A Soul of Darkness and Light

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Summary

With Selene as her mother and Helios her father, Luna is a child of the ancient gods. But her love of the mortal realm and her constant interference have caused her to be cast from the sky. Banished to Earth, her soul split into 4 pieces, she must find each to end her punishment. But each piece has claimed it’s own soulmate, unlocking strange gifts and drawing the turtles into a web of mystery surrounding her past, encompassing the gods of above and below.
It was dark, but then it was always dark down here. Light meant danger, darkness was safe. Leonardo revelled in the darkness. He embraced it, moved confidently through it and would see it wrapped, like a cloak, around his loved ones. Darkness sheltered, obscured, and shielded them from any who would do them harm. It kept them safe from the intrusions of the world above.

Leo saw well in the dark. What was concealed from others was plain to him. What would the darkness reveal to him tonight? There, what was that? A small gleam of light.

He sought up and down the tunnel for its source. Light in his darkness always boded ill. It was just a flicker really, a dim glow that was fading fast. But it was moving. On guard now, he disappeared among the shifting shadows, following silently with every sense alert.

Trusting in his skill, Leo drew closer. The glow was pale but to his light starved eyes it was bright enough to see well along the tunnel. There was nothing there. The ghostly flame danced alone. Confused, Leo checked the tunnel for life again, stretching out with all his senses and focusing his mind, but it was still empty. This tiny luminescence moved seemingly of its own accord.

In all his years down here, Leo had never seen anything like it. It was fascinating to watch, flitting here and there like a hummingbird, bringing its soft blue light to the shadows. Curious, Leo considered calling his brother. Don would love to see this. But until Leo knew if it posed a threat, he would leave Don out of it.

He would follow this flame and if it turned out to be harmless, then he’d let Don collect it for study. So far, it wasn’t doing anything overtly dangerous. It didn’t seem to emit any heat, or singe any debris. It hadn’t ignited the more flammable gases present either. It’s as if this glow was merely a memory of light, unconnected to reality.

Leo thought he could watch it for hours, it was so rare to come across something new down here but unfortunately it was wondering far too near the one place he didn’t want it to go. Home.

Leo had been silently watching, blending with the darkness, and it had not seen him. He wondered briefly if the flame like creature even had eyes, or some other form of awareness, but the time for observation was past. Now it was time to act, to draw this creature out, and move it away from his family.

He would expose himself to protect them from discovery. He would distract it and lead it astray. If he couldn’t do that he would have to find a way to destroy it.

Leo stepped to the center of the tunnel and watched it alertly. It was the primary focus of his
concentration, but experience had taught him to keep an ear out for other noises. This close to home there shouldn’t be any intruders. Then again, he’d just followed this little thing here, so there could be others out there, lying in wait in the darkness.

Leo waited, but it didn’t seem to notice him. The little light creature was intent on poking around in the shadows near the wall. Normally he wouldn’t bother something that wasn’t even interested in him, but the wall it was investigating was really a concealed door. It angered him that something unknown was this close to his family.

“Move away from there” Leo growled through clenched teeth, as he drew his weapon. “Pay attention little flame, I’m talking to you!”

It was certainly aware of him now. It... well, it flinched... for lack of a better word. It moved away from the wall and slowly floated toward the center of the tunnel.

Leo made a feint at it with his sword, a swipe he knew to be well short. He didn’t really want to hurt it, it was a beautiful little thing after all. Perhaps it was lost? Maybe it was being drawn to a power source like Don’s equipment.

It moved quickly back out of reach, then flared so brightly that Leo was momentarily blinded. He stepped back with an oath, and braced himself for the attack that was sure to follow.

Nothing happened. When his eyes cleared, the little flame was still there. It bobbed just out of reach of his sword. Okay, so now they had exchanged warning shots. He hadn’t hurt it and it hadn’t hurt him. Now what?

help. The light flared with a little pulse.

“What was that?” Leo asked, startled.

help. It flared again.

“You want my help?”

help. Another flare.

“With what exactly?”

This was something he hadn’t considered. That it might be in trouble. It could be sick, or injured, and he’d just taken a swing at it.

Guilt flooded him. He should know better than to judge something unusual so quickly. It didn’t look hurt, but what did he know about fire creature things?

It seemed to understand English, though, since it had moved away from the wall at his command. It sounded a bit simple. Perhaps it was young? He’d speak to it like a child.

“Let’s start again.” he said, “Who are you?”

sol.

“Your name is Sol?” He tried again. “And you need help?”

help.

Gods! That was frustrating. This was turning into a game of 20 questions, and all he could get were
one word answers. Of course, he wasn’t sure how it was talking at all.

“I need to know how to help you.” Leo said steadily. He would not lose his temper with this little one.

*show?*

It flickered tentatively toward him, then shied away again when his sword reflected it’s light.

It was afraid of him. Leo swallowed hard and felt guilt swamp him again. It was afraid but still asking for his help. It must really need it. He sheathed his sword in one smooth, practiced, movement and turned back to the little creature.

Holding out his hand palm up, in a peaceful gesture, he asked,

“How will you show me?”

*head?* Another little tremble.

“You need to touch my head?”

As it floated nearer, Leo examined it closely. It was shaped like a teardrop, and hung steadily in the air. He couldn’t see how it moved, much less conversed.

*ok?* Sol asked.

“Hold on a moment little one,” he said.

It paused while he pulled a small device out of his belt and quickly texted Don. Leo didn’t want Don in the thick of it, but he wasn’t about to let some strange thing touch him with no one the wiser.

*Intruder. He sent. Use back door, and track me. Small one, says it needs help.*

Leo got an immediate GYB and had to smile. With Don, Got Your Back meant so much more than just doing what was asked. It meant he would put everyone on full alert, activate all surveillance systems, and even notify those topside before he’d head out the back door.

Leo suddenly wondered if Don could even see this little flame on the surveillance cameras. It wasn’t very bright after all.

*help?* little Sol said again.

It sounded absolutely pitiful. Leo smiled hoping to make it feel better.

“Oh,” he said, spreading his hands “Show me.”

Faster than he would have thought possible, the little one zipped toward his head, hit him right between the eyes and disappeared.
Don had been in working his studio most of the day. He loved the room his brothers laughingly call “the lab.”

A large space, it was at least 30’ x 20’ with plenty of room to have multiple projects going at once. Plus, it was the only spot in their underground home that had natural light.

Several years ago, Don had managed to fit some solar tube skylights up through the convoluted underground passageways to exit in a private section of a townhouse garden courtyard.

He had done the install of the small domes topside on a dark night. Everyone who lived there assumed it was part of the complex and no one thought twice about it. He had surveillance on it, but the only thing he had seen near the domes in 2 years was a couple of pigeons and a squirrel.

The studio was a tinker's paradise, a place to invent and a quiet place to think. When sharing a home with 3 siblings one definitely needs a space to think.

He'd been living with his brothers all his life and sharing a common living space, dining room and rec room with the guys was fine. Sharing a workspace was not. Especially when he knew some of them were “allergic” to work.

Besides, it really wasn’t safe to let the others roam free in “the lab.” There were a lot of sensitive experiments going on at once, and if disturbed some of those projects could go boom.

It was still light out, though it was fading fast, when Don got an SOS text from Leo. Someone must be getting too near the front door, since he was calling for an assist and saying go out the back.

He said intruder, but he also said “small one.” That’s what Leo usually called a kid. Could a child have wandered down this far? Maybe, but they must be outside the surveillance zone, because none of the code red alarms had been triggered.

Don sent Leo a quick GYB and slid his chair across the room. Flipping a couple of switches brought up the heads up display at the front door, and triggered the silent alarm.

Don loved the silent alarm. It sent some code to all their phones to silence them, then vibrated a signal to stand by for a text message. Without a coded password after the vibration, the message wouldn't appear. It was a system Don had invented to keep the important stuff out of others hands.

Don forwarded Leo’s message verbatim to his brothers, who had chosen this inopportune time to go out. In fairness, everyone had been out and about, doing their own thing. Leo had his endless patrols, Don his studio. The others had their own interests to follow, but today it was damned inconvenient that they weren’t nearby.

Don followed his message to them with a live feed from the surveillance system, so his brother’s could see what was going on. He squinted at the monitors. Nothing. He panned through the hundreds of feet of tunnels leading up to the front door, but still couldn’t find anything.

Maybe this was another of Leo’s “test runs” to make sure we can still function as a team. They didn’t really need to do as many of those now as they used to, Don thought. They were no longer the crazy teenagers going out into the world half cocked. These days a training run here and there was all that was necessary to keep the team running like a well oiled machine.
Even if it wasn’t training though, he wasn’t too worried about this situation. Leo was a pro at leading intruders around by the nose. They’d end up back where they started in no time with no clue that he’d led them in circles.

Don knew it was the plea for help that made Leo call for backup. Leo could never resist the cry of something he considered helpless.

"Our fearless leader isn’t dumb though," Don thought. "He won’t walk into a trap alone."

Then he found Leo, right outside the front door. Someone got THAT close without setting off the other alarms? That got his full attention. Don scanned the screen intently while reaching for his weapons. He didn’t see anyone but Leo. He turned on the body heat scanners, but got nothing new.

Since Leo was the only one on screen, Don began analyzing his body language. Leo looked calm. He wasn’t reaching for his weapons, and even though this threat was literally outside the front door he was smiling. Weird.

Then Leo spread his arms out to the sides in a welcoming gesture and said “Ok, Show me.” There was a brilliant flash of blue light, then Leo collapsed.

Don hit the door to the the sub-tunnel out the back at a dead run. Part of him was in shock. He just saw Leo shot down! Leo LET himself get hit with some sort of laser! Had there been a hostage off camera? Why didn’t Leo defend himself?

Another part of Don's brain was calculating the time and distance around to the front door. He didn’t dare go straight out the front, even though that would be the fastest way to help. Leo’s sacrifice would be in vain if Don exposed their home that way. So far, the enemy only knew that Leo was alone in a supposedly isolated section of the underground.

The intruder must have been off camera, but Don couldn’t understand how. Every inch of the area around the concealed door had been covered. It was simply not possible for someone to hide there.

He pushed the 2-way radio button that figured prominently on their special phones and barked “ETA?!?” to his brothers.

“Fifteen minutes.” said one clipped and angry voice.

“He’s down, Dude! Leo’s DOWN!” protested the other.

“E-T-A?!?” Don snarled again, biting off each letter.

“8 minutes,” came the sheepish reply. “I’m at the crossroads. ”

“Not close enough.” Don nearly moaned.

He redoubled his efforts, running so hard he could barely breath. Even at this pace, with all the twists and turns that they had added for safety, he wouldn’t reach the front entrance for another 4.5 minutes.

“Did anyone see the enemy?” Don panted, “I didn’t stay to watch, but you’ve got the video feed!”

“I only saw the shot, the night vision's not picking up much. No heat signature.” came the strangled reply. They must be running full tilt. No time to really stop and check the feed for more information.
Don's hand shot out and grabbed a pipe. He used it to slide around a hairpin curve on the trash gathered there, cutting 30 seconds off his time. 3 minutes now to the scene.

At least I remembered the medkit, Don thought. He hoped the attacker had fled and he could jump right in to treatment. He would let his brothers dish out the punishment.

Leo might be down, but Don refused to count him out.
What is Seen Cannot Be Unseen.

What the little one was showing Leo, was like watching a movie in reverse. He saw their confrontation, followed by a rapid backtracking of Sol's movements through the tunnels.

Quickly the vision past the point where Leo had picked up it’s trail and backtracked even further through the sewers, rewinding so fast that parts of the journey were a blur.

Leo felt stunned. This had not been at all what he had expected. He felt dizzy watching this vision and found his mind wandering. Had Sol stumbled on their home by chance? Or had it been drawn to us in some other way? Leo was distracted from his musing as the little one at last arrived at the scene it wanted to share.

help! Sol suddenly demanded again.

The little one’s “voice” didn’t sound any different now than it did when it was floating in front of Leo. That’s when Leo realized what he had been hearing all along was in his head. This flickering creature of light and fire, this Sol, was telepathic.

As much as he wanted to stop and marvel at this revelation, there was no time. The image that was now playing forward in his head demanded an immediate response. Sol certainly did need help. Or at least it's companion did.

Leo shook his head, as his own vision slowly returned, and discovered he was now lying on the floor of the tunnel. He dragged himself to his feet and paused, groaning, as the tunnel spun around him.

It wasn’t that Sol had intentionally injured him, it was more that the vision had been accompanied by a kind of emotional punch he had been unprepared for. As if the feelings of the subject had been captured along with the image. And the extreme pain and pure terror were horrifying. It had not only brought him to his knees, but to a complete collapse.

Sol had projected several jerky moments of first person footage. It was like watching one of Mike’s video games on mute, he couldn’t hear any of it.

Leo's training had quickly kicked in and he began analyzing everything he could see. It was definitely topside, set in a rather familiar looking dank alley. He couldn’t tell much about the victim, except that they were taking a severe beating, but Leo felt each blow as if it were against his own body.

He was instantly enraged. This kind of thing was the very reason he felt the need to constantly patrol, both topside and in the tunnels. So many violent offenders roamed the streets these days, and many were helpless to fend them off.

Even ending Shredder’s dark rule of the criminal underworld years ago, had not stemmed the tide of evil flowing in the city.

Suddenly there was a dark pause in the vision. The pain faded slightly, and Leo gasped for breath. Had they blacked out? For how long? He couldn't tell as Sol chose that moment to fast forward. The vision slowed again at the next sign of movement.

It was the same perspective as before, but now it was darker. Whoever it was had crept into the tunnels. Somehow they had escaped and were fleeing as best they could. Choked with fear, ragged
with pain and constantly checking behind for pursuit, they took the next turn and ran headlong off the edge of a Long Fall.

Leo’s heart almost stopped, his terror combining with the victims as they fell together into the black.

A Long Fall is a tunnel that runs vertically through the underground. They drop straight down several stories from the surface, and are used mostly for ventilation.

Leo had always thought of them as the city’s version of an oubliette. Things that fall down them were best forgotten, dropping out of sight into the depths, never to be seen again.

There was no way to tell where this one was. There were hundreds of Long Falls in the city, and though he could probably trace the general direction from Sol’s rewind, it might take him days or even weeks to find the right one.

They could not have survived that fall. Thankfully, he’d been spared the physical agony of the impact, but the emotional pain lingered on. Leo wanted to weep. He could have fought the assailants, but how could he break it to this amazing little one that no help could possibly save it’s companion now?

The perspective of the vision suddenly changed. This new view was more like a camera slowly panning around, and Leo was able to make out a small face and an outstretched arm, despite the darkness.

His heart ached as he watched. Even though he looked very carefully he didn’t see any movement from the tiny form. The final frames of the vision chilled his soul, and he wondered if he would even be able to recover the body.

Should he try? Would it help the little one find closure?

Leo suddenly knew he would. He would search, every waking moment if need be. He would mobilize every asset, and call in every favor owed, because with the change in perspective had come another change.

Sound.

Leo heard soft singing. It came from the small form on the ground, in a language he did not understand. It was a song that cried out to him of pain and despair. The song pushed at the blackness surrounding it and begged for redemption.

Against all odds, she was alive. She had sent her Sol to find him, but she was slipping away.

Dying all alone, out there in the darkness.
There and Back Again

Don slowed as he rounded the last corner and saw Leo slumped over on the ground. His brothers weren’t here yet, and Don did not want to run into whatever had taken out Leo alone. But he couldn’t just leave Leo lying there on the tunnel floor.

A glint of light reflected off the tunnel roof and proceeded in the opposite direction. Whoever it was, they were moving away. His brothers would track them down. Right now, Don needed to get to Leo.

As he began to move stealthily towards where his brother lay, Leo groaned and pushed himself to his feet. Don froze, and waited to see if the sound brought the enemy rushing back. They would not get a second chance at Leo. Don would see to that.

“Sol?” Leo called, in a choked voice.

“No, Donnie” Donatello answered as he slipped quietly to his brother’s side.

Don began a quick evaluation of Leo, keeping an ear out for the enemy’s return. He flashed a small pen light at Leo’s eyes, checked his breathing and pulse. Leo seemed stunned. He kept shaking his head, and tears were rolling down his cheeks.

“She’s hurt Donnie.” Leo said in a low, harsh, voice. He shuddered, “She’s dying.”

Don clasped his brother shoulders and looked into his eyes. They were lost, haunted by some nightmare.

“Who is?” Don asked quietly.

“I was there with her. I have to get back. I can’t let her die alone...” Leo replied his voice trailing off.

“What are you talking about Leo?”

Just then Michelangelo arrived. He slid to a stop in front of them and whooped. “You’re alive!” as he pulled Leo into a giant hug.

Then he spun, ripping out his weapons, as sounds coming from behind indicated someone else approaching at a dead run. Don pushed a still dazed Leo up against the wall and took up a stance directly in front of him. Leo slid down the wall clutching his knees to his chest.

Raphael rounded the corner with a sai in each fist, ready to maim whatever had injured Leo. He took one look at his brothers defensive stance and whirled around to see what had followed him. Nothing. The tunnel was empty once again.

There was a long, silent pause while the three brothers stretched their senses in every direction assessing the sights, smells and sounds of the tunnel around them. A silence only broken by Leonardo’s quiet sobs. The sound of his eldest brother weeping set Raph on fire. He had never heard Leo cry, ever.

“I’ll kill ‘em. Whoever it was, whatever they did, I’m gonna take ‘em apart piece by piece!” Raph shrieked, shaking with a rage and fervor even he had never felt before. Mikey just stared.
The coast clear for the moment, Don slowly turned to Leo. He was crouched against the wall, head on his knees, arms wrapped around them for support. It was a pitiful position. One that Don had never expected to see his brother assume.

Don knelt, clasped Leo’s arms gently and whispered, “Leonardo, my brother, what happened?”

Leo couldn’t seem to find his focus. He tried to raise his eyes to meet Donatello’s gaze, but mentally he was with the girl, and couldn’t seem to find his way back again.

With great difficulty, Leo focused his mind and pushed away some of the pain and despair then looked up into his brother’s worried face. Don knew that look. Leo was going into shock.

“Let’s get you inside” Don said to him quickly. “You think it’s OK to go in the front?” he asked. After all, no one had seen the enemy yet, except Leo, who looked around quickly.

“Where’s Sol?” Leo asked.

“Who’s Sol?” Mikey replied. “We haven’t seen anyone.”

“Was Sol the kid?” Don asked, looking quickly back at Leo “Is she the one you took the hit for? The one that’s hurt?”

“It’s not what you think.” Leo said, shaking his head. He was still having trouble forming coherent thoughts. Flashes of memory kept imposing themselves across in his vision, and they weren’t his memories.

“Let’s get you in.” Don said again, “You need to rest. You can explain later.”

“We need Sol!” Leo insisted, “Time is running out. She’s calling... she’s dying…” His voice trailed off again.

Don and Mikey exchanged a worried look over his head. Raphael, after his initial outburst, had remained silent. But now he pushed forward, shoved Mikey out of the way, and knelt next to Don in front of Leo.

“Where’s Sol”, he asked quietly looking into Leo’s eyes intently. Leo looked at him warily.

“What are you gonna do?” Leo asked

Raph shrugged. “Bring him back. You said we need him. If a kid is dying, we better get our shells in gear.”

Don’s mouth fell open. He never heard Raph speak so calmly after such an outburst of rage. Especially when one of his brothers was injured. He had thought it would take hours to talk Raph down. Raphael was finally growing up.

Leo sighed saying, “It hasn’t gone far, probably just down the tunnel there. I can still feel it.”

“How do I catch him? What was that beam?” Raph asked, with the same searching look.

“You won’t need to catch it.” Leo said quietly. “If you back off a few yards, it’ll come check on me. It’s afraid of you.”

“Someone that got the drop on you is afraid of us?” Mikey asked amazed.

Don followed that question with one of his own. “How do you know it’s afraid?”
“I told you, I can feel it, just back off a bit and you’ll see.” Leo replied quietly.

Reluctantly, Don gathered the others and shooed them a ways down the tunnel, opposite where he had seen the light die out. They turned and waited, all eyes on Leo, who still sat partially slumped against the wall, panting and trying to get his emotions under control. They didn’t have to wait long.

After experiencing that fall, the darkness no longer seemed like a haven to Leo and he was agitated in it. He felt lost, bereft of the soft glow of the amazing little creature who had so incredibly, if briefly brought the light.

Leo couldn’t tell which feelings were his own anymore. This fear of the dark must belong to the girl. He pushed it back, trying to keep his other emotions in check as well. He had to be able to see past the pain and terror he had just experienced if he was going to find her in time.

Leonardo didn’t even know her name but he had been connected to her on a deep emotional level. Now he felt the same desperate need to get to her, as he would have if it was Mikey or Raph lying out there instead.

Light was returning to the tunnel, but so slowly it was almost imperceptible. Don wouldn’t have noticed it at all under other circumstances. He only saw it because he was watching the tunnel so intently for anything out of the ordinary.

A timid voice echoed down the tunnel.

*blue?*

Leo would have laughed if the situation wasn’t so dire. It seemed he never got around to giving little Sol his name, so it was calling out his color instead.

“It’s ok little one.” Leo said as gently as he could, “They won’t hurt you. Come back.”

Ever so slowly the increased light in the area began to gather, coalescing into a small barely glowing teardrop shape that bobbed in front of Leo without support. Don, fascinated, started toward them. The little light bravely stood it’s ground in front of Leo until Don stood right in front of them. Only flinching back a little when Don leaned his face in close to check it out.

“Don, stay back!” Raph growled low in his throat. “What the hell is that, Leo?”

Raph sounded fierce. He hated being taken off guard, and he still wanted to kill something. Somehow, though he managed to keep a rein on his temper.

Don’s eyes had remained glued to the creature, lost in theoretical abstracts about what it might be. Mikey was the only one who saw the moment of relief on Leo’s face that Raph had not acted on his temperamental outburst.

Leo’s reactions were still good, but the vision had sapped his strength. He actually wasn’t sure he could have stopped Raph if he had decided to attack the little one. Leo knew that what he needed was to rest and recover, but there was no way he was going to now. Not when the girl lay dying out there somewhere.

“That,” Leo replied quietly “is Sol.”
Less than 20 minutes later, Don and Mikey gathered a small group of associates in an underground cul-de-sac on the very edge of their territory. It was a fairly comfortable space, with some cushions for sitting and a short Japanese style tea table that served as a planning space. There were quite a few of these meeting places scattered about down here.

Leo had established them years ago as an alternative to meeting in their home. He’d taken the time to scout out locations and furnish them with the basics needed to convene. This way meetings could be held with outsiders without their home being revealed. It had been one of the best decisions Leo had ever made, Don reflected.

Earlier in the tunnel, shock had robbed Leo of his usual gift for strategy. He had briefly told them of following the flame and trying to scare it off.

He had told them of a mysterious girl and the torture she’d suffered. His usually calm voice had cracked and broken as he recounted it and the story had been so garbled, it was hard to make heads or tails of.

Finally Don worked out that the little flame creature had somehow shared a horrible memory of what had happened to the girl with Leo. No wonder he was in shock.

Sol had grown more and more agitated, the longer they lingered in the tunnel and Leo had reflected the same anxiety. Finally Leo couldn’t stand to wait any longer and took off on his own to search, after extracting a promise that the others would do as much as they could in his absence.

Don and Mikey were confused by this very un-Leo like behavior but Raph had taken one look at Leo’s crazed face and understood. Raph had always been the one with an excess of emotion, the one who had to focus all the time to control his actions. He understood, better than any of the others, the pain of keeping such extreme emotions inside.

Raphael felt nothing but pity for his brother, who was not just dealing with his own emotions, but also the emotions of the victim herself. The horror of being helpless to save her, while being forced to watch that vision was it’s own kind of torture.

“I’ll take care of him” Raph said quietly, and took off down the corridor behind Leo and the little flame.

Since they had left, Don formulated a plan that he hoped might let them find girl before it was too late. From the look on Leo’s face, too late was going to be too much to bear. But it was going to take quick work and the cooperation of a group that did not generally work well together to pull it off.

Don narrowed the area of the city where the girl could have fallen to roughly 40 square blocks. The alley from the vision, which had seemed familiar to Leo had been identified. Not two days ago, Leo and Mikey had run a short patrol over by a new building construction site, to check the place for illegal activity. They had jumped a couple of creeps in that very alley who were trying to mug a tourist.

That gave Don a center point for his search grid. Calculating how far the villains could have carried the girl before she got away again, had given him an outer radius for his search area.
Now they just had to identify all the Long Falls inside that circle and check them out.

Easier said than done. There were layers upon layers of underground areas to search in that area. Old sewers buried deep, Subway tunnels, utility runs, newer surface layer tunnels, and commuter exchanges, some of which carried their own populations.

Seated with Don now were an array of interesting characters he hoped would solve these problems. None of them could really be called trustworthy, and they stared malevolently at one another, but most owed at least one of the brothers’ personal favors so an unspoken truce was being observed.

To his left were a pair of scruffy looking little thieves. A young boy and girl, twins, who had been living in and out of the tunnels for some time now. They were wizards at slipping unnoticed into buildings. And that was exactly what Don needed to obtain all the blueprints for underground areas in the search radius.

How he wished those blueprints had been digitized, then he could just hack into the system to get them, but most of the older tunnel plans could only be found in the dusty back rooms of some city buildings downtown.

Next to the catburglars sat a representative from the homeless group, who populated the near surface tunnels in that part of the city. He was there to advise on the movements of tunnel dwellers in the area, and help isolate long falls once a map was compiled.

And then there was Chinowa. He was one of the gang that operated in that area. Don found it a bit distasteful to be dealing with the criminal element he and his brothers were all continuously fighting, but Chinowa was an exception.

Raph had saved him one night from a hit put out on him by a rival gang. While he was a bit of a loose cannon, Chinowa had become a dependable informant. If the beating of the girl was gang related, Chinowa would know.

Negotiations with the twins were easy. They owed Leo after all, and they merely agreed to Don’s terms and slipped out to acquire the blueprints.

The briefing with the homeless rep was enlightening. The rep told of a recent upswing in violence in that area, though Chinowa said his gang hadn’t been involved, and the rival gangs had been suspiciously quiet of late. Both were relieved to hear that Don and his family would look into it.

Don was planning on more than looking into it and finding this girl. He was planning to avenge her. Or at least avenge Leo, since his brother had obviously been devastated by the experience.

The twins were back in record time, and the group bent to the task of outlining all the places she might have fallen.
Raph easily caught up to his brother and together they fell into a ground covering trot perfected by years of training.

Countless nights on patrol made them intimately familiar with each others movements. And Raph could tell that Leo was off. He was slow, jumpy, and lacked his usual fluid grace.

Raph remained uncharacteristically silent, as he paced along, but he used the time to observe Leo, think through the evenings events and keep an eye on the strange little flame bobbing along with them. He regarded Sol with a mixture of wonder and suspicion.

It was a while before Leo broke the silence.

“You think I've lost it, don't you” he said, pausing so that Raph could run up beside him.

“No, I think ya' are finally reacting normally. “ Raph replied. “I knew one day, somethin' would spur ya' to trust yer instincts and act without bothering to spend years planning. But I couldn't of imagined this” he said, waving at the incredible little creature floating along beside them.

“Your problem bro, is that ya' try to cover every contingency ya’self and don’t trust your brothers to help ya” Raph continued.

“And yours is striking without thinking things through,” Leo snapped angrily.

“Know that,” Raph replied, refusing to rise to the bait. “Been thinking about it a lot these past few months, since…” he trailed off, not sure whether or not he was ready to talk about this secret.

“Well, ya know, since” he concluded lamely.

Leo knew. It had taken years, but he had finally come to understand what Raph really needed. More patience than a saint, an ear to vent to on a regular basis, and occasional proof that the world was not better off without him.

It was the last bit that Raph was referring to now.

Six months ago, they had been out on patrol, and it had been a terrible night. There had been a clash of wills, and an innocent had suffered. Leo hadn’t realized how badly Raph had taken that incident until later that evening when he’d came across his brother poised on the edge of a 12 story rooftop with nowhere to go but down.

