didn't make any sense...

“What- What did you just said? I don't understand what you're- Just- Just- Who... Who are you?!” I tried to beg and beg for any kind of answers but there was not a single response from the deafening voice.

Instead, it continues to spit riddles at me as if I wasn't even here...

TOGETHER, ALEX FLYNN, WE SHALL OPEN THE GATE WHEN THE FINAL HOUR IS UPON US AND WE WILL SUFFER FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD.

“What in the world are you talking about? Who the hell are you?!” My mind was starting to feel incredibly light-headed and numb as I tried to make sense of what the voice was trying to say.

The voice continued to flood my head with words of complete nonsense...

HEED MY WORDS:

AS WE SCREAMED AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD...

AT THE SUPPOSED END OF ALL TIME...

SURROUNDED BY NOTHING BUT THE VOID OF DARKNESS BEFORE US...

KNOW THIS: ALL OF US SHALL SUFFER, ALEX FLYNN. THERE IS NO DENYING THIS SIMPLE FACT...

“What are you talking about? What the hell are you talking about?!” I couldn't make any sense of what it was trying to say, my weak voice sounded pale in comparison to the overwhelming voice inside my head.

BUT YOU, ALEX FLYNN... YOU NEED TO HOLD ON TO THE SLIVER OF HOPE YOU HAVE LEFT. YOU NEED TO REMEMBER WHY YOU STILL WISH TO EXIST. YOU NEED TO REMEMBER WHY YOU ARE STILL STANDING.

THIS IS THEN, WITH MUCH SPITEFUL REGRET, WHY I HAVE CHOSEN YOU AS THE SHIELD, AS THE DEFENDER, AS THE PROTECTOR, AS THE GUARDIAN...

YOU SHALL BEAR THE WEIGHT OF A VANGUARD, TO FACE THE CURSE OF LIFE AND DEATH, TO USHER IN AND WITNESS THE FINAL HOUR AT THE APPOINTED TIME.

I AM SORRY...

I couldn't understand a single bloody thing of what the voice was trying to say, nor was I actually trying to do so. I simply closed my eyes as tightly as I possibly could, struggling to tell myself that this wasn't real. This was all just a dream, Alex, but... I can't- I can't remember the last thing I did before- all of this. I can't remember anything...

BE PREPARED, ALEX, SHIELD OF THE VANGUARD...

"Wait, wait, wait, you are not making any bloody sense! What is going on right now? WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?" I desperately pleaded for an answer as my weak heart was repeatedly drumming along; my tired breaths and weak gasps were simply struggling to catch up.

No matter how much I begged, it was getting clear that my desperate pleas were obviously falling on deaf ears, if it had any ears to begin with...

AWAKE, ALEX... YOU HAVE FINALLY BEEN AWAKENED...

As soon as those few words echoed inside my head, I could feel the blinding darkness surrounding me suddenly grew lighter. Out of nowhere, my body felt incredibly heavy like something from somewhere below, if there is even a place down there, was pulling me down with such unimaginable strength. I tried to scream and resist as best as I could but something was preventing me from doing anything remotely useful as my body simply felt like it was frozen stiff. I couldn't even lift a bloody finger, damn it! No matter how much I tried to deny it, I knew I was completely and utterly helpless as it feels like the entire world around me kept... falling...

And falling...

And falling...

"Wake up, Alex."

And falling...

"Alex, wake up!"

And falling...

"Alex Flynn?"

When will it stop?

"I say, Mr. Alexander J. Flynn, do wake up right this instant!"

The abrupt sound of a wooden cane rapping against the rough plastic table suddenly flooded my ears with a deafening and thunderous boom, giving me such a massive shock

that it immediately made me shot upwards directly back into the slump of my wooden chair without even stopping a beat. My heart was pounding non-stop as I quickly blinked my eyes repeatedly; I was staring on wide eyed, trying to make sense of what could possibly just happened to me, only to be amazed and surprised at the wrinkly sight of my homeroom teacher, Miss Lopez, standing before me in all her old-fashioned glory and with her skinny arms crossed as her famous wooden cane was firmly in hand and a stern scowl plastered all over her prunish head.

I quickly realized what was going on and a sinking kind of feeling immediately erupted from my guts in response...

“Sleeping in class yet again, Mr. Alexander Flynn?” Her snivelling voice echoed throughout my ears as I began to notice everyone else in the dreary and dull class was simply staring directly at me, hiding their snickers and sly smiles away from plain sight.

“Do you know what would happen if you were to continue falling asleep in class, Mr. Flynn?” Miss Lopez was slowly raising her voice ever so slightly, signalling the start of one of her speeches again. Oh boy! Can’t wait for it...

“Not only is it disrespectful to the teacher but to the other students who are actually trying to learn something that they know will benefit them sometime in the distant future...” She goes on and on, the sounds of nearby people chuckling in the distance were the only thing I could hear.

This is one of the main reasons why I don’t like taking a seat in the middle of the entire freaking class...

I simply turned my head downwards and tried to ignore the sight of the surrounding faces, the teacher’s wise words continued to drown my ears without a sign of stopping...

Darn it, I can’t believe I fell asleep in class again. Why the hell did I have to go and do that? Even when I promised my parents that I wouldn’t do it again too, just to make matters worse... This just keeps getting better and better, isn’t it? Why does this always happen to me? I can’t really explain why I’m like this either but... Maybe it’s because I have very poor concentration skills, or maybe I got lulled into sleeping because of the dull atmosphere that is the dullish grey walls of the classroom. Maybe it’s the teacher’s dreary ways of teaching or maybe it’s just really my fault... Being realistic though, I guess the true main problem is because I’ve been having more and more trouble sleeping lately. For the past few days, it’s just that I keep having these strange dreams; the strange thing is... I think I’m noticing that they were a certain- I don’t know, some kind of similarity to each other.

It all began with me somehow waking up in complete and utter darkness, surrounded by the wholesome nothingness for possibly miles. And then, slowly but surely, I would start hearing some kind of voice, a very weak voice that sounds like it comes from somewhere inside my head but also deep in the blinding darkness. In the beginning when I started having these bogus dreams, the voice would be extremely muffled and barely comprehensible. But lately, I think... I think the weird freaky voice is actually starting to be more and more understandable and a little less nonsensically whacky. Still, the only

thing I could make any sense, the only thing I could still remember from the weird voice in my head was, “Awake...”

I have absolutely no idea what that actually means but if my head was trying to wake me up, all I ever wished was that it would do a much better job for it before the eloquent Miss Lopez had noticed me... It's would certainly save everyone a lot more time and-

“Alexander Flynn!” A sudden piercing voice and a wooden cane loudly rapping itself onto the table before me caused me to immediately jump on my own seat yet again, much to the chuckles of some of my fellow classmates.

I quickly looked up from my chair only to see the esteemed Miss. Lopez standing above me; her eyes were seemingly glistening with rage as she gazed directly into my soul, her circular spectacles did nothing to hide the vast quantities of annoyed rage lurking somewhere behind those two windows of the soul. I'm sorry but I couldn't keep my eyes off her nostrils as they kept flaring up repeatedly with raging anger as if they were on a hateful pattern or something, it's getting to the point that it was highly distracting.

“When you are being punished and lectured for your own mistakes, young boy, do try to at least pay attention so you could learn from them and prevent it further in your future!” She increased the tone of her voice when she knew I wasn't exactly paying attention to her.

“Uh, sorry...” I meekly muttered as I stifled a weak sigh, glancing briefly at the bright yellow frilly dress she was wearing that seemed to have originated from the old era of the American Revolution. Other than the fact it was such a stark contrast compared to her awesomely wonderful personality, her wrinkly and contorted expressions coupled alongside her silver mantel of hair around her head has granted her the nickname, the ‘Iron Witch’, by some of the other students in school.

“This is your second time already in this week alone, Mr. Flynn, not counting the rest of the month...” She glared directly at me, continuing to lecture me as she defiantly waved her wooden cane around in the air, clearly ignoring my admittedly lame apology as she brandished her favourite weapon of choice.

“Why do you seek to ignore my multiple warnings, Mr. Flynn? I tried to give you a chance considering you are still new to this esteemed school of ours but why do you continue to disrespect me in my own class and also to the other students by slumbering in your own little dream world?” The various multitudes of wrinkles on her prunish face seemed to scrounge up whenever she frowns and angrily scowls. I'm surprised that she's still breathing. I thought mummies couldn't live out in the open for this long...

I simply kept to myself as I turned my gaze away from Miss Lopez when she's eventually too busy going on and on with her own lecture as loudly as she possibly could. She obviously liked the sound and tone of her very own voice as she even began walking to the front of the dull classroom, clearly thinking that she could put a warning or two about my bad behaviour for the rest of the class and using me as a fine example of what happens if we do not pay our utmost attention to school.

It's true though... I don't even know what we are doing right now... For a while, I even

forgot what class this is.

