

"The Elite Four rose from the ashes of the old world. Their hearts wept because the destruction of their brethren had took many lives. Green slowly sprung up around them, for their pure souls had watered and relived the Earth. The Elite Four felt burdened with the rebuilding of their world. With heavy hearts, they created a new world of green and youth. Once they saw that it was good, they ascended into the heavens to watch over their creation." This is the legend of how the goddesses made our world. This is the legend of our goddesses, the Elite Four.

Adivi was the eldest of the goddesses. No one has seen her, but the legends say that she has long blonde hair that flows like the rivers. All who pray to her will receive good fortune and joy. Alala was the harshest of the goddesses. She wore darkness as her clothing. When the goddesses believed the humans needed punishment, she was the one to do so. Anselm was the wisest of the goddesses. Her wisdom and knowledge overwhelmed and engaged us. She slept in the stars because they are never-ending, just like her mind. Amadea was the kindest of the goddesses. Her heart was beautiful and loving. She was the youngest of goddesses and legends say she was the most naïve, but this was what made her heart so wonderful.

Our goddesses watched over us because they were gentle to us. They understood that we were fragile and created weak. They said that our previous God had abandoned us. He left us to live in ruin and despair. It was only an example of their love for us to take on the burden that He disposed.

"Eva!" Eden called out to me. She wore a worried expression on her face.

"What is it?" I began to walk towards her. I hoped that I was not in trouble with my mother.

If you have not noticed yet, we are all woman in this new world. Our goddesses were disgusted with how He treated us, so they only allowed women to live. It was a punishment to all men.

"Your mother has been looking for you. She said that it was your turn to tend to the mares."

"Oh Adivi, have favor. I completely forgot. Do you think she is upset?"

"Only worried, but you better hurry. She's starting to rip apart the house in anguish." Eden looked into my hazel eyes and shook her head. She took my wrist and pulled me away from my thoughts that still hung in the sky.

"Run!" She exclaimed and bolted for my house. Eden never let go of my wrist, though. Therefore, she forced me to run along side her unless I wanted a mouth full of mud.

Eden was a nice girl. She had two older sisters, but lived with by herself with her dogs. Her mother, Diana, died when Eden was rather young. The people in the court said it was because she forbiddingly dreamt of men. Eden and I did not believe this though. Her mother was sickly and the stress of three feisty girls would defeat anyone; even someone with her vigor.

Eden was very strong for her size. She was quite short for someone in her eighteen year. She wore her bushy hair in a bun, because she said her hair was too thick. Her skin was dark and clear, just like her mother's. Her eyes were dark like the night, except when she cried; then anyone could see they were brown. Yet, Eden never really cried.

She was skinny, too. Her collarbones pushed through her skin and shown proudly. No matter how much she ate, she would never gain a pound.

"Ms. Eva's mom, I found her." Eden shouted. We were at my home, I did not notice.

"Thank Elite! Where have you been? I was worried. You seemed to just run off without speaking a word to me." My mother rushed towards me and embraced me. Her cheek pressed against mine. "Do not scare me like that."

"Why are you so worried?" I awkwardly asked. I felt something warm and wet sliding down my face. It was my mother's tears.

"Eva, have you forgotten? It is your eighteen year tomorrow." Eden said with a huge smile. "You'll finally be able to take on real work!"

"Not only that, but you know of the curse." My mom whispered. She did not want the goddesses to hear her. "Even though I tried my best to make sure the goddesses showed favor, I am only capable of so much. And you are my only daughter." My mother started to weep again.

The curse my mother talked about was more of a mystery. During the night of a woman's eighteen year, she may disappear. Several had vanished from our court. None knew why happens, it just did. Many had tried to stop this from happening, prayers and offerings, but no one knew exactly who would disappear.

"Mom, I will always be with you." I reassured her. "Please stop crying. It's actually freaking me out." I had only seen my mother cry one other time. It was when her niece, my cousin, disappeared. My aunt committed suicide shortly after that.

"We can never be too sure. Eden has decided she will spend the night with you, because her family seems to have good fortune." My mother said. "Not one of her sisters has disappeared. Hopefully, Alala will see her and remember her favor."

"If that is what you want." I wiped away her tears. "Just, please, stop crying."

My begging made my mother laugh. She nodded and turned away from me. Without another word, she went into the kitchen and started fumbling around. I heard pots crashing to the floor.

"I guess this means you'll help me with my chores." I said to Eden.

She snorted. "Yea right, I'm a guest!" Then she punched my arm. "I'll help though, since you are my best friend."

I took my best friend's hand in mine and walked towards the shed. There we would find the tools for tending to our mares. We use to have two, but then my mother adopted her sister's mare after her death. She had difficulties looking at the mare, so I usually tried my best to help.

We tended to the animals in silence for a while, but then Eden said something awkward. She looked up at me and smiled hard, as if she was trying to hide her fear.

"I sometimes dream about the forbidden gender. I can't control it." She mumbled with the brush in her hand. She looked down at the ground.

"Me, too," I shook my head. "I don't even know what they look like, but I long for them."

"No?" Eden smiled. "Oh, thank Elite. I was worried you were going to tell the court counsel on me."

"No. I would never do that. You are my best friend, Eden."

We went quiet again for a while. The mares would neigh and shuffle about, but there were not many words from us. We would glance at each other and then back at the mares.

"Eden," I whispered, "do you think about marriage?"

"Marriage? No, talking about that is forbidden. That is the practices of the old world."

"So, you have never thought about what it would be like?" I knew she was lying. Even though Eden was dark, her nose would turn reddish when she was lying. It was faint, but I knew her too well.

"I did, until my mother died." She looked directly into my eyes. "I don't want to think about those things anymore."

"But, Eden! We both know that your mother died because she was sickly. It had nothing to do with her impure thoughts." I shook my head. "Please don't ever think that. The court counsel is full of idiots! They didn't know your mother like we knew her."

"I know, but it's still a possibility that they were right. What if Alala felt her betrayal?" Eden bit her bottom lip. "And here I am, thinking about the same things that took my mother away from me. I should be frightened to even dream, but I can't control it."

"Neither can I, I think we all have these dreams, we just never speak of them out loud."

"Maybe." Eden replied. "Maybe you're right."

"When am I wrong?" I teased and pulled at her. I wrapped my lanky arms around her and squeezed her tightly. "You'll be fine. You are fine."