It had taken hours for Leo to talk Raph away from the edge.

They had grown closer after that, and Leo forced himself to find time each day to speak to Raph without the usual snide comments. Sure they still butted heads, but Leo found he actually liked having some private time with Raph. The hot-head was not nearly as unobservent as he seemed. Raph just didn’t consider his own input worthy, so instead of offering his thoughts, he lashed out.

Raphael couldn’t have been more wrong. Leo found these conversations considerably enlightening. Raph’s perspective of any given situation was unconventional. Raph observed, deduced and pointed out details that Leo himself hardly noticed. Details which often turned out to be vitally important.

Because of these quiet conversations, Leo was finally beginning to trust in more than just Raph’s
fighting skills. Perhaps he could trust Raph with this as well.

“Raphael” Leo began quietly, “Thank you for coming with me. I do need your help. More than you know.”

Raph was confused as he watched Leo slow, then deliberately drop the mask of competence he usually wore. Leo’s face twisted in agony, and his words began to flow, fast and furious.

“What they were doing, what they did - to the girl- was monstrous Raph.” Leo stuttered. “I don’t know how Sol did it, but I could feel everything they did to her. Every. Single. Blow. She tried to fight, but they had us pinned.”

“The leader backhanded us across the face and snapped our head against the wall. Blood was everywhere. I could feel it running down the back of our neck, from a cut on our mouth and from the gash over our eyes.”

Raph grabbed Leo’s arm and pulled him to a stop, terribly concerned. He didn’t miss the fact that Leo flinched away from his hand, or that his description had gone from ‘her’ to ‘us’.

“Two hard strikes directly to the stomach dropped us to the alleyway. Then they all kicked us, over and over.” Leo felt all the blood drain out of his face, trapped in the memory.

“There are broken ribs. I can feel them, sharp and stabbing against our lungs. And they didn’t just beat us, Raph.” Leo had to stop and swallow convulsively, before he could go on.

“They… They violated us.” Leo panted in horror. “All of them, one after another. I could taste them in our mouth. I could smell them, feel the weight of them on our body. And the PAIN inside…”

Leo let out a sob, and turned to face the tunnel wall in shame.

“Raph,” he whispered “I’ve never felt anything like it in my life. I couldn’t do ANYTHING! Only watch and bear it with her. I’ve never felt so helpless.”

Raph felt helpless too against this onslaught of pain. He had never been the one to offer comfort. Advice sometimes, but comfort was out of his league.

“I don’t know how she got away. She shouldn’t have been able to stand.” Leo shuddered. “Then to have finally escaped, only to fall…”

Raph’s eyes had widened so much, as he listened to his brother’s lament, that the whites showed all around. He and his brothers had seen many horrific things in their lives. They had fought and even killed when necessary, but rape was one thing Raph would never understand. It was a dishonor so deep, it could only be punished by death. And now his brother had been raped too. At least psychically. Raph felt sick.

“And nobody tried to stop ‘em? To help ya?” Raph raged aghast. “What about this thing?”

He jerked his thumb angrily at the little flame bobbing alongside. He couldn’t stop the glare he sent toward Sol, though what he thought the creature could have done remained unclear. The little one shivered and drifted further away from him

Leo shook his head.

“I couldn’t see Sol. God knows how it got a hold of the memory. I’m not even sure if it knows her,
or just stumbled across her and decided to be a good samaritan.”

“As agitated as it is?” Raph said, watching the little flame orbit his brother urgently.

“It knows her, and if it didn’t do anything to help....” Raph trailed off menacingly. He clenched his fists and stepped towards Sol, his intent clear.

“It’s an innocent Raph,” Leo said sharply, “It knew she was being hurt, but I don’t think it understood exactly what was going on. It’s not like us.”

Raph didn’t have an answer to that, so he fell silent.

Leo was becoming more desperate as time past, there was no way to know how much of it the girl had left. He had to get ahold of himself, but he just kept shaking.

What if she was already gone? A burning pain slammed into the center of his chest at the thought. It couldn’t be too late, and he couldn’t just stand around. Shaking off his immobility, Leo took off again down the tunnel.

Raphael watched his brother clutch his chest and speed away down the tunnel. He moved to follow quickly. Leo was in no condition to fight if he did catch up to any of those guys. Besides, Raph had something he wanted to give those thugs too. A little something he called payback.

Despite what the others thought, despite all the verbal clashes, Raphael cared deeply for his older brother. Leonardo had always been protective, first of his siblings, then of those that he considered helpless and being forced to stand by unable to intervene while one of them was repeatedly tortured, was worse than enduring torture himself.

The fact that his brother had actually experienced the beating and violation too… Raph didn’t even want to think about that. He suddenly began to fear what would happen to Leo if they did find the girl, and she was already gone.
Luna lay alone in the darkness, her body beaten and broken. Her bones shattered along with her soul. She should be dead, but her heritage somehow kept her heart stubbornly beating. It wouldn’t be long though, barring some miracle. She knew she would not be allowed to rejoin her family. Her punishment was incomplete.

Softly, in between tears, she began to sing. The song was an ancient one, sung to her mother the moon. A plea to Selene for light to push back the darkness, to ease the pain, and to beg for comfort. She had never thought to die alone.

She had never thought to die at all. She wished that Sol, at least, had stayed with her but she’d felt it go as she was falling. Perhaps that was better. It was too gentle, too good to follow her down to death.

When she had first been banished, she couldn’t imagine what would be in store. She knew it was going to be long and painful, but hadn’t expect to arrive in a body that was already flawed.

She remembered when she first opened her eyes, and her confusion at seeing only darkness. She was beautiful, or so she’d been told. Petite and pale skinned, with flowing hair so blond it was almost white and eyes as clear as crystal. Unfortunately those eyes were useless, she was entirely blind.

Life had certainly not be easy.

She drifted for a while, escaping into her memories.

Sol had simply found her one day and brought hope into her darkness.

Hello?

Startled out of her reverie, Luna tilted her head to try and trace the voice. She’d found that since one of her senses was impaired, her other four seemed to have become more sensitive to compensate. She couldn't seem to track this voice though. It seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

“Hello?” She questioned to the room at large. “Is someone there?”

Here. Was the firm reply.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t hear you come in.” She sighed. “Can I help you with something?”

She really hadn’t heard anyone enter her private room at the shelter, which was odd. She didn’t miss much. But she had been distracted, thinking about the fundraiser coming up next week.

She’d been working at the shelter since shortly after her unfortunate arrival. It had been a stroke of luck to find a position with them. They needed a spokesperson that would garner the sympathy of the socially elite for their fundraising efforts, and Luna with her petite good looks and intelligence had fit the bill.
They had offered her room, board, and a small salary for her help and it had seemed like a good exchange. Luna had felt pleased that, even in her banishment, she could help out those less fortunate than herself. It was her little act of continued rebellion.

She stretched her senses to see who had come in without knocking, but couldn’t find a single presence in the room. Maybe they were standing in the doorway?

She got up from her chair and straightened her second hand suit. Quickly tugging on the lapels of her jacket and smoothing her skirt. Then she walked carefully around her desk to lean casually against the front of it.

She had been here long enough to learn where everything was in her room. So long as the janitor didn’t move anything, she could move around in here freely. And meeting people standing up, she’d learned, was safer than sitting down.

“Did you need something?” she tried again.

friend. Came the sad reply.

She suddenly wondered about the age of her visitor. Perhaps one of the children had wandered away from their parents downstairs. It was the dinner hour and a lot of homeless and poverty stricken families were here getting a bite to eat.

She knelt down, toward the door where she thought her visitor must be. She worried about a child roaming around alone. This place was relatively safe but there were dangers, sometimes from the child’s own family. Best if they stay here, Luna thought.

Protocol said she should call down to the floor supervisor to find the guardian, but screw protocol. It was clear to her this child needed a friendly ear.

She had nothing but compassion for the youngsters in the shelter, and she’d found that the children tended to be drawn to her. Kneeling seemed to make them less afraid to approach.

nice lady? said the voice.

A small boy, she thought. Sounds about four or five. Usually a child that age would speak in complete sentences, but she’d found that the shelter children tended to be rather reticent and shy, especially with strange adults. She smiled and stretched her arms toward the door, offering the little one a hug.

“It’s ok,” she encouraged, “I work here. I would never hurt you.”

lady Good. There was a short pause, followed by,

lady can Speak?

Luna was confused. The verbal capitals were clearly audible, and she didn’t know what the child was talking about. He couldn’t know, could he? No, there’s no way this sad child was part of her lost world. She held her position, still beckoning gently to him.

help you.

Help me? Luna wondered. But couldn't pursue the thought, as she felt the gentle breeze, that signaled the child running toward her. She braced herself for the impact as she prepared to close her arms around him. But she wasn’t prepared for the intense feeling of warmth on her forehead, or
the blue light that flared behind her dark eyes before she fell to the floor.

Luna came back to the present with a sharp jolt. She opened her eyes again. It was a futile gesture, she knew, since it was completely black in here. Even if Sol had been around to help her see. The pain had faded somewhat, but she knew that was probably not a good sign. She began to weep quietly again. The gods were so unfair. She’d only been trying to help after all, but it seems that no good deed goes unpunished.
The Search

It was Michelangelo who finally came up with the solution.

Don had been beating his head against the proverbial wall, trying to determine how they were going to search every one of these stupid Long Falls without climbing all the way to the bottom of each. A task that was guaranteed to waste too much precious time, when Mikey piped up.

“This looks like a job for… the super spy copters!” he declared happily.

Don sighed, but then gave it a second thought. Mikey was right! This was a perfect job for those damn spy copters.

Mikey had wanted a souped up version of those little hover copters in malls for his birthday several years ago, and Don had finally relented and built him one. Of course this one had a gyroscopic stabilizer and proximity sensors to keep Mike from crashing it. Don was tired of always repairing Mike’s toys.

But one was never enough with Mikey. Over the next six months, he had begged, pleaded and cajoled until Don gave in and the one had expanded into a small fleet of copters that Mikey piloted all over their home. They were a tremendous nuisance. Especially after Mike added cameras to all of them and started taking blackmail video.

But they would be perfect for this search. Each had lights, a camera, and a tracking device. After the blackmail incident, the tracking device had been installed so Don could programmatically lock them out of certain areas of the house.

They could take the copters to the center point of the search area and release them all in different directions. It wouldn’t take long to program them where to go, and they could just fly to the bottom of each fall and check it out.

“Mikey, you’re a genius!” Don exclaimed. “Let’s head back home. You get the copters, I’ll grab my laptop, and we’ll set up our own search and rescue opt. just under that alley.”

“Awesome!” Mike shouted, pumping his fist in the air. “Last one to the lair…”

“How many times do I have to tell you. Only villains have lairs” Don grumbled.

It had been the work of moments to gather what they needed and only a short time to make it to the alley in question. Mikey was in seventh heaven at finally having the idea that might save the day, and was humming happily to himself while setting up his spy copters in a neat row. He checked each camera carefully, and turned the lights on and off.

Don was tapping away madly at his laptop, programming the coordinates of each Fall they had identified, and uploading them to a copter. With any luck, they would find the girl in the next half hour or so.

Finally all was ready, and Michelangelo stood back and watched with pride as all 20 of his super-
spy copters rose from the ground and scattered in every direction down a dozen different tunnels. He hurried over to Don and gazed intently over his shoulder at the monitor, to see what the little copters were picking up.

So far it was just a bunch of empty sewer tunnels. Boring. 10 minutes passed and Mikey was beginning to fidget. So far, they’d seen a whole lot of nothing. At 20 minutes and 30 Long Falls later, Mikey gave up watching the screen and moved to the center of the open space to practice his flips. Mikey hated sitting still, he had enough energy for any three turtles and found that the only way to focus was to constantly burn off the excess.

Not five minutes later, Don let out a horrified gasp, and Mikey stopped his bouncing to run over to the computer. Don double clicked the small frame holding one of the camera feeds and it grew to fill the screen.

Mikey was no innocent, no matter his childlike manner and energy. He had fought beside his brothers for years and dished out pain and injury to those that deserved it with no more thought then he gave to crushing a cockroach. He had seen many battles and their aftermath. He had seen friends and allies injured, even near death, but none of that prepared him for this vision of a tiny girl crushed at the bottom of the Fall.

Counter to what Leo had told them of his vision, she had not just fallen to the bottom. Oh no. Now she was covered with and surrounded by debris of all sorts. As if whoever had assaulted her wanted to make sure the job was finished and had pitched whatever they could find down on top of her until they were sure she was dead.

A large piece of concrete had pinned her legs and another crushed her left arm. A large wooden beam lay across her chest and her head lolled back at a strange angle. There were tear marks all down her face, clear tracks through the dust, and blood had pooled under her head and shoulders. Her right arm remained flung out as if beseeching aid.

Mikey couldn’t pull his horrified gaze away from the screen, so Don slowly got out his phone and pressed the 2-way button. He had to clear his throat twice before he could get any words past the lump that settled there.

*God! What was this going to do to Leo?*

“Guys,” he said quietly into the device, “We found her.”
Leonardo felt his heart beat wildly as he heard Don’s voice come out of his phone, saying quietly “We found her.”

He was so overjoyed to hear it that he missed the carefully controlled tone of Don’s voice and the sadness there. He practically ripped the device from his belt.

“Coordinates” he barked into it in a clipped tone. He finally felt back in control.

Don relayed them and sent a route to his phone that showed the shortest path to the level where she lay.

Raph hadn’t missed it though, and he picked up his own phone and quickly texted Don for a status update. He didn’t want to be blindsided by her condition. The response he received made his stomach turn and he suddenly felt empty, hollow inside. Don had only sent him a screenshot in reply, but that was enough.

There was no way in hell she was alive.

“Leo!” Raph called to halt his brother, who was now running full speed down the corridor. “Let’s just take a moment here, ‘kay? I mean, uh, we need to be prepared, just in case, ya know?”

Leo had stopped at Raph’s words. He looked over his shoulder and narrowed his eyes.

“Raphael, “ he said formally, “This is no time for delay. She is grievously injured and every second we waste here, could be her last.”

Leo turned and resumed his headlong flight down the tunnel, checking his direction every so often on the phone. Raph sighed and picked up his pace. He would be there to help his brother when the world came crashing down.

Leonardo was a stone’s throw away from the Fall where she lay, when he began to feel that something was terribly wrong. He peered cautiously up the tunnel into the bottom of the Fall. It didn’t look right. Could Don have somehow got the location wrong?

It didn’t match his earlier vision. He could make out a large pile of debris in the center that blocked his view, but he couldn’t see the girl. Sol was agitated as well. It moved frenetically around the corridor, bouncing back and forth between Leo and the pile of rubble, but Sol’s little glow was not really enough to light the space.

Carefully stepping around the edges of the pile, Leo caught a glimpse of pale hair, and a scream suddenly reverberated through the Fall.

“NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!”

He didn’t even realize it had come from his own mouth. Leo lunged forward and snatched at the large wooden beam that lay across her chest. Adrenaline and panic fueled him, letting him wrench
it off her body. He hurled it away, and it shattered into thousands of pieces against the wall, just like his heart.

Leo was too frantic to see Raph move in to free her left arm and lever the concrete off of her legs. He crouched over her and gently pushed back her hair, anxiously stroking her face.

“Wake up Sweetheart.” he murmured, “I’m here. I’m gonna get you out.”

His heart sank as there was absolutely no response. Leo fumbled for a pulse, but found nothing. He checked for breathing, holding his hand close to her mouth and nose. Still nothing. He felt dazed and dizzy. He couldn’t catch his breath.

This wasn’t possible. He couldn’t have failed her. Not after what they’d been through. The devastation he’d been holding at bay, the trauma of the rape, and the physical pain he’d been fighting off to find her began to crash over him.

Leonardo clutched her body close, collapsing beside her in shock and pulling her into his lap.

“Noooooo.” he moaned in a low, stunned, voice rocking her back and forth. Tears spilled from his eyes, soaking into his mask. He shook his head repeatedly, this couldn’t be real. Holding her motionless form felt like the worst kind of nightmare.

Raphael crossed quickly to his brother, and knelt in front of him, waving away the little blue flame orbiting Leo’s head as if it was an annoying insect. Tears in his eyes for his brother’s pain, Raphael reached out to Leo and tried to take the girl from his arms.

“She’s gone Leo,” Raph said softly, “Give her to me. We’ll take her home.”

Anger and pain flared to life in Leo as comprehension returned to his gaze. He jerked her body away from Raph, and stared down at the beaten face and shattered body of the fragile girl in his arms.

Then the screaming began.

First it was just Leo’s voice, torn with rage and pain. Loss formed into it’s most primal form. Forcing it’s way from his body. But the moment he began to scream, Sol went mad.

It began to pulse rapidly, heating as it became bigger and brighter with each flare.

As the screaming went on and on, Raph threw up his arms to shield his eyes from the fire and backed away across the Fall. He tried to force his way in again, to pull Leo to safety, but the flame had spun itself into a huge fiery whirlwind that roared up through the Fall, magnifying Leo’s screams. It burned Raphael and pushed him back, pummeling him with debris.

Leo staggered to his feet in the center of the whirlwind, with the girl in his arms. Suddenly, the wind collapsed back on itself and crashed into him with physical force, engulfing his body in blue. Truly burning inside and out, Leo tilted back his head and roared a demand to the heavens in a strange language, raising the girl over his head as if in supplication.

The blue surrounding him solidified into a single beam, rocketing straight up the Fall. It shot out into the night, piercing the darkness with the brilliance of a shooting star and disappeared from view.

Silence fell. Raphael stood, frozen and wide eyed, across the Fall from his brother. He just starred as Leo slowly crumpled back to the earth, the girl held tight to his chest.
Fathers

Raphael was completely out of his depth. How the HELL was he supposed to deal with this? Slowly he pulled out his phone and pressed the 2-way button, then took his finger off it again. He didn’t know what he was going to say.

Don and Mike packed up the rescue operation and took the gear back home. Neither of them discussed it but they both knew they didn’t really want to be there when Leo found out what had happened to the girl.

When they didn’t hear from Raph after a bit, however, Don began to be concerned. He pulled out his phone, pushed the 2-way channel.

“Raph, Raph come in.” He called. There wasn’t an immediate response, and he and Mikey traded worried looks.

“Raph, answer me. What’s going on. Is Leo ok?” Don waited, but still didn’t get an answer. “Damn it Raph! Pick up!”

“I’m here,” Raph finally responded. “Um, can you guys come an get us? An’ hurry, ‘kay? Leo is...” there was a long pause as Raph tried to decide how best to end that sentence.

“broken.” He finally concluded.

Don and Mikey hurried toward the fall. As Don rounded the last corner, he stopped with a sniff. What was that charred smell? He licked his lips nervously. The air didn’t taste right either. He hurriedly clicked on the small lamp he’d brought and stepped carefully clear of the debris near the entrance.

As he stopped to examine the walls of the Fall, his mouth dropped open. What had done this? There were sweeping black streaks of soot swirled up the walls as far as he could see. The grate high overhead had been blown off and he could see the stars.

Don turned a slow circle, staring around in shock. The only clean space in the whole area was exactly in the center of the Fall, about 4 feet across and contained a distraught Leo and the tiny broken form of the girl.

He turned a questioning look on Raph, who stood not too far away, soot covered himself, and almost invisible against the wall.

“Sol” was all Raph said.

“Sol did this?!” Don exclaimed, staring around again. “He’s not bright enough to see by!”
“Ya don’t believe me?” Raph said, “Go to the tape!” And he tossed a slightly melted spy copter in Don’s direction. “I think it caught most of it.”

Don suddenly couldn’t wait to get back to his lab and see what was salvageable from the device, but his eyes kept coming back to Leo in the center of the space.

“How long’s he been like that?” Don asked.

Raph looked back at his oldest brother who sat with the girl cradled in his lap, face tilted towards her, eyes closed. He looked like he was meditating, if you discounted the fact that he was covered in blood, with a terrible twist of grief on his features.

“Since the light show,” Raph replied. “I’m glad ya guys are here, Donnie. I don’t have a clue what to do for ‘im. I would have said he didn’t know tha’ girl from Eve, but I think whatever Sol did to give him tha’ memory, made ‘em like family or sometin’.”

Donnie wasn’t sure what to do either. He’d never seen his brother suffering under anything this profound, and their father was out of reach for advice. He was still pondering, when Mikey interrupted.

“Uh, guys?” Mikey said, and pointed up. “What are those things?”

Raph and Don took a step away from the wall and looked towards the top of the Fall. Tiny points of golden light were blinking into existence up above. Hundreds of them.

“Fireflies in Manhattan?” Don wondered.

But they didn’t behave like bugs, instead they fell slowly, gently drifting down like seeds upon the wind. They settled around the brothers and coated the floor. A breeze appeared from nowhere and began to tease them together into a small, whirling form.

Slowly, the form gained height and solidified into that of man. He was majestic, tall, and muscular, his clothing ancient in design. But most remarkably, Don could see through him.

He glowed with a soft golden light, and his shoulder length hair appeared to be made of flowing flames. He stood silently for a moment, his gaze locked on the small form in Leo’s lap. As the apparition moved toward him, Leo opened his eyes and met its stare. His silent tears reflected in the growing light.

“I have not felt that powerful a Calling in a long, long time.” the figure said. It’s voice echoing with power. He measured Leo with his eyes. “Centuries perhaps. But now I understand...You are one of hers.”

“Hers?” Leo replied hoarsely.

“Luna’s” the figure replied, gesturing to the girl still nestled in Leo’s lap. “My poor, sweet daughter.”

It was obvious that this being was something extremely powerful. Don could sense the controlled menace and sheer force hovering somewhere behind the figure.
It gave off a feeling of pulsating heat, but it didn’t burn. And that flaming hair...what was it? Don wondered.

He began mentally compiling a list of mythic beings, trying to make this figure fit, as another part of his brain was thinking “oh shit, here we are holding his daughter’s corpse.”

Raph was having much the same thought, at least about the corpse, and his hands were hovering near his sai, ready to spring if this strange glowing guy made any hostile moves. Don caught his eye and gave a microscopic shake of his head.

They should not provoke an unknown entity. He didn’t even look entirely here, if his luminescence and transparency were anything to go by. Their weapons might not even make contact with it.

“She had been set a task.” the figure said sadly, “and she cannot return to me until it is complete. But this is not a part of her trial.” He frowned. “This is the work of another. One whose jealousy mars the very air around her.”

He paused, angered. “I submitted to Zeus’ will regarding her exile, but on this matter I cannot. I will not let this be her ending.”

“You can do that?” a voice rang out. All eyes shifted to Mikey, who quickly looked down, sheepish about his outburst. “I mean...that would be awesome.” he mumbled, taking a quick glance at Leo.

Surprisingly, the being smiled at this. “One of the privileges of being a god, young one.” He replied.

“Through my powers light and life come to this planet everyday. Reconnecting my daughter to her celestial lifeforce is simple enough.”

“She was to be denied this during her time on the mortal plain, so I cannot restore all to her. Zeus would not allow it, but a small thread should suffice.” he concluded.

Raph glanced at his brothers, mentally trying to catch up. His brain stuck on the word god. Mikey was just smiling like an idiot, and Don had a look of calculation on his face, as if classifying an unknown species of bug. Leo remained perfectly still, though hope was growing in his eyes.

“I will awaken her, and heal her life threatening injuries, but more I cannot do.” the god sighed. “She will have to suffer through the rest alone.” he paused.

“Or perhaps not.” the god murmured, His gaze hardened, as he turned back to Leo. “You are the one that Called when she could not. Sol did well in finding you. I charge you now with her new existence. Guard her, for I will not be able to intervene again.”

With that puzzling remark, he held up his hand and blew gently across his palm. The familiar bluish flame that was Sol appeared there, then zipped back down to orbit around Leo’s head happily, radiating a rather smug pride.

“I cannot stay. My presence here puts her journey in peril.” the god said. He walked up to Leo, who gathered the girl in his arms and stood. His arms tightened around her and he refused to relinquish her to her father.

The god merely smiled, kissed the index finger of his right hand and pressed it to her forehead. There was a small flare of golden light, and he dissolved into a thousand little sparks that slowly faded out. Leaving one final reverberating thought.
“I miss you, my daughter.”
The girl shuddered in Leo’s arms, drew in a breath and groaned. But she was nowhere near consciousness. Don’s mouth fell open, as Leo crouched quickly to lay her on the ground.

“Oh. My. God.” Don said

“Literally” Mikey replied

They rushed to gather around the girl. Not just “the girl” any longer Don thought. Luna, daughter of a god. An ancient greek one, unless he missed his guess. And they’d just been made responsible for her safety.

Leo growled at them, low in his throat. He had a feral look in his eyes, that said he wasn’t registering friend from foe right now. After the considerable shocks of the day, Don wasn’t really surprised.

First the strange blue flame, then being forcibly joined emotionally with another, a psychic beating, an urgent quest, the trauma of finding her dead, and finally meeting a god who not only resurrects the dead girl, but then thrusts the responsibility of her continued safety on him.

Saner minds than Leo’s would crack under such strain.

“Easy there bro,” Raph spoke up raising his hand in a placating gesture. “Donnie boy just needs ta check her out and see what’s still wrong.”

“Don’t worry Leo. Donnie can fix her now, right Don?” Mikey added.

The soothing voices of his family finally won out and Leo allowed himself to be moved a short distance away. He collapsed down on a bit of rubble, but his eyes never left the girl laid out in the dirt of the Fall floor.

Don moved in and set about assessing her as best he could in the semi-darkness. His movements were sure over her body, confident from many hours of patching up his family and friends. He frowned slightly as he categorized her numerous injuries.

True to his word, the god had healed her life threatening ones. The broken ribs were mended, her lungs unpunctured. Her skull was intact, as well as her spine. There didn’t seem to be any internal bleeding. But that was all he had done. She was still beaten, broken and bloody.

Her left cheek bone was fractured, and her left arm was useless. A large gash bled above her right eye.

She had two black eyes, and was covered in darkly swelling bruises. Various cuts, both deep and shallow still slowly oozed blood onto the ground, and both legs were broken.

Don gently ran his hands under her matted hair to check for hidden injuries, and flinched in sympathy, when his fingers found a large gash across the back of her scalp.

Finally he peeled back her eyelids and let out a shocked gasp. Her pupils were white, and the iris colorless against the pink of the broken blood vessels in the whites of her eyes.

The others contained and comforted Leo. Raph kept him in check with a firm hand, each time the
girl moaned during Don’s exam, and Mikey checked out Leo’s own numerous injuries from the fiery whirlwind, but all eyes went to Don at his gasp.

A stunned Donatello met their gaze.

“Guys, I think she’s blind.”

Leonardo sat alone, slumped on a cushion next to the low shiki futon that Don had pulled into the infirmary for the girl. Don deemed her too bruised to leave on the tall stainless steel table where he usually treated injuries. Shortly thereafter came the cushion for Leo, since he refused to leave her side.

Don had dimmed the lights and left giving Leo a stern look and strict instructions for both of them to get some rest.

He really should rest, Leo thought, now that all the commotion had calmed. But he found himself unable to commit to the oblivion that sleep would provide. He greatly feared that her resurrection may not be real and he might wake to find her gone.

Gently he reached out and stroked a strand of her pale hair where it lay across her pillow. He wanted to do more, but feared touching her would cause her even more pain. She still moaned in her sleep, even though Donatello had given her a large dose of morphine.

Leo finally settled on holding her hand, lifting her least damaged right one from the bed and grasping it lightly in his own bandaged one. He tried to soothe her by rubbing his thumb gently across her palm.

“This will never happen again, dear one” he murmured softly. “I’ll die first.”

Comforted by his grip on her hand, his eyelids slid slowly closed and he succumbed to sleep.

You’re not the only one. Raphael thought as he watched Leo finally close his eyes from the edge of the infirmary door. He’d stationed himself there to keep an eye on them, just after Don had left the room. He heard Leo’s quiet declaration and he sighed thinking back over the last few hours.

In a show of trust, Raph wasn’t sure he deserved, Leo had allowed him to carry the girl back home. Most of Leo’s body was covered in burns, and his great shout to the heavens had drained him of all surefit energy. He leaned heavily on Mikey the whole way back.