Looking at the blackboard behind the teacher though, still riddled with various equations and numbers, it wasn't that long though before I remembered it was Maths at the current moment. It was also the final period for the entire day so I think nobody here really mind if we're just wasting the final moments of the class by another reliable lecture because of some trivial wrong-doing. No one really likes Maths... Well, I guess that was an exaggeration. I'm sure at least someone in this dull class of mine absolutely loves the subject. Heck, I, myself, used to like the subject because it was the only thing I was partially good at besides Science and English, but when they started adding alphabets to the numbers... I somehow just lost sense of it all and my grades were quite obvious of that fact. No matter how hard I tried to actually learn more and more about the subject, I just couldn't do it anymore...

I guess I really am hopeless, after all... Ha...

Good for nothing, yet again...



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RAKUEN'S DUSK II

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Hello fellow readers! As you can see, this is the next part in Dusk's tale. Now, I know it is shorter than the last, at least, I think it is, but I needed an intermediary piece for my next one, which should be a biggie! As always, you can find my DeviantART here: <http://thevictoriouswolf.deviantart.com/> I was abstractly considering sending in some more pieces, but I think I shall wait until I get some way into Rakuen, first. Anyway, enjoy!

Time... Time is a detail, the greatest of all. It is a warning, an order. Yet, at the same time, it is an invitation, an invitation to let any being try their luck. Be it for glory, riches, to have a future, or simply to relieve a chronic state of boredom, time beckons all. She isn't inherently an evil mistress, as she is more stubborn, though genocide does seem to be a favourite pastime, killing all those unworthy, while conspiring with her lovers, destiny and fate, to propel the seemingly ordinary into sonnet and tale and legend.

Time had always been elusive for him. either he would fall to a syndrome of frivolous, time wasting drivel, or, on the rare few days he would 'Plan', something unexpected, unpredictable, and unstoppable would halt his already slow progress towards... towards some kind of development. At least, that was where he hoped this would lead. Something new... Something unfounded. Something wondrous and fun, that gave joy to his heart. Joy. Hah! He really had been born in the wrong Millennium, if that was what he was hoping for these days.

Still. The ideas... they stuck, stacked, stayed. They left an imprint in his brain, one that would refuse to leave or dissipate. They left images, too, of rolling plains, perfected landscapes basking in the full moon, enjoying some kind of company. Perhaps a pack... That would be nice. Pack life. He should try it sometime. Or had he already done so? He couldn't remember. There was something about this place... its peacefulness... it... it made one want to forget. Not that he had any quarrel whatsoever with that.

Yet still the ideas remained.

Though it had seemed, to him, like roughly 4.2 lifetimes, it had been but 3 hours. Since the start of his elongated mental counting, he had not budged. He had contemplated, however, that he should budge, but only now did his body sneakily sneak towards the

edge of the mattress, without the knowledge of his mind. Oh, his body *loved* playing tricks with his mind. Of course, his mind was very mischievous, too.

Of course, his body had succeeded, and gravity ensued. As did surprised yelping from his swiftly opened maw, as did bangs on the roughened floor. Rising slowly, he noticed the lack of light in the room. It must've been about midday, because light still hung like a fog outside, yet none entered the shack. Obviously, the sun was above the shack. He let out a large huff of breath, which, if anyone was still alive out there, must've seemed like a sigh, or some such. His ever distant mind now began to wander, further now. Was it possible, that he could be the last wolf living on this dead rock? Surely he must be now; he hadn't seen anything in an age. He barely survived on the odd rabbit, if he was lucky, a corpse, or a dear. Surely, no other of his kin could be out there.

Suddenly, destiny intertwined her meddling fingers, into boring affairs, like a child plays with food. Fate brought the gust of wind that carried the scent of something new, it smelled sour. He could not help himself- he yapped gleefully, happy for the chance at meeting another wolf.

It would only be a matter of time now.

A STORY OF A CLOWN AND THE LACK OF A TITLE #3

Darren James Mamis
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"Your friend is very lucky." Doctor Sanjuan explained, "The force of the pole hitting his ankle should have fractured it irreparably."

"So, how is he?" Catherine asked worriedly.

"He'll walk again, but not for five weeks."

"But, doctor," Harry protested, "the show must go on. I have to perform."

"You'll have to find a way to perform sitting down, because if you put any pressure on your ankle, it will break and you'll have to use crutches for the rest of your life."

"Aye, I understand."

I stayed with Harry and Catherine that night in the hospital while the others stayed behind and finished setting up. Harry was not the type to be easily distracted, which made it unusual for him to let his attention slip the way it did. Perhaps it was just age dulling his senses, but I knew something was bothering him, something deeply personal, and I was determined to find out what it was. When Catherine went out relieve herself, I found the opportunity to bring up the topic.

"You really are getting old, Harry. Maybe it's time to hang up the bulbous shoes." I knew that all I had to do was poke at his pride and I would get him to talk.

"I'm thirty-seven years young, m'boy. Biologically, I'm supposed to be in my prime."

"Well, if it isn't senility, what happened back there?"

"I was distracted by natural beauty."

Harry looked away from me. If I didn't know him better, I would have accepted that answer. I decided to humor the humorist.

"Aye, the sunset was beautiful. But maybe you were talking about Catherine."

"Catherine and I haven't been lovers for years, m'boy."

"The love may be gone, but her curves are still in place."

"You got me there. Those curves kept me going from dusk till dawn. I lost a lot of sleep because of those curves."

"Okay, I get it." I began to regret opening the topic.

"I also lost a lot of fluids because of those curves."

"I get it, Harry."

"because I was sweating."

"I know. You don't have to—"

"because we had a lot of sex."

If there was ever a time that I wished to follow in the steps of van Gogh and cut off my ears, it would have been at that time. I saw Catherine as my mother figure; it made me a little more than queasy to think of her in a sexual light.

"Enough jokes, Harry." I looked at him intently, making it clear that I had become hell bent on knowing the truth. "I want a serious answer. What happened?"

"Do you really want to know, m'boy?"

"Aye."

"Quid pro quo, then."

"What do you want?" Harry had a skill for making me regret trying to get things from him. I could already tell what he was going to ask of me. My regret reached the pinnacle of lamentation.

"Take my place at the show tomorrow night."

"Aren't there any other offers?"

"Well, you could get off my back and let the matter rest."

"I'll take the offer. Now, tell me what was on your mind."

"Ah-ah, let me explain what you have to do tomorrow first."

Harry began explaining the routine. The scenario would be that Harry, now played by me, was a drunkard who works with his wife, Catherine, and brothers-in-law, Beezo and Punchinello, at a restaurant. Harry came home late one night to an infuriated Catherine who brought Beezo and Punchinello to teach me a much needed lesson. Drunkenly paralytic, I would dodge the utensils Catherine threw at him by losing my balance and falling over. I would then get back up only to be knocked down again by either of the brothers-in-law hitting me with a metal pan. The act would conclude with me getting hit with a spoon and falling over, thus ducking out of both Beezo and Punchinello's swings leaving the two Augustes to knock each other unconscious followed by myself promptly passing out. All of this would be highlighted by a lone Damian on his trumpet.

"Did you get all of that?" He asked me, fully prepared to repeat all of it.

"Aye-aye. Now, your end of the bargain."

"Of course. You see, m'boy—"

The clicking of the door mechanism as it unlocked interrupted his speech, and my satiation. Catherine had come back and I knew I could not make Harry continue his story in front of her, being the gossip that she is.

"It's past your bed time." She said to both of us. "You should get some rest."

"Aye-aye" Harry responded, immediately closed his eyes and went to sleep. I then realized that he was stalling the entire time he explained to me. Well played.

I woke up early the next morning practicing. I knew I had no hope of matching the performance Harry could have put on, but I was determined to do my best. I'd never been drunk before, but I had seen enough drunkards at the shows to know how they functioned. What I needed to do was fall properly. I could fall and get back up fairly quickly, but I could not sell the hit as comically as I wanted to. I stopped practicing after it took me ten minutes to get back up.

I rehearsed with Beezo and Punchinello for a small portion of the afternoon, and as if I did not have enough to think about, they brought up that I still lacked a name. Then, I wondered. Did it even matter? I would be costume; no one would be able to tell because most people have never seen us. I could go under Harry's name and no one would be the wiser. Besides, they advertised Harry the Harlequin.

And so the show began.

Our act would be the show's closer, so I was not immediately anxious. I even enjoyed watching Klein get mauled by Grayson and then come out as the shirtless barbarian who then slayed the beast with his bare hands. I felt the first shiver down my spine when Bea's horse jumped through three flaming hoops. The crowd's cheers slowly began sounding savage, vicious. In my eyes, the peaceful, jovial people of Vidrerres turn into the hordes of hell itself. They screamed for entertainment, for pain. They howled to see me beaten to a pulp – by fat bakers.

The rest of the show flew by me. I failed to notice it as I was busy struggling against hyperventilation and panic attack. When it was my cue to stumble into the middle of the ring, I did not even need to act paralytic. I was intoxicated from nervousness. I was suddenly thankful for not having any sensible lines to say as I drove and stammered through every word I said in a perverse massacre of all language. I was so nervous that the first time I fell was actually out of dread, but the crowd overlooked it.