I could feel her tears leaking through my shirt. Everyone seemed to be crying today. Then, I felt the sting in my nose. I could not control it. I began to weep with her.

Once we had finished tending to the mares, my mother called out to us. She told us she had made dinner and it was getting cold. Her eyes were red. She had been crying the entire time she cooked. I wish I could reassure my mom, but I did not know what to say.

We headed to the house, our hands interlocked. Eden squeezed tightly on my hand and I glanced at her. She pressed her lips tightly together. I nodded. It was clear she was telling me to keep quiet about our conversation. Why would I even bring it up?

Fifty candles lit the entire house. They smelled like apple. Supposedly, the smell would please the goddesses. My mother made apple pie as well. She smiled once we entered the house and motioned us to sit. Food covered the entire table.

There were all kinds of dishes and sweets. I could feel my stomach smiling. I sat down next to my mother and she placed her hand onto my shoulder. She squeezed tightly and then kissed my forehead.

"Thank you for this meal." I said and then closed my eyes.

Silently we prayed about our own wishes and hopes. No one was allowed to pray aloud on the day before a woman's eighteen year. It would bring misfortune.

I was the first to finished my prayer and I stayed silent until the others finished. Even though I wanted to, I kept my hands at my side until they looked up. I noticed that they were waiting on me to be the first to fix my plate. They were behaving so oddly.

"You can have anything you want. You can even have your sweets first, if you like." My mother had said with pain in her voice. "I made all your favorites."

"Thank you." I mumbled. I reached for the wild rice and took a good chunk out of the top. I pushed my hand into the shredded cheese and sprinkled it on the rice. There was goose in the center of the table and I sliced a piece from its back. I left the legs alone because I knew that was Eden's favorite part. I also cut a piece of the apple pie. Then I looked at my mother and nodded. She smiled.

They started fixing their plates, too. Eden went straight for the goose legs. My mother grabbed a few turkey necks. I smiled at them, still waiting to eat. It was rude to eat before everyone else had gotten her food. I watched them look at me and nod. Then, we began to eat.

Of course, there was silence. It was awkwardly and painfully quiet. Never was it so quiet in my house. My mother would always bring home funny stories of real work. Real work was something the court counsel assigned to you. They would see what they needed, what you are best for and then assigned you a job.

If Eden were around, she would talk about her latest inventions. Eden had a sharp tongue and an even sharper mind. She would create some wonderful things that made life easier for her. Once, for my nine year, she gave me a doll that had a voice box inside. She made the voice box herself. Whenever I squeezed the doll tight enough, it would sing. Eden was the voice in the box, of course.

"Mother, any stories?" I asked. The silence was killing me.

"Not really. Samma came back from her maternity leave. She said her new baby girl has her grandmother's eyes." My mother said. "She showed us pictures. Her girl will be very beautiful, indeed."

"That's cool." I mumbled. "What about you, Eden? Have you made anything new?"

"Actually, yes I have. I found a way to sharpen knives instead of tossing the old, dull ones. Its looks like," she moved her hands in the air to give the full effect, "this. You're supposed to slide the blade into the black part and it just comes out shape." She said with a mouth full of food and an ego full of pride.

“Really? You should have brought it. I would have loved to see it.” I said with a huge smile. Yes, now we had something to discuss. “We have a ton of dull knives.”

“Really? Do you think I could actually market them? Maybe the court will see my invention as useful this time.” Eden’s mood changed. She had a glint of hope in her eyes.

“Of course they will!” My mother chimed in. “Your inventions are always helpful, no matter what they say.”

Eden was a farmer, but she loved to invent things. Whatever she received from crops, she would invest into materials. Her job as a farmer gave her a lot of free time for doing other things. She would always approach the court counsel with high hopes and a new machine. However, they would never recognize her as a real inventor because her title was a simple farmer.

“How’s the food?” My mother asked me. “Did you like it?”

“Of course I did. I love your cooking. You have an amazing talent.”

My mother worked at a factory. She would fix any machines that malfunctioned. Her job was simple, but she loved to cook. She always wanted to become a chef. Yet, the counsel put her where they needed her. They knew she had experience with machinery in her early childhood and placed her in that field. She never complained, but I knew that she is not truly happy unless she is cooking.

“Thank you, sweetie. That means a lot.” She kissed my forehead again. “I’m going to rest now. I’ll see you,” she paused and I watched her eyes start to water. “Good night, baby.”

She turned her back towards me. Her shoulders heaved up and paused for a second, and then she released a sigh. I could see her trembling.

“I love you, mom.” I whispered.

“I love you, back.” She answered and walked off towards her room.

I looked at Eden who was about to cry, too. She tried to smile with her cheeks full of goose, but she was hurting. I assumed it was painful to watch this unfold.

“Are you ready for bed?” I asked her.

“Not yet. Like you said, your mother has a talent.” She took another bite of her bird.

“You can bring it in my room.” I said. I did not want to sit at the table and hear my mother sobbing in the other room.

“Okay,” she replied. “I’ll be up in a little. Just let me grab a few more slices of this apple pie.”

I nodded and headed to my room. I had the only room on the second floor. There was not much up here. It was lonely and cold, but I still liked it. The hall that was upstairs had two doors. One door was the restroom and the other was my room.

One light hung low from the ceiling. It hovered and lit the entire hall. Every night, it would flicker once or twice because my mother broke the socket. She tried to fix it, but her talent, unfortunately, stayed in the kitchen.

I went into my room and pulled a brownie out of my pocket. I nibbled on it for a little until a star caught my eye. It was shining brighter than all the others were. Had I ever noticed this star before? I was usually always looking up at the sky. Why did this star look so unfamiliar?

“Hey,” Eden announced her arrival. “You two should really get someone to fix that light.” She sat on my bed. There was a plate overflowing with food on her lap.

“You could probably do a better job than I.” I replied and sat beside her. “You know what I was wondering?”

She stuffed the meat of a turkey neck into her puffy cheeks. “No.” She tried to say, but the food in her mouth blocked her response.

I started to smile at my friend. “Where do all the babies come from?” Eden almost choked on the food she was inhaling. She gave me a weird facial expression. “Honest. I was just thinking about that. I mean, in the old world, the legends say they needed a male and a female. Yet, we are all women.”

Eden chewed and chewed. She stuck her index finger in my face and continued to chew. She swallowed small chunks of meats and starches until there was enough room for her to respond.