Upon returning, Don burst through the door and went straight to work preparing the infirmary. Raph was right behind him with the girl and Mikey brought up the rear with Leo. Don took charge and barked orders to his brothers like a general.

“Mikey, get Leo up on the table, I’ll take a look at those burns. Once he’s settled, call April and get her down here. I’m gonna need another pair of hands.” Don snapped.
Don looked over to Raphael, who stood in the middle of the room, still holding the girl. His eyes softened.

“Raph, I need you to clean her up. I can’t work on her until I can see all her injuries. Take her through the dojo and use the sluice shower to start, then put her in the tub.” he said

“What?” Raph said, throwing Don a panicked look, which he quickly turned on Leo.

Raphael had absolutely no intention of being anywhere near the naked form of the daughter of a god. Especially one that Leo seemed so attached too. Don sighed.

“Leo trusted you to bring her home, it’ll be ok.” he said.

Raph looked again at Leo, completely zoned out in the infirmary, then turned his gaze on the quietly moaning form in his arms.

He shook his head and headed toward the dojo.
Honor in Peril

Raphael carried her quickly through the practice room and out the back to the large overhead showers they used for cleaning up after a tromp through the sewers. There was no way he could prop her upright on her own under the shower. She wasn’t even conscious and there were her broken legs to consider.

Sighing, he turned on the water at the wall and waited for it to warm a bit. Slowly he backed under the flow with her still in his arms. It wasn’t the first time he’d stood under the water in all his gear, but he felt extremely uncomfortable about holding the girl there as well.

He angled her body, this way and that, trying to gently rinse off the blood, ash, dirt and gunk.

He tilted her head back and gently ran the fingers of one hand through her hair while still supporting her with the other. He watched with a sick feeling in his stomach as blood ran down the pale strands and swirled around the drain.

_He backhanded us across the face, and our head snapped back against the wall. Leo’s voice returned to him. Blood ran down the back of our head, from our split lip, and the cut above our eye._

Now, as he stared at the results of that account, Raphael couldn’t stop the rage and pity that was building inside him. She was a tiny little thing, quite pretty under all the grime and bruises, and she felt as fragile as spun glass in his arms. No way had she deserved this.

Raph closed his eyes and forced himself to focus. His shaking rage wasn’t helping her now. He took a cloth from the pile nearby and began wiping as gently as he could at the crusted blood and tear marks on her face.

When her face was relatively clean, he gently shifted her body until he was holding her upright, facing away from him. He wrapped his right arm carefully around her waist, across her body to her left shoulder, supporting all her weight against his chest.

His left hand reached out for hers.

_Careful, _he reminded himself. _Don said this arm was shattered._

Raphael intertwined his fingers between hers and supported the whole length of her arm with his own. He frowned as he raised it toward the flow of water. With the grime rinsing away, he could have sworn that her skin started softly glowing.

_Not like her father’s, _he thought, _not golden. No, this looked more like moonlight._

She moaned, and he flinched, mentally berating himself. Now was not the time to be ogling her fair skin. He carefully shifted her into his other arm and repeated his supported washing motion, in case that arm was damaged as well.

Finally he decided that was as clean as they were going to get under the shower. He backed out and shut off the water. Grabbing a towel off the bench, he wrapped it awkwardly around her with one hand to keep off the chill.

As he scooped her back up and prepared to take her back across the dojo, he paused, staring down at her.
I’m probably never going to have a chance to hold a girl like this again, he thought.

It made him incredibly sad, and he held her a little closer. He gazed at her, with such tenderness that his brothers would have been shocked.

“Don’t worry, little one.” he said quietly with a slightly sick, twisted smile. “You deserve so much better than me. You’ll love Leo.”

But I’ll always be standing by to protect you. He finished in his head.

Raph was incredibly relieved to find April in the front room, surely she could do the next half of the washing. She nodded to him as he approached.

“Donnie said you’d need help,” she smiled with a knowing look, and led the way down the hall to the bathroom. She’d already filled the tub with lukewarm water and as soon as Raph entered with the girl she angled the door closed with her foot. She turned to him and carefully assessed the situation.

Raph was definitely flustered, his face was flushed, and he kept looking around the room, not meeting April’s eyes.

“It’s ok, Raph” April said gently. “You’re much too honorable for me to think you’d been anything less than a gentleman.”

He could meet her eyes then.

April removed the the towel draped over the girl and considered her clothes. She went to the counter and returned quickly with a pair of scissors.

Raph reacted instantly and instinctively to the sudden appearance of this ‘weapon’. He gave a shout of alarm and whipped himself around, placing his shell between April and the girl. In less than 2 seconds Mike and Don were beating on the door.

“It’s alright!” April called loudly, “Raph just had a little scare.”

April chuckled and held her position on the other side of the room, scissors still in hand. She knew better than to approach a ninja who’d just been startled. The results could be painful.

“We have to get her out of those clothes, Raph.” She said, just a hint of rebuke in her voice.

Raph look back at her sheepishly. “Sorry, April. It’s been a hell of a day.”

She shrugged it off, completely at ease with the high strung nature of her friends.

“Ready for me now?” she asked.

Raph nodded and April approached once again with the scissors. Angling them carefully, she started cutting the girl's shorts off. Raph looked away. Anywhere, but at what she was doing.

“Do ya think she’ll be mad about the clothes?” He asked to distract himself.
“I can guarantee you, she will never want to see this outfit again.” April replied, moving on to the girl’s tank top. As she removed clothes, April carefully covered the girl’s body with more towels for Raph’s continued peace of mind.

“Ok, Raph, just put her in the bathtub, towels and all.” April said. He looked at her funny, but leaned down and carefully placed the girl in the water.

“Thanks. You should go clean up yourself now. You’re covered in ash. I’ll call one of the other guys to get her out when I’m done.”

“Nuh uh.” He said. “I’ll just rinse off and be right back.”

Raphael rocketed back to the showers and cleaned up in record time. He washed himself and his gear, then stopped by his room to pick up his spare mask, belt and pads. He oiled his weapons and was armed, standing sentry in front of the bathroom door, long before April stuck her head out and said the girl was ready to move.

He ferried her towel wrapped form to the infirmary and laid her carefully on the table. Leo looked up from a chair in the corner, well bandaged and definitely more alert. Some semblance of his usual calm finally showed on his face.

“Thanks for taking care of her Raphael” he said. Raph ducked his head and beat a hasty retreat.
Donatello had done the best he could for the girl. It took ages, even with April’s help, to bind Luna’s wounds and get her stitched up. Once he had all the open wounds under control, Don had given the girl some morphine so he could set her broken bones. She’d still screamed when he pulled her legs straight.

That sound was going to haunt his dreams for a while. Not that he was going to be able to sleep anytime soon. Whatever trouble Luna was in had been thrust upon his family and Don needed facts to prepare a response.

Now he was back in the lab, reviewing the footage from the spy copter Raph recovered and trying to make sense of the evenings events. Don rewound the footage to Raph and Leo’s arrival, and watched it again. He winced when Leo discovered the body, but forced himself to keep watching.

As the video progressed and Leo began to scream in earnest, Sol suddenly appeared on screen. In it’s regular form Sol was not even bright enough to pick up on camera, but the brilliant flame it became when it finally understood the meaning of Leo’s screams was incredible. Don watched in awe as the recording played back the gigantic whirlwind of blue fire that consumed the Fall.

The roar of the wind was too much for Don to make out what Leo actually said during the next part, and Raph hadn’t recognized the language. Don sighed, wishing he’d been there. That phrase could have been an important clue, but Leo didn’t remember it.

Time to try another tack. Don dug through the clothes that April had removed from the girl, and found what he’d been hoping for in her back pocket. A thin, rather beat up wallet with a New York id, and a couple of bucks in cash. He studied her id carefully.

Name: Luna Heliades
Age: 27
Hair: Blonde
Eyes: Blue

What the... Eyes blue? Well they certainly weren’t now. Don wondered if that was an effect of being reconnected to her “celestial life force” as the god called it. Don quickly googled her address and was surprised to discover it was a shelter on the east side of town. Hmm.

Next he hacked into the police network and ran a background check. Not a lot to work with there. No criminal record, at least not in the tri-state area. A credit check was next, but she didn’t even seem to have a report. In desperation he finally googled her name outright.

Here was something, a public interest piece in the local online paper from a year ago. The article was welcoming Luna to the staff at the shelter and declaring her their new PR person. The piece went on to say that Luna had overcome many challenges, and with help from the shelter, had risen from homeless on the street to a productive member of society.

Typical PR bullshit, he thought and was about to close his browser when he saw another search result, this one a hit on her last name ‘Heliades’.

HELIADES : Nymph Daughters of the Sun | Greek mythology

Don stared at the entry for a long moment. ‘Daughters of the sun’?
Through my powers light and life come to this planet everyday. The god had said. Don quickly clicked on the link and read avidly.

THE HELIADES were seven nymph daughters of the sun-god Helios and Clymene the Oceanid. When their brother Phaethon was struck from the chariot of the sun by Zeus, they gathered around his smoky grave on the banks of the River Eridanos and in their unrelenting grief were transformed into poplar-trees and their tears into golden amber.

Luna certainly wasn’t a tree, and her name wasn’t one of the seven listed on the page, but the Greek gods were not known for monogamy, Don thought. She could well have had a different goddess or even a human for a mother. But the evidence was piling up that her father was Helios, God of the Sun.

Don only knew the basics of Greek mythology, but it was enough to worry him. The gods always seemed to hold grudges against one another, and Helios had implied that Luna was sent here as some sort of punishment.

He had also said, there was another ‘jealous’ force determined to destroy her. Don sighed. How did they get into this mess?

It seemed that the only way out, was to question the girl about the conditions of her punishment. Once she had fulfilled her task could she leave this plane and return to her own. It was the only way to free his family from her burdens.

And where did Sol fit into this little puzzle? Maybe the girl wasn’t awake, but Leo had spoken to Sol. Perhaps Don could question it as well.

Don left the lab and crossed quietly to the infirmary where Raph was on guard.

“Are they awake?” He paused beside Raphael to ask.

“Nah.” Raph said quietly, “Leo’s been out for a while and she’s just moaning.”

Don placed a hand on Raph’s shoulder and squeezed it lightly. “You did good today bro. I never thought to see Leo bested for self-control of all things, but you really kept it under wraps. I’m proud of you.”

Raph felt the blood rushing to his face. Donnie was proud of him?

While Raphael cared for all his brothers, he’d always put Donatello up on a pedestal. Don was all the things Raph wanted to be. Smart, strong, caring without seeming weak, and able to handle any situation.

That Don was proud of him… He didn’t know what to say.

Don chuckled to see his normally quick witted brother speechless and went to check on his patients. Luna was still out. Her body was so traumatized that Don didn’t expect her to wake for several days, if not a week.

Leo had slumped down next to her on the futon and was snoring softly. Don checked that he wasn’t resting on any of his burns, and then let him lie. The person, or thing, he was really here to see was Sol.

The little blue flame was settled in between Luna’s head and Leo’s, and was giving off a soothing glow that pulsed every once in a while, like a quiet heartbeat. Don stared at it for a while. He
wasn’t quite sure how to address the little thing. Finally, he whispered “Sol?”

Sol hovered up a few inches in response and glowed a little more strongly. Don took this as a good sign.

“Could we talk for a bit?” Don asked, keeping his voice low.

Sol flared, then hovered first over Luna, then Leo in a meaningful way.

“They’ll be all right here.” Don said, sensing what Sol was worried about. “Raphael is on guard. No one will get past him.”

Sol paused, as if considering this, then floated gently past Don and Raph out into the hall. Raph looked on curiously as Don cleared his throat, feeling a little ridiculous about his plan to talk to a flame, but he pressed on.

“So, Sol” he began, “Have you known Luna a long time?”

A quiet tinkling laugh chimed down the hall.

yes.

It came from everywhere and nowhere. Don’s eyes widened and he looked to Raph.

“Did you hear that?” Don asked. Raph just nodded, his eyes as big as saucers. Don turned back to Sol.

“So, um, is she a goddess?” Don asked

yes. no. yes.

Don and Raph exchanged another look.

“Which is it?” Raph said.

But Don was thinking hard. “Helios said she’d been set a task and placed on the mortal plane, cut off from her celestial life force.”

“Who’s Helios?” Raph interrupted him.


“You’ve been hanging out with Mikey too much Don” Raph said with smirk.

“Then her mortal body died,” Don continued, as if he’d never been interrupted, “and Helios gave her back a connection to her powers. So I guess the answer would be, yes she was a goddess, then she was human, and now goddess again?” Don turned back to Sol, “Well at least partially since she’s still trapped in an injured human body.”

yes.

Raph was staring at Don. “I really don’t understand how your mind works, bro.”

But Don was already moving on to his next question.

“Do you know what her task is?” Don asked.
Sol.

Ok, that was a little tougher. Don pondered for a few minutes. “You’re her task?” he asked finally.

yes. no.

“You are one frustrating little flame, ya know d’at?” Raph said. “Why won’t ya give us a straight answer?”

There was a flare and Don got the distinct impression Sol was frustrated as well.

Can’t!

It replied a little louder than usual. Don just sighed.

“Can you show me? Da’ way ya showed da’ girl to Leo?” Raph blurted.

“Raph, you saw what happened before. We can’t afford to have you out of commision now.” Don interrupted. “Besides, it looks as if that communication bound Leo to her in some way.”

Don continued his thoughts aloud, oblivious to Raph’s irritated glare.

Some of us wouldn’t mind that. Raph thought, but instead said “Maybe he can do it without d’at stuff.”

They both turned back toward Sol. It’s light had dimmed a bit, as if disappointed.

only blue.

Don sighed. It could only show things to Leo, so they were back to 20 questions.

“You’re obviously connected to her in some way,” Don mused. “What are you to her?”

Sol

“Great! D’at helps.” Raph groused.

Don’s eyes narrowed. “You are her Sol?” he tried out the words in that order.

“Her soul!” he breathed.

yes. no.

“Part of her soul then?” Don asked excitedly. Now they were getting somewhere.

yes.

“Ok, so you are part of her soul. And she has to find all the parts?” Don continued.

yes.

“Who can break a soul?” Raph interrupted again, “I thought they were rather intangible things.”

“Did you just use the word ‘intangible’? Who are you and what have you done to my brother Raph,” Don said.
“Ha-ha. The question?” Raph turned an expectant look on Sol.

Sol gave a little bob. The flame equivalent of a shrug Don thought.

*Zeus*

Oh this was not good. Luna was in trouble with the king of the gods.
Open Your Eyes

Give me a sign... Leo begged mentally, sitting besides Luna’s still form. He had hardly left her side in the week since he’d found her at the bottom of the Fall. Only when Don and Raph physically evicted him, struggling, from the infirmary did he even think about needs like food and rest.

It had taken Leo three days to fully recover from the burns and exhaustion he suffered. He, like all the turtles, had an accelerated healing factor. But he hadn’t resumed any of his normal routines. Training and patrols didn’t interest him as long as she was unconscious.

He spent most of his time next to her in meditation, trying to send her some of his strength, and silently begging forgiveness for not being able to keep this disaster from her. Sometimes he even forgot that she wouldn’t know who he was when she did wake up.

“If I could turn back time, I’d undo all this pain. Keep you safe…” he murmured.

Make you mine. His mind added.

Leo glanced guiltily at his constant companion in this vigil. Not certain if Sol could hear his thoughts if there was no physical contact.

Sol had stayed nearby during the whole ordeal and could inevitably be found hovering over one or both of them. But it always went with Leo whenever he was kicked out of the infirmary. It would follow him chirping and making small motions of encouragement, until Leo ate and rested a bit before returning to Luna’s side.

Donatello had shared Sol’s startling revelations with Leo, and they had him more than a little worried. How was he going to protect Luna when so much power was in play? And worse, he had dragged his family, those he had already sworn to protect, into this mess with him.

Leo had tried to get Sol to give him more details on Luna’s predicament, but the little one just got frustrated. It wanted to ‘show’ him things, but Don had forbidden it except as a last resort. Don was already concerned about Leo’s sudden emotional attachment to Luna. He didn’t want it to deepen any further until they had this situation sorted out.

Leonardo already knew it wouldn’t matter if Sol touched him again or not. His mind, body, and soul were already bound to her.

Unable to obtain true peace, he dropped his meditative pose, and gazed sadly at her beautiful face. The bruising had faded around her eyes and some of the lesser cuts had healed. Her bones had even begun to knit. Don had said this was faster than normal human healing. Leo hoped that his energy was the reason.

He sighed and raised his hand toward her soft cheek, but the sight of his green, three fingered hand against her pale skin bothered him, and he dropped his palm. She was a goddess. Literally. He was a monster, not even a lowly human. Completely unworthy of her.

Wake up! His heart pleaded. Just let me see the life come back to your face. I need to hear your voice, your laugh, memorize your smile! I’m going to make it right somehow. I swear it.
Luna came back to herself slowly. She felt terrible. Weak. Sick. Everything ached. Pain! Yes, there was definitely still pain, but it was different. It was the pain of healing, not of breaking.

The pressure that had squeezed the last bit of breath out of her lungs had ceased. The weight that had crushed her arm and legs was gone. She could no longer feel the terrible draining weakness of blood pouring into her chest. Her head hurt and her scalp felt tight, but it was no longer broken and bleeding.

Having taken stock of her body, she pushed her senses further out. She did it without thought, as naturally as breathing, sensing life around her. She stopped, shocked, and pulled her power back. She hadn’t been able to reach outside herself since her exile.

She dove back inside, down deep to her core to locate the source of this change. Two small glittering threads, had been woven back into the empty space at the center of her being.

One was golden, feeding her life, and she recognized her father’s essence immediately. It connected her to a trickle of her own lost power. The second was unfamiliar but calm and solid. It was deep blue and fed her weakened body strength.

Confused, she surfaced to her skin and began taking stock of her environment. Luna didn’t bother to open her eyes. Without Sol, she couldn’t see anyway.

Instead she reached inside for that trickle of power and sent it out to the air currents of the room. A breeze gently began to pass over her skin, and as she mentally whispered questions, the breeze brought answers.

That she lay in a place of safety, she did not doubt. Comfort, warmth and healing energy flowed from all around. Four pillars of power supported this sanctuary and Luna began to wonder if some of her immortal cousins had taken pity and defied Zeus to save her.

Then more mundane scents made themselves known to her. Antiseptic, bleach, soap, a sterilized environment. Not her family then she thought disappointed. But still, powerful beings dwelt here.

Scents of sandalwood and musk swirled nearby, and mixed with the sense of solidarity and comfort. One of these beings was responsible for the dark blue thread, and it was sitting right next to her.

Sol was restless, Leo thought. It was more active now than it had been all week during their vigil, and he wondered about the change. But this was just a brief distraction from the girl in front of him. He turned his eyes back to her face and gasped.

“Donnie!” He called, slightly panicked. Her face, in fact all her exposed skin, had begun to glow softly in the dim light.

Don leapt from the balcony in front of his bedroom door to the floor of the living area, and made the door of the infirmary in two strides. Raphael was right behind him since he had taken to sleeping on the couch, just to be nearby.
Mikey stuck his head out of the kitchen and trotted over to see what was up.

Don quickly strode over to his patient, noting that color was returning to her cheeks and that she was breathing more evenly.

“What is it Leo?” He asked, keeping his voice low for the sleeping girl.

“She…she’s glowing” Leo said softly in awe.

Raph and Mikey stopped in the doorway blocking the light that had been streaming in from the living quarters, and Don could suddenly see the pale white glow around her sleeping form.

“Maybe that means she’s gonna wake up soon, bros.” Mikey said happily.

His brothers had all been way too serious and moping around since they’d brought their latest friend home. Sure she’d been pretty badly injured, but Mikey had great faith that the huge glowing dude, and his genius brother, would be able to fix it all.

Mikey had been trying his best to keep the others spirits high, but the atmosphere had begun to dim even his bright outlook. He smiled his beaming grin now, thinking about how great it was going to be to have a new friend in the house. Outside of Casey and April, the brothers trusted few humans enough to really call them friends.

“Ok guys,” Don said. “If she is gonna wake soon, let’s not overwhelm her with all of us at once. We’ll give her some time with Leo and see how she reacts. I'll stay nearby, but out of sight. Raph and Mikey, you two stay out until we think she's ready.”

Mikey grumbled that if she was blind, she couldn't see them anyway, but they both nodded. Past introductions to humans had not always gone so well, and the girl was still injured. Silently they filed out.

Luna drew her power back. She had too little to squander it at this moment. She would let the slow trickle pool inside until she needed it. She already felt stronger. The power flowing in on that blue thread was speeding her healing. But it was time to get moving again.

Luna was drawn by a powerful curiosity as well. Who were these powerful ones that they could so defy the gods without fear? Carefully, so as not to upset her injuries further, Luna came back to herself. She flexed her arms and legs but moaned in pain. The bones were mending, but she wasn't going to be on her feet anytime soon.

The presence beside her had not yet moved, or spoke, and tired of waiting, Luna finally opened her eyes, even though she knew she could not see. At least it was a signal she was awake. There was a sharp intake of breath. Luna knew her eyes were startling this way. White pupils and crystal clear iris were not normal for a human. She sighed softly, and cleared her throat.

"Thank you for saving me" she said.

Leonardo gasped again. Her voice was the most beautiful he had ever heard. It was bell like, and resonated with just the slightest hint of power. Something Leo was fast learning to associate with the gods.
Luna waited a bit for a response, and when none was forthcoming, she tried again. "I don't know how you did it, but thank you." she said

Leo was at a loss for words. For a week he'd been begging her to wake up. Now that she was, he was afraid of saying the wrong thing. Freaking her out. Losing her. He shook his head. What happened to the one his brothers called 'fearless'?

"Don't worry, you are safe here." he said, worriedly, dodging her implied question.

Luna would have smiled at his anxious tone, but her face hurt too much, so she settled for just a quirk of her lips.

"That I do not doubt" She said formally. "Did my father send you?"

It was the only thing she could think would make even powerful beings such as these stand against a god.

"Send me? Uh, no. Not really." Leo replied

"Then how did you find me?" She wondered aloud.

"Sol found me." Leo said cautiously. “It… found me in a tunnel, and asked for help. It showed me you were in danger." He reached out and gently took her good hand, happy that she did not flinch away from his touch.

"Sol?!” she exclaimed. “Sol are you here?"

At her cry, Sol left off happily orbiting Leo's head and went to hover over Luna. She freed her hand from Leo's grip and raised it unerringly to the little flame. It settled itself happily into her palm, and made a little chirping cry that was part glad greeting and part purr.

“I’m so happy you’re here, my friend.” She said. Then her tone became extremely formal. “Little one, will you join with me again and lend me your sight once more?”

Sol gave another happy chirp and zipped to float above her head. Slowly, it began to unravel it’s form, like a piece of soft blue string that lowered until it touched the top of Luna’s head. As it’s blue light began to drain down into Luna, her crystal clear eyes shimmered, and filled from the bottom with Sol’s light.

A moment later Sol faded out completely and the light in Luna’s eyes dimmed to a normal human blue.
Unusual Surroundings

Leonardo watched Luna closely as she looked around the infirmary where she lay. Her beautiful, now blue, eyes flitted from one thing to another, taking it all in. The tall stainless steel table in the center of the room. The counter built up against the wall. The shoji screen dividers. The futon where she lay.

At last she turned her gaze on Leo. Leonardo closed his eyes, wished he could fade into the darkness around him, and waited for the screaming to begin. He stayed motionless, desperately afraid she would injure herself further trying to get away from him if he moved.

While he had believed her blind, he had let himself hope that he would be able to be close to her. That he could keep secret exactly how different he and his brothers were. That hope turned to ashes the moment he realized, that with Sol's help, she could see. Now, he did not want to meet her gaze and see fear in those beautiful eyes.

Luna's eyes widened as she took in the appearance of the being beside her, but otherwise she kept her thoughts to herself. Truly she hadn't expected anything human. The power levels she felt from these beings were way too strong.

Besides, as a former goddess, she was already well aware that there were many things residing on Earth that were neither human or animal. She had met a number of them in the ancient days, and had nothing but respect for their courage.

Living among the barbarian hordes that made up the masses of humanity took skill and discipline. Humans of the present day were so egotistical, they called these powerful beings 'monsters' and relegated them to the realm of fairy tales.

What did surprise her was the fact that he was mortal. The amount of energy he was feeding her injured body was so immense she couldn't quite believe it. She sent just a tendril of her own power back to him to verify it. Yes, definitely mortal.

Obviously he was used to an adverse reaction to his appearance. He whole body projected sad determination, and he hadn't opened his eyes, so she took the opportunity to study him carefully.

His form was unique, based on that of a terrapin crossed with a human. It was hard to tell from her prone position, and it didn't help that he was kneeling, but she judged his height to be about 5' 10". He was extremely well proportioned and muscular, with smooth, creamy dark jade skin.

For some reason, she found herself wondering what his skin felt like. The thought made her feel warm and shivery inside.

His back was covered by a dark protective shell and his chest armored in light tan plates, both of which were marked with chips and scratches. These scars spoke of many battles with edged weapons, yet she didn't sense any aggressiveness from him. If anything he hovered rather protectively over her, projecting an air of serenity and calm.

He wore a few human accessories. A belt with several carry pouches, some protective gear and a weapons harness of some sort, which was currently empty. He also wore a blue mask over his eyes, and Luna wondered if that was for obscurity or identity.

Overall, she thought him quite a handsome creature. His expressive face held a cool confidence that showed, even in his distressed state. He matched the feeling of the blue thread inside her
perfectly, and she felt drawn to him in a way she had not experienced before.

For one thing, she was extremely grateful to him. Somehow this lovely, expressive creature had managed to summon her father and redeem her life. It was a debt she was never going to be able to repay. But what she felt was more than simple gratitude.

Even in her injured state, looking at him stirred feelings within her that she thought long discarded.

Finally she could take the silence no longer. He deserved to know who and what he had rescued, and he needed to know about the dangers of sheltering her.

"I am known as Luna Heliades, daughter of Helios, Master of the Sun and Selene, Mistress of the Moon. May I have the pleasure of your name?" She said formally.

Startled, Leo opened his eyes. He already knew who she was, but he had never met anyone who was not first shocked, then disgusted, by his appearance. Oh, other humans had befriended them eventually. The disgust and feelings of wrongness wore away with time and repetition. But none of their friends, not even April, had met his eyes and instantly accepted him for what he was.

Stunned, he rose and bowed automatically in response to her formal tone. She had never seen anyone move as gracefully as he did.

"I am Hamato Leonardo, first son of Hamato Yoshi, our Master Splinter, and head of my clan." he replied.

She smiled and winced slightly as that caused pain in her face, but the smile reached all the way to her eyes, warming and lighting them from within.

She actually smiled at me, Leo thought, no screaming, no panicked attempts to escape.

"I am honored Leonardo. I owe you and your clan a tremendous debt. May I know the others of your family?" She inquired. "Sol speaks highly of them."

Leonardo exchanged a glance with Donatello, who had stayed out of sight across the room, but had watched Luna's assessment with interest. Don came around the stainless table and bowed as well.

"I am Hamato Donatello, third son of Hamato Yoshi." Don said.

She nodded gracefully in reply. This one was similar in appearance to his brother, but wore accessories and weapons of a different color and character. The masks were mostly for identity then, she thought. But there were slight differences in skin coloration as well.

"Sol tells me that you are the one I should thank for tending my remaining wounds. Thank you, Donatello, my debt extends to you as well." she said.

While Don was introducing himself, Leo went to the door and motioned to Michelangelo to come inside. Leo simply couldn't believe how well she was taking things. He watched her covertly as Mikey made his way in the door.

"Go easy on her," Leo warned his brother.

Mikey just grinned at Leo. He forwent the formal bow his training dictated and instead flamboyantly dropped to one knee saying, "Hamato Michelangelo, at your service beautiful goddess lady!"
Leo frowned, but Luna laughed lightly. It was the most melodic sound Leo had ever heard.

This, Luna thought, was definitely the youngest of the family. His orange accessories suited him to a 'T', and his innocence and optimism washed over her like a tidal wave. She rejoiced to see such joy in their world.