Doctors say that the perception of time is slowed in high-stress situations, and that those in high-stress situations are able to take in more information and data in a shorter amount of time. This is all due to the wonderful hormone known as Epinephrine, commonly known as adrenaline. This wonderful hormone allowed me to perceive the following things in the half second it took me to fall to the ground: the lights became brighter and hotter, the crowd became louder and more overwhelming, three women from the crowd were worried, likely because they knew I was not acting, five young boys and three young girls were whining about the heat, six of their parents struggled to tolerate the fretting, and on top of all that, I had a vision.

It was there, as if by some divine clarity, the vision of a goddess appeared to me as I fell past Beezo toward the unforgiving ground. I saw her standing at the entrance of the tent, the pale skin on her face illuminated by a thin smile, framed by heavenly Auburn hair. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and I hoped and prayed that I was the reason for that smile on her face. Then, I hit the ground.

I hit the ground harder than I had ever hit the ground before because I had fallen twice in one go. I had fallen from the crippling anxiety and from the arrow Cupid had shot through my right atrium. I had fallen in love. I heard the crowd cheer as the knife passed over me, making a faint thud against Beezo's frying pan. I got back up and for a second I deluded myself into thinking they were telling me to go to her. It was a wonderful thing, the world cheering me on as I looked for my goddess. The first blow from Punchinello and his frying pan brought me back to my senses.

"Mangiarlo, cazzo!" Punchinello shouted at me.

I fell to the ground and sprang up like, well, a spring. Beezo's frying pan sent me flying to the left. I saw her walking towards a woman, her mother perhaps. She grew lovelier with every sight I saw of her. Another fork passed over me.

"Alzarsi, di merda!" Beezo demanded so he could whack me again. I complied, but it was Punchinello who brought his pan to my cranium.

A fork passed over me; this time I was back to reality. The loud pang the knife made against the frying pan sounded like a gong summoning me to close the show. I got up one last time to finish the act. The crowd's crescendo of laughter was reaching its peak. "Hit him at the same time, imbecilli!" Catherine barked at the Augustes. Beezo and Punchinello wound up their swings. I looked around once more, looking for her. I couldn't see her.

The spoon hit me with a tremendous amount of force. I barely had to act like I was falling backwards. Beezo and Punchinello slammed their pans into each other's heads and the three of us were falling down. I turned to my left as I fell. There she was, and then there was the ground. And then there were two frying pans that landed on my face.

I was exhausted and in pain. Suddenly, the crowd's deafening laughter turned into a thunderous applause. I stood up with Beezo and Punchinello. We greeted the applause with Catherine. I looked around and I saw her standing and clapping. I was rejuvenated. I was exhilarated – intoxicated. I loved it. I wanted more of it.

The world suddenly had a new clown. Sure, his first performance was the quintessence of a fluke and the only thing he proved was that he could take a hit, but a fire burned in his heart. The fire burned with the intense desire to make people laugh. He's been training all his life and he knows he has the skills. The only thing he lacked was a name. And he had two days to come up with it.

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RESCUE OF IMMORTALITY

Haley Alden
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Hello my darlings!!

Alright so Cyon is awesome! I love him! Next week everyone will be going to the games. Well the king, knights, and Casidina. They will probably cause some serious trouble, because that's just what they do. I'm excited to write that.

Again as historically accurate as possible, so lets just pretend it's correct.

As always thanks to my editor <http://bewarethezombies.deviantart.com/>
Check me out on deviantart and tell me what you thought! <http://pen-pen1996.deviantart.com/#>

Casidina and Cyon are mine!

Olympia 779 BC

Casidina sat with her black hair piled in knots and braids held in place with wax. In front of her sat a king and a metal bowl of fruit. Guards stood around her only allowing her to live because the king had been intrigued. She had suddenly appeared not threatening the king but claiming to offer some help. She sipped the thick heavy wine that had been diluted by a bit of water out of a silver cup. The king swirled his own wine and studied Casidina. She smiled at the man simply. Civil wars were breaking out everywhere in the city-states making the guards apprehensive and a bit anxious at her every move. Cyon, Casidina's guard, was getting jumpier and tenser with every twitch and jerk of the kings men.

Casidina grinned at the king and set down her glass. "Now your majesty, I have a proposal for you." She said leaning back on her seat just enough to project her nonchalant attitude.

"I was under the impression that is why you are here. But first what makes you think you have the ability to just talk to a king without even asking first." He said as a slave offered him another plate of bread. The king casually grabbed a loaf of bread from the platter held before him. He tore the bread and steam escaped dancing in wisps through the air.

"I, myself, am a ruler. As basic logic reveals you being a king does not affect me, a princess. That is why I have the ability to just talk to you without being asked first."

Casidina said still grinning at the man. She could tell that everyone behind her had gone stiff. Cyon had advised her beforehand not to say anything about being a princess. He hadn't wanted to create a target; Casidina suspected that walking in had already placed the target before she even opened her mouth. She didn't understand why the other men had felt so threatened by the fact she was a ruler. A common woman could have been trained while a ruler would have focused on other things less threatening than combat.

"I see. Where do you come from?" The king asked her still chewing the warm bread.

"A far away land that has yet to be discovered by your people." She said sipping her water trying to hide her smirk.

"We could begin to trade with your land." He offered, his own smirk proud on his face.

"Oh, I don't think we'll be doing that. That was not what I came here to discuss with you." Casidina said smiling politely at the man.

"Then what did you come here to discuss with me?" He asked.

"You and the neighboring city-states have been in civil war for quite a while now." He nodded at this, and she continued. "I'm sure that this is draining to both your finances and your people. The best way to get to peace, I suggest a game." She continued.

"A game?" He asked curiously as well as suspiciously.

"If you were to have an athletic game, dedicated to the gods of course, and made the area a safe zone where no weapons could enter then you would be making a peace offering without surrendering your pride." Casidina explained simply.

"What would you gain from something such as this?" The man asked sounding suspicious of her

"Life is too short fighting your neighbors I believe. I think that if the city states came together very great things could come from this place." Casidina said in a relaxed tone.

"I will speak to my advisors about this. Thank you." The man said making a shooing motion with his hand. Casidina rose from her seat and made to leave. One of the guards grabbed Casidina's arm when she tried to pass. Cyon immediately unsheathed the sword on his hip and pointed it at the man holding Casidina. "Why are you trying to leave?" The king asked. "As you pointed out to me, you are of royal blood as well, making you a suitable match for me." Casidina stared at the pretentious king studying his seriousness. She looked at Cyon and shook her head slightly signaling him to leave. "Good choice, my love." She jerked her arm out of the man's and was led to a room outfitted with a small bed and chest of dresses.

“This is where you will be staying until you and the king marry.” He said then closed the door. Casidina paced the small room getting a feel for the slice of marble that it was situated on. She stood next to the window looking out over the city. It was white marble structures with people in white roaming the streets. It was all very monochromatic in her opinion, however so was her town when she thought about it. She ate dinner with king begin surrounded by slaves and silver bowls of food. She ate very little while being interrogated about her home.

Soon night fell covering the city in a dark blanket to comfort their sleep. Casidina was still awake and sitting next to the window. Cyon found her window and helped her get out. They walked silently towards the back wall where a rope was waiting for them to climb. However two guards found the rope first. Cyon unsheathed his sword and handed a knife to Casidina.

“Take this” he said handing her the iron blade, “if they attack you while I’m busy, fight back. And it probably wouldn’t hurt to scream.” She took the knife and got behind him in the dark. Cyon snuck up on one of the guards and sheared his head off. The man’s quizzical expression flew through the air as the other man yelled for back up. The sound of men running came quickly to their ears as Cyon fought with the man. Metal clashed and the sound echoed across the yard. More men came running and immediately tried to get Casidina away from the scene. She slashed randomly and screamed loud and high pitched.

“Okay I lied, don’t scream.” Cyon said irritated.

“Well, what am I supposed to do?” Casidina asked back just as irritated. The guards were surrounding her and she could only slash randomly for so long before one found an opening.

“Well I suggest not being kidnapped by kings.” Cyon said back sarcastically. He sidestepped the man who was trying to impale him with a sword. The man continued forward and instead stabbed one of the men fighting Casidina. Cyon turned and stabbed the man he had been fighting in the back and quickly retracted the blood covered from the man and sliced at the next man in line.

“I don’t think that plan is going so well.” Casidina said through narrowed eyes. What Cyon thought was the entire group, turned to fight him who was returning their blows to them with ease. The men were falling quickly. Fear was infecting their brains and not much was left. While Cyon was preoccupied fighting the last man another guard grabbed Casidina who reflexively stabbed the blade into the man’s heart. Both men fell with very little time between their thuds.