"The goddesses shouldn't be question." She mumbled.

"I know, I'm just saying. I am not questioning them. I just want an answer besides 'the goddesses can do all' and junk."

"Well, you're supposed to be satisfied with that response." Eden took a small bite at her food. "I know what you mean, though. I never saw anyone actually pregnant."

"So you have noticed it, too." I agreed. "That's what made me wonder."

"Speaking of pregnancy is forbidden as well." Eden hissed.

"You are the one who said the word. I still haven't." I smiled at her and looked back at the star. I wondered if Anselma was up there. Maybe that is why it was so bright; it was delighting in her presence.

"About what I said in the shed," Eden began, "I had a dream." She sighed and put her hand to her stomach. "I was with a man who seemed happy in my sight. He was crying, but was really happy. He was looking down at me. There was also a woman with a mask on. She came over and handed me a child."

"You had a dream about child birth?" I gasped. "Are you sure?"

"I'm positive. I know what I dreamt." Eden looked down at her lap. "I woke up happy, but then I realized my reality."

"We shouldn't be talking about this." I nervously said. "Let's go to sleep."

Eden only nodded. She finished her plate hastily and then placed it on the floor. I placed my head down onto my pillow and closed my eyes. I felt Eden's back against mine. I could feel her breathing.

"Good night." She said.

"Good night. I'll see you in the morning." I mumbled.

My bed rumbled in my sleep, as if there was an earthquake. I opened my eyes and glanced over at Eden. She was still asleep. Then I saw it. There was something black in the corner. It watched me.

I did not move or speak. I only watched it back. It had no face, but it possessed a human's body. I could see its chest moving. It was alive. Yet, it did not move.

"Hello?" I said to it. "Am I going to disappear?" I asked.

It did not response. Instead, it started walking towards me. I noticed that its darkness was clothing. It was Alala. She came for me. I must have been because I was talking so much about marriage.

"Alala?" I could feel myself about to cry. "Please, don't take me. I am the only one my mother has. The rest of my family is dead or disappeared. Please."

The figure stopped. Did Alala reconsider? I held my breath and poked Eden with my toe. I hoped she would wake up. I tried to kick her subtly. She did not budge.

The figure moved again. Some kind of skirt covered its legs. It did not speak. I felt a warm tear run down my cheek. The dark one approached me and then it stopped at my bed. It put out what I assumed to be a hand. It waited.

"I'm not going." I growled. "I'm the only one here for Eden and my mother."

"Rebel." It said. Its voice was loud and stern. It scared me.

"Rebel?" I repeated. "I'm not a rebel. I'm only telling you that I cannot leave." I tried to explain myself.

Then two taller shadows materialized in my bedroom. The first one pointed in my direction. Then my eye lids become heavy. I felt tired suddenly. I tried to watch what happened, but I was falling back into sleep.

"Terminate the rebel." The two larger shadow figures said. Their voices were deeper than the first one's. They reached out their hands and seized me.

I started to struggle violently in their hands, but it was no use. They were stronger than I was. Their hands were the biggest I had ever seen. I swung my head back into what I thought was a head and heard it yell in pain; it still did not let me go. It was as if it trained for this moment.

"Eden!" I screamed. I could see her turning in her sleep. "Eden! Wake up!"

Her eyes opened slowly. "Eva?" She looked around for me. "Eva!" Her eyes opened wider once she spotted the black shadows.

Before she could even act, a circle appeared underneath the four of us. It was bright and stung my eyes. I felt my skin burning and my body ripping in half. I watched Eden cry out something, but I could not hear her. I watched tears fall from her eyes for the last time and then I disappeared.

I woke up on a hardwood floor. My body ached. I could hear my heart pounding in my head. I looked around and saw nothing but four white walls. Then I noticed it. I actually did not know what it was. It looked like me, but it lacked some of my features. It stood in the corner naked.

I almost jumped at what I saw between its legs. I tried to get a better look. I had never seen that before. Then I noticed I was naked as well. I quickly covered myself.

The weird looking female moved from the corner and approached me slowly. I looked at its skin and noticed scars and bruises.

"Who are you? And why am I naked?" I asked.

"I am Adam." It said with a deep voice. It pushed its long hair out of its face. "I am man." He announced.

I gasped and looked at him. His chin was bigger than mine was. His light brown hair was long, but it was not as shiny. He had what looked like breast, but they were flatter and wider. There was also that thing that hung between his legs.

"What? There are no men." I mumbled in disbelief. Still, that would explain many things.

The man crouched down and looked me in the eyes. His eyes were green. They seemed lifeless though. His curly hair fell back into his face. His hair fell a little past his neck. His neck had some kind of collar on it. As if, he was a dog.

"Please don't talk anymore." Adam whimpered. "You'll get me in trouble."

"With who?" I asked. The scars that covered his olive skin worried me. "There's no one else here."

"Them." He said and pointed at a white wall.

I looked over and saw no one. I looked back at Adam who was now closer than before. He grabbed my chin and pulled my face close to his. My heart raced. I watched him press his rough lips against mine. Without warning, my hand curled into a fist and punched him in the cheek.

He did not look stunned and he did not release any noise of pain. Instead, he looked at me and hugged me. It was weird because I was naked.

"What are you doing?" I questioned the man.

He chuckled. "I'm hugging you." Adam squeezed his long arms around me and hugged tighter. "You don't know what a hug is?"

"I do, but," I felt the urge to hug him back. Instead, I pushed at his breast. "Go away." I hissed.

"No, I'm not allowed." He said. "I can't leave until my job is done."

"What is your job?" I asked. I wanted him out of my sight.

"I'm supposed to have a child with you." He said calmly. "Yet, the process is slightly discomforting."

"What are you talking about?" I pushed him again. "Stop talking nonsense. I don't know how you survived the goddesses' wrath, but once they realize you are here --"

"They know I'm here." Adam said and kissed me again.

My fist came up once again and slammed into his jaw. "Stop doing that!" I hissed.

"It's my job. Please don't make it difficult for me."

"Difficult for you?"

"I was told this was my last chance." He explained. "If I don't get you pregnant, well, let's just say there won't be a next time."

"They will kill you." I said. I understood. This is where the babies came from. All the girls that disappeared never really did. They were taken, to this place.