"I am honored to meet you Michelangelo. Sol tells me you are most amusing, and have made waiting for me to awaken much more pleasant. I look forward to experiencing that myself." she said

Mikey grinned, rose to his feet, and elbowed Don. "You hear that?" he smirked "I'm already her favorite!"

Don just rolled his eyes. "Go make our guest some of Sensei's healing tea, and tell Raph to come in." he said.

"No problem, bro" Mikey said and headed out the door.

Raph entered so quickly, Leo suspected he had been lurking outside the door. He crossed to Luna's side and bowed as formally as Mikey had not.

"I am Hamato Raphael, second son of Hamato Yoshi." He said. Leo waited for the snide remark that was sure to follow, but was surprised yet again. Raphael smiled, one of his rare unguarded smiles, and said, "It's great to see you awake."

Don shooed everyone out then, insisting that even Leo needed to leave and get some rest. Then he brought in Mikey's tea from the kitchen and propped Luna up carefully so she could drink. He had a few questions he wanted answered.

"I know you're probably hungry," he said, "but let's start with this. My Master has been treating us with it since we were little, it has great healing properties."

Luna smiled and accepted the cup with her good hand.

"Thank you, Donatello. Your family has been generous to take me in at such great risk." She said.

"And what exactly are the risks, my lady?" Don probed lightly, stumbling only a little over the correct term of address to use with a goddess. He wondered if the information he had gleaned so far was accurate, and if she would be forthcoming with the truth.

"I will not lie, Donatello, the risks are indeed great. Though not, perhaps, as great as you fear." She frowned. "Sol tells me he was unable to share with you many details of what has occurred, but you and your family should be aware of what sheltering me may mean."

She quietly sipped her tea for a time before she continued.

"Do you know much of the gods of the ancient peoples, Donatello?" she asked.

"I have some knowledge of human accounts from the time. I understand your father drives the sun chariot across the sky each day?" Don said.

Luna's musical laugh trilled out again. It felt terribly familiar to Don. For some reason, it reminded him of Sol's giggle the other day, before Luna awoke.

"That is a very poetic interpretation of his responsibilities, equated to the knowledge of technology
and power the Greeks had at the time. But I think you'd like a more scientific explanation, would you not?” she inquired.

Donatello's eyes lit up.

"I would love to hear all about it after you have recovered somewhat," Don said "But I think the pressing issue is the peril you find yourself currently in, and those causing it."

Luna sighed, but nodded while taking another soothing sip from her tea. It was the most interesting tea she had ever tasted, and it was reviving her more than any natural tea should. On her next sip, she sampled it gently with her newly restored senses.

Not surprisingly, she found it bound about with power. It had threads of color that matched all four of these turtle beings, but at the core of it she found a deep and abiding strand of green, which the other threads wound about. Love was holding it all together. Intriguing.

"I am here in this mortal form because I am in exile." Luna admitted. "I take full responsibility for the actions that led me to this fate, and I'm afraid I would do it again. But though my exile was meant as punishment it was never meant to be deadly, merely arduous, difficult, and painful."

Don was burning with questions after that quiet statement. Her response indicated honor and acceptance of her punishment, but he couldn't imagine what she might have done to warrant banishment. However, at the moment he couldn't afford to be distracted from the main point.

"So, who is trying to kill you?" Donatello asked gently.

"I am uncertain as to the exact person at this time, Donatello." She replied. "Unfortunately, I have many enemies, both mortal and immortal. It could be any one of them, taking advantage of my exile to remove me permanently."

Donatello considered her words. Mortal opponents, as she put it, could probably be easily handled. Immortals he wasn't so confident about. Perhaps he and his brothers could help her complete her task quickly. Surely when she regained all her power, she would be able to defend herself.

Luna was quiet for a few moments, and Don worried that he was tiring her out, but before he could suggest they continue the conversation later, she suddenly asked,

"Your brother, Leonardo, he is the one who Called my father?"

"You could say that," Don said quietly. "It was more like, he demanded a response for your suffering."

Her eyes widened, surprised that anyone would dare demand anything from her father. But Don refused to say anymore about it. She didn't need to cope with anymore trauma. He settled her back on the futon and took her cup.

"You should rest." Don said. "I'll be nearby if you need anything."

He watched her quietly as she settled into the futon and prepared for sleep. She pressed her good hand onto her forehead, made a peculiar gesture with her fingers, and began to hum a soft tune. A small blue glow began to escape her forehead, and in mere moments, Sol had reformed and flitted out of the infirmary searching for Leo.

Don had begun to leave as well, but turned back with one last question he could no longer restrain.
"Luna," he said quietly, "Why were you exiled?"

She did not turn to face him, and he had to lean in close to hear her soft reply.

"I saved a child."
Leonardo lay on his bed watching the shadows and patterns of light the candles were making on the ceiling. It was very late, but he could not bring himself to contemplate sleep. Every time he dozed off he saw the same thing, the brutal rape of the girl who had come to mean everything to him.

He had screamed himself, and practically the whole household, awake more times than he could count in the last 3 weeks. He hadn't had a solid 8 hours sleep since Luna opened her eyes.

Daytime didn't bring any relief either. Leo had always been sensitive to the feelings of his brothers. Master Splinter had been training him to hone that skill for years, but now, overnight, that sensitivity had been magnified a thousandfold.

He felt every emotion around him. Donatello's worry about Luna's recovery and the danger she represented for their family. Mikey's blinding happiness to have a new friend. Poor Mikey suffered the most from their enforced isolation, but now Leo could feel that suffering rolling off his brother, replaced with overwhelming joy in a new companion.

He also felt Raphael's intense attraction to the girl, as well as Raph's determination to quash it for Leo's own sake. But perhaps worst of all was Don's pity, as he watched it all play out.

Where had this extra sense come from? Don had postulated that it was triggered by his connection to Luna, or perhaps by his call to the god Helios. Leo just wished it would go away. The only person whose feelings he was interested in was Luna, but from her he received nothing.

Was she still hurting? Was she quietly suffering from the trauma of her attack? He couldn't believe that she wasn't, since the mere memory was enough to bring him screaming awake night after night. The attack had been brutal and humiliating, and Leo wished with all his heart that he could take that painful memory from her.

Since he couldn't really tell how she felt about him, he resorted to ignoring her during the daylight hours. Her unusual acceptance of his family had thrown off his perceptions of the world. But he still couldn't bring himself to hope she could ever want him.

He shouldn't want her. As soon as she met the conditions of her exile, she would go back to the sky and have her choice of gods chasing after her.

Leonardo finally abandoned his bed as a lost cause, and padded silently across the room to his desk. He took out some of the fragile parchment paper he used for writing poetry, wet his brush, thinned his ink, and began composing. Slowly and carefully he painted the kanji symbols in the hopes that putting his emotions on paper might help him understand.

Echos of light, bring me peace.
Cleanse me of these desires.
Dreams and nightmares born of her,
igniting chaotic fires.

Must I ever walk in darkness?
Can she not light my way?
I am undeserving, but would she even stay?
Captured and no longer free,
I'm bound by soul and heart.
Hers to command, if she has need
and yet she will depart.

When she goes, then I would die.
and for her, I would kill.
Hope is lost, and darkness nie
to lie in ever still.

As Leo re-read the parchment in his hand, tears began to well up in his eyes. How he wished his Master was here to talk this through. Leo was no longer sure of his direction and the chains he felt around his heart were agonizingly tight. He could not talk to his brothers. They were depending on his leadership while their Master was away.

Devastated all over again, Leo threw himself back into bed, and blew out the candle. It took mere moments for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, but he realized something was missing. Sol.

Leo had come to depend on the gentle blue glow of his little companion to soothe the ache of self imposed loneliness. Inevitably, Sol came to his room after Luna was asleep and didn't need him to help her see. Sol was his continued connection to her, but tonight he was alone.

Donatello knocked quietly on the door to the infirmary to see if Luna was still awake. It was late, but Don thought she might open up to him more in the quiet hours of the night. In the past few weeks, he had not pressed for further answers regarding her exile. Her quiet statement had been offered with no further elaboration.

But his observations of her and their conversations over those few weeks had convinced him that she was entirely good and more than worthy of their help. He also suspected she was harboring some extremely traumatic emotions, and in the absence of their Master, supposed that he should be the one to try talking them out with her.

Then there was the matter of Leo. Don was sure that the emotional link Leo was experiencing, went both ways. He had noted Luna's longing looks, whenever Leo passed by, and Leo's refusal to spend time with her, was depressing her spirits and stunting her mental healing.

"Please Donatello, come in." Luna said.

She was already dressed and in bed, wearing nothing but a long t-shirt borrowed from April, but she had seen his anxiety growing the last few days, and she was glad that he had finally come to talk to her about it. Instinctively, she knew it was going to be about Leonardo.

Luna found her heart racing these days whenever she glimpsed the head of the clan. Even when he was just crossing in front of her door. But he hadn't come back in to see her, at least, not while she was awake. Sol reported that sometimes he came down at night and spent hours at her side.

Don waffled around at the edge of the room, trying to decide how to approach what was surely a delicate subject.

"Is something troubling you, Donatello?" she gently prodded.
She had quickly learned to read the signs of concern on his face. His eyebrow ridges had a tendency to push up together in the center of his forehead, and his mouth flattened out in a severe line. He sighed quietly and came to kneel beside her bed on the floor of the infirmary.

"I know you are recovering well physically," he began, "but I need to ask, how are you feeling day to day?"

Luna blinked. This was not a question she had been expecting. She considered her reply carefully before answering. She did not want him to think her ungrateful for his around the clock assistance.

"Despite your most tender care Donatello, I must admit that the days are hard." She closed her eyes, and terrifying images flashed before her. Her lips thinned in pain. "But I would not burden you, and yours, even further with my thoughts. I have already brought far too many troubles to your clan."

"Luna," Donatello replied gently "You are no longer alone in this exile. Your time with us has been enlightening and the motives for your actions, honorable. We have pledged to help you, and I would help you with this as well, if I can. Have you been sleeping?"

"Yes." she said simply.

Each time she closed her eyes, she expected to be traumatized by the events of her death and redemption, but strangely, she'd been sleeping through the night. This undisturbed rest was speeding her physical healing, and she suspected this was Leonardo's doing. She knew he was still sending her his strength. She could feel it flowing in during the night.

"I believe Leonardo may be responsible." She continued, surprising Don.

"Hmm. That could explain a few things" Don said.

He suddenly wore the very intense look he sometimes got when they were discussing the more metaphysical aspects of gods and science.

"Has he mentioned the empathic abilities he's acquired since you came to be with us?"

Luna shook her head.

"All of you have some pretty powerful latent talents." she said, startling Don again. "They will come out eventually, but I believe that Leonardo's contact with my soul," she paused and a slight blush crossed her face, "may have opened that channel in his mind more quickly. He has not come to discuss it with me, but I can feel it's power."

"I'm afraid he's experiencing some trouble from it." Don sighed. "He locks himself away most of the day. He's not eating, he hasn't slept. He wakes us all in the night screaming." he said

Luna paled and frowned, thinking hard. She consulted briefly, internally, with Sol.

You're supposed to be watching him! Why didn't you tell me? she demanded.

luna is sick. Sol replied. leo is helping.

He's syphoning my nightmares, isn't he? Luna asked.

leo is HELPING. Sol replied more firmly.

Don waited through her silence. He had become used to these silent conversations she held with
Sol. Luna eyes narrowed and abruptly she asked,

"Do you think I am ok to move around now?"

Don considered that for a few moments.

"If you were human, you'd have to be off your feet for a few more months." he replied "but you're healing at a phenomenal rate. The bones are pretty far along, so if you need to move around a bit, that would probably be ok. What did you have in mind?" he asked.

"A solution for Leonardo." She said.

When Donatello helped Luna upstairs to Leo's room, Leo was once again being tortured in the grip of a nightmare.

"Nooo" he murmured, writhing in his sleep "Get away from her!"

Don's sigh, as he helped Luna to the bed, made it clear that this was all too typical a state for Leonardo these days. But he didn't try to wake Leo, Don merely settled Luna gently by his side and quietly left.

Luna sat still and regarded him for a few moments. She smiled slightly to see him sleeping "weapons ready." As if had just thrown himself at the bed ready for an all out battle to get some rest. The only concession he had made toward peaceful sleep was removing his katanas.

She reached out carefully and laid one gentle finger in the middle of his forehead. Her focus turned inward, seeking some of her precious pooled power, and after warning to Sol not to interfere, she sent a tendril of thought into his mind.

Instantly she was absorbed by his nightmare, and recognized it as her own. No wonder she was sleeping well and he was not.

Even now he was protecting her. She bowed her head, filled with sorrow, that he experienced that horrendous event. His mind was damaged with pain and guilt. Somehow he had convinced himself he was to blame for the entire incident. Not finding her fast enough. Not saving her, even though he hadn't even known her name at the time.

She withdrew her hand and sank deep within her own consciousness, right down to her core, where the blue, silver, and gold threads were woven in tight. Carefully she made the flow of power on the blue thread one way, keeping her thoughts and emotions from sliding back across the connection.

His sleep quieted immediately. She followed the flow back into his mind, and sought out all the images related to her attack. Carefully she smoothed the sharp edges from them. Making them once removed, less painful, not so personal. Hopefully they would no longer trouble him so.

She created her own gently glowing, moon-light white, thread and wove it in, out, and around his thoughts, showing him without words how to shield his mind and protect himself from the emotions of those around him. She took the time to weave in other lessons, ones of attack and defense, that he would unlock as his abilities increased.
She lingered at the edges of his mind, basking in the feeling of his normal serenity flowing back over his consciousness. How she wished her time with him didn't have to end. For the first moments since her exile she had begun to feel that she might make it through. Here, with Leonardo and his clan, she felt safe. Comforted by their presence, surety, and strength.

But Leonardo was only just coming into his gifts. In the past few weeks, she had learned that the brothers truly did not understand the depth of their power. Most of their gifts had yet to be unlocked, and they were already extraordinary.

In a flash of foresight, Luna saw what would happen if other gods discovered these beautiful beings. They would be treated as the 'monsters' of old, twisted and used as toys. Manipulated for gain amongst the powers. Leonardo and his family were far too precious to endanger that way.

She would do the responsible thing, and release Leonardo from her soul bindings. Of course, she would heal more slowly, but he would not absorb any more of her pain. Then he and his brothers would be able to let her go.

Sol protested violently.

*stop luna! leo is helping!*

*But HE is hurting!* Luna replied, tears she didn't feel rolling down her face.

Why did doing the right thing feel so bad?

Carefully, so as not to disturb his now peaceful slumber, she reached out again to touch his face. She stroked it gently with the back of her left hand, whole again, thanks to him.

Luna tilted her head and ran her eyes over his face intently, memorizing his features. His high brow bones and strong jaw showed his intelligence and compassion. His soft mouth practically begged for her kiss. One kiss couldn't hurt, could it? Something she could hold on to when all she had left was memories?

She stopped that line of thought abruptly. That would help no one. As a goddess, she'd had and left hundreds of lovers, both immortal and mortal. So why was this so hard?

She had loved none of them, so none of them had hurt to leave.

No. If she stayed Leonardo and his clan would be destroyed, long before they ever became the luminous beings she knew they could be. She withdrew from his mind and slipped back down into her own core. She would free him. She owed him that, at least, for her life. Unbound, he would not mourn her.

She would mourn for them both.

Mentally she reached for the blue thread, took hold, and tugged at it gently. Loosening the tangle that bound him to her.

Leonardo frowned and stirred in his sleep. Something was wrong. Seriously wrong. All his instincts were screaming at him to wake up, but he seemed unable to open his eyes. Something very precious was being taken from him. He began to writhe around on the bed, pain making him moan.

"No! Please!" he cried out. "Stay! Don't leave me in the darkness!"
"Luna, NO!" he shouted coming awake with jolt.
Luna forced herself to remain focused as Leo began to groan softly in his sleep. The tangle holding his thread to her moon-lit one, was wrapped up in her father's gold as well. How could this have happened? Her father was an experienced weaver. Helios' thread shouldn't be caught up in this. She tugged a little more forcefully, but still couldn't get the blue thread to come loose.

*luna*! Sol chided, *leo hurts*!

Leonardo was mumbling something about darkness, but Luna kept at it, trying to tease the knot loose from the inside. Suddenly Leo screamed.

"Luna, No!"

Intense pain shot through her head and heart, then everything went black.

Someone was in the room with him, and something was tearing a hole in his heart. Before he had time to think, Leo leapt and struck. Too late he registered the scent of lilies and hyacinths.

Luna's scent.

His fist had already connected with her soft flesh and she dropped to the bed like a stone.

What have I done?

Leo panicked looking at her silent form. She was just healing and now he'd dealt her a blow hard enough to knock her out. He rushed to her side and knelt next to her slumped form.

Trembling, he reached out and gently cupped her swelling cheek in his palm. Astoundingly, a blue glow surrounded his hand, and flowed over Luna's face, easing the swelling and wiping it away where he stroked her gently with his thumb. In moments, her face was healed. Leo stared, unable to comprehend what had just occurred.

Luna's eyelids fluttered, and she opened her eyes to discover Leonardo crouching over her, worriedly inspecting her from mere inches away. His sweet breath fell softly onto her face, and her body reacted instinctively.

She lunged toward him, letting her weight slip off the bed and on to his lap while she reached out and pulled his shoulders toward her. Her lips captured his in an instant but her weight took them off balance to the floor.

Leonardo stiffened as Luna threw herself into his arms and kissed him passionately. Surely she was confused by the blow, and imagined him someone else! This couldn't be real. Luna couldn't be willingly kissing him... the monster. That sort of reward was saved for the hero.

He tried to carefully push her back so he wouldn't do her any further harm.

Luna felt his resistance, broke the kiss and drew back, looking into his eyes. Leonardo wanted to drown in them, but instead he looked away, trying to sit up and remove Luna from his lap.
Devastated, Luna realized she was too late. She must have succeeded, after all, in untangling Leo's thread. Upset, she pushed herself to her feet and limped toward the door. She didn't even realize there were tears running down her cheeks.

"Don't worry Leonardo," she said quietly. "I know you do not want me now. That is as it should be. I will get Donatello to take me to the surface. You won't ever have to see me again."

Leonardo was completely disarmed by this. Here she was, his greatest desire, preparing to leave because she thought he didn't want her? Surely there was some mistake.

He was on his feet and blocking the door so fast it looked like he'd disappeared.

"Luna! Dear one! Please... don't cry. " He tipped her face up gently, and wiped at her tears with his thumbs. "I can't stand it!"

"But," was all she had time for.

He cut her off with a kiss. He would show her the truth, make her see how much he needed her.

Her full lips were so soft and warm against his, he never wanted the kiss to end. He buried one hand in her silky hair, pulling her closer, and let his other hand slide down her side to her waist, wrapping her tightly in his embrace, physically forbidding her to leave.

She moaned and the sound electrified him, sending a shock down his spine. He'd never experienced such pleasure, until she opened her lips and showed him this was only the beginning. She teased his tongue into her mouth, stroking and exploring. She threw her arms around his neck and melted against him, wanting, needing to be nearer still.

Luna felt her desperation rising. Abruptly, she pulled back and stepped away from him. This was wrong! She had just broken their connection, hadn't she? She was supposed to be leaving!

Leo stood trembling as she released him, eyes shut tight, not moving for the longest time. He had allowed hope to grow, had allowed himself to believe she might actually have meant her words, but now she was pulling away. He was the monster after all.

"Leonardo?" she said worriedly, touching his arm.

Leo opened his eyes, and looked her over carefully. Pain crossed her tear streaked face and she swayed a bit where she stood. Suddenly, he recalled her injuries, and in the blink of an eye his expression changed from confused pain to protective concern.

"Luna!" he scolded, "You aren't supposed to be putting weight on your legs!" He scooped her up quickly in his arms, unable to stand the thought of her in the slightest pain. Startled by his sudden movement, she threw her arms around his neck for balance.

Leo stood for a moment, just holding her. He loved the feel of her clinging to him. Determination suddenly welled within him. He would not let her slip away. He would do whatever it took, become whatever she needed him to be. Perhaps he could be the hero too.

He leaned in and deliberately nuzzled her face with his before scattering soft kisses over every bit of her he could reach.

Luna was confused, he wasn’t supposed to be reacting like this. He shouldn’t want her anymore. She closed her eyes and dove inside to examine the soul bonds she thought she'd released.
What she found shocked her. The knots were even more complex than before, and the blue had thickened from mere threads to a rope that wrapped tightly around her heart and wove through the remaining piece of her soul.

Stunned, Luna opened her eyes and gave in, letting Leo support her utterly. Maybe it was selfish, maybe it was wrong, but she didn’t want to lose him. She let her head fall back across his arm, and he took advantage of her exposed neck, licking and kissing his way to the soft spot at the base of her throat.

Quickly he strode to the bed and sat her carefully on the edge of it. He knelt in front of her on the floor and gently inspected her soft bare legs for further injury, running his hands from ankle to knee. Luna stopped him. Parted her knees to pull him closer, and captured him once more in a kiss.

That was all the invitation he needed to run his hands further up her thighs and under the hem of the long tee she was wearing. He continued to kiss her passionately as she trailed her hands down his neck and over his chest.

The feel of her warm flesh under his hands was pure bliss.

Before now, Leo felt his hands sole purpose had been bearing weapons, punishing evil and defending the defenseless. Now, he discovered their true purpose was twofold, to protect this beautiful woman in front of him, and to bring her as much pleasure as he possibly could.

Luna's hands slid down his upper plastron to his belt, and she deftly stripped him of it and his harness. He stood and quickly devested himself of his remaining pads and gear, before returning to the bed to lie next to Luna. Luna slid out of her own clothes, and as soon as he joined her, intertwined her legs with his and wrapped her arms around his neck, to be as close as possible to him.

Leonardo worshiped her with kisses, stroked and caressed every inch of her body, and memorized every motion that made her shudder and moan.

Luna caressed his form lightly in return. Exploring his body, so unlike any of her other lovers. She admired the texture and beauty of his shell, ran her hands over his sides, and revelled in the taste of his dark jade skin.

"Leonardo" she gasped, in her bell like voice, as he made her quiver.

The way she gave voice to his name was like a caress. Leo captured her lips with his and rolled them till he was on his shell, with Luna straddling his waist. She sat up and traced the seams of his upper plastron, first with her hands, then her tongue.

Shuddering with restrained passion, Leonardo gripped her gently at the waist and shifted her seat lower towards his hips, exposing his lower plastron. He guided her hand to the slit there, now swollen with his arousal. And released her.

He met her eyes then, and his were tinged with fear. This more than anything else, proved he was the monster. His sex was hidden inside until needed, and only her gentle stimulation could release him. He waited for her to cringe back in disgust, to draw her hand away and flee from his room.

Instead Luna leaned forward, never taking her eyes from his gaze. She slid her arms around his neck and tugged his soft blue mask free from his eyes, discarding it over the side of the bed. Eyes wide open, still meeting his, she kissed him deeply.
"You are the most beautiful being I have ever encountered." she whispered.

Leo's arms closed about her in an instant. Never had he believed this moment of total acceptance would come. He kissed her, again and again. Beyond passion. Beyond reason. He never wanted to release her.

She broke free, sitting up and laughed in delight. Her laugh stoked the fires inside him to new levels and his need for her grew even stronger. She slid down herself this time to expose his slit and began to lick teasingly around it. Leo moaned loudly, and flushed thinking the entire household could probably hear him.

Finally, Luna took pity, and laved him fully with her tongue from bottom to top. That sensation pushed Leo over the edge. He bucked and arched underneath her, and his thick full erection broke free of it's confinement and rose in front of her eyes. Luna's breath caught.

She wanted him, no, she needed him. Right now.

Knowing her legs could not support her long, Leo rolled them again, until Luna was resting gently on the bed. He raised himself above her, balancing easily with powerful muscles but nearly lost himself, when she spread her legs invitingly.

"Are you sure Luna?" he whispered softly.

She smiled radiantly up at him, and her skin began to pulse with a soft white light as she released her power to surround them. She reached for him with hands and mind, pulling him close.

"Stay with me, Leonardo." she said, before fastening her lips to his.

His reply echoed in both their minds.

*Forever...*
Raphael tossed and turned in his bed, but it was no use. Sleep was eluding him once again. He sighed and sat up, automatically reaching for his weapons and gear. Not that he needed to go armed at home. Not usually. But since Luna's arrival, Raph had been keeping his weapons closer. Her enemies were varied and dangerous, and some of them would not be kept out by the deceptions that misled humans.

Raph headed down toward the kitchen to grab himself a drink. At least that's what he told himself he was doing, but really it was just an excuse to pass by the infirmary door and look in on the girl. He smiled at the thought of seeing her tiny form tucked into her nest, in the flickering candlelight. A memory flashed across his mind.

Luna had only been conscious for a few days, and Raph knew she was scared and hurting. He longed to hold and comfort her, but he would not hurt Leo that way. So he asked, instead, if he could bring her anything to help her feel better. She had shyly requested some additional cushions for her bed, and he had gathered a few for her.

He wondered rather aimlessly around, taking a small pillow from the couch, and picking a few from the storage area. Each time he returned with one, the smile grew a little larger on her battered face, and he felt compelled to seek out another.

Why one little girl needed so many cushions had been beyond him until he checked on her later that evening. She had created a huge, soft, nest in the middle of her futon and was snuggled down in the center of it, sheltering like a tiny bird. Sleeping peacefully for the first time since she regained consciousness.

The next day, he turned the house upside down, and gathered every single pillow he could find. He quietly added them to her nest without comment. Some were extras donated by Donnie and Mikey. Raph gave her all of his.

He blinked, coming back to the present. She really was like a rare tropical bird. Something glorious and precious that needed protection. He would make sure she had it.

Raph frowned as he neared the infirmary door. The room was dark, and that was odd. Luna was afraid of the dark. Raphael had made sure that everyone knew to keep a candle burning for her at all times. He paused in the doorway, and panic gripped him. Luna wasn't there.

Raph's gaze darted frantically around the room. There was no sign of a struggle. Stay calm, he instructed himself. Maybe one of the guys had helped her to another room. He knew she was getting restless in the infirmary.

Raph glanced up towards his and Donnie's rooms on the second level. No lights there, so he headed for the main living quarters. As he entered, he saw Don coming down the far staircase.

"Donnie, did ya move Luna?" he demanded.

Don nodded, and Raph let out the breath he'd been holding.

"Ya scared me Don," he said more quietly, "I thought she'd been taken, right under ma nose."
Don nodded again, a little sadly, Raph thought.

"Where’d ya take her?" Raph asked.

"Leo's room." was the quiet reply.

Raph's heart sank. He knew Luna deserved far more than he could offer. Fearless was certainly worthy of her. God help Leo if he ever hurt her though. Brother or no… Raph sighed.

Don laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Let's get some tea" he said quietly, and led Raph back toward the kitchen away from his brother's sleeping quarters.

Raph slumped dejectedly at the table while Don puttered around the kitchen. Soon, one of Splinter's best tea sets was between them and they sipped companionably for a time.

"It's been a month." Don said finally. "Luna is mending, and her enemy, whomever it is, hopefully still thinks she is dead. I think it's time for a little investigating."

Raph nodded slowly, wondering where Don was going with this.

"I, for one, am not going to sit around on my shell, until this enemy finds out Luna is alive and comes back at her with even more force." Don continued.

"And..."

Suddenly all trace of the gentle, laid back, Donatello was gone. In his place stood an absolutely lethal ninja assassin.

"I am going to kill every last one of those son's of bitches that laid a hand on Luna."

He smiled fiercely.

"Wanna help?"

An exhausted Leo lay quietly, his arms wrapped firmly around a sleeping goddess and wondered just exactly what had happened. One moment he had been trapped in the usual nightmare, the next someone was tearing his heart out.

He shuddered and pulled the goddess closer. Luna had been in his room, and he had attacked her. He had ATTACKED her. Guilt flooded his system. At least he had somehow healed her as well. All these new abilities popping up kept him very confused.