“Not too bad for your first time with a knife.” Cyon said sounding impressed while

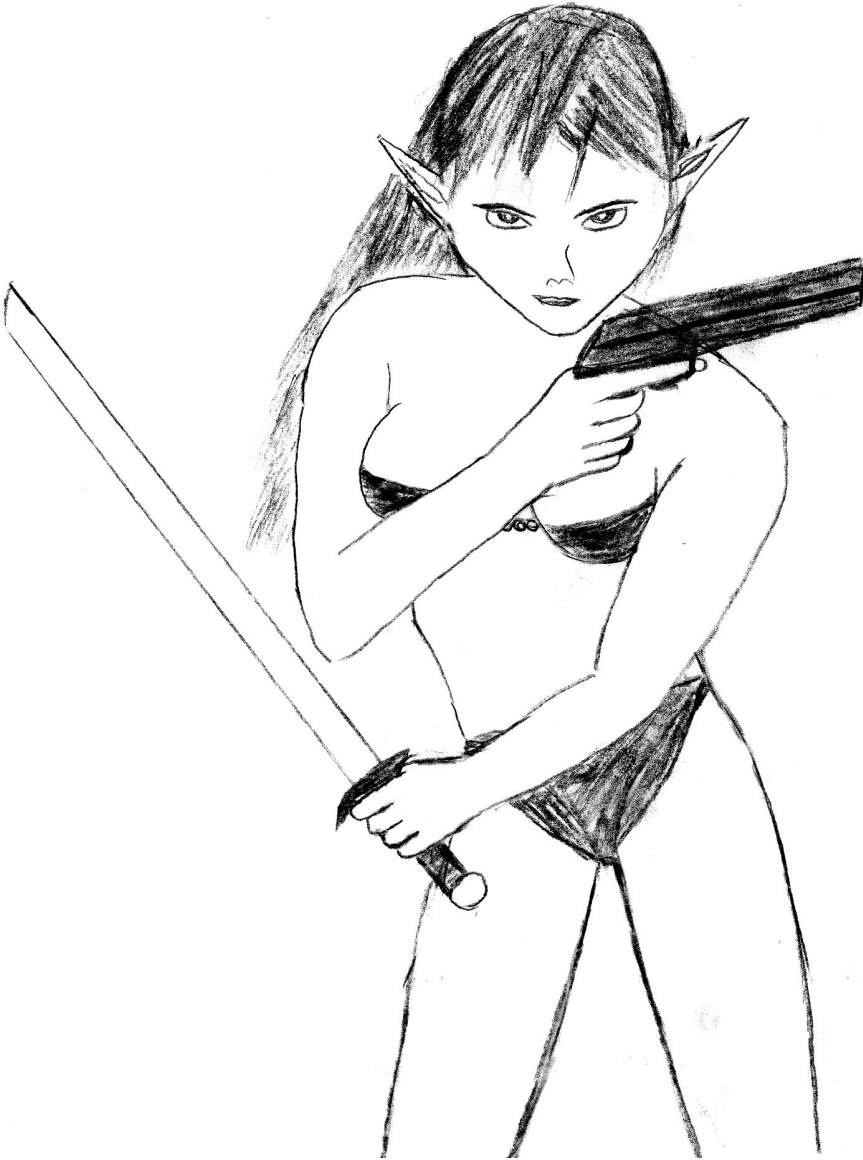
wiping the blood off his blade and on the grass.

“I just killed a man.” Casidina said eyes narrowed and eyebrows knit tightly together stomping to Cyon who was preparing to climb the rope.

“Yeah, and just I killed seven.” Cyon said testing the rope then starting to climb.

When the pair had left and a slave found the bodies in the garden the news was taken to the sleeping king. He was not surprised by the news or visibly upset. The slaves left him in his room after advising an extra set of guards. He okayed the order because still lingering in the air around the king was the idea of a race to calm the storm that had been spinning as well as the man and woman who had brought the suggestion.

FAN FICTION



Or: Leanna's Return

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ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 14: THE JUSTICAR

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As the cab slowly touched, the Helldiver stepped out. Surprisingly, the spaceport didn't look busy at all. In fact, there were several police officers around the area and one of the areas was sealed off.

Austin noticed a Volus being escorted by two Turian guards. However a purple Asari officer stopped him.

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

The Volus turned to face the Asari, who Austin's suit identified as Detective Anaya.

"I'm taking my goods to Omega, Detective." He said.

"You're not going anywhere, merchant! Not until I solve this murder." Said Anaya.

"I had nothing to do with that. It was those mercenary thugs you can't seem to get rid of." Said the Volus.

"The victim was your business partner, and I'm not ruling you out. I'll let you know when you can leave." Said Anaya.

"What about that Justicar that just showed up? Everyone says she might go crazy and start killing. I need to leave." Said the Volus nervously.

"She'll only kill the unjust, so I'm sure you have nothing to worry about, Pitne For." Said Anaya. "Find me in the station if you need me."

"Looks like she's the person to ask where Samara is." Said Alaara.

The group went into the station and found Anaya at her desk. She was very surprised to see four Helldivers here.

"First a Justicar, now Helldivers? Seems everyone's after the Eclipse." She said.

"Don't worry, detective. We're not here to cause you any more problems." Said Austin calmly.

"And yet you brought guns. Try not to use those in my district by the way. What can I do for you...?" she asked, asking for their name in the process.

“Major Shepard of Alpha Squad. I’m looking for an Asari Justicar named Samara. I’m told she’s here right now.” Said Austin as he sat down on the chair in front of Anaya’s desk.

“If you’ve got a score to settle with Samara, take it somewhere else! I’ve got more than enough trouble here already.” Said Anaya.

“We not here to cause trouble for you. We need to recruit Samara for our mission. As soon as we’ve done that we’ll be on our way.” Said Austin.

“Justicar’s usually work alone. But they are drawn to impossible causes.” Said Anaya.

“Convenient.” Said Sandra.

“If you getting her out of my district, I’ll get you to her ASAP. She’s at the crime scene.” Said Anaya.

“You’re awfully anxious to get Samara out of your district.” Austin inquired.

“My bosses want me to detain her. They’re worried she’ll cause some kind of cross-species incident. But her Justicar Code won’t let her be taken into custody. If I try it, she’ll have to kill me. I have no interest in dying, so if you lure her away with some big noble cause before I have to carry out my orders, I’m thrilled to help you.” Anaya explained.

“You superiors are sending you to certain death for no good reason. You have a right to disobey.” Said Austin.

“We can disobey suicidal orders? Why wasn’t I told?” Alara joked.

“Most of the time, I’m not being stupid about it. I can’t say the same for Anaya’s superiors.” Said Austin.

“I’m a cop, and I know my duty. I’ve been ordered to detain her and I will – unless I can get her to leave my district first.” Said Anaya.

“Then how do we get to the crime scene?” Austin asked.

“It’s around the corner – go outside, take a left. Look for the police line. I’ll send word to let you in. Be careful – the Eclipse mercs have been all over those back alleys lately.” Anaya pointed out.

“We’d better get moving then.” Said Austin as he stood up from the chair.

“Good luck.” Said Anaya.

“We’d better find Samara before the detective goes after her.” Said Sandra.

With no time to lose, the Helldivers immediately left the station and headed for the crime

scene. The two Asari guards took notice of them.

“Anaya told us to let you through. Watch yourselves. There’s merc activity back there, we’re waiting on backup.” Said the Guard.

Austin nodded in acknowledgement to them and the group went in. Once they’d cleared the police line, they drew their weapons.

“Keep an eye out. Eclipse are very good at hiding.” Said Alaara.

All the area was really just a load of massive corridors with loads of cargo crates in them. True to what Alaara had said though, it was the perfect place for an ambush. As a result of this, everyone remained on their guard.

As they rounded a corner, they could overhear several Eclipse mercs. All of the Helldivers immediately cloaked and looked around the corner. There were three mercs and three assault mechs. Nothing they couldn’t handle.

“Get the rest of bravo squad prepped. Beta squad went after that Justicar twenty minutes ago, and they’ve gone dark.” Said the leader.

“Mark ‘em and drop ‘em.” Said Austin quietly.

Just like the move that Alpha Squad had done on Horizon with the Collectors, the Helldivers each took a target and lined up the shot. Austin in particular was making sure his was lined up just right. If he got it perfect, he’d be able to take out two targets in one shot.

Everyone took a deep breath and waited for the Major to give them the signal.

“Fire!” he whispered.

Almost instantly, all the Asari fell and one of the mechs also lost a head as the group fired at exactly the same time. The mechs reacted to the threat, but several plasma shots made quick work of them.

The door that the Eclipse squad had been stood in front of looked like the last one to go through before they reached Samara. They could also hear fighting coming from the other side.

The door opened and almost immediately, an unfortunate Eclipse Asari was suddenly smashed against the doorway. On one of the upper levels was the leader of this squad. She had her gun pointed at an unseen target.

“Those were my best troops.” She said as she seemed to shiver nervously. Then her target came into view.

Stood in front of the Eclipse Asari was another Asari. This one however was vastly different.

The Justicar, Samara, had a somewhat very wise look about her. No one needed to guess that she was definitely around 700. She was dressed from head to toe in a red sort of armour with a few black bits on her legs and places where she didn't need armour. Her forehead also had some kind of crown decoration on it. Due to her age, Samara's skin pigment seemed slightly paler than normal Asari. She was definitely a very light blue compared to Alaara and Liara. To be absolutely honest though, that was not the most noticeable part about Samara. The part of the armour on her chest was cut away in a v shaper. Not only did it show a lot of skin, but it also showed a lot of cleavage. Even without the exposure, Austin guessed that Samara's cup size had to be at least twice the size of Liara's. Perhaps they were even larger than that. Austin quickly had to remind himself to stay focused as he shifted his gaze back to the Justicar's face rather than staring at her rack or her arousingly large behind, which the suit did a poor job of trying to size down.