"Yes, they will kill me." Adam whispered. "So, now that you understand. Could you please let me do my job?"

"No." I hissed. "I don't care what happens to you. You are a man. Men are the cause of all our heartache."

"I'm not the only one who will be punished for not complying." Adam announced. He pointed to his left arm. There was a dark scar the size of a hand. "Do you see this? This is from the last time."

I nodded and looked away from the scar. I saw a tiny camera in the corner of the room. Something that Eden would have made, but more advanced. It glowed red and hummed. At that moment, I realized there were several of those around my house. Were they always watching us?

"That is them?" I asked and pointed up at the camera.

"Yea." Adam said and waved at it. "This is them, too." He added with his index finger pointed towards his collar.

"Who are they?"

"Your goddesses."

I stood to my feet. There was nothing in the room, but a bed. There were white sheets and a white comforter. The bed frame was dark brown and it was made of metal. There was a ball at the end of each rod of the frame. I walked towards the bed.

"Thank you." Adam said to himself.

I rolled my eyes and grabbed one of the balls. It was stuck on there. I pulled at it, but it did not budge. I thought like Eden. She would break things down and build them up again. I leaned in to get a better look and noticed it was screwed on.

I twisted to the left and heard a soft rumble. I continued until the metal ball was in my hand. I felt how heavy it was and rolled it in my hands. It was good enough.

"What are you doing?" Adam asked.

"I'm Eva, by the way." I said with a smile and chucked the ball towards the camera. I heard it crack and the glowing light faded.

"Why did you do that? They are going to shock me now! Great, thanks for that." Adam pushed his hands through his hair and continued to mutter words of annoyance.

I started taking apart the bed. Now that I had privacy, I felt more comfortable. I ignored Adam and took each rod. I had three balls left and four rods. I left the balls on three of the rods. The last rod I used to make a sack by tying a sheet to it. Then I tossed it to Adam.

"Adam. Be quiet." I grumbled. "Do you hear that? Foot steps. They're here." I smiled.

I walked over to him and looked at his neck. How could I get the collar off? I had no tools with me as Eden did.

"I'm taking you back to Eden." I said and grabbed his hand. "Where's the door?"

A door came up from the floor and three black shadows came into the room. They were tall like Adam. They had long metal things in their hands. They pointed them directly at us. It looked dangerous.

"What now?" Adam hissed. "I'm a dead man."

I took a rod and felt how heavy it was. It would last a few good hits. I took one and tossed it to the man. Then I motioned with my head. I ran towards the shadow and swung at the metal he held. Then, at what I assumed was the head.

Adam caught on quickly and followed my lead. He knocked the metal down and then aimed for the head of one. I saw him pick up the metal thing while I finished off the last one.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It's a gun," he explained, but noticed I looked confused, "it's a weapon."

"A weapon," I repeated. I crouched down and pulled off the black cloaks that covered the figures. They were humans. All were men.

"A weapon. You know; something you use to really hurt people." He said and bent down to get the cloak, too. He pulled it over his body. It completely covered his face.

I did the same. I picked up the gun and looked at it. I did not quite understand, but I decided to let Adam handle them. I pulled the three bodies into the room. I took off their clothes and left them naked.

"Let's go."

"Go where?" Adam replied. "We don't know where we are? You did not even know what a gun was. What makes you think you can really escape from here?"

"What's your story, Adam?" I asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Where did you come from? You must have a story. How did you end up here?"

"Oh, well, I was born into captivity." Adam said. "My father was just like me, a man used for reproduction. My mother was a woman like you, she conceived a boy. Instead of disposing of the boys, they grow them up in here and when they reach eighteen, they forced to have sex."

"Sex?"

"The act for creating a baby." He explained.

"So, there are more of you guys?" I asked while walking down the hallway. I noticed that engaging Adam in conversation kept him calm.

"Yea, there are a lot of us."

I bit my lip and looked up at the ceiling. There was a big pipe. I stared at it until I noticed it was leaking. There was a screw loose or something.

"What are these pipes for?"

"Probably for plumbing." Adam said. "It's probably the waste of your precious goddesses."

"Do you think it would lead outside?" I asked and began to follow the pipe.

Adam stayed close to me and held his gun out. He smelled funny, but he was very beautiful, for a man. He had a well-sculpted body, too. The goddesses must have shown him favor.

"Look." He commanded.

I looked ahead of us and saw a hole. The pipe ended there. I could smell the waste. It was horrid. Adam ran ahead of me and I let him. He pushed a button on his gun and a small light flickered on. I did the same.

"This is it. This is our way out!" He exclaimed. It was the first time I actually saw him smile. His green eyes glowed with excitement. He stepped into the hole and soon his light faded.

I took a deep breath and did the same. My legs were greeted with cold mush. I did not look down at it because I knew it would gross me out. I quickly caught up with Adam. He looked back at me and laughed.

I ignored him and walked ahead. I could see it. There was a light shining down. Everything else was dark, but there was a light. I stood underneath it and saw the sky.

"How will we get up there?" I asked in defeat.

"The ladder?" Adam said and chuckled. He did not hesitate to go up the ladder either. I watched him climb and then proceeded in doing the same.

Adam reached the top first. I heard loud crackles that echoed. I grew stiff. I counted each loud crack. There were six in total. I did not move. I felt fear freeze me.

"Eva?" Adam called down. "Eva, come up. It's safe now."

I looked up and saw his smile. I felt the ice melt away and joy swell in my heart. His face shined in the light as he reached his hand down the hole. I lifted up mine to reach his and I realized his was warm. It felt like safety and freedom. I could not explain it exactly.

When I finally crawled out of the hole, I embraced Adam for the first time on my own. I was shaking and his arms came to comfort me. My head pressed against his chest and I listened to his heartbeat.

"Thank you." He uttered.

"For what?" I asked.

"You saved me." He smiled and leaned in to kiss me.

I turned my face and pushed away from him. I started walking away from the hole. He sighed and followed behind me. I smirked a little. His frustration was somewhat attractive. I did not understand the feelings I felt at that moment, but I liked them.

The sun was directly overhead by the time we arrived in my court. We had to wear the black clothes over our faces to hide Adam. Oddly, no one questioned why two people were wearing all black. It was lucky for us though.

We arrived at my house and I walked towards the front door. I could hear weeping from behind the door. My heart grew heavy as I turned the knob.