Then she kissed him. Impossible, but true, and tried to walk out of his life. He may have been confused, but not enough to let that happen. He stopped her the only way he knew how. If Luna wanted him, he was more than happy to acquiesce.

She hadn't run from the monster. She'd called him beautiful. Would she still think the same when
she awoke?

Now that she was asleep, he was alone with his thoughts and feelings. He wondered why that felt strange. Then he realized he didn't 'hear' anyone else. No loneliness, no longing, no pity. Had his brothers gone out? Unlikely at this hour. He squinted towards his clock in the dim glow.

_Glow?

Sol was quivering softly between their heads on the pillow.

"Sol?" He breathed quietly, so as not to wake Luna "What. Happened."

Sol zipped straight up into Leo's head, all prohibitions forgotten.

_luna tried to free leo from the soul bond._ Sol made the mental equivalent of a shrug. _luna failed._

What? Back up. Let's just start with what she was doing in my room. Leo said.

スマートワン said that leo was hurting. Sol projected Don's concerned face talking in the infirmary, but Leo couldn't make out the conversation. He had to rely on Sol's loose interpretation.

leo hurting made luna angry. luna asked to see leo, so smart one carried luna up. The vision was Don carrying Luna swiftly up the stairs towards Leo's room.

She was worried that I was in pain? Leo asked.

Yes. leo is luna's soul bonded.

Sol projected a vision of several silvery glowing threads, woven around some that carried a very familiar shade of blue.

Leo took a moment to digest this. Luna's soul piece was bound to him? Nothing would make him happier, but...

She came up to break that bond? he asked horrified.

no! luna stopped leo's hurt and showed leo how to stop others feelings getting in.

But then she decided she didn't want me? he asked, his heart felt heavy.

no!

Sol projected the next vision almost violently at him. It was Luna's tear streaked face as she gently stroked a sleeping Leo's cheek.

leο and family are special! luna thinks very bad things happen if luna stays. if other gods find family. luna thinks if leo was unbonded, family would be safe. luna would be lost, but leo would be happy.

I don't want Luna to be lost! Leo's mind screamed. She can't do it, can she?

no. Sol was very smug. Father made sure.

Sol provided a much more elaborate vision of the same weaving. In this one, the silver and blue threads were bound about and held together by thousands of super thin gold threads. Helios, had indeed intertwined their fates.
Danger

Word on the street was, if you was smart, you stayed away from the one called Raphael. He had a nasty habit of showing up at the most critical time of any given gang job and beating the crap outta you. That is, if you was a ganger hanging around on the lower east side.

Chinowa didn’t know what the word on the street might be in other parts of the city, but he figured the way Raph and his brothers moved around, it was likely the same. Of course, most of the gang members had never really seen Raphael, even when they were getting smashed by ‘em. If they had, they’d probably be even more afraid.

The sneaky bastard loved to work in the shadows. He was so fast, most people knew only two things about him. His deep, grating voice tauntin’ you, and the painful bruises or broken bones he left behind.

Chinowa was one of the few members of his gang to have actually held a conversation with the guy. And it was pretty one-sided the first time. But the thing was, you had to respect him. Not just because he could beat you silly, but because he held to his own sorta street justice.

If you were gettin’ the beat down, he didn’t care who you were or what your past might be, he just stepped in an’ put a stop to it.

He did expected you to pay it forward though, and if he ever caught you doin’ the beatin’, well he didn’t give second chances.

It happened like that to Chinowa. One night he’d stepped over the line, so to speak, with a rival gang and discovered the consequences a little too late. He’d thought that dark alley and the piss and the puddles were gonna’ be the last things he ever saw, considerin’ the number of booted feet flyin’ at his person that night.

Chinowa couldn’t tell if Raph came from the roof, the fire escape or just boiled up outta hell, but in a sudden flurry of arms, legs, and shadows the bodies around him all just stopped what they was doin’ and dropped down to the pavement.

There was a long silence before Chinowa finally decided he was gonna live and scrambled to his feet. Then a scary voice came outta the darkness.

“There’s stuff ya’ do and stuff ya’ just don’t do in this world, kid. Sometimes life don’t give ya’ much to work wit’ but even here in the unda-ground ya’ can make choices. Choices between right and wrong.”

“Tonight I made a choice, to step in and stop this. Because of me, tomorrow, you get to make one.”

“Choose to give a little more than ya’ take. Choose to not go whalin’ on the helpless. Choose to save ya’ violence, for those that really deserve it. Choose these things, and I got your back. Choose otherwise...”

The voice trailed off menacingly, and huge green, bulky figure stepped out of the shadows of the fire escape into the light of a street lamp.

“I’ll be comin’ ta put ya’ down.”

Chinowa had cringed back from this new threat, but it stopped and tossed him somethin’
“Take dis."

It was small metal cylinder attached to a keychain. The end opposite the chain, had a funky little dial with a button, and the side had a digital readout with a phone number that changed every 3 minutes. The figure disappeared, but the voice came again, echoing down the alleyway.

“That little gadget does 3 things. Ya’ see somethin ya don’t like goin’ down, or ya’ higher ups, plannin’ somethin' really wrong, you dial that number and leave a message. Ya’ get cornered ya’self, ya’ turn the dial and press down that button. You’l get backup. Ya’ feel it buzz, ya call tha’ number and listen up.”

Chinowa stood up shakily, peering into the darkness of the alley.

“Why me?” he yelled.

“Ya’ got a good head on ya’ shoulders kid. I’ve seen ya’ around. Don’t make me have to take that away from ya’. K?” Came the voice.

“Who are you?” Chinowa called.

“They call me Raphael”

Chinowa hadn’t exactly been on the straight and narrow since then, but he understood what Raph was gettin’ at. He’d actually been pleased the couple of times he’d been buzzed and asked to help out with some things. It hadn’t been anything too major but he suddenly had the feeling his life could make a difference. That was somethin’ he hadn’t felt in a long time.

He’d run into Raph a couple of other times. Mostly to do with things he’d been on the fringes of. Raph would give him a nod to let him know the message had been appreciated, even if it was some small time stuff. Chinowa would hang back ‘til Raph was done, then have a quiet word. That’s how he met Raph’s bro’s one night.

Now, for the first time, he actually had somethin’ bigger to report, and he was feelin’ pretty spiffy about it since it had to do with that girl Don had been askin’ about a few weeks back.

He had the feelin’ somethin’ huge was about to go down, he just didn’t know he was gonna be that big a part of it.

Leonardo, Raphael, and Donatello concealed themselves on the top of a 4 story brownstone near where Luna had been attacked on the lower east side, and watched the alleyway below them cautiously. If the information Chinowa called in panned out, one of Luna’s assailants would be meeting him down there shortly. Or at least someone who knew one of them.

Leo knew them all, he’d seen them in his dreams night after night, and he would recognize them instantly, but Don rather doubted it would be one of those actually responsible for Luna’s injuries. The report Chinowa had called in was of an unusual suspect cruisin through his neighborhood, not a street thug.

The guy asked questions about the remains of a girl who had died on gang turf, with the excuse that she had stolen important property from him. He was offering a reward to anyone that could tell him the location of the body. Chinowa had arranged to meet with him tonight.
Leonardo was tense as he watched the alley intently from his position above. When the man showed up, what would he do? If he saw the face of one who had violated his mate, he was likely to lose all self control. Even picturing them in his mind made his blood boil and caused his usual calm to shatter like a crystal dropped on concrete.

Unfortunately, they needed information and that meant taking the man alive.

Of course, Leo was not in the mood to grant a quick death to any of her assailants anyway. No, they were going to suffer, and beg for death, long before he would grant them that privilege. Leo looked up and silently met the eyes of his two brothers. He knew they could see the fury and anxiety in his eyes, and that worried him.

Raph grinned grimly in support and waited impatiently, toying with one of his sai. He kept slapping the handle into his palm over and over while watching the alley. Leo knew Raph would support any kind of punishment he might wish to dole out, but Leo didn't know how far Don would let him go.

"Donatello," Leo said softly, trying to assess his mood, "If we get this guy, can you make him talk?"

Don turned his eyes from the street below and carefully studied his older brother. When he finally moved, it was with a lethal grace, and he came toward Leo slowly, his chocolate brown eyes hardening into chunks of agate.

"After what they did to Luna? I'll make him scream."
The pieces won’t pick up themselves

Luna awoke with a nasty taste in her mouth that made her teeth itch and a groggy feeling in her head that made her want to burrow back under the covers and hide. Instead, she forced her blurry eyes to focus on the clock Don had given her. 6PM. She hated sleeping the day away. She hated the way the sleeping pills made her feel even more. But it was the only way she was going to recover.

She was still a long way from 100% but now that Leo wasn't shielding her, her dreams made getting solid sleep difficult, if not impossible. Not that Leo hadn't tried to resume his protective shielding but she’d absolutely forbidden it. He shouldn’t have to suffer every time she closed her eyes. Don’s sleeping pills and afternoon naps would have to do.

Just then Michelangelo poked his head in the infirmary door, interrupting her thoughts and bringing a smile to her face. His ever cheery attitude was always a balm to her frazzled nerves.

"Afternoon Sleepy Moon!" He teased as he came in with a tray that smelled of delicious, mouth watering things.

She had discovered early on, that Michelangelo was the source of all the incredible meals in this place. He loved to cook and the kitchen was his second home, after the spot on the sofa in front of the gaming machine. Since she’d awakened, he’d kept up a constant stream of excellent food and reassurance during her long recovery and she adored him for it.

She sat up as he set the tray in front of her with a flourish worthy of a french waiter, and waited for her to sample his latest creation. She didn't hesitate, shoving it into her mouth and nodding her appreciation.

He flopped down into a nearby chair and flung one leg casually over the arm while waiting for her to finish her meal.

"So," he began, rattling a small cup, "I've got your latest dose of pain pills here and after you have them we have a few hours to kill. What do you wanna do?"

"Any chance we could get outside and soak up some rays?" Luna asked without any real hope. She felt trapped in the infirmary, and feeling some of her father's power on her skin would be heavenly. But she really didn't expect that the answer would be yes.

"Hmm." Mikey thought for a moment, then brightened, "Well we could hang out in Donnie's lab for a little while. He has skylights in there."

Luna's jaw dropped. "He has skylights? This far underground?"

"Un-huh! And when the sun goes down in a bit, I can take you up to the rooftop and we can soak in the moon's rays too!" Mikey said. "Or should I say Luna-r rays?"

A smile lit Luna's face and Michelangelo basked in it. There was something truly uplifting about making Luna smile. Somehow it made him a feel complete, like everything was right with the universe. He’d found himself spending more and more time with her and doing everything he could think of to make that smile appear.

It was why he hadn't thought twice about volunteering to stay behind to guard her when Leo, Don and Raph decided to set a trap for her attackers. Leo had been a bit surprised since Mikey was
always up for a fight but to Mikey, it made perfect sense. Luna needed a distraction, and at that he was king.

She finished her meal and Mikey helped her carefully through several different rooms until they reached the long expanse that Donatello used as his lab. It was a room Luna hadn’t yet seen in their home, and she was amazed.

The late afternoon light was streaming in, magnified by the refractive caps Don had created to enhance the effect. Sunlight washed over all the varied equipment, guilding the glass containers and reflecting off the impressive array of inventions lining the rear shelves.

Luna looked around in wonder. Experiments bubbling away, chemistry equipment, electronics, and tools cluttered up every flat surface in the room. The walls were lined with shelves, drawers, and containers piled high with unidentifiable odds and ends. One wall was completely filled with books; there was everything from the nature of the universe, to poetry to sci-fi.

As she stared around, trying to absorb it all, Mikey balanced her at a nearby table and went to empty a cozy armchair in the corner. He scooted it around, nudging it this way and that, until he was satisfied that it was directly under one of the tubes of sunlight.

He watched intently as Luna walked carefully over and sank gracefully into the chair. Like his brothers, he was terribly concerned about her recovery and she was still so fragile looking, he was afraid even a small gust of wind could knock her off her feet.

She settled in, closed her eyes, and tilted her face up to the bright rays of light streaming into the lab, looking for all the world like a flower soaking up the sun. She let out a small, soft, satisfied sigh and relaxed completely for the first time in what seemed like weeks.

Mikey silently studied her face and he liked what he saw. He knew she was concerned about her effect on their family, but from what he’d seen so far, she was exactly what this family needed.

Michelangelo was exceptionally insightful and one glance was usually all he needed to tell him everything about a given emotional situation, including how to defuse it. But things had been going steadily downhill here, before Luna arrived.

His family had outgrown their home. Not in the physical sense, since the tunnels and rooms down here went on and on, but mentally. Each of them developed their own ways of coping but they all suffered from the same malady. Being trapped underground, hidden away from society.

Mikey kept things light and tried to keep his brothers in harmony, but lately even his best efforts were failing. With Master Splinter away and unable to advise them, the unity that they depended on for survival had been fraying rapidly. It pained him that no one else seemed to have noticed.

He sighed quietly and turned his attention again to the miraculous little goddess that had been practically gift wrapped and dropped in their laps. She was a god-send. He laughed a little at his own joke. She was a breath of fresh air, a new perspective that shook them up and made them start acting and thinking again rather than just going through the motions of life.

Then there was her new bond with Leo. It had taken awhile for Leo to explain it in a way they could all understand but it’s meaning was astounding. It represented an entirely new phase of their lives. One that none of them had even dared dream of before now.

They could have mates.

The mere possibility was enough to make them all eager to help and protect her, even unto death.
They sat quietly for a while, each contemplating their own thoughts, until Mikey’s inner timer for quiet thought went off and he had to say something.

"What cha' thinkin about?" he asked, just to break the silence.

"What a great cook you are!" she shot back, and he laughed.

"Glad you liked it, but really, you looked totally unhappy just then, so unless my cooking gave you a belly ache, you were thinking about something else. What's up?"

"I'm worried about Leo," she admitted. "Donnie and Raph too!" she added quickly. Then, as if a dam had burst, more words she hadn’t meant to share came pouring out. She couldn’t seem to stop them.

“They are out there risking exposure to immortals with powers they’ve never even imagined, and it’s all my fault.” she said, agony clear on her face. “I should have tried harder to undo the bond that Sol created. I should have stopped it from seeking you out to begin with. Maybe it’s not too late to untangle you. Perhaps I could get one of my cousins to shelter me and just disappear. I couldn’t bear it if any of you got hurt."

or enslaved. Her mind added silently.

"That'd just hurt us in a different way, dudette." he replied quickly, his smile gone. "Leo would go crazy with worry and all of us would be out looking for you in a heartbeat."

He frowned.

"Maybe you’re not used to it because you didn't need anyone when you were all god like, but now you're a lot more fragile. We can protect you. We want to protect you. You're our family now, Leo's mate, and we want to help you pick up the pieces."

At that, Luna's face pinched again with worry.

"I'm afraid of finding the other pieces, Michelangelo." She said, her voice dropping even lower. "I know they are out there somewhere, floating around like Sol. They are probably just as innocent and scared as it was before it found us. But what if, in their fear, they've bonded to others?"

She turned wide frightened eyes to his, her face pale with worry and distress. Michelangelo hadn't thought about her having more than one soulmate. He'd just assumed the other pieces would bond to Leo as well.

How many other pieces could there be? What would that mean for his family? Exposure to more humans? More immortals? And most important, would Leo, who had waited so long for a mate, be able to share her with a stranger?

He wanted to ask all these questions and more, but she was already too distressed. Instead, he asked a different one.

“How do they do it? The soul pieces, I mean. How do they bond with people?”. 

"The souls may be innocent, but they are powerful. They can see into the hearts and minds of the other beings they encounter. If someone meets their criteria, they may offer a bond. No one really knows what they are looking for, but once the bond is offered and accepted, it takes a god to undo it. Soulbonding is quite rare among mortals and unheard of among the gods themselves. I never expected it to happen to me."
"Well, Sol didn't choose anyone until recently. The others could be holding out as well. I'm sure Donnie can come up with a way to search for them. Maybe they give off a weird energy or something he can track." Mikey was ready to say anything that would take that pinched and horrified look off of her face.

He looked around, hoping to see something to distract her with. He hated to see her wilting under the stress. Darkness had settled over the city while they were talking, perhaps now was a great time to distract her with the outside.

"Ready to see the stars?" he said, changing the subject abruptly.

The opportunity to be above ground after more than a month below, was too tempting.

"Only if you're sure it's safe..." she trailed off at his indignant expression.

"Of course you'll be safe Sleepy Moon!" He said, misunderstanding that her concern was for him. "I'll be there to guard you. Besides, Leo would kill me if I took you someplace unsafe."

"Ditto" she replied, but she said it under her breath so he couldn't hear.

Grinning hugely, Michelangelo scooped her up flamboyantly from the chair, and holding her in his arms, strode swiftly out into the open tunnels. Nobody knew them like Mikey did, and before she realized it, they were approaching what looked like an actual door at the end of one. Mikey keyed some numbers into a pad and it opened to what appeared to be the empty furnace room of an old housing tenement.

From the dust and debris, she could see the room was rarely used, but on the other side of it was the oldest elevator Luna had ever seen. It was the freight kind, the type with the gate you have to manually pull closed. It was dented and dinged and had a rather permanent looking sign on it that read "out of service."

Mikey headed straight to it, accessed another number pad, and the elevator roared to life. It's lights flickered, the gate rose up, and there was a great grinding of gears that clanked loudly. The hairs on Luna’s arms stood up at the sound.

Mikey met her frightened gaze and winked.

"It's perfectly safe." he said, reading the thoughts on her face. "That’s just one of Donnie's little deceptions to keep people from messing with it. I recorded the sound effects, and Raph said the lights should blink."

She laughed, appreciating the cleverness of her new family.

They took the elevator straight to the roof, and Luna couldn't stifle her excited gasp as they exited to a night full of stars. After weeks of being indoors, the sky looked incredible.

Mikey carried her straight to an old chaise lounge he used for stargazing and laid her gently on it. He watched as she settled back. Just as she had when basking in the sun down below, she closed her eyes and tilted her face to the sky.

A stray cloud had been hiding the large orb of the moon, but at that moment, it trailed away and the cool bluish glow hit her skin. At first Mikey thought it must be a trick of the light but soon he realized her skin was giving off an answering moon glow. A soft reflection of the larger light above.
Michelangelo knew she wasn’t completely human but everytime he saw an example of her power it took his breath away. She was truly gorgeous and otherworldly, and he couldn't help comparing her to the unlikely heroines and female superheros he idolized from his comics.

*She blew them all away.*

He started guiltily at that thought, remembered he was supposed to be keeping his guard up and quickly moved his gaze to the scan the surrounding rooftops. He didn't want Leo to think he'd been careless with his mate.

They hadn’t been on the rooftop very long, when Michelangelo felt a weird prickle on his skin. The air turned suddenly cold and he whirled around checking everywhere for danger. Shadows seemed to have sprung up from nowhere and were shifting in the moonlight.

He drew his weapons, and backed slowly across the rooftop toward where Luna lay.

"Um, Luna, sweetie, I hate to interrupt, but do you know what those are?" he said.

She opened her eyes as if startled, lost for a moment in her silent contemplation. Squinting she took in the shadowy forms swooping around them just outside her moonbeam glow.

"Those are shades." she said "Shadows of the dead that can't reach the afterlife without help."

"Are they dangerous?" he asked.

"Shades are harmless but something has them all worked up." She frowned. “They usually only get this agitated when..."

She trailed off as a ghostly howl rose in the distance and echoed around them.

"When there are wraiths about."
The sun was almost gone when the messenger arrived, and Leonardo decided to break his own rule about fighting in the daylight. There were enough thick shadows in the alley to obscure them from a casual glance if someone did happen to look out a window.

Although he knew he had been considering the shadows too long when it looked like they had begun to twitch and move on their own.

With a hand signal and a tilt of his head, Leo told his brothers he planned a flanking attack, and without another thought, he leapt off the side of the building. Using the closely spaced fire escapes in a practiced way, he dropped noiselessly into the alley behind the man.

Right away, he knew something was wrong. This wasn’t the same man that Chinowa had described. He was of fairly normal stature for a human thug, but the power emanating from him was abnormally intense, and when he turned to face Leo, his eyes flashed redly for a moment.

But it was too late now, they were already committed and Leonardo was not going to back down and lose this chance to find Luna’s enemies.

He drew his katanas and stepped into the light to let the thug see him clearly, a tactic he hoped would startle and distract the guy, while his brothers struck from behind. Raphael attacked without warning using a flying kick that should have laid the guy out in the alley. Instead Raph bounced off the thug’s back like it was a brick wall. Raph quickly recovered, but not fast enough to avoid a countering punch.

Leo didn’t wait, he flung himself forward and into the battle, followed closely by Donnie. Weapons whirling, they managed to force the thug away from Raph, who flipped and rolled through the opening they created.

In two mighty bounds, Raphael launched himself up over his brothers, using the alley wall like a trampoline. He landed with considerable momentum, and all his massive bulk, in the middle of the thugs chest. This time the guy did go down but only for a moment. Both quickly rolled and regained their feet.

The thug backed off a few paces, shook himself and laughed, a horrible grating sound that brought to mind the crackling of broken glass under a booted foot.

"Why all this effort defending a body?" he asked mildly, while easily deflecting a tandem attack from from Don and Raph. Leo waved them back and narrowed his eyes at the thug.

"What do you know about that poor girl?" Leo demanded.

"I don't know or care about the corpse," the thug replied callously, "I just want something she had on her. Maybe you've seen it? It may have looked a bit strange, but by the look of you, maybe not that strange." He smiled evilly. "It's a small bluish flame that has the distressing tendency to fly about on its own."

Leo's eyes widened and he exchanged glances with Don and Raph. This maniac wanted Sol?

And what was up with the calm acceptance of their appearance? Usually there was all this shouting about freaks. And something was definitely off when a Don/Raph tandem attack did nothing. Leo decided to try another approach.
He deliberately dropped his guard, letting the tips of his katanas hit the pavement in a show of nonchalance.

"I might have seen it," he said cautiously, "What's it worth to you?"

Again came the broken glass chuckle. "Quite a bit actually. My employer would pay handsomely for it, or for any information leading to it's capture, since I doubt you could catch it, even as unusual as you are."

"Oh?" Leo said acting offended, "Then how do you plan to catch it? What use is it anyway?"

Leo thought if he kept asking questions, he might be able to trick the of information he wanted from the thug by playing the ‘you might be able to corrupt me’ ploy.

The man reached into his jacket and Leo immediately raised his weapons, but he only took a strange little sphere out of his pocket. It was about the size of a baseball, but transparent as crystal, except that it somehow reflected a slight reddish gleam from the inside.

Leo exchanged a glance with Don, who shook his head a tiny bit. He'd never seen anything like it either.

"This can hold it," the man said, shaking the sphere and watching the red move slowly from side to side.

"Alone, that little blue flame is of no use. But if you have a complete set," he laughed, jiggling the orb again, "You can join the gods!"

The thug looked past Leo, towards the mouth of the alley, and gave a strange little beckoning gesture. That moment of distraction was all Don needed. He swung his bo and knocked the sphere across the alley. With a roar, the thug leapt after it but it spun out of his hand and rolled even further away.

Then all hell broke loose.

The shadows in the alleyway had grew to enormous proportions. They twisted and moved in a way none of the brothers had ever seen before. Shades broke loose from their moorings and whirled all around, whistling and whispering.

At that same moment, a horde of wide eyed and crazed looking humans charged forward from the street side of the alley.

Luna locked eyes with Michelangelo.

“I’m thinking that whatever made that noise is not so harmless.” Mikey said, as another banshee wail rose from the darkness. “What are they?”

"Wraiths. They’re a hybrid being. A cross between phantasms and demons, and they are eternally hungry. When they feed, they drain power from unwitting mortals; and immortals if they can catch them. They are slaves to whoever summons them and are usually sent to hunt down a specific victim and drag their soul to Tartarus.”
“You’ve been spending far too much time with Donnie. English please for us lesser mortals.” Mikey drawled.

“Ghosts Mikey. Big. Scary. Ghosts. Who want to eat you, then take your soul to the underworld. Got it?”

“So... we’re doomed?” Mikey asked theatrically.

“They wouldn’t be a problem if I was at full strength, but right now... It usually takes a god to banish them before they find their prey, unless Hades can be persuaded to rein them in.” She mused. “They’re not here yet, so we still have a chance.”

"Right! Let’s get you out of here"

Quick as a flash, Mikey scooped her up in his arms and started for the elevator, but Luna yelled.

"Not that way Mikey! We can't escape with a physical barrier, they’ll just follow us underground. They're looking for our power signature not our bodies. I can shield Sol and my own power from them, but I don't have enough energy to cover you too!"

"That's ok, dudette,” He smiled, trying to keep her calm. “Other than my kick ass ninja skills, I don't have any special powers to worry about. Though I wouldn’t mind a superpower or two. Maybe flying, or seeing through walls, that would be cool.”

"Mikey!” she gasped, “This is serious! You may not have tapped it yet, but you've got so much power you're lit up like an orange neon sign! You might as well have 'eat me' tattooed on your forehead."

"I am? Uh-oh! What should we do then?" he said, stopping his headlong run towards the elevator. His levity did not stop her panic about his safety. She looked frantically around the top of the building trying to think of anything that might help. Her eyes landed on the milling shades, still drifting all around them.

"I've got an idea! Get us back into the deepest shadows you can find. I’ll send Sol away so there is less power to hide.” she said.

"Sol?” She made the releasing gesture quickly over her forehead. “Leave me now. Go directly to Leo! Don't stop and don't get close to the wraiths. Ok?"

Before she had finished speaking, Sol had collected itself above her head, and her eyes had gone dark again. But Sol hesitated, hovering above her.

"I've got her Sol, you go!” Mikey whispered, as another howl announced a wraith getting closer. Sol took off, leaving a small blue trail behind him.

"Ok, now what?” he whispered to Luna, as he clutched her close to his chest and slipped back into the regular shadows of some A/C units.

"Set me down here and move over back into those other shadows.” She whispered back. “This is gonna feel weird, but just stay still and quiet ok? No matter how uncomfortable this is, no matter what happens, don't leave the shadows.”

Luna closed her now useless eyes, as Mikey reluctantly left her and moved away. She focused her
attention on the group of shades flowing over the rooftop and whispering all around them.

_Come to me, little ones!_ She mentally called to them. _Help me and I will deliver you to your eternal peace._

Five of the restless Shades stopped their mindless whirling, and moved closer. She called again, but she couldn't seem to attract any more. She sighed, these would only be enough to shelter Mikey.

She shook her head, what was she thinking? He was the one she had to hide. She knew the wraiths were hunting her, but if they saw the beacon of power that was Michelangelo, all bets were off about who was going to be dinner.

??? She felt from the curious shades gathering around her.

_On my honor as a goddess, shield this one from the wraiths, and I will Send you._ She said.

She felt the normally timid shades eagerly agree. The chance to cross over did not come often for these poor creatures, and though they feared the wraiths, it was merely the residue of their human fears.

Spent souls did not interest wraiths at all. They had no power to drain so the wraiths ignored them. With a little boost from Luna, though, the shades darkness would become reflective keeping the wraiths power hungry gazes away from Michelangelo.

She felt a sudden chill from the depths of the grave, as the shades passed over her to cover Michelangelo. And she heard his sharp inhalation when they gathered around his hidden form. She threw them each a little silver thread of power to increase their reflective capability. Then steeled herself for what was to come.

There was not enough power left to truly shield herself, but she hoped she was drained enough that the wraiths would be confused. Right now her power signature was more like a humans than a goddess.

She smiled grimly. And if not, well, she had an ace so to speak. The wraiths might take her, but Hades owed her a favor.
Monsters

Leonardo, Raphael and Donatello were caught off guard by the swirling shadows and howling humans, but it didn't take them long to discover the shadows were merely a distraction. Attention quickly diverted back to the charging humans who were attacking as if possessed.

Leo turned to meet the first wave as his brothers peeled off to retrieve the orb and stop the thug from escaping. As the humans reached him, Leo was stunned to see Luna's assailants among them.