"Tell me what I need to know and I will be gone from here. Where did you send her?" she said as she paced back and forth slowly in front of the Eclipse merc. As expected, Samara's voice had a very gentle and wise tone. At the same time though, it was also forceful and demanding. Samara might look all elegant and gorgeous and might give young males the wrong impression, with her sexy attire. But as Austin knew, a book should never be judged by its cover.

Austin still felt as though the outfit was a bit much. Did Samara even know she was showing that much cleavage?

"What is it with Asari and their cleavage display?" he asked in his head. *"Not that I'm complaining about it."* He quickly added.

But Austin banished these thoughts as he quickly snapped himself back to reality and focused on Samara pacing back and forth in front of the merc. She was still glowing with biotics and looked ready for another fight. She had after all just dispatched this merc's squad.

"You think I'd betray her? She would hurt me in ways you can't imagine." Said the merc.

Still Samara continued pacing. Her composure remained unchanged, calm and peaceful. At the same time though, she would not leave until she got an answer. She was one of those strong and silent types. Austin sometimes liked people like that.

"The name of the ship! Your life hangs on the answer, Lieutenant." Said Samara sternly. Despite the calmness in the Justicar's voice, it now seemed that her patience wouldn't last long. Her biotics glowed just a little bit brighter.

"You can kill me, but one of us will take you down, Justicar!" said the merc as she pointed her gun at Samara.

Samara however instantly reacted and threw up her hand. The merc was enveloped by biotics and Samara instantly threw her right out of the window and onto ground level. As

the merc struggled to get back up, Samara then jumped down. As she did, she used her biotics to slow her decent and then landed gracefully on the ground. The merc could only watch now as the Justicar slowly walked up to her.

“What was the name of the ship she left on?” Samara repeated as she placed her high heeled foot on the mercs neck.

“Go to hell!” the merc spluttered.

Samara’s composure didn’t change, but it was obvious now, that she would not be getting anything out of this merc, no matter what she tried. There was only one thing she could do now.

“Find peace in the embrace of the goddess.” She said as she twisted her foot violently and the mercs neck snapped.

Having seen the entire thing, Austin and his teammates ventured a bit closer. Samara took notice of them as they came into her sight. She was rather surprised to see four Helldivers, especially two of her own species. It was easy to tell from Alaara’s paint job which was designed to look like her skin and Liara’s biotic armour appearance.

“My name is Samara, a servant of the Justicar code. My quarrel is with these Eclipse sisters, but I see 4 well armed Helldivers before me. Are we friend or foe?” she asked.

“That merc was wounded and helpless! Do you just kill anyone who won’t help you?” Austin asked, a bit surprised that Samara had killed that Eclipse merc so casually.

“If my cause is important enough, yes. Are you different?” Samara asked back.

“I’ve killed enemies, but always with good reason.” Austin replied.

“I answer to a code that is clearly defined. If my actions are true to that code, I am just. If they are not, I am unjust. I don’t pretend that it is a simple matter or that it seems right to everyone. But I sleep well at night, and that is more than most can say. How may I be of service to you?” said Samara.

“I’m going up against suicidal odds and I need the best. That’s you.” Said Austin.

“I sense the truth in what you say and it humbles me. But I seek an incredibly dangerous fugitive. I cornered her here, but the Eclipse sisters smuggle her off-world. I must find the name of the ship she left on before the trail goes cold.” Samara explained.

“I wish you were willing to go with the Helldiver, Justicar. I’ve been ordered to take you into custody if you won’t leave.” Said a voice. It was Anaya.

“You risk a great deal by following your orders detective. Fortunately, I will not have to resist. My code obligates me to cooperate with you for one day. After that, I must return to my investigation.” Said Samara.

“I won’t be able to release you that soon.” Said Anaya worriedly.

“You won’t be able to stop me.” Said Samara.

“There must be some way we can all get what we need.” Said Austin, trying to diffuse the situation.

“I see a way. While I am in custody, you find the name of that ship. Do that and I will join you, then the code will be satisfied.” Said Samara.

“Do you have any leads?” Austin asked.

“The Volus merchant, Pitne For, is tied to this. Eclipse mercs are preparing to kill him. Get the truth out of him. He may know a way into the Eclipse base.” Said Samara.

“Their base? I don’t know about this.” Said Alaara hesitantly.

“It’s not like they’ll recognize, darling. You haven’t been with them for nearly a hundred years now. Besides, it’s no secret that you were an Eclipse merc. No need to still be ashamed of it.” Said Sandra reassuringly as she patted her wife on the back.

“Still... I worry if some familiar faces are still here.” Said Alaara. “If they still have their old leaders, it won’t be easy for us. They’re crazy and their violence knows no limits.”

“Your friends have your back, Alaara. We’ll do alright. Besides, we only need a ship name. If we’re lucky, we can probably avoid a bloodbath.” Said Austin.

Everyone returned to the spaceport with Samara accompanying Anaya back to the station. Austin quickly spotted Pitne For and the group walked up to him.

“Hello Arkane Clan. What can I do for you?” he asked.

“Why are the mercs after you?” Austin asked, deciding to go straight to the point.

“I know nothing about any mercenaries, Arkane Clan. I’m merely an innocent merchant--”

But Pitne was quickly interrupted when Austin’s plasma cannon activated and it’s targeting laser pointed right at him.

“Oh dear! Please put that away! I’ll be cooperative, I swear!” he said quickly.

“Tell me everything.” Said Austin sternly as his plasma cannon stood down.

“I smuggled a chemical onto Illium that boosts biotic powers in combat.” Pitne explained.

“Red Sand?” Alaara asked.

“How did you know that?” Pitne asked, surprised.

“We’ve had a lot of run ins with red sand dealers. We used to use the compound ourselves even.” Alaara replied.

“Then you probably also know that it is toxic. I may have, um, forgotten, to mention that to the Eclipse. So they are perturbed and want to kill me.” Said Pitne.

“We need to get into the merc base. You’re gonna help us.” Said Austin sternly.

“I do have a pass card they issued me to bring my goods in. Well, I had to return that one, but I happened to make a copy.” Said Pitne.

The Volus noticed Austin cracking his knuckles and didn’t need to be told twice.

“Take it. Be careful – each Eclipse sister commits --” he said, but Alaara interrupted him.

“Murder to earn her uniform. We know.” Said the Asari.

Oddly enough, the entrance to the Eclipse base was dangerously close to Anya’s station. If the Eclipse ever planned on assassinations, no one would ever see them coming. Austin had planned for the group to sneak in, remain cloaked while in the base, find the ship name and get out of there. That plan however sort of backfired when a mech instantly greeted them as the elevator doors opened. Recognizing immediately that the three Helldivers in front of it weren’t Eclipse, the mech sounded an alert just as Austin sliced it’s head off with his omni blade.

A small band of Eclipse sisters that had been in room just outside immediately reacted and started firing on the intruders. As they did however though, Austin couldn’t help but notice that one of them was retreating and running away from them. Right now though, that was the least of Austin’s concerns. He was more concerned about the Eclipse mercs that were actually fighting them.

To complicate matters further, the entire room was full of several fragile containers that Austin, Alaara & Sandra all knew contained the Red Sand compound. True this compound boosts biotic powers greatly, but it’s toxicity had provided an awful lot of problems for the Helldivers that used them. Some had suffered permanent skin damage, others had become addicted to the Red Sand since it was rather addictive to biotics, and not just on a power level. The compound also did nasty things to the brain from prolonged exposure.

The Eclipse mercs were even worse as they smashed several of the containers near them and used the Red Sand to boost their biotics. Fortunately, Alaara and Liara had canisters of Blue Sand which was just as powerful as Red Sand but was not toxic or addictive. Rather embarrassingly, Alaara it seemed had also found ways of increasing biotic sex.

Austin fired several shots at more of the Red Sand canisters in hope that the concentrated exposure would kill the mercs. To his relief, it worked for most of them, but the others weren't as exposed as the ones Austin had just killed so he had to leave those to the two Asari. Alaara in particular was making clever work of the Blue Sand and used it to fling one of the mercs over the edge. Liara was resorting more to defence and was providing Austin with a bit more cover from one of the Eclipse rocket troopers.

Finally, Austin managed to get close enough so that the rocket trooper forgot about Liara and concentrated on him. Liara used this to her advantage and threw a massive warp at the trooper which caused the merc to fly into a explosive canister which exploded upon impact.

With the room clear, Austin and the others went back to their original plan of sneaking through the base. Just as Austin cloaked though, he could hear a whisper coming from the door leading to another room.

“Oh, Goddess! Oh, Goddess, don't let them see me. If they do see me, don't let them kill me. What am I doing here?” said the whisper.

“Hold up! Let's check it out.” Austin whispered.

The door opened and the group went in with their guns ready. At first, it didn't look as though anyone was in here, but their suit computers quickly highlighted the increase in heartbeat and breathing.

“Come out! We know you're there!” said Austin forcefully.

Reluctantly, a very young Eclipse Asari came out from behind a computer terminal. She reached for her SMG as she did so. Austin and the others pointed their own plasma cannons at her.