"Eden, get behind me." My mother said. Her red eyes full of hate. "Are these the figures you saw?"

"Yes." Eden said and stood to her feet. "Where is Eva?"

I removed my headpiece and softly grinned. "I told you I'd see you in the morning. Sorry I'm a little late."

My mom and Eden rushed over to me and hugged me tightly. They started to laugh and cry at the same time. I cried with them. I thought I would never return. I was not planning to return either. I thought I was going to die.

"Who is this?" Eden asked. Her arms loosened.

"I'll tell you later. Mom, we have to go to Eden's house for her tools." I said and rushed into my room. I dug into my dresser and pulled out two dresses. I also grabbed under wear and headed back downstairs.

Adam was silent the entire time. He did not move or speak. He was good at imitating the shadows. I reached for his arm and then motioned for Eden to follow.

"Why are you leaving so soon? I just got you back!" My mom said.

"Mom, I already told you. I will always be with you." I said and closed the door behind me.

Eden was watching the figure carefully. She did not trust it. She did not know what it was, either. She held my hand tightly until we arrived at her home. She released my hand from her iron grip and unlocked her door. Three dogs ran to lick her face.

"Not now, mommy has some business to attend to." Eden said. "Now, who is this?"

I ignored her questioning and looked around her house. I saw several red lights. "Adam, use the gun." I said while pointing at the cameras. I smashed the ones I could reach.

"What was that?" Eden screamed. She covered her ears with her hands. "Why does it make so much noise?"

"It's a gun. I need you to take one apart, find out how they are made, and make some more for me." I said.

"First, who is this?"

"His name is Adam, he is a man." I announced. I was proud and my smile showed this.

"A man? You're lying!" She said. "Show your face."

Adam looked at me and I nodded. He slowly removed his facemask. Eden almost fainted. She reached out to touch his face and flinched. That made Adam smile. He grabbed her hand and pressed it against his cheek.

"Okay! Enough of that. Let's focus on the important things at hand." I said. I felt a little jealous. "This thing around his neck, do you think you can remove it?"

Eden looked at Adam's neck. She pushed his chin upwards to get a better look. "I'm pretty sure. It may take an hour or so, though." She said.

Without time for me to respond, she turned away and walked off. I watched her for a little and then glared at Adam. He was playing with the collar around his neck.

"What the heck was that?" I asked.

"What are you talking about?" He replied and then smirked. "I see. You like me."

"What? I don't hate you, so I guess." I looked at my hands. The dresses were dangling between my fingers. "Here, put this on."

"A dress? Do you not have any pants? Men don't wear dresses." He explained.

"Why not? I wear dresses and so can you. Dresses are pretty." I replied. "Besides, we don't have clothing for men."

"Well, turn around." He mumbled.

"What? I have already seen you naked. Get dress and hurry up." I said. "Here are some panties and a bra, as well. I do not think it will fit your breast, though. Yours are oddly flat and wider than mine."

"That's because they aren't breast. They are pectorals. Chest." He explained. "I'm not wearing your underwear."

"Why not?" I growled. "You're too good for my dress and now my underwear?"

"No, that's not it at all. It's just--look. I am not wearing your underwear. That's that." He turned away from me and slipped out of his black robe.

I did the same and dressed away from him. I did not understand why he was so shy. I already saw everything. There was no point in hiding now.

"Okay, I've got the tools." Eden said.

"Do you have a sewing kit?" I questioned while picking up the black material. I decided I would be the first woman to make male clothing.

"I do. It is in my mother's room. Please be careful in there." Eden simply said. She placed her rough hands against Adam's shoulders and pressed down. He knelt. She looked closely at his neck and pulled a screwdriver from her toolbox.

I went into Diana's room. There was spider webs and dust everywhere. It seemed like no one came in here, ever. I turned on the light and it flickered. Then the bulb busted. It scared me and I almost screamed. There was silence in the room, which freaked me out. I decided to hurry up and find the machine.

I did not see it anywhere. I peeked under the bed. It was dark under there. I still had the light from the gun and clicked it on. A small machine materialized in front of my eyes. If it were a snake, it would have bit me. I pulled it out and wiped away the dust. I looked back underneath the bed and saw a little bag. I pulled that out, too.

I left the room and sat next to Eden and Adam. She was still looking deeply into his collar. She was intrigued and puzzled at the same time. I came over with measuring tape. I held the tape up to

Adam's legs and arms. I wrapped it around his arm and legs to get the circumference. He looked down at me and smiled.

I measured his waist and his chest. He winked at me, but I continued to ignore him. I decided not to look at his face anymore. When I was done with the measurements, I went back to the machine. I pulled out scissors from the bag and cut shapes out from the black fabric.

Eden let out a little yelp of pain. I looked up at her, but she did not look away from her project. Then my puzzled eyes glanced at Adam. He shrugged his shoulder. I shook my head and looked back down at the fabric in front of me.

I turned the machine on and heard it purr. I placed the string into the machine. I only had white string, which I was sure Adam would not complain about that. I started to sew his underwear first. It seemed the most important to me. I imagined him without underwear and shivered. Men were crafted oddly.

"Eva, you should come see this." Eden said. I looked over at her. "Two things, I got the collar off. But, what is that rock thing in his neck?"

"It's an Adam's apple." Adam explained. "All men have them. Watch this." He swallowed and his Adam's apple moved.

"Ew." I closed my eyes.

"Do it again!" Eden said. She would love to take Adam apart and find out how he works, but that would be murder.

"Wait, so your name is Adam and you have an Adam's apple? Are you sure you aren't making this up?" I asked bluntly.

"Oh, hush." He said and rubbed his neck. "It feels so weird touching my own neck. I haven't done this since I was in my sixteen year." He looked up at Eva and smile. His eyes glowed with life.

"I'm almost done with your clothing." I said and looked away. For some reason, his eyes made my skin tingle.

"That's good. Then I can get out of this wretched dress."

"Excuse me? My mother made Eva that dress!" Eden said and pinched Adam on his arm.

"Whatever. It's my opinion." He said. Adam tilted his head left and right, getting a feel of his neck again.

"Adam, can you tell us why you aren't dead?" Eden asked. "I'm not trying to be funny. I am honestly curious. We were taught that women were the only humans left. Even our animals are all female."

"And you guys never thought that was a little weird?" Adam asked. "My father told not to believe every person who came to me. He said to test them because there are many false diviners."