Rage like he’d never known before engulfed him and he let out a howl that would have sent sane men running for the hills. At the sight of those faces, those horrible, twisted, unforgettable faces, Leo snapped. His plan for capture and interrogation turned to dust. His anger had no measure.

Leonardo had never been so deadly.

He attacked with graceful fluid movements, bringing pain, devastation and destruction to those that had dared to violate the beautiful goddess he now called his mate. He sliced, slashed, and maimed those who stood before him, showing none of his usual regard for human life.

He would not rest until he had ended every single one of them.

Don had recovered the strange crystal and Raph had forced the thug into a blind corner when Leo’s enraged cry broke over the alleyway. Raph gave him a concerned look, but Don turned, took in his brother’s mindless rage, and jumped to the conclusion that these were the men who assaulted Luna.

And he wanted in on that action.

Don’s bo spun in a deadly arc towards the humans who had so wantonly destroyed the fragile mortal existence of his patient. Each blow was dealt sternly in retribution for the broken bones he had to mend, the wounds he had to stitch, and the devastation he felt while caring for her broken form.

But none of it could relieve the pain, shame, and horror he endured while tending to her many other injuries. These rapists had to be put down, and he would not mourn them.

An unnatural silence fell over the alleyway.

Don’s bo stilled.

There were no more targets.

Leo stood panting in the middle of the alley; surrounded by silent human forms, unmoving on the street at his feet. When he was sure that none of the figures was going to rise again, Leonardo turned on the thug Raphael held pinned to the wall, his gaze still lethal.

"Who do you work for?" Leo demanded, raising a blood slicked katana to the man's throat.

“Stupid mortal.” The thug spat. “I do not fear you. I am the Guardian of the Dead, and you know nothing of the affairs in which you interfere.”

His eyes flashed red, and a mental storm of fire, pain and fury hit Leonardo. He staggered back with a gasp, dropping his swords. His brothers flinched in pain as they were caught by the edges of
Don wasn’t sure how Leo was still standing. It felt like the Earth was swaying and Don had only been grazed by the blow. If there had been any question on the state of this enemy, it had now been answered. This being was definitely immortal.

At that moment, something blossomed in Leonardo's mind. One of the lessons Luna gave to him. A way to use his new talents as a defense... and a weapon. Leo’s gaze narrowed, he reinforced his shields, and sent a mental lance of his own at the thug. The guy writhed under Raph’s hard grip his eyes flaring.

Don stood by, on guard in case the bastard managed to twitch free of Raph’s iron fist. His mind raced trying to put a name to the immortal. If they could only tell Luna who her enemies were, they might be able to plan out how to defeat them.

*Keen eyes that flash to red, unstable angry personality, guardian of the dead. This has to be Charon, the ferryman of Hades.*

Sensing easier prey, Charon turned his attack on Donnie and Raph. With no mental shields to soften the blow, Leo’s brothers collapsed outright, clutching their heads and groaning in pain.

The crystal orb dropped from Donnie’s numb fingers as he fell.

“NO!” screamed Charon.

His gaze burned a solid red, as he leapt over the fallen Raphael and attempted to catch the orb before it was too late. Leo grabbed his arm and, with an effort that strained even his powerful muscles, held Charon back.

The orb slipped past the tips of Charon’s fingers and shattered on the pavement.

A brilliant light shot out of the broken crystal remains and bathed them all in a deep red glow that coated the walls of the alleyway like spilled blood.

Michelangelo watched warily from his position about 10 feet away from Luna. The wraiths had not yet come into view, and he was worried about her sitting alone. Especially now that she couldn’t see.

He could see, even though the shades were wrapped all around him, but he got the feeling that was a one way thing. Which was the point, he reminded himself, using the dead to hide from the undead. That was almost as clever as something Don would come up with. Of course, Don couldn’t command the dead.

Mikey twitched uncomfortably and wished the shades didn’t feel so slimy and cold. He shivered trying not to think too much about them as he eyed Luna again. He couldn’t say for sure, but it didn’t look like there were any shades hiding her.

Still, he held himself in place by repeating over and over that she was a goddess and knew what she was doing.
Stay in the shadows, she said.

He trusted her, but it didn’t make him feel any less guilty about hiding over here when he should be protecting her. He didn’t have too long to worry about it though. A few seconds later the first wraith topped the railing at the edge of the building and his mind went totally blank.

Luna felt it arrive and shivered in trepidation.

This is for Michelangelo she reminded herself sternly. If I don’t get rid of these wraiths quickly, then they are going to find him. Those shades can’t protect him forever.

With that thought, Luna pushed herself to her feet and stepped around the A/C unit; sliding each foot forwards carefully and testing her balance before putting her weight on it. She was actually quite glad she couldn’t see the wraith. The last one she saw was not pretty, and she doubted this one was any different.

In fact, it wasn’t.

Michelangelo could have told her, if he could have spoken through lips gone numb with fear. The wraith was a putrid green and ghastly to look upon. It had a snarling demon like face, with sharp gnashing teeth, a long pointed nose and yellow eyes that were filled with hunger and madness. Horns rose from it’s skull and clumpy, unkempt bunches of green fur covered it’s head.

Thankfully, most of it’s body was covered in a large dark green cloak that billowed and glowed with the same sickly color of gaseous green as it’s face. Only it’s hands were exposed, crooked into deadly looking claws with long conical nails that looked like they could puncture armor.

It didn’t seem to have any legs and it exuded noxious fumes that made him gag. It was the most terrifying thing Mikey had ever seen. It opened it’s mouth and let out a moan, and a wave of hunger, pain, longing and sadness hit him so hard he just wanted to curl up and die.

Luna stood her ground as another joined the first. Then another. Until three distinct power sources floated in the air in front of her.

Three!

One she might have been able to bluff her way past. Three… There was no way she was going to be able to handle that many on her own.

She still had enough energy left to summon Hades, and he could easily rein in these monsters. They were from his realm, after all, and he owed her that much at the very least. As long as the shades sheltered Mikey it should be safe enough.

Michelangelo watched in horror as two more of the stupefyingly scary creatures appeared over the edge of the rooftop and settled in front of Luna. She had shocked him when she stood up and paced toward the creatures, and now he was certain they could see her.

His face hardened, and he shook off his fear to began easing his way towards her. He moved very slowly, and felt the shades move along with him. They really didn’t want to get any closer to the wraiths, and they began to murmur around him in protest.

The wraiths seemed confused and milled around in place. Luna couldn’t tell if they were perplexed by her partially shielded power levels, couldn’t figure out why she wasn’t screaming, or if they sensed Mikey but couldn’t find him.
She didn’t care, any delay was good. She reached inside and began to weave her summoning spell for Hades.

Suddenly, Luna felt Mikey moving up behind her. What was he doing? She tried to wave him off. Any change might send the wraiths into attack mode before she was finished. When he didn’t respond to her wave, she hissed at him from the side of her mouth.

“Michelangelo! Keep back!”

He ignored her protest, determined to not let her stand alone, and kept moving toward her ever so slowly. Finally he stood so close he was almost pressed against her back.

“What are you doing?” she asked, trying not to draw any more attention to him.

“Can they see me?” he whispered.

“No,” she whispered angrily back, trying not to draw any more attention to him.

She couldn’t summon Hades here if Michelangelo insisted on being involved. She couldn’t risk another god seeing his vast potential.

But Michelangelo had another plan in mind. Without warning, he shoved Luna behind him, shielding her with his invisible form.

The wraiths advanced, swarming towards the place where she had just disappeared, and Michelangelo attacked. He darted in between the three forms dishing out blows in a fluid series of moves. It would have been impressive if any of them had landed, but his weapons passed right through the nightmarish forms.

When his nunchucks didn’t hit anything, it threw him completely off balance. He staggered into the cloak of the first wraith and the shades abandoned him, unable to hold their shield under the wraith’s touch.

Now that the wraiths could see him, he was an irresistible lure to their hunger. They turned away from Luna to pursue him, and Michelangelo rolled smoothly under their non-existent feet. He lept up, fired some shuriken at them, and fell back to lead them further from Luna, but the throwing stars just passed through.

Michelangelo was phenomenally fast, dodging and bouncing all over the rooftops but the wraiths were not bound to Earthly rules like gravity and physics. Nothing he did seemed to slow them at all.

Luna collapsed on the gravel of the rooftop, her injured legs unable to hold her upright any longer. She couldn’t actually see what was going on, but she had a pretty good idea where everybody was, since she could mentally “see” the power sources moving around.

The wraiths were almost on top of him, when Luna gathered her remaining power and blasted a bolt of hard silver light across the rooftop. They scattered, and the wraith closest to him howled in injury. At least she’d tagged one.

She sensed the remaining wraiths turn towards her with even more malevolence and she screamed, panicked, unable to escape. Mikey’s head snapped around at the scream. He dodged and charged back toward her as fast as he could. He lept over Luna just as a wraith raised its arm to strike. With no options left, he took the blow meant for her.

A swipe of seven horribly long claws.
Michelangelo shrieked as they tore deep gouges across his face, shredding his mask and just missing his left eye. He clutched at his wound, but still managed to land between them, and twist his shell protectively over Luna. He dropped to his hands and knees and crouched over her body, using his larger form to shelter her.

He quivered and grunted as blow after blow rained down on him, slicing out pieces of his flesh, and puncturing his shell. But he refused to cry out again. He may not be able to strike at them, but to get to her, they were literally going to have to go through him.

He held his breath, and prayed he was strong enough.

Blood flowed from his face and body, dripping onto Luna and coating her skin. The warmth of his blood shocked her, and she reached desperately inside for the power to save him. The small trickle she had left wasn’t enough.

She could not stop them.

"Michelangelo!"

It came out as a choked whisper, as she reached up to touch his face. Tears gathered in his eyes and mixed with hers as they rained down. His pain and despair washed over her. There was only one thing she could do now.

Her face illuminated with a soft moon-glow and his eyes opened wide. She leaned up and placed a kiss on his undamaged cheek, her lips lingering on his skin. With that kiss, she drew his agony into herself and gave him the serenity of the stars.

In response, he closed his eyes, breathed out slowly, and relaxed. Briefly, he touched his forehead to hers, a frighteningly tender action that silently accepted this end.

"I swore," he whispered. "I swore to protect you..."
Leonardo was blinded by the light for a few vital seconds, and the thug twisted out of his hold. Darkness fell back over the alley, and Leo surveyed it intently. Charon had completely vanished in the confusion.

All the supernatural entities had disappeared. The creepy moving shadows included.

They should be going too. The police were probably on their way after that light show. It might be a few more minutes before someone was brave enough to phone it in, but they couldn’t count on it.

Leo regarded the carnage in the alley around him impassively. He expected to feel guilty about these people. Instead, all he felt was a sort of grim relief that they could no longer harm his mate.

*Never again.*

He noted that a few of them had been taken out with blunt force trauma and not damage from his blades. He wasn’t alone in his vengeance. Shaking his head, Leo closed his eyes and forced himself through some calming exercises. His bloodlust was slowly replaced with a more immediate concern for his family.

He moved toward his brothers. They were coming around; testing their muscles and climbing to their feet. He checked Donnie over carefully, but his wounds seemed superficial; mostly cuts and bruises.

He gave Raph a visual once over from a few feet away, knowing his brother well enough that he wouldn’t approach until the battle rush wore off.

"Geez Leo," Raph said, still shaking his head to clear it. "How come d'at immortal creep didn't drop ya' like it did us?" His voice deepened with anger and scorn.

Leo ignored his tone. Losing made Raph angry and even after all these years, Raph hated looking weaker than Leo. Leo sighed. Some things would never change, no matter how close they got.

"Luna." Leonardo answered quietly, watching jealousy flare in Raph's eyes.

Raphael quickly suppressed the emotion. Luna was not his. She deserved Leo. He was sure Leo knew how he felt; he also knew Leo forgave him for it. Constantly. It was in his nature.

Leo continued with his explanation, choosing his words very carefully. There was no reason to hurt his brother further.

"The other night, when she… stepped in to stop my nightmares… she wove me a" Leo paused looking for the correct term. "shield."

Leonardo was about to explain further when Don interrupted.

“Uh guys,” he was moving toward the back of the alley into the dead end. There was a small flickering pulse of light that looked very familiar. Raph and Leo moved closer to check it out.

"Sol?" Don asked, surprised, as Leo's eyes widened.

But this wasn’t Sol. Leo had never seen Sol change color. Even when it was enraged at Luna’s
‘condition’ in the Fall, it was still blue.

Leo shuddered, shying away from that memory, unable to acknowledge the fact she had died. She was still recovering and it hurt to even think about. He forced himself to focus on the here and now, dismissing those thoughts. She was safe at home with Michelangelo standing guard.

This fire creature was definitely red. But it looked just the same. Could it be one of the missing pieces?

“It must have been the red that we saw in the crystal.” Donatello said keeping his voice low. He remembered how skittish Sol was when it first encountered them. “I wonder... does he already have the others?”

He and Raph exchanged a quick glance and fell back as one when Leo approached. After all, the first piece had bonded to him immediately. They didn’t want to impede this one.

Leonardo made his way slowly over to where the little red flame was hovering near the back of the alley. He smoothed his voice to be as gentle as possible.

“Hello, little one. Are you injured? Were you trapped in that crystal?”

Leo waited for some kind of response. It flinched back when he first started speaking and now looked like it was trying to flatten itself against the brick wall behind it.

“Don’t be afraid.” Leo tried again quietly. “I have a friend like you named Sol. What’s your name?”

Silence.

Leo exchanged a wary glance with Don. They couldn’t stay in this alley much longer, the police might be here any minute.

Leo turned back to address the little red flame, but it had moved. It was floating slowly and cautiously away from him and toward... Raphael?

Raph backed up a step and it stopped. He looked at Leo confused. Leo gave him a nod that said, “You try, we’ve got to get out of here!”

Raph glared at him and mumbled “Are ya’ kiddin’?” under his breath, but Leo just gave a little hurry up motion.

“Uh... ‘Ey little flame thing.” Raphael said awkwardly. “What’s ya' name?”

Great, he thought. Ya’ sound real intelligent there, tough guy.

fina.

It was a very quiet, hesitant projection, not at all like Sol’s bright little tone. Raph froze in mid tirade. It had answered him.

“Fina, huh. Well I, uh... know ya' goddess. D’at is, if ya' are a part of a goddess’ soul.”

He trailed off self consciously, rubbing the back of his neck. How the heck was he supposed to talk to this thing?

“Ya’ wanna come an’ meet her? I mean, we’re goin’ ta her now, if ya’ wanna come.” he ended
Raph wished Mikey were here. That quiet question made him want to shout ‘alright!’ and slap a high three, but he was too self conscious to try it with Don.

Despite the carnage and disappointments of the evening, this was definitely a piece of Luna’s soul. And for some strange reason, it only wanted to talk to him. He cracked a cocky smile.

“Yeah, Luna. She’s been looking everywhere for ya’. So let’s not keep her waitin’, ‘K?”

*That sounded a little better. More confident.*

Raph headed up the nearest fire escape. Fina, bobbing alongside, kept even with his fast bounding movements. Leo and Don were right behind him. They moved over the rooftops to put some distance between them and the battle but it wasn’t long before Leo called a halt to talk with Fina.

He hadn’t even formed a question, just turned in Raph’s direction, when he was abruptly interrupted by a bright blue light that streaked across the sky and smacked into his head.

Sol began frantically shoving visions in front of his eyes. Very clearly upset about something.

“Sol,” Leo said out loud, trying to hold on to his calm, “Slow down, I can’t understand!”

The visions repeated in sequence, a little slower.

*The sense of eating while chatting with an amused Mikey in the infirmary.*

*An armchair in Donnie’s lab, and sunlight warm on his face, eyes closed, serene.*

*Darkness, amazing starlight, open spaces and an internal but visible soft glow.*

*Then a concerned Mikey surrounded by whirling, twisting shadows, just like Leo’d seen tonight in the alley.*

A chill went down his spine as suddenly the vision went third person again, like a camera, and there was sound. Leo knew that meant Sol had separated from Luna. Why would he leave her?

The next projection enraged him all over again.

*Luna’s tiny pale form, huddled in Mikey’s arms. They were hiding in the shadows on a rooftop, her eyes were white, and her voice was full of fear:*

“*Sol! Leave me now. Go directly to Leo! Don’t stop and don’t get close to the wraiths!*”

Mikey seemed to look directly at him, his eyes as large as saucers.

"*I've got her Sol, you go!*" he whispered

Followed by the most blood curdling, banshee wail Leonardo had ever heard.

Don and Raph had been waiting patiently as a minute passed, then two. Leo had that blank look on his face that said Sol was showing him something.
Suddenly, Leo’s head snapped up, his eyes were feral, and his hands clenched into fists.

“They’re under attack!” Leonardo growled.

“In the lair?” Raph barked amazed.

“On the rooftops.”

No one delayed to ask for an explanation.

Leonardo took off toward the only place he thought Mikey might take her to stargaze. The abandoned tenement building just past April’s apartment. The one where Don had rigged the elevator.

His heart pounded in his throat, and he struggled to push past his anger that she was under attack. Again.

And he wasn’t there. Again.

He had to focus, had to think. He could not fail her.

“Your problem bro, is that ya try to cover every contingency ya’self and don’t trust your brothers to help ya.”

Raph’s words from that fateful night came back to him. They were a team, and besides his mate, a member of that team was under attack. He needed them all to sort this out. Leaping to the next building, Leo caught Donatello’s eye.

“What do you know about wraiths?” he called.

“Wraiths?” Don asked, as they continued to sprint across town.

“Hmm, the word itself is from a Scottish dialect and means ‘ghost’ or ‘spirit’. It was originally used to mean a ghostlike image of someone seen shortly before or after their death. Kinda like a bad oman.”

There was a pause while they crossed a particularly large gap. Don wondered if they were headed towards April’s place. Would Mikey have taken Luna there? He got back to his explanation.

“It has also been used to describe a much more powerful type of spirit called a ‘soul eater’. Fantasy writers have been using the term to refer to all kinds of monsters in literature for years. It’s been used for everything from banshees to the grim reaper himself...” Don continued.

“I don’t know if I’ve ever heard it associated with Greek mythology specifically. Maybe Sol knows?”

“Sol?” Leo said aloud, “Do you know what a wraith is?”

bad.

“Can you tell everyone what you know?”

Sol left Leo’s head and coalesced to orbit around it in an agitated manner. It projected the answer to
all of them, and a very startled Leonardo just about fell off the next building.

The projection came in Luna’s voice. Sol was obviously repeating something Luna said earlier, but it was weird to hear her voice coming out of thin air.

“They’re a hybrid being. A cross between phantasms and demons, and they are eternally hungry. When they feed, they drain power from unwitting mortals; and immortals if they can catch them. They are slaves to whoever summons them and are usually sent to hunt down a specific victim and drag their soul to Tartarus.”

“Demons?” Raph exclaimed in disbelief, he looked to Don for clarification.

“Well, demons are considered malevolent spirits or fallen angels that have to be summoned” Don began. “And phantasms are mental figments, usually attributed to a disordered mind. So if it is a hybrid we may not be able to touch it physically.”

“Tha’ means Mikey ain’t gonna be able to do nothin’ to protect ‘er!” Raph said his own anger rising.

“And most likely, neither are we…” Don began when Leonardo stopped dead in the middle of a rooftop.

fear….. Fear…..FEAR! Terror…..Desperation…… AGONY!

Emotions were pummeling his mind, from inside his shields.

“LUNA!” Leo screamed.

Her grief and anguish, flowing through their bond, made Leo clutch his head and fall to his knees. Don and Raph ran to his side, uncertain how to help.

stop!

Sol flared brightly, its little voice echoing across the night. Leo’s pain ceased abruptly as Sol cut off the flow.

The brothers stared up as Fina and Sol shot toward each other, like two bullets of light. They spun together, shooting upwards, and leaving glowing trails like a firework. They combined, forming a bright mass that pulsed briefly then floated back down towards them.

we have a solution.

It was Sol and Fina voices, but their tones were blended. Stronger, with a faint hint of the godly echo. They were much more powerful together than separately.

our powers activate and enhance your own.

Leo and Raph exchanged a confused look and both turned to Don for a translation. He shrugged.

“We’re new powers might be turned against them?” Donnie suggested, intrigued.

we strengthen you, you reinforce her.

“So Sol will boast my powers, and I can somehow feed them to Luna? Will that be enough to fight off the wraiths?” Leo asked.
sol cannot do it alone. fina must be bonded.

“No problem.” Leo turned to his brothers.

“If I pass out, wake me however you can. Mikey and Luna are running out of time.” he said.

He took a firm stance and braced himself for the powerful experience he remembered from Sol. He beckoned to the glow, “Anytime you’re ready Fina.”

no. Fina’s voice said softly.

“NO?” Leo’s gaze darkened.

leo is strong. Sol’s voice said gently, almost sadly. but leo is mortal. his soul is already full.

“How is that the answer than!” Raph said angrily.

it can be done with a sacrifice.

“Anything!” Leo practically begged.

Donatello was more cautious. He put a hand on Leo’s shoulder.

“It’s dangerous to agree blindly to a sacrifice when dealing with gods, Leo. What if that sacrifice is you? Or one of us?” Don faced the large glow. “What is the nature of this forfeit?”

leo must concede.

“I’ll submit to anything you want!” Leo’s voice cracked.

even to sharing your mate?

“What?” All three mouths fell open.

red is acceptable. fina can offer a bond.

only if leo agrees. Sol added quietly.
Raphael couldn't believe what he was hearing. Fina wanted to bond with him? Luna would have two soulmates? How would that even work? He was torn. His honor would not to allow Leo to destroy himself that way, but Raph had to admit that he wanted this.

_He was already in love with the girl._

He met Leo's gaze. It tore him up to see the pain growing there as Leo thought about what this would mean. This girl was everything Leo ever wanted. How could he even think about this? But, if Leo didn't allow the bond, how could they save Luna and Mikey from something they couldn't fight?

Leonardo closed his eyes in pain and bowed his head.

_I lost her once... before I even knew there was a bond._

_It almost destroyed me._

_Rejecting this would damn her and my little brother._

_I would give my life for either of them, is my love a higher price?_

"I concede." Leo whispered.

Luna shrieked as the wraiths tried to drag Michelangelo away from her. She grabbed desperately at his shell, feeling his arms close around her protectively, even as they flew into the air.

The wraith threw them back against the closed door to the elevator shaft, howling in anger. Mikey twisted in the air to cushion her impact, and hit shell first. Luna heard pieces of his already abused body shatter at the impact.

She lay still for a moment where she had fallen on top of Mikey's panting chest. He wasn't trying to get up, and the wraiths were closing in.

She finally surrendered to the despair she was holding inside and moaned, a deep hopeless tone.

_It was her fault, all her fault._

This beautiful creature, this loving, happy, carefree being, who brought such life and joy was going to be extinguished in front of her. He would never have encountered these monsters, never been up against something he couldn't fight, if she just hadn't taken shelter with them.

Michelangelo stirred at the moan, and struggled to lay her gently down at his side.

"Don't worry, Sleepy Moon." he whispered, as if reading her mind. "You are the _best_ thing that _ever_ happened to us."

"No," she wept, "I've destroyed you."
With great effort, he summoned a smile. It was tired and filled with pain but completely genuine. He reached out to her slowly, stroked her cheek and tucked a stray hair behind her ear.

"I love you, little sis. I'll always protect you. No matter what."

Then, despite his mortal injuries, he struggled to his feet and limped in front of her prone form; prepared to make his last stand.

The brothers raced across the remaining rooftops faster than they ever had in their lives; flanked by two immortal fragments of a goddess' soul. They reached the final fire escape to the building, and didn't even slow. Swinging and climbing over each other in their haste, Donatello, Leonardo and Raphael made the final leap onto the rooftop and stopped stunned.

The stillness lasted only a moment before Donatello shot to his fallen brother's side. His eyes drowning in horror as he categorized all the splintered bones, bleeding gashes and horrible contusions on Michelangelo's body.

Mikey's face was a mangled mess, his mask gone. His left eye had swollen almost shut. His shell was broken, missing large pieces, and his tender back and spine lay exposed.

His breath was so shallow, it took Don several seconds to make sure he was still breathing.

Luna lay behind Mikey on the concrete in front of the elevator. Don didn't know how badly she was injured but his sensitive ears picked up her quiet weeping. She was still alive. Right now he couldn't afford to take his hands from Michelangelo. Not if he wanted his brother to survive.

Leonardo and Raphael peeled off in different directions and prepared to flank the ghastly creatures. The power emanating from the two turtles was an enticing lure for the wraiths, and they turned aside from, the now weaker, Luna and Mikey to pursue these new targets.

Leo's first powerful sword thrust went right through a wraith's body.

"Donnie was right!" Raph yelled as his throwing stars passed harmlessly through the wraith nearest him. "Now what?!"

**now us!**

Fina and Sol moved as one towards their bonded and dove into their rapidly moving forms.

Leo's blades erupted in blue light and his next stroke caused a wraith to scream and writhe in pain. He pushed the oozing creature back with blow after blow, moving rapidly to counter the third when it tried to get in behind him.

Raph's sai changed as well. Fina crowed in his mind as each sai was coated in red fire. With every twirl and flourish, his blades produced a brilliant fireball that shot towards the wraiths as if pulled by a magnet.

But they were still fighting a losing battle.

The wraiths began to heal, almost as fast as they were injured; drawing power from the injuries
they had inflicted on their previous prey. Leo continued fighting as if possessed, but Raph was paying attention.

"Leo!" Raph called as he leapt and bound to avoid an attack, "Lay off! Send the power to Luna! We aren't doing enough damage alone!"

Leo backed off, reached for Luna and panicked. He couldn't locate her. Then he remembered Sol had blocked her from him.

"Sol!" Leo shouted, "You're keeping me out! I can't feel her!"

prepare yourself... Sol said quietly, then opened the link.

Luna lay sobbing quietly into the blackness behind her eyes, overwhelmed by Mikey's agony and her own sorrow, when the sound of a voice she would know anywhere broke through her tangled thoughts.

"Sol! You're keeping me out! I can't feel her!"

Leonardo was here!

Moments later, a blinding light smashed into her forehead. She saw blue, then red, as energy flooded into her core like a tidal wave breaking over the shore. Suddenly Luna found herself on her feet, braced in front of Michelangelo and Donatello, without a clear recollection of moving.

Sol had returned with reinforcements.

Her eyes filled with an unearthly blue glow, that did not fade. She could see, and the nightmare was worse than she had imagined. Michelangelo, who had filled her days with sunshine, love, and reassurance, lay destroyed at her feet. Portions of his beautifully patterned shell had been broken. His arms and legs had been punctured in dozens of places, and muscles were torn away.

She gasped as the pain and agony she was still keeping from him ran through her once again. But, even now, Mikey clutched his weapons and groped weakly at her ankle, trying to get her to move back.

She forced her eyes away from him. First she must take care of the danger, then she could see he was healed properly. She changed her focus as the influx of power demanded her attention.

She recognized the cool, blue, healing energy of Leonardo, but it had been magnified by Sol a thousand-fold. It healed all her own injuries, and forged an even tighter bond between them. So powerful was the flow that it followed the silver thread of her celestial life force back to it's source and strengthened the connection, letting through an enormous wave of her own inherent power.

Intense silver light rushed over her body as she turned to face the three grotesque green creatures quivering in the air before her. She expanded the light into a glimmering silver shield, protecting herself and those she stood before from the draining, despairing cries of the wraiths.

The shield accomplished, a blinding rage began to build within her. Her family had been brutally attacked and a member nearly killed trying to defend her. How dare these insignificant demons
think to harm what was hers!

Her eyes glazed with Mikey’s agony and her own rage, she raised her hands and prepared to send them back to Hades. Orange, red, and golden fire flared to life in her palms and flowed down her hands, dripping with a hiss onto the gravel of the rooftop. Startled, she dropped her gaze to them.

*RED? Sol can only summon cold, blue fire!*

Her rage surged again and overwhelmed that moment of doubt. This fury carried the tang of a deep volcanic pit. The kind of natural, bountiful, violence that had been boiling beneath the surface for years. This anger wasn't entirely her own.