“Wait! Stop! I didn't fire my weapon once. I pretended to because the other Eclipse sisters were watching, but I didn't really shoot!” she said hastily as she stood up and came out of her hiding spot.

“Your wearing an Eclipse uniform! You expect us to believe you?!” said Alaara harshly.

“I'm not one of them! I'm new! I thought being Elnora the mercenary would be cool... but I didn't know what they were really like!” said the Asari as she hastily reached for her SMG.

For a moment, she pointed it at them. Austin and the others didn't do anything, but they didn't stand down either.

Then Alaara used her scans to analyse Elnora better. She was lying. The suit was showing the usual traits that a body showed when a person was lying.

“You're lying! You think Helldivers are blind?! Besides, chances are you killed someone

for that uniform!” she said.

That was enough to convince Austin.

“You chose your side, Elnora: And you lost.” Said Austin as his plasma cannon activated and pointed at Elnora.

“Screw that, bastard! And screw you!” said Elnora.

She fired one shot but that didn’t do any damage at all. All the group immediately returned fire tenfold and Elnora was dissolved into nothing, screaming as the plasma burned away her uniform, and then her skin.

Getting through the rest of the Eclipse base proved to be much less violent. Helldivers where trained to operate stealth missions, and this was a perfect example. As the group cleared a massive loading area that had a gunship docked there, they took a moment to relax. It was tense sneaking through the rooms without the mercs potting them so all their hearts had pounding rather hard in their chests, nervous of what would happen if one of them was spotted.

As they took a moment to get their breath back, Austin noticed an audio log that looked recent. He decided to have a look and activated it.

“Well, it’s official. Little baby Elnora is now finally a fully fledged Eclipse merc. I earned my uniform last night when I killed that ridiculous Volus. A close exploding rounds. Blew the little bastards suit wide open! I can’t wait to see some real action. Next time I go home, my friends are gonna be so jealous!” it said in Elnora’s voice.

“I knew it! Good thing we took her out!” said Sandra.

“Detective Anaya would be interested in this.” Said Liara.

“Definitely.” Austin agreed.

After sneaking through yet more rooms filled with Eclipse sisters, the group finally came to another empty room and took the moment to relax. Alaara even gave Sandra a playful spank, but Austin told them to behave themselves.

Liara then noticed a datapad on a nearby table. As she read it, her eyes went wide.

“Austin, you may want to take a look at this.” She said as she threw the datapad to Austin and he caught it.

“This looks like a shipping manifest. It shows that Pitne For sold 2000 units of Minagen X3 to the Eclipse. Along with 600 units of red sand.” Said Austin as he examined the

datapad.

“This isn’t the information Samara needs, but it proves that the Volus is a criminal.” Said Liara. “Detective Anaya would be interested in this.”

“Maybe, but we’ve got to keep moving.” Said Austin.

The next room was just a hallway, but it wasn’t empty. Inside the hallway was a Volus stood in front of a café machine. He turned around, almost drunk like and bumped into Austin causing him to stagger back a bit. The Volus however regained his composure, but it looked as though he wasn’t in his right set of mind.

“I am a biotic god! I think things – and they happen! Fear me, lesser creatures, for I am biotics made flesh!” he said as he glowed brightly with quite a few unstable biotics.

“I don’t know what drugs you’re on, but stay back and I won’t shoot you.” Said Austin.

“You will regret your scandalous words! I am a great wind that will sweep all before me like a... a great wind. A great biotic wind! Yes, the Asari injecting so many drugs into me was terrifying. But then I began to smell my greatness!” said the Volus.

“Probably not all he smelt.” Sandra joked, making sure her helmet was sealed properly in the process.

“You may laugh when I fall over, but they don’t know what I know in my head – that I know that I am amazingly powerful. Fear me!” the Volus continued.

“Are you part of Pitne For’s trade group?” Austin asked as his suit’s computer identified him as Niftu Cal.

“When I was mortal, I worked for Pitne. Poor soul is probably terrified that I have not returned.” Niftu replied.

“He hasn’t reported your disappearance. Probably so his departure won’t get delayed.” Said Liara.

“When the chips are down, even your friends will screw you for an extra cred.” Said Alaara.

“Bah! I will wreak a just revenge upon his people! But first... the leader of these mercenaries is in the next room. I shall toss Wasea about like a rag doll!” said Niftu confidently.

“Wasea?!” said Alaara in shock.

“Does that name mean anything to you, Alaara?” Austin asked, concerned at Alaara’s look of almost sheer fright.

“She’s one of the most feared, Asari in the Eclipse. She’s addicted to red sand and it

makes her crazy. Abusive also. Cruelty I had to witness first hand. She was... my mentor.” Said Alaara, once again sounding ashamed of her Eclipse training.

“Why didn’t you say anything, love?” Alaara asked comfortingly, surprised that her wife hadn’t mentioned how she had cruelly abused during her training as an Eclipse.

“Wasea always gives me nightmares of her cruelty. Plus, I had no idea she was still here.” Said Alaara. “She’s as bad as the Eclipse can make Asari.”

“It matters not. She will fall before my might!” said Niftu.

“Shepard, he couldn’t tie his bootlaces, much less fight.” Said Sandra.

“I will tear her apart! My biotics are unstoppable!” Niftu repeated.

“Wasea will tear you apart. Take a nap – you’ll feel better.” Said Austin.

“Are you mad? I’m unstoppable! Feasting on her biotic-rich blood will be the last step of my ascension to godhood!” said Niftu, and before Austin could do anything to stop him, he ran for the door.

“He’s a goner.” Said Alaara.

“We should at least try to help him.” Said Austin.

The group quickly chased the Volus through the door.

The large room was full of hundreds of Red Sand canisters. There was a desk at the far end of the room. Stood behind that desk was an Asari. She was wearing a Partisan armour and had large red facial tattoos. Just the sight of her chilled Austin. He could only dread to imagine what this Asari was capable of, let alone what she had done to Alaara.

Niftu got Wasea’s attention threw a biotic warp at her. The warp however was so small that it merely just gave the Asari’s head a small push. This however seemed to make Wasea very angry and she flung an absolutely massive warp at the Volus. Rather surprisingly though, Niftu put up a biotic shield which blocked Wasea’s attack. As the Asari readied for another attack, Niftu spoke.

“Enough! You are beneath me! I am a biotic god, Wasea! And I will not be bullied by--”

But Niftu was interrupted as he was completely enveloped by Wasea’s biotics, flung up into the air and smashed into the ground. Wasea then lifted him up again temporarily and smashed him twice into the ground again before finally letting him go. Niftu dropped at Sandra’s feet, who dragged him to safety.

“Puny god!” Wasea muttered as she went back to her work.

Wasea meanwhile had noticed the Helldivers who had followed after the Volus whom she had just beaten into submission. From the looks of things though, Niftu was okay. Volus

suits where very tough little things.

Wasea still didn't seem worried at all by the presence of the Helldivers as she casually held a datapad in her left hand and sipped a drink in the other. She spoke again as she downed the drink.

“Everything's gone to hell since we smuggled that filthy creature off-world. First a Justicar shows up, now you.” She said. Her voice was very cold.

Wasea then glowed brightly again with biotics and picked up one of the nearby red sand canisters with her biotics.

“At least I can take pleasure in turning you head into a pulpy mass!” she shouted as she threw the canister at them.

Austin and Liara jumped out of the way, but Alaara stood her ground. Surprisingly she even smashed the canister with her arm just before it hit her.

“Over my dead body... mentor.” She said coldly.

Wasea's expression turned to surprise as she recognised Alaara's voice.

“Well well well, look who finally decided to come crawling back to me. Why are you here traitor?” she replied.

“I'm gonna do what I should've done long ago, you bitch!” Alaara shouted back.

Sandra was quick to join in as well and a massive battle broke out with the Eclipse mercs fighting Austin and Liara and Wasea fighting Alaara and Sandra.

Sandra didn't have biotics since she was mostly a comm specialist, but her skills with a gun did at least give Wasea something else to worry about. Despite the Blue Sand though, Alaara was struggling. Wasea had taught her nearly everything she knew and she knew a lot of Alaara's moves and tricks. Some of Alaara's new Helldiver abilities were working to her advantage and Wasea was starting to get a little angry at Alaara not faltering.

Eventually, Wasea began to feel her biotics weakening and she started smashing more and more Red Sand canisters on the floor near her feet so that she could boost her powers back up. Alaara could tell however that Wasea was starting to feel the pain. The concentrated exposure to so much of the compound was slowly starting to damage her skin tissue.

Austin and Liara meanwhile were using both their strengths to kill the other Eclipse mercs who were trying to help their captain. Austin used all his soldier and Helldiver training to shoot the mercs, while Liara used her immensely powerful biotics to cut off the more out of range mercs.

Alaara meanwhile had thought up an idea. As she held back a constant warp attack from

Wasea, who was doing her best to hide the fact that she was in a lot of pain now. Alaara charged up her strongest biotic throw and hurled the canister at Wasea. The Captain noticed the canister only just too late and it hit her right in the forehead, knocking her out cold.