"We did think it strange, but we were afraid to question it. Alala would surely have our heads if we ever did." I said. I had finished his underwear. I then started to sew him a pair of pants.

"I guess," he replied. "I was born in captivity."

"That's it? That cannot be it. Our legends say that all the men were destroyed by our goddesses, but here you stand--why?" Eden said. "There must have been a mistake."

"There is not mistake. Men were never destroyed. Women were just excluded." He said. Adam pressed his fingers against his Adam's apple and swallowed again. "I've seen your so-called goddesses, too."

"Really?" I asked. I paused what I was doing to listen. "Were they beautiful and radiant?"

"No, they were old." He hissed. "I don't know why you guys are so blind. They tricked you all."

"Explain." Eden said. She was too curious to be offended.

"My grandfather was a man of the old world. He lived with a wife and a daughter. He was around before the big war broke out between the two countries, Yoco and Barrol, which bordered each other." Adam explained. "Each king wanted the territory that bordered their countries to be their own."

Women and men alike joined in the fight to please their kings. Four of these warriors were your so-called goddesses.”

“They fought bravely, but they grew bitter as they watched many die before them. They lost hope and faith. The fight dragged on for several years until finally, the king of Barrol decided it was time to end it. He bombed the land of Yoco fiercely. When the raid was over, all that was left was rubble.”

“How did the four survive?” Eden interrupted.

Adam sighed. “I was getting to that part.”

“Oh, sorry. I’ll be quiet now.” Eden bit her bottom lip.

“Thank you.” Adam scratched his chin. “A handful people were tipped off about the bombings before it actually happened. They went into shelters underneath the ground.”

“Like the place we were in today! Is that one of the shelters?” I asked.

“Yea, it is. Aditi, Alala, Anselma and Amadea lived in that place for a year. When they finally emerged, they saw their entire country destroyed. They clearly went insane and here we are today.”

“How come they were able to trick us and get us all here?” I asked.

“The first generation were robots. The second generation were your mothers and the third generation is you.” Adam explained.

“You expect me to believe this?” Eden questioned with her arms crossed.

“Look at it this way, I’m a man and I’m here.” He said and stood to his feet. “Is there a place I can wash off?”

Eden nodded and pointed down the hallway. I tossed him his underwear and his pants. I was still sewing his shirt. I wanted it to have a collar and buttons. The only buttons in the bag were white though, but I knew he would not complain. It was better than a dress in his eyes.

“Do you believe him?” Eden asked once she heard the water running.

“Don’t you?” I asked. “Even if he said that we were all robots, he is a man. Eden, a man in our world. That is already impossible. I don’t know what to believe, but I don’t believe them anymore.”

“I guess you’re right.” Eden said. She looked at the collar and shook her head. “Do you know what this is?”

“A dog collar?”

“No, I would never put this on one of my dogs. This is a collar used to electrocute the wearer.” Eden looked at it in disgust. “Why would someone put this on a human?”

“Did you two miss me?” Adam had asked. His hair was dripping with water and he had a goofy smile on his face. “I have never, in my life, done that before.”

“Showered?” Eden asked.

“Yea, that was amazing.”

“I hope you used soap.” I said. I remembered his smell. He smelled horrid, and we had to walk in the waste mush to escape the sex cell. That made his aroma ten times worse. I shivered at the thought of it.

“Put on a shirt!” Eden exclaimed when she noticed his scars.

I looked at Adam and saw him shaking the water from his hair onto Eden. She was growling at him, but she was also laughing. I watched Adam for a while. He was very tall. Most women did not grow to be his height, not in my court. He was at least twice the size of Eden.

He was also muscular. I wondered if they trained him to be strong in the bomb shelter. Scars covered his muscles. His skin looked almost discolored. I could never imagine what he had to go through, but now he was free. He was able to live however he wanted and with whoever he pleased.

“Did you finish my shirt, Eva?” Adam asked.

I quickly looked down. I could feel my cheeks, ears, and nose burning from embarrassment. Had he seen me watching him? I pushed my thoughts away. I only had to sew on the buttons. I worked as quickly as I could without messing up.

"White buttons?" He asked. He was behind me, peeking over my shoulder. "That actually looks pretty neat." Adam pressed his navel against my back and bent over me for a closer look.

"Thanks." I mumbled. "I'm almost done." I could not keep my hands still. I felt my heart beat in my fingertips.

"That's great!" He exclaimed. "Unless you guys like me walking around with my shirt off."

"I don't. Your scars make me uneasy." Eden muttered and looked down at her hands. "Is anyone hungry? I have leftovers from yesterday."

"You took food from my house? While I was missing?" I looked at Eden and frowned. "That's dirty, even for you."

"A girl's gotta eat! Especially if she is depressed. Food is the best comfort, I always say."

"I'm starved!" Adam moved away from me. He started to follow Eden to the kitchen.

My back and shoulder felt cold. When he left, he took his body heat with him. I rolled my eyes at the thought and took advantage of the privacy. There was peace and quiet. I could focus.

When I had finished the shirt, I lifted it up. I looked at it and smiled. It was sown pretty well, if I do say so myself. Adam and Eden were in the kitchen for a while. I decided it was time for me to make my appearance.

"I finished your shirt." I said with a smile.

"Oh, thanks." Adam said. He was eating one of my mother's apple pies.

"Where's Eden?" I asked and handed it to him.

Adam only shrugged. He slowly buttoned the shirt up and smiled. He rolled each sleeve up passed his elbow. He nodded with approval.

"You're supposed to fix the collar." I said and walked over to him. "It's supposed to fold down like this." I huffed.

Adam simpered. He placed his sticky fingers onto my cheek. "Eva," he gently said.

I gazed into his eyes and froze. I knew what he was doing before he even tried. He was going to kiss me. My blood began to rush. I watched as his eyes closed and his face came closer to mine's. The heat from his face was so enticing; I closed my eyes, too.

His lips were softer this time, probably because he had taken a shower. He also smelled rather sugary, and his lips tasted like apple. It was no wonder the Elite Four cherished the smell and taste. Our embrace seemed to last forever, but it had to end. Adam pulled away. I opened my eyes to see him smirking at me. I watched him lick his lips.

"I knew you liked me." He whispered. His long arms swung around my waist. "I'm irresistible."