*Raphael! she realised. She could feel Raphael!*

But that meant another soul piece had not only returned, but bonded! Which one? The red flames gave her the clue.

*Fina?* she whispered.

*here!*

Luna's face lit with an almost unholy glee.

*Fina, we're gonna set the world on FIRE!*
All eyes snapped to Luna, as her silvered form began to rise into the air. She brought both arms overhead and fire ran from her palms down her arms. Her hair burst into flames, that did not consume, and she suddenly resembled her father.

“A message for your master.” She hissed, her voice reverberating with a deafening, thunderous echo. She lowered her arms to her sides and as she raised them again she had beautiful, fiery wings.

“I am the daughter of light, heir to daybreak and twilight. I claim these incredible beings,” she gestured across the rooftop, “as mine by right of family and mate.”

"Tell your master, if they ever fuck with what’s mine again, be they mortal or god, I will destroy them!”

With a keening cry, her body shimmered and transformed into a brilliantly plumaged firebird. The brothers could only stare as she swooped low over their heads, let out a scream of outrage, and scorched the wraiths to dust.

Before they could really recover from that bold transformation, the incredible firebird came to rest behind Mikey’s body and shimmered back into Luna’s human form. But this was a Luna that Don almost didn’t recognize. She was still petite and pale, but she radiated power. Her hair flamed, and her face was twisted with wrath.

As she stepped gracefully towards them, the very air trembled.

Donatello refused to move from Mikey’s side. As imposing and wild as she looked at this moment, he had faith she would not harm them. After all, she’d just claimed them as family.

Besides, he was too busy applying pressure to some of Mikey’s worst injuries. Trying to stop the bleeding, even though his heart knew it was a futile effort.

“Donnie,” Mikey quavered.

It was the first time Michelangelo had spoken since they arrived and Don was glad his brother could still recognize him. Don leaned in closer to hear.

“I’m here Mikey.” Don said softly.

“Luna! Don’t let the ghosts get her bro…. I swore… she would be safe….” he gasped.

“She’s all right Mikey. The wraiths are gone.” Don said gently. “You did it, you kept her safe.”

Michelangelo smiled.

A soft, satisfied, sigh escaped his lips.

“Mikey?” Don said urgently, as he felt Mikey’s pulse begin to waver. “Stay with me Mikey!”

“Luna!” Don cried, turning frightened eyes her way. “He’s dying!”

She approached swiftly, trying to control the rage inside her at Michelangelo’s condition. Anger would not help him now. She would cage it for a time, until she found out who had summoned those demons.
Her hair gradually stopped flaming and settled in a more human red color, her eyes faded to gleaming blue, and her pale skin was no longer coated in silver. Finally, she knelt by Michelangelo.

One tiny hand began to give off her softer moon-glow, and she passed it over the top of Mikey’s body from head to foot. She exchanged a long, weighted glance with Donatello.

Don felt his throat tighten. Was there nothing she could do?

“Leonardo,” she called out wearily “I need you.”

It was only then that Don realized his brothers had not followed her to Mikey’s side. He looked around to see them both sitting dazed on the gravel of the rooftop.

When Sol opened the connection to Luna, neither of them had been prepared. Even Leo’s reaction earlier hadn’t been enough warning. They had been blindsided by the unimaginable despair of a goddess and the agony of a dying brother.

It was the perfect emotional storm, and they had been driven to near unconsciousness.

Leo looked up at her call. Despair, fear, and agony still swirled in his gaze, but his eyes never made it to hers. They brushed Mikey’s body and he froze, staring at his little brother, completely horrified.

“Raphael?” Luna called, her tone desperate.

Raph responded instinctively to her unspoken plea. He struggled to his feet, wiping away his own tears, and roughly hauled Leo up. They made their way over to Luna somewhat awkwardly, Raph practically dragging Leo along.

Raphael couldn’t bear to look at his youngest brother himself. Michelangelo was completely covered in blood. Don’s hands still tried to hold some of it inside. But Leo couldn’t seem to look away.

Luna met Raph’s eyes as he deposited his anguished brother next to her. They were an odd mixture of human and goddess.

He saw fear than confidence, insecurity than hope flash through those glorious eyes in rapid succession. It was as if two separate parts of her were at war.

Raph wanted the world to stop. He wanted to call a timeout, like they had when they were kids. He wanted just a moment to grab Luna up, examine her closely, and convince himself she was safe.

But he couldn’t in front of Leo. He dared not start something now when his little brother’s life hung so precariously in the balance.

Raph started to back away, putting a safe distance between them when her beseeching gaze met his again.

“Stay with me?” she pleaded, her eyes huge.

God help him, he was lost to that gaze. He would never be able to refuse her anything.

Raphael hurried around to her other side and sat, catching Don’s eye. Don raised an eyebrow at Raph’s quick compliance.
Interesting... Don filed the that information away to consider later.

Luna gently touched Leo on the shoulder and the change in him was instantaneous. He suddenly seemed to snap out of his daze, spun to her and crushed her to his chest, burying his face in her hair.

“Luna! God, I thought I’d lost you again!”

“Leo, love,” she gently pushed him away. “I know you’re in shock. I didn’t have the time to take the power from you the way I should have, but Mikey needs your help now.”

“Of course.” Leo blinked sadly at her, struggling to resume his leadership mask. “But I’m afraid I’m not sure how to do it.”

“Bullshit!” Raph burst out. “You’ve healed Luna twice, ya’ don’t get to bow out now d’at Mikey needs ya!”

The look that Leo directed his way could have leveled mountains. “I don’t know how I did that, with her it’s totally instinct.” he snapped. “If I could control it consciously, don’t you think I’d be right there saving my little brother?”

Luna merely squeezed both their hands.

“Don’t worry, I’ll guide you through it.”

Raphael?

It was her voice inside his head, and thankfully she didn’t sound angry about his outburst.

Now that he was bonded to her, being in her presence was a whole new experience. It was staggering and he understood, in a way he never could before, why Leo had locked himself away from her when she first awoke.

He closed his eyes.

It was so difficult to think near her.

For a few solid heart beats he did nothing but bask in the echo of her voice in his head, feeling the energy flow back and forth between them through the new bond.

He let her essence seep into every part of him like a soothing balm, filling up all the empty spaces in his heart, and for once in his life, he felt true peace.

No anger, no self condemnation, no pride, no rivalry, guilt, or fear.

Serenity and tranquility claimed his soul. In sudden insight, he realized this was the reason Splinter and Leo meditated. They were reaching for this state of perfection.

It had taken the will of a goddess to bring it to his fiery soul.

Beloved, she called again, do you feel where the energy flows?
Raph finally found the focus to answer.

Yeah.

*Concentrate your thoughts on me, and let your strength flow like a stream through that connection.*

He focused on her. It was easy to do since he was so aware of her next to him he was practically counting her every breath, and tried to do as she asked.

Her glow intensified and Raph felt dizzy.

*Easy, dear one. She admonished with a smile. That's more like a river!* 

Eyes closed, Raph still felt the smile. It was like the sun coming up, warm upon his skin. He forced himself to relax and slowed down his “stream.”

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*Leonardo?*

Leo felt her in his mind. With two soul pieces regained and an increased tie to her own powers, her essence was even stronger than it had been before. He was totally awestruck.

*I am not a stranger, my love. Luna reassured him. I am still yours, now and always.*

He felt her probe gently at the sorrow and guilt surrounding his thoughts. Felt her realize his fear of losing her, not just to danger, but to Raph.

*How can you say that? Leo asked. How can you share this bond with more than one?*

*Do you not share the bond of brotherhood with three others?* she replied. *Do you not care for each of them?*

*But this is more!* he cried, unable to articulate the tangle of emotions.

There was a long pause as she considered how best to answer him. Perhaps he would not believe until he was shown.

*I am more…*

She finally answered, lowering her shields, just a little, so he could understand.

She let him see only the barest glimpse, but it blew him away. This incident and the new soul had changed her. She was slowly recovering her godhood, and he now realized that meant more than just power.

He sensed a vast presence as she showed him the flow through her silver laced connection. An amazing intelligence, superseded only by her capacity for emotion. His mind boggled.

She’d only shown him a glimpse, and she was not yet at full power. No wonder her human form seemed so frail, trying to contain all that glory.

But behind all that, there was a torrent of feeling that swirled only around him. His life, his form,
his soul, was precious to her beyond words. He was the first being, mortal or otherwise, that she had ever loved.

It warmed him, filled him, and pushed all his doubts aside. She did still need to be with him, perhaps even more than he needed her.

*I love you Leonardo. No one can take your place. Just as no one will be able to take Michelangelo’s place if we let him go. Please dearest, let us tend to him…*

“*She’s all right Mikey. The wraiths are gone.*” Don said gently. “*You did it, you kept her safe.*”

Michelangelo sighed in relief and let himself fall into the darkness, his soul no longer tortured by the fear that his incredible sister was going to die. He had done it. He’d protected Leo’s mate long enough for them to save her.

She had taken his physical pain and agony away, and her gentle touch was what he wanted to remember. He felt a new bolt of sadness rip through him though, as he thought about leaving his brothers behind.

And his father, who he would never see again. Would Splinter have been proud of him? Accepted his sacrifice?

yes.

A soothing, calm voice, a voice he would know anywhere, answered that unspoken question.

*Leo?* Mikey was startled.

*I am here, little brother. And Splinter could not be more proud of you than I am in this moment. I will never be able to thank you. Luna lives because of your courage.*

An intense chill swept through his body, and Mikey shuddered, but it was followed by a feeling of warmth and safety.

*I was afraid to die alone, Mikey thought, but I promised to protect her. She’s so good... for all of us.*

*You are not alone Michelangelo, I am here.*

There was great sadness in his voice.

The cold returned and increased, but warmth replaced it quickly. It was getting hard to think straight.

*I’m sorry I can’t stay... I want to stay.* Mikey said. *Tell Donnie and Raphie, I- I love them.*

*It’s all right Michelangelo. Rest now. I will take care of everything.*

Then all was silent.
Battle scars

Donatello jerked upright as his head once again began to tilt involuntarily down to his chest. He had way too much going on to fall asleep right now. He was holding down the fort despite his own weariness. He’d sent everyone else off to bed hours ago. They all needed rest after this evenings trials and he needed the quiet to concentrate.

He rubbed his eyes lightly, removing the last of the earlier tear marks, as he pushed away the latest test results and got up from his chair in the lab. He stretched, giving his stiff muscles a moment to adjust. It was time to check on his patient anyway.

As he headed for the infirmary, he wondered again why he had allowed his brothers to build it so far from the lab. It seemed as if most of his time lately had been spent walking back and forth between the two locations.

He yawned again, sighed quietly to himself and decided to detour into the kitchen for another cup of coffee.

Caffeine acquired, Donnie headed through the living area. It was dark, but he didn’t bother turning on the lights. He’d walked this path so many times, he could do it blindfolded. Besides, he didn’t need the light to wake anyone. They might leap to the conclusion that something was wrong.

He paused by the couch noting that Luna had finally crashed. He grabbed up the old quilt from the back of the recliner and draped it gently over her, nodding to Sol and Fina as he did so.

“Didn’t she ask you two to stay with them?” He whispered to the two little flames.

Sol dimmed slightly, as if caught doing something it shouldn’t and shot off towards Leo’s room. Fina flared a bit defiantly and stayed where it was.

“Suit yourself.” Don shrugged, and headed on to the infirmary.

He still hadn’t figured out how pieces of a person’s, or in this case goddess’, soul could become personified and act independently, or even contrarily, to the original persons wishes. He made a mental note to discuss that with Luna after the current crisis was resolved. If they were going to find the rest of her soul, it would help to understand what the remaining pieces might be thinking.

As he rounded the last corner of his route, he stopped abruptly. Someone was in there. A soft light flowed out through the door, even though Don knew he hadn't left any on during his previous visit.

It wasn’t Leo or Raph, both of them were out cold in their rooms. Neither could calm down once they were home, and Luna had finally ordered them into their beds and knocked them out mentally. It looked kind of like Luna’s moon-glow, but it couldn’t be, since he’d just seen her in the living room.

Don flattened himself against the wall and peered every so cautiously around the door jam.

Michelangelo was still laid out on the stainless table in the middle of the room, a light sheet pulled up to his chest, just as Don had left him. Standing on the other side of the table was someone, or something, Don didn’t know.

His skin tingled ever so slightly.
Don’s heart pounded as adrenaline hit his system, and he began to ease himself back towards the living area and Luna. That glowing form was definitely an immortal and Don had no intention of facing one of those alone.

A quiet, respectful call stopped him in his tracks.

“Hamato Donatello”

It came from the immortal. How the heck did it know his name? Don quickly looked toward the living room where Luna lay, judging the distance. She could be here almost immediately if he shouted.

“Please… don’t wake her. She needs to rest. Come in and speak with me.” It called again, a soft echo of power tinting it’s tone.

Against his better judgement, Don reversed his earlier decision and went to see what it wanted.

Leonardo was topside, stalking through the darkness of the night. He was angry, near to boiling, but he didn’t know why. Something was missing, but he couldn’t really remember what it was he was looking for. He just had to keep going until he found it.

He slipped silently down the street, kept to the shadows, and peered carefully into each alley as he passed. He stopped and narrowed his eyes toward the back of the next one. Out of the darkness, a pair of glowing red eyes appeared. It was the punk Leo and his brothers had fought.

 Didn’t Donnie say his name was Charon? Some underling from the Greek underworld.

Charon laughed evilly and loomed over the tiny, pale figure of a woman with long red hair who shook from head to toe. She looked familiar. Had he saved her before? He shook his head. It didn’t matter. Whoever she was, she needed his help now.

Leo drew his katanas and ran stealthily towards them, but Raphael stopped him before he was even halfway there. Grabbing his arm, Raph swung Leo around with an intense glare.

“Headspace’s got a lot of problems, Leo, but he’s got his eyes on you. Leave them be!” Raph practically yelled.

Luna! How could he have forgotten? Was that her down there in the alley?

His heart skipped a beat, then began to pound. He needed to get to her, but Raph wouldn’t let him go. Leo had the skill to easily break Raph's hold, but something kept him from doing so. It seemed more important somehow to convince his brother he’d done the right thing. At least the right thing for Luna and her recovery.
Those bastards raped her Raph! They beat her senseless and when she finally escaped, fell and was helpless, they threw garbage down on her until she **died**! I never thought I’d have to explain that to you!” Leo defended his actions. “They didn’t deserve to go on breathing the same air as her. She **might** be able to sleep now, and get on with her new life.”

Raph just shook his head.

“I can’t let ya’ near her now. Ya’ know d’at, right?” Raph said, “What if ya’ snap an’ hurt her too?”

“I’d **never** hurt her!” Leo objected.

“A minute ago ya’ didn’t even remember her name!” Raph yelled.

*True. And very puzzling.*

Something hot and wet touched Leo’s hands, distracting him from the fight. He shifted his gaze to them, even though he knew it was a bad idea to take his eyes off of Raph when he was in one of his moods.

*Blood?*

It was dripping off his katana and coursing down over the handles. Blood that glowed softly like the moon.

“No!” Leo threw the swords violently from him as Raph shrieked, “Leo! What have you done?”

A scream echoed up the alleyway, and the brothers turned as one. Luna was no longer alone. She sat on the ground, sobbing brokenly over the body of their little brother. Mikey and Luna were both covered in cuts and slices. Mikey wasn’t moving and Luna sat in a pool of his blood while her’s ran down her arms and mixed with it causing the pool to glow softly.

She turned towards them, an orange mask in one fist. She held it to her lips to stifle her crying as tears pooled in her startlingly blue eyes and streamed down her face.

“I tried to save him.” She whispered. “But he just won’t wake up!”

Charon laughed, and waved them over.

“You may reclaim your brothers corpse. I already have his soul!” The guardian of the dead cackled.

“This is all your fault!” Raph screamed, turning back to Leo and drawing his sai, “Ya’ left her alone with Mikey. For what? To pursue your vengeance? Our brother’s **dead** Leo, and your incompetence is killing **my** mate!”

Leo shrank back against the wall, horrified.

*leo! be calm.*

The voice echoed through his panicked mind.
“Sol?” he cried out, “I didn’t do it! I didn’t strike them!”

“Leo they’re covered in sword cuts!” Raph exclaimed.

dream. a dream.

“But,” He gestured wildly down the alley where Luna had collapsed over Mikey’s chest, sobbing as if her heart was broken.

“Luna is hurt and Mikey won’t wake up...” he moaned, “Raph’s right, this is all my fault!”

destiny. luna sleeps.

The image of the alleyway shattered like a broken mirror, the pieces falling away, as Sol projected a new picture behind Leo’s eyes.

It was the living room of their home. Quiet. Dark, but for the small pulsing red glow that was Fina. In that glow, Leo could see Luna was whole, uninjured, and asleep. She looked completely spent, curled up sideways on the couch.

Eerily, she had one hand wrapped in the remains of Mikey’s orange mask, just like in his dream, but it was tucked up gently to her cheek. And her chest silently rose and fell with her breathing.

Donnie stood nearby, gently covering her with an old blanket.

Leo felt himself relax. Luna was ok. Donatello was on guard. He trusted Donnie.

all will be well.

Then a blue fog overwhelmed Leo’s mind and he drifted into a dreamless darkness.

Raphael awoke with a start. Something was very wrong. He couldn’t put his finger on it, but he just had this feeling that he couldn’t shake. Using all his ninjutsu training in stealth, he loaded up his weapons and quickly left his room.

Checking the hall for signs of life, he slunk past Donnie’s room with barely a glance inside. Don, of course, wasn’t there. He’d either be in the lab or the infirmary. Donnie would never take time off to rest, even as he insisted his brothers do.

Raph decided to bypass the stairs, to maintain the element of surprise, and lept silently over the
railing easily sticking the landing after the fifteen foot drop. A quick look towards the infirmary showed it was dark and silent. Don must be in the lab then.

Raph couldn’t bear the thought of looking in on Mikey’s still form, so he slipped passed the infirmary door and moved on into the living area. Fina had told him earlier that Luna had fallen asleep on the couch, so he padded across the dark floor silently to check on her. Leaning over the back, he felt his breath catch in his throat.

She wasn’t there.

*Don’t panic, tough guy. This happened before. She could be in the bathroom, or maybe she needed a drink, or she might even... be with Leo.*

He didn’t really want to think about that but it had to be considered. Any of those would be preferable to his own wild imaginings. His feeling of foreboding only increased, however, when he checked the kitchen and bathroom with no results.

He’d climbed the stairs to the second level on the other side of the living room and was about to burst through Leo’s bedroom door, no matter what he might see, when he heard a quiet thunk from downstairs and a soft female moan. It didn’t take more than a moment for Raphael’s mood to go from extremely worried, tense, and possibly jealous, to enraged.

Luna was the only female in the house, and that moan hadn’t come from behind Leo’s door.

Besides, he recognized that quiet thunk from far too many battles. It was the sound of something heavy connecting with someone’s skull. Luna was under attack in their very home! With a roar he couldn’t contain, Raph vaulted down the stairs and turned to the one room he hadn’t already searched.

The dojo.

Raphael flung himself through the door without a second thought but came to an abrupt halt, panting, as he took in the scene in front of him.

Luna lay flat on the tatami mats they trained on, unconscious and groaning softly. Charon with his red flashing eyes, knelt across her waist. His knees pinned her wrists to the floor. He held a long tanto knife from their wall of weapons in his grasp, the sharp edge of the blade pressed tight against her throat. A small trickle of glowing blood was seeping down her neck.

“I wondered which of her ‘mates’ would come running” Charon cackled. “Though I am a bit surprised that you are not *all* here, since you are *so* connected.” He snorted. “How could she want you mortal monsters as family?”

Raph’s eyes flared as they flicked back and forth between Luna’s face and the knife, but he didn’t rise to the bait of being called a monster. Luna was too important to lose. He would not let his temper get in the way of rescuing her.

Raph was too far away, at the moment, to use any of his hostage counters but maybe he could distract this bastard with words.

“I don’t know tall, dark, and ugly. Maybe because we *love* her and don’t go around trying to kill her for her bits of soul?”

“*LOVE?* How could any of you claim to love her,” Charon said. “yet still leave her alone in the dark?”
“I sent Fina to make sure she had light!” Raph snapped, annoyed despite himself.

“Ah, you mean the little burning one? Thank you for that. It was easy to take down.” Charon raised his other hand and shook a new crystal orb, filled with red.

"Fina!” Raph raged. "Let them go you freak!"

Charon ignored him.

“Little good it did her though. Without the other one, she couldn’t see it anyway. But at least you know she fears the dark.” He laughed without any real humor. “But do you know why?”

“Yeah, yer punks trapped her in the dark.” Raph answered, easing his way toward them.

“Wrong!” Charon exclaimed. “She is the heir to sunlight and moonglow. As a goddess, both answered her call. Her temper flared like the sun and her healing love glowed soft as the moon.”

Charon sighed dramatically.

“Yeah? And what would ya’ know of either?” Raph spat, creeping closer by the moment.

Charon didn't seem to realize Raph was moving. Geez. What was it about villains and monologues? Their mouths started moving and their brains switched off. Not that he was complainin’.

“Darkness is her antithesis, her opposite, her enemy. When she is in the dark, she is at her most vulnerable. Especially now that neither flame nor glow will answer when she calls.”

Ah, well Charon obviously didn’t know Luna had been reconnected to her celestial strength. Raph wasn’t going to enlighten him.

“No one that truly knew her, as a mate should know her, would have figured that out.”

Charon snarled, pressing the knife more firmly against Luna’s throat.

She whimpered, and Raph froze. He really needed to distract this guy with somethin’. In a sudden flash of insight, Raph thought he had the answer.

“Ya’ wanted Luna, didn’t ya’? And she rejected ya.” He tsk’d lightly. “Well, I'm happy to tell ya', d’is certainly won’t change her mind.”

“It’s too late for that now anyway.” Charon said with a snarl.

He looked up, directly into Raphael’s eyes, and drew the blade firmly across Luna’s throat. Fina’s red light in the orb flickered and went out.

“NO!” Raph screamed and his whole world erupted in flames.

Raphael flung a hand toward Charon and a solid stream of fire shot from his palm straight into Charon’s chest. Charon collapsed over Luna with a crackling, burning gurgle. His body slumped down and the mats began to ignite.

Raphael was in agony. His ploy had backfired horrendously. He waded through the fire and kicked Charon’s burning body off Luna’s limp form. He collapsed beside her, heedless of the flames and pulled her close, cradling her in his lap.

He closed his eyes and howled his anguish as fiery red tears traced a path down his face adding even more flame to their pyre.
raph! the bed is on fire!

“What?” he opened confused eyes. Why should he worry about a bed? He looked around. Their whole home was on fire, and he couldn’t care less. His soul mate was gone…

raph! stop! do you wanna kill everyone?

The voice was extremely upset, but Raphael ignored it, beckoning the flames even higher.

“RAPH!”

Now that was a voice he knew.

Donatello.

He couldn’t burn everything. Donnie and Leo were still here, and they didn’t deserve to die that way. Raph regained his feet, still clutching Luna to him and concentrated. Slowly, he was able to call the fire to him. It stuttered and rolled back until it was only around his legs. Then he forced it out.

Something cold and very wet hit him in the face.

Raph sat up abruptly and looked around. He wasn’t in the dojo, he was in his room, in his bed.

His now sopping wet, ash covered, and slightly smoldering bed.

Raph looked up. Donatello stood there, his eyes huge. He was holding a large blue bucket they used for mopping up when Leo thought the kitchen looked a bit too dingy.

Raph stared at Don as if he couldn’t imagine how he’d gotten there, or what he was doing.

“Raph?” Don snapped his fingers in front of Raph’s face. “RAPH! …You with me now?”

“Yeah, I… What happened?” Raph stuttered.

Don shrugged. “Dunno. Fina flew into the infirmary screaming that you were on fire. Thus…” He held up the large blue container as if that was enough of an explanation.

“Was I on fire?” Raph asked confused.

He looked around, trying to come to some understanding of his destroyed bed and the general mess.

"You, the bed, part of the wall...” Don replied tiredly. “But most of it seemed to be smothering itself just as I came in. It was weird. I’ve never seen fire behave like that. I threw the water, just to
be safe.”

raphael did that.

Fina’s little voice was cold.

“I didn’t do nutin’!” Raph growled.

you had a nightmare, wouldn't listen to me, and practically burned the whole place down.

“How did he do that if he was asleep?” Don asked reasonably.

He was only half paying attention to the little soul. He was more intent on grabbing each of Raph’s arms in turn and examining him for burns. Besides, after everything else that happened today, arguing with a little red flame, didn’t seem so strange. Although Fina was a lot more talkative than Sol ever had been. Maybe even a little bit snippy.

he’s a firestarter. every time he’s angry or upset, we’ll get flamed. luna’s going have to train this one real quick, or we’re going to have a huge problem.

At the mention of Luna’s name, Raph’s nightmare came back to him full force. Just the memory of Luna’s dream death had his hands flaring up.

see what i mean?

“I can’t take anymore surprises tonight.” Don sighed. “Fina, can’t you control it?”

does it look like i can control it? it’s his freakin’ power.

“I guess we’ll be waking Luna then.” Don said.
Donatello's Dedication

Don dropped the bucket to the floor and rubbed a hand over his face for about the 500th time that night. He left Raph sitting in the sopping wet mess that was once his bed, while Fina scolded him nonstop.

I’m getting too old for this. He thought with a grim smile. Oh sure it was fine when they’d been in their teens and full of boundless energy. Now though...

Characters from Greek mythology, demons, near death experiences, firebirds, comas, gods and now the most uncontrollable and hot-headed of his brothers was a firestarter.

He shook his head. Pretty overwhelming for just one night. Was it too much to ask that it might be spread out just a little bit? Like, maybe over a few years instead?

With a sigh, Don put those thoughts aside and stopped in the infirmary, again, to check on Mikey before he went to wake Luna.

The poor girl really needed as much rest as she could get. And a small delay wouldn’t hurt anything. Raph wasn’t going back to bed any time soon. Now that he was awake, Fina could probably keep him in line.

Don stuck his head through the door and heaved a small sigh of relief at what he saw. Mikey was looking so much better than before. His skin was regaining it’s more normal green tone and he was breathing in a soft regular rhythm. He no longer looked like a corpse laid out for a funeral.

Don even chuckled a bit as he heard a small mumble from Mikey’s lips about a pizza.

It was a miraculous turn around, Don reflected. Mikey certainly wouldn’t be recovering if it hadn’t been for Selene. He let his thoughts drift back to his earlier conversation with the Goddess of the Moon.

Don had entered the infirmary to face this new being with a confident walk. He forced a calm exterior, but he was holding on to his coffee mug as if his life depended on it.

He strode to Mikey’s side, eyes never leaving the glowing form on the other side of the bed, and inclined his head respectfully.

“I am Hamato Donatello. But it seems you have the advantage of me.” Don said.

The glowing form laughed, a chiming, peculiar sound, that seemed somehow familiar.

“Have we met before?” Don inquired.

Besides the very similar, though much brighter, glow she was petite like Luna. But she had a rounder face and rich black hair. It was long and piled up on her head in an elaborately intricate style. Her eyes were a deep, midnight blue that shone with tiny specks of light which Don could have sworn were stars.
Also, she was semi-transparent, much as Helios had been. From this he gathered that she was a full
goddess, and not entirely in this plane, unlike Luna.

“I am Selene, Goddess of the Moon.” She smiled softly, “And I am honored beyond words to
welcome you and your clan into my family.”

“Your family?” Don asked, confused.

“Did you think my daughter’s claim a spurious one?” Selene laughed again. “I assure you Luna
was quite serious. But even if she had not claimed you for her own, I would still be here. The
sacrifices your family has made to protect my Luna have not escaped my notice.”

She gestured to Michelangelo’s ever so still form on the table. Don rested his palm on Mikey’s
forehead and sighed deeply.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with him.” Don admitted. “His wounds have been healed but he just
won’t wake up. It’s some kind of coma, but none of the tests I’ve run have yielded any results. His
brain waves are normal, well... normal for a mutant turtle, and his body is fine. As far as the scans
are concerned, Mikey is in perfect health.”