The Helldivers waited for all the Red Sand to clear and dissipate before continuing. Wasea was out cold but still alive. Austin had thought she would just be executed there, but Alaara and Sandra had said that they had plans for the Asari bitch.

Austin walked up to Wasea's desk and picked up the datapad she'd be holding earlier.

"There's a Justicar here! Probably looking for the one we sent off on the AML Demeter. I was happy to see her go; she chilled me to the bone. I just hope this Justicar doesn't mess up my operation." it read.

"That must be the ship Samara was looking for." Said Sandra.

"Should we head back to the police station and give her the name?" Liara asked.

"Let's give her the name and keep moving." Said Austin. "Bring the Volus with us. He should come around soon."

It felt nice to be back at the spaceport. Just as they neared Anaya's office, Niftu Cal regained consciousness. As Sandra put him down, he didn't stagger at all. It looked like the drugs had worn off now.

"I don't know what they put in me, but I thought I was... well, you saw. Anyway, thank you Shepard." He said thankfully.

Austin simply nodded to Niftu and allowed the Volus to be on his way.

Samara was sat near Anya's desk and was meditating. Anaya had a look of pleasure and relief on her face when she saw Austin and Liara return. Alaara and Sandra had gone back to the Normandy early with Wasea in tow.

Samara opened her eyes as she sensed Austin's presence.

"I've got the name of the ship. Your fugitive left here two days ago on the AML Demeter." Said Austin.

"Shepard, you impress me. You fulfilled your part of the bargain, and I will fulfil mine." Samara smiled. The Justicar smiled and hopped down from where she'd been meditating. She then turned to face Anaya. "I am ready to leave immediately, if that will satisfy your superiors, Detective?"

"You're free to go, Justicar. It has been an honor having you in my station. And it's nice you didn't kill me too." Anaya smiled.

“The Normandy is docked near the main trading floor. We’ll meet you aboard.” Said Austin.

“I must be sworn to your service, so that I am never forced to choose between your orders and the Code.” Said Samara. The Justicar then suddenly glowed with biotics and knelt down. Austin resisted the tempting urge to look down Samara’s cleavage as she did so.

“By the code, I will serve you, Shepard. Your choice are my choices, your morals are my morals. Your wishes are my code.” Said Samara. Her biotics then pulsed and her eyes glowed brightly as she stood back up.

“I never thought I’d see a Justicar swear an oath like that.” Said Anaya, amazed.

“If you make em do anything dishonourable, I may need to kill you when I am released from my oath.” Samara advised.

“I can see that this is a very important act, Samara. Thank you.” Said Austin kindly as he bowed his head. He knew a thing or two about Justicars and knew to be very respectful in their presence.

“Truly, the life of a Justicar can get lonely. I admit, I am looking forward to serving with the company of honourable heroes. Shall we return to your ship?” Samara smiled.

“Not yet. I need to speak to Anaya quickly.” Said Austin.

Anaya nodded and sat back down at her desk.

“Thanks for getting Samara out of my district. I can tell my granddaughters about meeting a Justicar. And you’ve just upped my chances of living long enough to have grandkids.” She said gratefully.

“We found out who killed the Volus merchant.” Said Austin as he handed a datapad that contained Elnora’s recording to Anaya.

“Let’s see what you’ve got there.” Said the detective.

There was a long pause as she read the datapad’s content.

“Interesting, but I can’t verify it. It would be inadmissible.” She said.

“I vouch for Shepard and any evidence he brings forward.” Said Samara.

“I accept the judgement of the Justicar. Thanks, Shepard. I wasn’t sure about trusting a Helldiver -- and a human, at that. But you came through. Never heard of this Elnora. Sounds like she was just starting her career. Good thing you cut it short.” Anaya smiled.

Austin nodded in acknowledgement of Anaya’s thanks.

“Okay, enough with all the congratulations, I’ve still got a spiralling crime rate.” Said

Anaya.

“You may also want to look at this. It proves that Pitne For smuggled in red and illegal weapons tech.” said Austin as he handed Anya the shipping manifest thy had found earlier.

“I’ll send in some officers to arrest him and his cohorts. This is a bog help, Shepard. I can’t do much to thank you, but we do have a small discretionary bounty fund. Take this.” Said Anaya as she handed Austin a sum of credits that the Helldiver placed in one of the pouches on his belt.

Austin, Alaara and Liara had assembled in the comm room to give Samara a proper greeting and welcome on the Normandy. It really was an honour to work with a Justicar. Especially one like Samara. There was something about her that made her very likeable.

“Welcome to the Normandy, Justicar. It’s a real honor to have you on this team. With your skills, we think you’ll be an excellent addition.” Said Alaara as she shook Samara’s hand in greeting and bowed her head.

“Thank you. I too am honoured to be a part of your mission. I have heard many impressive stories about the Helldivers. I am deeply honoured and excited to be working along such fine warriors.” Said Samara warmly.

“The honour is all mine, Samara. I’ve seen your biotic powers at work. They’re almost unmatched.” Said Austin.

“We still don’t know what we’ll find when we assault the Collector home world.” Said Liara.

“I will be prepared for whatever we encounter.” Said Samara calmly.

“So, where shall we put you?” Austin asked.

“A room that looks out on the great empty void of space would be most comforting.” Samara replied.

“Well, the observation room on deck three is currently vacant. Would that be appropriate?” Alaara suggested.

“Yes, that will be fine. Thank you. I must meditate on the day’s events.” Said Samara.

Samara left and Alaara and Liara went back to their posts. Austin decided to let Samara settle in before he talked with her. It then occurred to him that he hadn’t talked with Kelly lately and decided to rectify that.

He found her at her usual spot right beside the galaxy map.

“There is nothing more absolute than the oath of an Asari Justicar. You did well getting Samara on our side. She is so elegant and gorgeous. Too bad her manner is just so... cold.” She said.

“Maybe, but I didn’t recruit her for her looks. The Normandy already has plenty of beautiful women. You in particular, Kelly.” Said Austin, trying not to sound like he was flirting with her.

“Oh, Shepard. I wish there were time to get to know you better.” Kelly laughed.

“Well, now that you mention it. Why don’t you join me in my cabin for a meal? It would give us the chance to talk.” Austin suggested.

“That sounds wonderful. I’ve been hoping for some private time with you. Lead the way.” Said Kelly.

Austin led Kelly into the elevator and he pressed the button for his cabin. He admitted he was looking forward to this. It would be nice for him and Kelly to get to know one another better.

BROKEN WINGS

Tiffany Kennedy
of withoutcause@hotmail.co.uk

NARUTO (-ナルト-)Masashi Kishimoto & Shueisha.

Original Characters & plot belongs to me.

Broken Wings ~Re-Write~

A modern day Naruto Fanfiction.

By DetectiveTK (formerly known as Zottiely)

I have decided to actually re-write this story in hope to make my sequel better as well.

The sequel is A heart of Sand.

I personally think that anyone who was a fan of the original should read the re-write but that's all I have to say.

The skies moaned with happiness. The blue as bright as can be and even the clouds couldn't ruin that. Birds leapt from the trees causing the branches to shake as they flew away to find some food. The grass below these trees weren't as green as the leaves but almost dead from the drought in the city of Konoha. It was a strange thing to see here, usually the weather is perfect, fairy tale perfect, and raining at perfect moments, the sun shining to create a perfect day but recently this city was far from perfect. At least it hasn't lost its status just yet, being one of the highest ranking cities around. Maybe because that's where all the paparazzi are at seeing as really big events are usually held around here. Like the Akatsuki band. Itachi Uchiha got most of the attention seeing that he is the singer of the band. It was a wonder how he was able to get this girl into his house without the tabloids knowing a thing or any fan girls knowing who she is. I guess it helps to know the paper too.

The uchiha mansion was home to a new guest this summer. She was very good friends with Itachi, they were all family friends with history. Itachi had known this young girl since she was around the age of four, though he was older than she was. To her she was the brother she never had and to him, she was the perfect little sister. The girl was an only child so Itachi was important to her. Itachi knew that and she was also important to him so he allowed her sanctuary in his home. She had a situation going on and Itachi knew he had to help her; the mansion was her escape now. Though she had thoroughly forgotten her past.

“Class we have a new student,” Iruka sensei told them.

A girl with electric blue hair that short just passed her shoulders walked in. Her hair was wavy and tangled; she hadn't bothered to tie it up or anything. Everyone stared at her oddly causing the blood to rise to her cheeks. They probably never saw someone with such abnormal hair yet she could spot a girl in the front with pink hair and another

with purple hair. Or maybe it was the clothes. She wore black jeans that were ripped, a shirt that had a girl sprawled across it, yet she had a skull for a face and under that picture it said Bring Me The Horizon. Her bag was pure black with badges all over it. She let the bag hang off her shoulder. Her shoes were platform ones that drew your attention away from her lack of height. Her eyes were dark brown, almost ash black. They pierced through everyone as she scanned the room. She looked for a place among her class mates as Iruka Sensei introduced her. She sighed. There was a spare desk next to the raven haired boy but she could tell by his glare that he wanted her nowhere near him. She wondered if he even knew that she was staying in his house. Her eyes wondered, there was a spare seat next to some girl with her hair tied up. She had pure blonde hair and she was rather pretty but she wasn't too fond of blondes. Her eyes wandered over to the back of the classroom. There was a spare seat next to a red headed boy who had a tattoo on his forehead and dark eyeliner circling his sea foam coloured eyes. He had his ear plugs in; he was listening to his iPod. She looked around him; no one was seated next to him. She shrugged and lightly smirked. She walked all the way to the back and sat down next to him, everyone stared as she did.