"Or maybe I'm just desperate." I replied and kissed him again. I felt his arms tighten around me. Adam pulled me close. I could feel his tongue pressing against my lips.

"Guys?" Eden mumbled awkwardly. "I'm sorry, but what the heck are you guys doing?"

I quickly pulled my face away from Adam's and looked at the buttons on his shirt. I could feel his arms pulling me even closer. His softly kissed my forehead.

He turned to look at Eden and smiled. "We're madly in love. We have decided to run away together."

"What? No, not even." I replied and pushed away from Adam. "We were kissing each other's lips." I explained.

"Why would anyone want to do that?" Eden asked. Her face began to scrunch up with repulsion.

"It's actually quite fun, you should try it." Adam said.

"Okay, get away from her." Eden took my hand and pulled me from Adam's embrace. "I'm not leaving you two alone."

I could hear Adam chuckling. Eden pulled me to her living area and sat me down on a chair. She left the room for several seconds and then returned with a box. She opened it and pulled a metal thing from it. It was a gun; almost identical to the one I had brought her.

"You did it!" I said with a huge smile. I stood up and glanced inside the box. There were at least twenty inside it.

"I did. That's what I was working on while you two were being weird." She said. "I actually think I made it a little better than the one you gave me." Eden looked at me and frowned. "Why do you want these?"

I took the gun from Eden's hand. "Because we're going to attack the bomb shelter. We're gonna start a riot."

Eden had successfully made one hundred guns by the end of that day. I had made forty and Adam only made sixteen. We also started to build bombs. Adam told us how they worked and drew a sketch. He could actually draw really well. He even drew a sword and Eden made a few of those, too.

I hadn't made a plan. All I knew was that the Elite Four were liars. I knew that they were stealing away innocent girls to turn them into baby-making machines. I knew that they were cynical freaks who needed to pay. And I knew that I was not going to let them live in the new world I created. I would cut them down from their self-made thrones and strike their heads with my heel.

The next thing I needed to figure out was how we were going to get people to believe us. I decided to test this problem out with my mother. We headed to my place. The black of the night hid us from the court guards.

"Wait outside here." I said to Eden and Adam. I did not want my mother to freak at the sight of him.

I pushed the door open and my nose was greeted with the smell of apple. The smell overwhelmed me. I heard chanting coming from my mother's bedroom. I pressed my ear to the door to listen. She was thanking the Elite Four for my return. I rolled my eyes and then knocked on the door.

My mom did not answer. She was too engulfed in her prayers. I decided I would just walk in. I opened her door and saw my mother kneeling in front of her bed. Candles surrounded her. She was mumbling words of thanks and praise.

"Mom," I whispered. "There's something I have to show you."

"Huh?" My mother turned to look in my direction. She smiled when she realized it was her daughter. "Hi honey. What do you need to show me?"

I swallowed hard. "It's something that can destroy your life fabric."

"What are you talking about?" She asked looking worried. She stood to her feet and started to walk towards me.

"Eden, bring him in!" I shouted.

Adam and Eden walked into the room. I watched my mother look confused at the waving man. He put his hand out in front of him.

"My name is Adam." He said with his deep voice.

"He's a man, mom." I explained.

I was not expecting my mother to faint, but she did. If this was how our entire court, our entire country was going to behave--I did not believe we stood a chance. I heard Adam and Eden sigh and I shook my head. We sat in the living area until my mother woke up. While we waited, I took the liberty of smashing all the red lights around the house. I did not want anyone listening to our conversations.

I heard my mother groan. She must have hit her head hard when she fell back. I listened to her shuffling in her room and then the door slowly opening. I held my breath. I was worried about what she would do or say.

She crept into the living area and peeked around the corner. I could tell she was scared. The last thing she probably remembered was meeting a man. Anyone would be afraid because of the way we

were brought up. Men were evil, which is why they were banished. They were selfish and did not believe women should live. They were dangerous and villainous. Yet, that was not the case.

Adam was patient with me. He did not try to force himself on me even though his life depended on it. He was sweet and compassionate and generally had a good heart. Even though sometimes he would tease me. I just needed to find a way to make my mother see this Adam.

“So it wasn’t a dream?” My mother sighed. “He is real.”

“Yea, I’m real.” Adam replied. He stood to his feet and put out his hand again. “The name’s Adam, ma’am.” He tried his best to be polite, but I could tell he was feeling awkward.

“I’m Magnolia,” my mother said shaking Adam’s hand. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“The reason I brought you here was to explain.” I looked at my mother and tried my best to smile. “I didn’t disappear last night, I was kidnapped.”

“What do you mean?” My mother took a seat. She probably was afraid of fainting again.

“While I was sleeping, three figures came into my room and took me to a white bunker. There, I met Adam for the first time. He explained to me that I was there to create a baby with him.” I paused and watched my mother’s face. “That is where the babies come from. I was made in a white bunker and then you found me in your room. Samma’s baby was conceived in a white bunker as well. Your niece, my cousin, is one of the women used to make a child. The old world’s ways never really ended. They were only exiled from our world. The world that we know is a lie.”

I watched my mother’s face twist. First she was confused, then disgusted, sad and then angry. She stood to her feet and paced around the room. I did not say anything. I had seen my mother like this several times, once was when I was late for curfew, two days late.

“What do you plan on doing about this?” My mother asked.

“We plan on freeing our people.” I said.

“Then let’s get started.” My mother replied and walked over to Adam. “Are there more of you?”

“There are. Some of us were trained to be breeders and others were trained to be brutes.”

“Like the two that showed up in my room?” I whispered to myself. I looked at my best friend and nodded.

“Here, Ms. Eva’s mom. These are weapons. Adam taught us about them. He said to use them to hurt people. He said to handle them with care.” Eden pulled out a gun and passed it to my mom.

“Why would we need to hurt someone?” My mom gasped.

Adam opened his shirt and showed his chest to my mother. She looked like she was about to cry.

“They need to be stopped.” I said to my mother. “They’ve hurt too many for too long.”

“I agree. Too many have suffered at the hands of Alala and her kind, whatever they are.” I watched my mother grip tightly onto the gun. “What do you need me to do?”

We quickly formulated a plan of attack. I was in charge of recruiting young fighters into battle. Those who did not want to get their hands dirty were to report to Eden and help her make weapons. Adam tagged along with me; he was all the proof I needed. My mother had to talk to the women who were in their twenty-five year and higher. She would also destroy any red lights she saw around the court or the homes.