“Hey,” she called. The red headed boy ignored her. She could hear his music beating loudly. Bullet for my Valentine, she recalled. She shrugged when he didn't show any interest in her existence. She pulled out her book and started writing down notes from the board. She looked around the room again and noticed that Sasuke Uchiha was staring at her. All of the girls were fawning over him but his eyes remained on her. *Why don't you stare at someone else?*

The day went by as fast as it could and lunch was just around the corner. She didn't exactly have any friends, nor did she want to start contacting people. She had had a conversation with that pink haired girl named Sakura in second period. She was mainly interested in why Sasuke was staring at her. She told Sakura that it was because she was living in there mansion because she was like a sister to Itachi. She nodded and understood but warned her off Sasuke. She knew that she wouldn't dare go near the boy. She continued to walk around the school and her trail led her to the arts room. She frowned; there was one light on in there. She tried to peer through the window but something was blocking her way. She moved back to the door and opened it.

“Hello?” she noticed no one was there. She frowned. Why was the light on if no one was there? Shrugging she took a look around. There were canvases everywhere, no wonder she couldn't see through the window. She could tell there were people in here just before but that must've been from second period. She looked at the chalk beside a blank canvas. She took it and drew lines onto the canvas. She felt a certain ease to herself as she drew on it. It was like she had a new friend that was just there to listen, to comfort her. She rubbed the charcoal in certain places to create a certain effect. She didn't know what she was drawing or why she was drawing it but that was the fun part. It was always like that, she never thought about it; just let her emotions fall through onto the paper. She heard a creak. She froze automatically. There were footsteps coming towards her. She turned around. It was probably a teacher or something but she would still get in trouble.

“Hello?” she asked and no one answered, fear started to get the better of her, “Who's there?”

There was another creek but no words.

“Show yourself!” she didn’t know why but whatever it was it felt like some sort of dark over powering shadow and it scared her. A hand appeared and gripped her shirt pulling her up against the closest wall. It was a pale hand and she could feel herself almost fall out of her shirt. She gripped the hand trying to make it let go but it just wouldn’t. Her eyes met ones that she swore were red, even just for a moment. Sasuke was staring deeply at her.

“What are you doing here?” his voice started calm.

“What do you mean?” she could feel the fear right through her bones, “I have every right to be here.”

“No, you don’t,” he shook his head, “You shouldn’t have come back to Konoha! You shouldn’t be here!”

She felt his grip tightening; it felt as if he was going to throw her across the room.

“What!? I am aloud to be here! Itachi let me stay at the mansion!”

“You and that no good backstabbing brother!” he pushed her against the wall, harder this time, “You shouldn’t have come back! Not after what you did to me! It hasn’t even been that long!”

“I never did anything to you!” her voice crackled at the signs of her choking which only made Sasuke’s grip on her shirt tighten and he pushed her back more. She felt her head graze the wall.

“You left me! Or don’t you remember?! How long has it been?! A year?! Not even!”

She paused and stared straight at him. Her vision started clouding over and her feet were dangling off the floor as he held her against the wall. Her own hands clutched at his.

“I…” she started to remember it but she felt her vision disappearing as her head scrapped the wall.

“That’s what I thought! You are a good for nothing whore! Get the fuck out of my mansion! Take my sticking brother with you!” his eyes were cold and she could see his face turn to rage. His other fist connected with her face creating a cracking sound. He let her go and she dropped to the floor. Her hands reached her cheek and she could feel the blood flushing up to her skin creating a red mark, “fucking whore.”

“What the fuck?” she yelled. Sasuke’s mouth opened; like he was going to say something but soon there was a huge ‘bang’ and he fell to the ground. Her eyes followed Sasuke’s movements, she didn’t even realise there was a mystery man there. That man kicked Sasuke in the face causing him to fall backwards. The girl looked up at him.

“Stupid Uchiha’s,” he muttered in a cold yet smooth voice. Sasuke grunted from the floor. He tried to pick himself up but failed three times. He made his way out of the room quickly knowing what this boy could do. The red headed boy walked over to the girl in front of him. He gripped her wrist and pulled her up. She stared at him wide eyed. She looked as if she was about to cry.

“Why’d you do that?” she asked.

“Does it matter? He’s gone,” he saw that the girl was going to ask more about it, “I just wanted to hit him again.”

“Were you in here the whole time?”

“Hn.”

“Uh,” she stared at his eyes, almost mesmerised, “Well, thanks. I uhm, I’ll see you around.”

“I guess.”

“What’s your name?”

“Gaara.”

“Cool, well I’m Aoi,” she smiled at him before leaving the room quickly.

“Aoi...” he repeated. He looked at the drawing on the canvas. It intrigued him just like she did for no apparent reason. There was a butterfly on the canvas, but this butterfly was trapped inside a cage. Sunlight was flaring around every single area but the corner the butterfly was. This butterfly was stuck in here and its wings, its wings were damaged, broken, ruined. Everything outside that cage was happy, even beautiful but inside that cage laid a harmed butterfly that couldn’t find its way out. Does this have something to do with how Aoi feel about her life? Gaara knew he could relate to it, so what was so bad in her life that made her want to draw this? Gaara took the canvas and walked out of the room.

POETRY is published here thanks to John Mahler's [Quotes of the Day](#).

Some people, at least, have enjoyed my Quotes of the Day, so here they are, for your amusement and bemusement: one entire year's worth of quotes. My quotes by the way; nobody else's. These are my thoughts and observations on the world around us: funny, sad, uplifting, evocative, inspiring, silly, and occasionally just plain stupid, they are all here for your perusal: enjoy!

IS THE BEST YET TO COME?

Sasha
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Death.

Have you ever thought about it?

...

Of course you have. Everyone has, right? Everyone's wondered what comes after. Where we go, what it's like. That was a stupid question. I should be more specific.

Have you ever thought about

...

..

.

Suicide?

Gasp. Run. Call the hospital. End of the world, she needs a therapist, she needs medicated, she needs help.

No.

That's not what I mean. Not "I give up" or "It's too hard" or "I'm too alone".

I mean, what if I'm tired?

20, 30 years from now. When I've lived, loved, lost. All of that. When I've done everything I wanted to do.

What if I'm just waiting for the end?

What's the point?

What if I'm not unhappy, I'm just done?

It should be my choice, not yours.

No one can tell me how to live my life.

Or, rather, how not to live it.

You can't stop me.

But don't be sad.

I'm not sad.

Death isn't a thing to run from

It's where we're all headed

It's my choice when to go there. Isn't this what everyone wants, control?

I will control my life.

And no one will stop me from controlling my death.

TRUST IS A DOUBLE BLADED KNIFE

Kristina Carlock
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So..this is poetry. It does have a hidden message in the bold words. (**I trusted you and you broke my heart.**)

Trust can be delivered,
through the eyes.
It can be sent,
with just one touch.

one touch can lead,
to a fatal attraction.

You don't know when it starts,
it just gradually happens,
slowly growing,
steadier,
faster,
stronger,
until you have so much,
you see stars in her eyes.

you see galaxies,
universes,
planets,
the whole solar system.

it's so beautiful;
you don't notice the pain in your heart.

somedays it's cloudy though,
so you're stuck in the clouds,
with the rain, thunder,
lightning clashing,
all at once.

you can see her soul,
sworn to her your loyalty,

promised to never break her,
already bruised and tattered heart.

as she did to **you**.

betrayal seems to come hand,
in hand with trust.
its like they are both,
double ended blades,
without a handle.

if you aren't careful,
you'll find,
both blades,
piercing your skin.

One through your back,
one through your front,
where your **heart** lies,
vulnerable to their eyes.

when you trust someone,
you allow yourself to,
become vulnerable,
unsafe,
very close to harm.

perhaps we loved,
just a little too much.
perhaps we **trusted**,
just a little too much.

I trusted her,
allowed her,
to come inside,
of **my** shell,
let her,
break me out,
and show me,
what it's like,
to be loved.

then she **broke** my heart,
and let me fall,

down

down

down

without a trace,
of never,
ever,
being found.

WRITE IN PEN

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I am simply an amateur poet from deviantart. I love finding new ways to expand and practice my craft, such as trying out new fixed forms of poetry. If you like what you see here, visit my page on deviantart--> <http://zuko4444.deviantart.com/> Thanks!

I write my life in pen,
There are no take-backs.
Whenever I make a mistake
I'd just scratch it out and move on;
Forget about it.

I could write my life in lead.
I can fix mistakes,
Erase what I wrote and correct it.
Sometimes on-the-fly,
Sometimes after a review;
But what has been erased
Is forgotten.

I'd rather write in pen.
I know I've made mistakes,
But I forget about them
And move on.