It took us at least seven days to complete the plan and to turn everyone into believers. We had a small army at our disposal, too. I did not allow anyone in the fifteen year or lower to participate in the battle. They were sent to different courts to spread the word. Soon word of a riot reached three counties (which is nine courts). That was plenty.

I summoned everyone to the center of our court. There I addressed them about our plan. Adam stood beside me holding my hand. Eden was holding onto my other.

"Fellow women of the court, I have gathered you here today because today is the day. Today is the day we raid the bomb shelter. Today is the day we attack our suppressors. Today is the day we take freedom." I shouted to the crowd. They cheered. Once they calmed down, I continued.

"Here on my left is a woman; a human being with feelings and hopes and dreams. She is kind and honest, loving and fair. She is beautiful." I felt Eden squeeze my hand. I continued. "Here on my left is a man. A human being with feeling and dreams as well. He may look different from us, but he still has a heart. He still loves and deserves to be loved." I felt my cheeks burning, but I ignored that.

"We are all human. We all have rights and one of these rights is freedom." I paused when the women cheered again. I nodded. "Yes, freedom is something that we have never seen before, but today is the day we get to embrace it for the first time. Today is the first day of the rest of our lives!"

I flew my hands into the air, allowing the cheering crowd to build my ego. I felt Adam's hands on my waist. He lifted me off the ground and spun me around. Everyone was watching. I felt no shame.

"Alright, people," Eden took the center of the stage. "We will be splitting up into two teams." She held a gun in her hand. "Everyone on my right will be freeing the breeders, men and women alike. Everyone else will be attacking the shadows. Now listen, I know they raised us to harm no one, but this is self-defense. They will attack you first. You mustn't let them harm you. They will stand in our way if we ignore them."

"They wear all black, from head to toe. They look like shadows, you cannot miss them. Some are women and some are men, but they are all our enemies. Stop them at any cost."

Eden turned from the crowd and gave us a thumbs-up. She walked off to her group to help pass out the guns and other weapons. I watched my court take the guns with pride. I smiled at the group that embraced truth so willingly. They believed in something that seemed impossible.

I turned to look at Adam who was beaming. He was amazed as well. He took my hand and kissed me on the cheek. He pressed his lips against my face long and hard. When he pulled away, he shook his head.

"Thank you." He said to me.

"For what?"

"For sticking through with this. Without you, everyone who have been in the dark." He said and kissed me. It was a quick kiss this time.

"Whenever you kiss me, I can't help but taste apple pie." I admitted.

"Am I too sweet for you, baby?" He teased and kissed me again.

"Come on, you two. You have to lead the people into the new world." Eden said. "Eva, stop being gross and grab a gun."

"Right," I replied. I left Adam and grabbed a gun. I lifted it up and shouted freedom at the crowd. They, in returned, shouted it back. Then, we chanted freedom for at least thirty seconds. When it was over, everyone roared.

Adam, Eden and I walked towards to the bomb shelter with a crowd of hundreds behind us. The footsteps of our army rumbled the floor. I could feel the Earth around me shake. I smiled. Today was the day.

The first group went ahead to clear a path for the second group. It was the second group's job to remove any breeders from the premises. I told them they had only a minute to get in and clear a big enough path. I knew they could do it.

When the second group went in, I felt nervous. It was our turn. Eden, Adam and I were supposed to find the Four and take them down. Our job was simple, but it was frightening. I was coming head to head with the very people I worshipped. I had to keep reminding myself they were only people.

"The minute is up." Eden said and headed into the bomb shelter. She held her gun in front of her and walked slowly.

I quickly followed. It was quiet at first. Then I could hear a soft rumble. It got louder and louder with each footstep. I felt my heart sink into my stomach. When I saw it and my mouth dropped open.

Though they were shadows, they bled red. I saw their bodies spread out along the floors. Red covered some and others were still breathing. I saw some women covered in the same red liquid. They were dead.

We had to step over all the bodies to get to the control room. It was not that far in the shelter. It was directly in the center. I could sense the evil behind the door. I held my breath and watched Adam kicked the door down.

Four old women were sitting down in their chairs. Their hair was long and grey. They all looked alike. They were truly sisters. Their faces were wrinkled and they were smiling. I grew angry at their smiles.

"Welcome," they said in unison. "We've been expecting you three."

"Oh, have you now?" Adam asked.

"We have." The one farthest right had said. "We knew this day would come."

"Then why did you do it?" Eden asked. "Why would you go through with this plan if you knew it would lead to your demise?"

"That answer is complex." The youngest one said.

"I want to know." I said. "Tell us."

"As you wish," they spoke in unison again. "We were brought into this world for one purpose. Our purpose was to free our suppressed sisters from the man's curse."

"No, that's not true at all." Adam growled. "Tell her the truth."

"This is the truth, man." The middle one said. "When I was younger than you, I had to fight for my king. He was foolish enough to fight for a strip of land. He forced his people, men and women, to fight in a battle he would never see. Many had died, too many to count. He was selfish and through his selfishness, he destroyed his nation."

"Each king decided it was time to bomb the other. They bombed each other into oblivion. There was nothing left. The trees perished, the sky was dark, and everything was gone. We were a few of the only ones alive."

"I know, I understand that much." Eden replied. "Hurry up and get to the point."

"Patience is a virtue, young one. Please allow us to complete our tale so that we may live on through it." The young one replied. She paused to see if there would be any more outbursts and then continued. "We did not have much, but we had our brains. Unfortunately, the king used us for brutal combat, but we were always technicians. We believe the world would become better with inventions, as do you, Eden."

"We decided to build a new world. We created female robots. With the skin of the dead, we made them look realistic. We programmed them to take care of each other. We taught them true compassion and love."

"Love that allowed the hatred of men." I barked.

The Four ignored me and continued. "We decided that the God we learned about was a false one. Why would He allow this much pain and suffering to exist in the world?"

"You allowed pain and suffering underneath our feet!" I yelled.

"Yet, we are only human. We could only make this world so perfect." The second oldest one replied. "Though you see these things as cruel, we see them as necessary."

"We found the other survivors and preached our new philosophy to them. They were lost and confused, so we easily persuaded them. We told the men that they were needed to repopulate the Earth. These filthy men were eager to do so. Their lustful ways is another reason we did what we did."

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