Don didn’t know why he was opening up to this being. After all, she could be lying about her
identity. But she was here and listening, and he sensed that she truly wanted to help.

“I’ve formulated a few theories. Everything from mental shock to losing his soul, though I must
admit I know very little about the latter, or even if we, as mutants, have one. I mean it’s only just
been proven, by Sol and Fina, that souls are a tangible thing that could be lost, broken, or captured
and we must have something, or there wouldn’t be this connection that Raph and Leo are
experiencing…” He realized his brain was running off on a tangent and shut up.

Selene just smiled. “Your open mind and heart are a great gift Donatello. But then that could be
inferred from your given name.”

He was startled by her response to his rambling. He was used to others glaring at him and telling
him to ‘tone it down’ or ‘use English’. Well, everyone except Luna. And, he was surprised that she
knew about his name. Few realized that Donatello meant gift, though his father clearly had some
insight when choosing it.

Selene placed her hand on his.

“Your deep inner desire to give to others, the sharing of your knowledge, and your creative genius
were not traits your father would have overlooked.” She commented, making Don wonder if she
was eavesdropping on his thoughts.

“And to answer your question, you and your brothers most definitely have souls. Some of the
strongest and purest ones I’ve ever seen. A normal mortal soul would not have survived bonding
with even a fragment of Luna’s. It would have been absorbed wholly.”

Don nodded knowingly, as if this information had not just shocked him to the core. While he
processed, Selene raised her hand from his and positioned a glowing palm over Michelangelo.

“May I?” She asked.

Don nodded warily.

Selene traced her hand over Michelangelo in precisely the same manner that Luna had on the
rooftop before she and Leo began their healing. Seeing this made Don feel somewhat better about letting this strange immortal near his brother.

Perhaps it was the equivalent of a godly scan. His curiosity flared and he began to observe her every move closely. Maybe, with Luna’s help, he could modify this type of energy to produce a more sophisticated treatment apparatus. He blushed a bit as he felt his thoughts running away again.

Selene moved her hand gracefully from Michelangelo’s head to his feet and back again. After a long silence, she paused with her hand over his heart.

“Ah” she announced softly. “Now I understand.”

“Michelangelo and my daughter thought themselves lost. Luna’s compassion led her to interrupt his soul’s connection with his body.” She continued, “My daughter absorbed his pain and the trauma of his injuries, but that left his consciousness disconnected from his mortal form. He does not know his body is healed. He has abandoned it.”

Don felt his stomach clench. That explained Luna’s haunted, and pain filled, gaze when they all returned home, but did that mean Mikey would never wake again?

Selene dropped her hand to actually touch Mikey, reaching up to stroke his forehead and face gently. Softly glowing tears began to form in her eyes, and as she raised her face to meet Don’s amazed gaze they slowly spilled over her cheeks. A goddess was crying over his brother?

“He took such pains to care for my daughter.” She said softly, “I watched him feed her, tend to her, befriend and distract her. He did his best to make her feel welcome and happy, a part of your family. Even in so short a time, he loved her.”

Don’s eyes had filled now. Michelangelo had always been their joy, and he had embraced Luna as family even before they had learned of Leo’s bond. He was their hope when things looked darkest. What would they do without him?

“Luna’s despair when she was losing him was so tangible even Zeus was affected. All of Olympus could feel her pain.”

Don’s hands shook as his mood went from amazed empathy with this goddess to anger. He clenched the mug he was holding so tightly that his grip went white.

“If you knew, why didn’t you stop it?” Don practically yelled.

Donatello rarely lost his temper, but this was the last straw. Willful abandonment was responsible for not just Mikey’s pain and coma, but for Luna’s previous pain, violation, and death. Now he could add Leo’s emotional pain as well. Raph would not have had to bond with Fina, if one of these gods had just stepped in!

“No parent wants their child to suffer pain and death.” Selene said quietly, dropping her eyes. “While Luna’s current situation is unique, her father and I would never willingly abandoned her. We would have flown to her aid but for Zeus. He forced us to stand by as they battled for their lives on that rooftop.”

“But even Zeus is not heartless, nor Helios without influence. It took some time, but Zeus has been convinced that someone is interfering in his punishment.” Selene stroked Mikey’s cheek again. “So I have been permitted to assist in reviving this one.”
Don took in a long, slow calming breath, forcing his anger to cool. This was more than he had hoped for, and he couldn’t risk Selene leaving because of his temper.

“So, where is Mikey?” Don asked, uncertain about what came next.

“He has placed himself in purgatory, but he does not belong there. He must be called back.” Selene replied.

“However, I am unknown to him. Michelangelo will not answer my call.” The goddess stated sadly, “But he may come to you, Donatello. I will give you the strength you need to reach where he has fled, but you must convince him to come back with you.”

Michelangelo was bored. Who would have thought death would be this dull? He didn’t even get a chance to come back as a ghost or anything cool so he could continue to prank Raph.

He was alone in the dark.

Not that he wanted any of his bros or friends to be joining him anytime soon. He knew they had been really lucky so far, not to have lost anyone close to them.

But would it be so hard to just have, you know, a game system or something to keep occupied with until then? Heaven sure needed an overhaul.

Michelangelo tried to amuse himself.

He reviewed all the pranks he’d ever pulled on his brothers, retold all of the jokes he knew, and mentally recited his favorite recipes. He acted out his favorite cartoons, moved on to his favorite movie scenes of all time, and was even considering doing training katas as a last resort to keep the boredom at bay, when he thought he heard something.

“Mikey?” The call came again. “I know you’re here somewhere. This is not the time to play hide and seek.”

He knew that voice. It was Donatello!

“Donnie? Over here, dude! Argh! What happened?” Mikey asked, distraught, as Don came into view from the deeper blackness. “How are the guys and Luna gonna survive without you?”

“What?” Don snapped.

Don had been wandering around in this darkness for who knows how long, he didn’t know if Selene was going to let him search much longer. Now that he’d found Mikey, he really didn’t have time for hypothetical questions.

“We’re dead dude… Thought you might have figured that out, with your big brains and all.” Mikey replied sarcastically.

“OH, that.” Don said with a shrug. “We’re not dead Mikey.”

Michelangelo deliberately swung his head left and right, making a show of staring into the nothingness.
“Could’ve fooled me!” he replied.

“God forbid I end up having to entertain you for eternity.” Don grumbled, “But really Mikey, everything is ok. Leo and Luna were able to heal you in time. Your body’s fine. It’s just laying around like a lump taking up space in the infirmary.”

“Uh-huh.” Mikey said. “Nice try dude, but I think you’re in denial. My poor sis was dead tired when I left, no more juice for anything. I know, I watched her try everything she could. And Leo’s superpower is that emotion thing, not healing.”

“Well it seems our fearless leader left out a few things when he was telling us the whole soulmate story.” Don frowned, “He does indeed have a healing ‘superpower’ as you put it. And Luna got a bit of an upgrade when Fina bonded to Raph. She’s a whole lot stronger now, and just a li-ttle bit scary.”

“Luna? Scary? Don’t make me laugh.” Mikey grinned. “That babe is the sweetest sis a guy could have.”

“An enraged sister, more like. You should’ve seen it Mikey. She was so ticked off her whole body caught on fire. She started making threats to whoever called those things and claimed we were all family and under her protection. Then she and Fina turned into this amazing firebird and pretty much burned those wraiths right out of existence.” Don explained.

“Are you even hearing yourself right now? Where’s Mr. Science gone?” Mikey asked. “Wait... who’s Fina?”

Don sighed. This was not going the way he thought it would. Mikey was so sure they were both dead. What would convince him to come back?

“Another piece of Luna’s soul. Looks like Sol, but red. I don’t think it has quite the same powers that Sol does, but we only just met so who knows?”

Don replied absently, still trying to figure out how to change his brother’s mind.

“We saved it from a Greek immortal from the underworld when we went to trap those punks. They had it caged in some sort of crystal sphere. Turns out, we needed it’s power to beat the wraiths, but weirdly it only wanted to bond to Raph.”

“IT BONDED TO RAPH?” Mikey yelled.

He skipped over the immortal underworld part and latched immediately on to the emotional issue as the most important factor. Leo and Raph already pushed each others buttons. How the hell were they going to handle this?

Mikey began to pace in the darkness.

“They’ll drive poor Luna crazy.” He muttered under his breath.

He turned decisively to Don. “So, how do we get back? Without us, they’ll kill each other!”

Don just reached out, hugged his little brother, and smiled.

“Follow me to the light. I'll take you through.” he said. Don didn’t know the mechanics of it, he just knew Selene would bring them both back together.
Donatello finally opened his eyes and stretched out of the lotus position he’d been meditating in. It seemed like days had gone by there in the dark, but when he checked the clock next to Luna’s old bed, it had only been about an hour.

Selene was gone. Don made his way over to Mikey and was encouraged by what he saw. There was actually expression in Michelangelo’s face now, even though he was sleeping. Selene had said to let him rest until he woke up on his own, so that’s what Don intended to do.
Luna stirred restlessly, in the dark. It wasn’t that the big sectional couch was uncomfortable. It was long enough and wide enough, but it was most definitely... worn. That was the nicest thing she could call it. But what else could she expect. It was probably the latest in a long line of cast off sofas to parade through their living room.

She was sure it was great for holding everybody while watching T.V. but it certainly sucked for sleeping.

She missed her futon in the infirmary, but she didn’t feel right being in there next to Mikey when his brothers probably wanted to be by his side. Raph and Leo were so upset last night, she’d had to put them to sleep mentally just so they could recover a little. But she knew they would be up anytime now to check on him.

She bit her lip guiltily, as tears began to gather in her eyes once again.

*Why hadn’t Mikey been ok?*

Sure, it had taken a some time to heal his injuries. Wounds from wraiths are essentially ‘poisoned’. The wraiths continuing to feed off the agony they inflicted until banished, but she’d sent those particular wraiths back to Hades as nothing more than ashes. So that aspect should have been nullified.

And she’d led Leonardo through the process of purifying and healing the wounds with extra care, using energy from Raph as well, so what was left? She couldn’t remember what else needed to be done. It was so frustrating, she wanted to scream!

It was just *wrong* being mortal and immortal at the same time. Her physical brain and body could only handle so much power and knowledge at once. It was a state no being was ever meant to inhabit, and she understood why Zeus cut off her powers when he made her fully mortal on this plane.

It felt like her goddess self was trying to squeeze into an outfit 12 sizes too small. In order for something to fit in, other stuff had to get out of the way.

One moment, she would be absolutely sure of something, some vital piece of information. The next moment the thought was gone, replaced by her very limited understanding of things her human brain said was possible.

And it wasn’t just knowledge that was being affected. Her emotions were all over the place as well. One moment the confident goddess, the next the fearful mortal.

It was worse when Sol and Fina were away. As pieces of her original soul they expanded her celestial abilities. When they were with her, more of the knowledgeable goddess appeared. But she couldn’t always keep them near. Sometimes, like last night, they needed to to watch over their bonded.

Luna sighed. Maybe today the answer would come to her.

As she pondered, she decided it was a good thing that her mental shields stayed intact, and that
she’d knocked Leo and Raph out last night before she had her little emotion storm. If they felt how upset she’d been, she was sure they’d never leave her alone again.

Donatello had tried to comfort her, but in the end he could only bring her a cup of tea, and let her cry herself to sleep, because it was her fault.

All her fault.

Mikey was gone because of her weird situation. Because pieces of her soul had bonded to his family without even a by-your-leave, and because she was a magnet for immortal bounty hunters. She was sure now, that her enemy was one of the gods, or at least an immortal henchmen, but as much as she wanted to shift the blame to the ‘bad guys’ the truth was Michelangelo would still be whole and entirely here if not for her.

Her soulmates and even Donatello would never blame her, but she knew where the fault lay.

She sighed, hearing someone else stirring, and sat up. She quickly mopped her tear streaked face with the bit of cloth she held in her hands. It was Mikey’s mask. She had clung to it all night. Hoping a little goddess-y energy might seep through to him and call him back from wherever he had gone. But that was probably just wishful thinking.

Which reminded her, she needed to call back Sol and Luna if she was going to get through this day. She sent a little thread of inquiry along her connection to Raph and Leo, and ‘listened’ for it to ping the locations of Sol and Fina.

Sol came zipping out to her, appearing quickly from Leo’s room. Luna smiled as she regained her sight. Leo must still be asleep. Fina didn’t rush back but was definitely still in Raph’s room. Luna frowned.

Was something wrong with Raphael?

Just then Don wandered into the living room and saw her sitting up. Luna’s frown deepened. Don looked like he’d been drug through a wringer. He was dead tired, and ...was that ash smeared across his white lab coat?

But Don had a small smile. She couldn’t help herself, she smiled in return. Glad to see that someone was still mentally stable.

“Luna,” Don said, relief evident in his voice, “I’m glad you’re up.”

Her smile faded, “Is something wrong? Is Mikey worse?”

“No, no... “ Don reassured her. “In fact, sometime soon he’s going to race through here demanding a pizza.”

“What?” She exclaimed. “Did you find something new last night?”

“Actually, I had some help from the in-laws.” Don chuckled.

Perhaps she spoke to soon about that mental stability. Lack of sleep was clearly taking it’s toll, Luna thought. Maybe she should make him lie down.

She might need one of his brothers to help with that. She glanced up, relieved at a movement nearby, and caught Raph’s eye as he headed to the kitchen for breakfast. So he was alright after all. Raph gave her a nod before continuing on.
“In-laws?” She inquired sweetly, turning back to Don with a nervous look.

“Your mother to be precise.” Don replied.

“My mother.” Luna looked skeptical “Here?”

“I’ll fill you in on that later. Suffice it to say Mikey is on the mend and should wake up on his own sometime later today.” he said.

Don grinned again, rather maniacally Luna thought. It brought to mind old black and white movies with mad scientists. All he was missing was the shock of white hair sticking up straight.

“So you came in here looking for me because…?” Luna asked, really worried now.

“Well… What do you know about firestarters?”

Charon was angry, and while there was never really a good time to be around the Guardian of the Dead, when he was angry would probably qualify as the worst time. And he was definitely angry now. Not only had those mortal monsters cut a good portion of his henchmen to shreds, but they’d managed to release one of the soul fragments he’d already captured.

But Charon contained his anger and seated himself on his throne with as much dignity as he could muster. Right now, his throne sat in a warehouse they were using as a base of operations on this plane, but soon it would command the position of highest authority in the city.

Charon took a moment to contemplate the shaking man standing in front of him with a sneer. He enjoyed the fear that played across the underlings face as he continued his mental evaluation of all the things that had gone wrong with this evening.

Not that freeing the soul fragment would do those animal freaks any good, Charon thought. As mortals, they were lucky if they could even see it, much less converse with it or use it. It had probably wandered off somewhere already. He would get it back sooner or later. After all, where was it gonna go? Luna was dead.

But it still made him angry that the blue banded animal had threatened him. He grimaced. Not that a mortal would usually be able to hurt him, but that one had somehow been able to pierce his mind. He pondered the implications of that. It was more powerful than it first seemed, although the others wilted rather easily under his mental onslaught.

All the animals were pretty upset that Luna was gone. Oh, they had played a fine game of unconcern, but their behavior towards his murdering henchmen told him more than any words that these things had somehow been involved with her. They probably had the body, or knew where it was.

It didn’t matter.

Charon didn’t need her corpse, he just needed the fragments of her soul.

He glanced again at the shivering man in front of him. Gauging his reaction. The angry silence had
made the magician drop to his knees, groveling in fear. This was as it should be, Charon thought. Soon all would grovel before him...even his master.

This groveling human had been dabbling in the black arts long before Charon came to this plane, but he’d not succeeded in summoning wraiths until Charon had stepped in to increase his powers.

“Report!” Charon snapped, pleased with the way the man flinched at his tone.

Perhaps this miserable mortal’s wraiths had located where the blue soul fragment was hiding.

Raphael slumped dejectedly down the stairs. Fina had certainly given him a piece of it’s mind this morning, accusing him of putting all their lives in danger with his pyrotechnics. His automatic response was to get angry, but that just made the fire situation, and the tongue lashing, worse. He could hardly believe this was the same hesitant little being that barely spoke to them last night.

But it had a point, and it was depressing. How was he supposed to keep Luna safe if his own power could burn her to death in the middle of the night without him knowing?

Raph paused automatically near the door to the infirmary, glancing in out of habit to check on Luna, but started when he heard a loud snore and a quiet mutter. He stuck his head in to see his brother was no longer laid out all stiff and unmoving, but had assumed a classic Mikey sleeping posture on the stainless steel table.

Michelangelo lay on his front, head turned to the side, one arm shoved up under his pillow. His knees were tucked up under him pushing his butt high in the air. The other arm was hanging off the side of the table, dangling halfway to the floor, his sheet sliding off the other.

And just like that Raph’s dark mood lightened. His baby brother was back. Mikey was gonna be ok. There was still hope. Life would go on, and he would learn to control this power.

Raph glanced around to make sure no one was looking before he tiptoed in and lifted the sleeping Mikey in his arms. Raph deposited Mikey gently on the futon Luna had been using, and pulled up the blankets, tucking him in. Raph turned, and before he left, patted Mikey gently on the head like he had when they were young.

“Sleep tight, little guy.” Raph murmured before slipping out.

Raph had regained his confident swagger by the time he past the living room where Don and Luna were conferring. She looked up as he walked by, and when his eyes met hers, his heart gave a small flutter in his chest and began to beat faster.

The pace of events last night had been so breakneck, he hadn’t had a moment to really consider what his bond meant, or what being around her now would be like.

She had deep purple marks under her eyes from worry and lack of sleep, her hair was all mussed
from tossing on the couch, and she wore an expression that was just the tiniest bit confused.

She had never looked so gorgeous.

He tried to play it cool, heading on to the kitchen with just a brief nod in her direction, as Donnie was explaining something about in-laws, but his pulse was thundering in his ears. He made it out of her sight but suddenly felt dizzy. His balance was off and he staggered into the kitchen table before collapsing into a chair to hold his head in his hands.

_Geez, what was goin’ on?_

“Breathe Raph.” Leonardo spoke quietly so only Raphael could hear.

Raph jumped up again, startled. He’d been so out of it, he hadn’t even seen Leo in the kitchen. Leo put a hand on Raph’s shoulder, reseating him in the chair.

“Long, slow, deep breaths- now.” Leo commanded.

That was when Raph realized, the moment she’d met his gaze, he’d stopped breathing.

Leo took the seat across the table from Raph and met his gaze seriously, as Raph forced himself to breathe deeply for a few minutes.

*Here it comes.* Raph thought. *Fearless is gonna make a play for dominance.*

“She really is something, isn’t she?” Leo said with a gentle smile.

Raph couldn’t argue with that, so he said nothing and focused on his breathing.

Leonardo just sipped his tea and continued to regard his brother steadily as Raph slowly got himself back under control. When Leo was satisfied Raph wasn’t going to pass out, he stood up, took his cup to the sink, rinsed it out, and set it in the dish drainer.

“I’ll be in the dojo.” Leo said amiably, and left.

Raph’s brows went up. That was it? No third degree about his intentions with Luna? No demands to limit her time with him? Hmm. This might work after all. He frowned.

If he could remember to breath.
Leonardo stood in the center of the dojo, katana drawn, but perfectly still. Trying to focus his body and mind on the first of many katas. Slowly, he moved through them, one after another. Each movement blending gracefully into the next.

Training was his one constant. A balm for his recently shattered nerves. A physical expression for the anger and tension still eating away at him from the inside. It began like many other solo training sessions Leo had put himself through.

But it was hard to focus on the training today. His thoughts were snarled and flashes of last night’s battle and nightmare were on his mind. Perhaps the figure of Raph from his dream embodied a subconscious guilt for killing those bastards. But after meditating and searching his feelings this morning, he found he didn’t feel the least bit guilty about it while he was awake.

What was really bothering him about the dream was that he hadn’t recognized Luna. His subconscious, if Raph really was a representation of his subconscious, seemed to think he would only bring her pain and that it would be best if he could forget about her. Leo shook his head, dismissing that thought.

Then there was breakfast.

Leo had come down to good news from Don that Mikey was on the road to recovery. That had lifted a huge weight off his shoulders. He’d been so afraid that somehow the emotional turmoil last night, about sharing his soulmate, had further injured his little brother during the healing. Perhaps forcing him into the coma like state. To hear that Donnie had found a concrete reason and cure...the relief had been overwhelming.

Leo was distracted a moment from his thoughts as he caught sight of Sol hovering observantly over him, watching his training but also unaccountably still. It's little blue form hardly wavered as it focused its attention on him. Leo wondered briefly at it’s presence. Didn’t it need to stay with Luna? Perhaps Fina was with her instead.

Leo finished with the single sword katas and effortlessly drew his second blade. Without pause, he moved into the double bladed ones. These he performed faster. His swords virtually dancing in the patterns of the candlelight, creating complex forms and battling enemies seen only in his mind.

But even these more complicated movements were old friends, performed from the rhythm of memory, and Leo’s mind slipped back into contemplation of this morning’s events.

When Raph had come into the kitchen, Leo had felt himself tense instantly. He hadn’t had time to come to terms with the situation yet. What could he even say to his brother? Leo thought about slipping out before Raph saw that he was there, but another quick glance made him realize that something was off with Raphael.

Leonardo didn’t even have think about it. It seemed like the most natural thing in the world to reach out with his energy to see what was wrong. He almost laughed out loud when he realized the reason Raph was staggering about, but he also felt a sudden sympathy for Raph’s condition. Leo had felt that way in Luna’s presence more than once, but all he could advise his brother to do was breathe.

Somehow, that little insight into Raph’s feelings made Leo more comfortable with the situation.
He wasn’t the only one struggling with overwhelming emotions. With this new perspective, Leo found he was able to finish his tea and even tease his brother a bit.

He knew Raph expected something else and had surprised even himself when those feelings of protective dominance hadn’t appeared. Of course Leo couldn’t count on that lasting forever, so he’d excused himself once it looked like Raph was recovering and headed in here to sort out his thoughts.

Leo reached the end of musings as he reached the end of the double bladed series. He slowed, and moved back into his starting position, poised once again in the center of the dojo.

He waited.

With a small hum, Don’s practice bots sprang to life. They attacked. First singly, then in groups of 3 or more. All were repelled with smooth, efficient strokes of flashing silver.

His daily training complete, Leo sheathed his katanas. He felt vaguely dissatisfied, knowing that he had no real way to prepare himself for battle against more supernatural adversaries. He sighed, still lost in thought.

Sol chose that moment to act.

Three glowing blue forms appeared before Leonardo and he fell back immediately into a defensive position. They were ghostly shinobi, appearing as ninjas of old. The one in the lead bowed to him, a classic sparring introduction, then drew his katana and attacked.

Leo reacted, drawing his own sword to counter, but his blade passed right through, encountering the same problem he’d had on the rooftop. The glowing ninja’s blade, however, continued it’s motion and Leo felt a searing jolt across his plastron at the strike.

He may not be able to mark them, but they could certainly hit him. And yet, they did no real damage.

Leo spun away from the ninja, and glanced up to where Sol was hovering calmly above him. If he was truly under attack, Sol would be helping or heading for Luna. This must be something else.

Leo rolled away from the trio and lept back to his feet, squaring off with the lead glowing form.

"So, I have a new sensei now?" Leo said flicking a glance to Sol, who bobbed slightly.

*leo must learn to battle those on another plane.* Sol replied calmly. *more will come for her.*

The deceptively slow dance of dodging and maneuvering continued on the dojo floor, as Leo nodded grimly.

"Then there is a way for me to counter these, without your help?" he asked.

*yes.*

The ninjas paused, at some silent signal from Sol.

*like weapons, leo's energy is a tool. it can heal or harm.*

Leonardo nodded his understanding. His weapons could be used to protect and defend, or thrust in attack. Even in attack, he could choose to mortally wound an enemy or just to impair them. It was logical to think his power could be used in a similar manner.
It was perhaps the longest single sentence Leo had heard from Sol, and with that rather cryptic piece of advice, the spectral ninjas took a ready stance again.

Leo thought about what Sol said. He remembered how it felt when Luna helped him to heal Mikey. That combination of relaxation and focus was eerily similar to the calm, meditative state he usually assumed before combat.

Leo did not need to close his eyes to let himself drift into that state. His consciousness could float alone in the center of his mind. A bright point of light, an island in a sea of darkness.

His position of perfect mental balance.

He brought only one objective with him to that island, to make his energy manifest physically.

It was not surprising, this time, when a blue glow began to outline his body. He concentrated harder, and felt a pressure begin to build inside himself. He wasn’t entirely sure what he was doing, but acting on instinct, he began to gather that power using intangible mental fingers into a tighter, smaller mass. Compacting it together in his center and preparing to release it against his enemies.

When he thought he had enough, he turned his focus outward and looked towards his targets. He noted small tendrils of blue light escaping from his body and frowned, concerned. Then he yelped in surprise as a larger blue cord of energy sprung away from him and struck the dojo wall. He hadn’t intended to do that.

Like a streamer from a plasma ball, it trailed over the bricks to his left, but instead of expending energy and dissipating as he expected, it seemed to be drawing even more power out of the very bricks themselves. Some of them began to crumble, and the air around Leonardo began to vibrate.

Um, this was more than I wanted... I’ll just let this go, before it gets any worse... he thought.

But it was too late for that. The power center he had created was too strong. He didn’t know how to direct all this energy safely, so he did the only thing he could think to do. He packed it tighter and tighter together inside himself.

Raph ran in just then to see what all the noise was about. After his nightmare, he was more than a little sensitive about strange lights and noises coming from the dojo. His jaw dropped when he saw Leo. More and more of the streamers had leapt from him, tracking to the walls, floor, and ceiling.

Raph heard a rather menacing sound as well, similar to the rumble of a subway train, only it was a lot closer than any train that ran near their home. As it got louder, the walls began to shake in response.

Leonardo was now suspended in the air, a good three feet from the dojo floor. Blue energy was crackling everywhere, and he seemed to be absorbing it from all around him. Even Sol was caught up in the crossfire.

"Leo!" Raph called, throwing up his arm in front of his face and pushing his way into the charged air, trying to reach his brother. Raph’s own energy flared up in response, and streaks of red joined the blue racing toward Leonardo.

Raph only made it halfway to his brother before dropping to his knees. The blue light was draining him, taking all his physical energy, as well as the strange red one he was producing. He locked eyes with Leo as their forces continued to combine, but despite Raph’s struggles, he was unable to
Just as Leo felt his world disintegrating into nothing more than pure light, Luna appeared in the
doors of the dojo. Donatello was with her, his eyes wide in wonder and Leo thought he saw Don
mouth the words ‘energy vortex’.

Luna took one look at Leo, Raph, Sol, and the glowing blue ninjas and shook her head. She raised
her hand in a ‘stop’ like motion and all the lightning streamers instantly jumped to her
outstretched palm.

She reversed the polarity of the stream, as her other hand pointed to the Earth at her feet, and in
one quick and dirty motion she pulled all the excess energy out of Leonardo and grounded it into a
large crystal formation she sensed below them.

The crystal hummed and began to glow softly beneath her feet like a fully charged battery.
Interesting, she thought. Unprepared crystalline formations didn’t usually have that response.
She’d have to check that out later. Right now, someone owed her an explanation.

The light died.

Leo dropped to the floor but managed to keep his feet. Raph stood up. Sol, shot down to hide
behind Leo’s head. The ninjas were nowhere to be seen.

Luna stood glaring at them all, tapping her foot. She looked odd. It took a moment for the
difference to sink in. Her eyes were glowing a kind of amber color with red flecks. Her hair was
coppery red.

Of course! Fina must be providing her sight since Sol is in here causing problems. Raph thought,
eyeing her warily. That thought was quickly followed by:

Man, she’s hot when she’s angry!

“Would somebody care to tell me” Luna began in a deceptively sweet tone of voice, “just exactly
what is going on in here?”

Silence. Three pairs of eyes and a small flame looked anywhere but at her.

Don decided it was a good moment to step out of the line of fire, and slipped away from her side,
but he was too curious to go far. He stayed within earshot.

Raph couldn’t bear to look at her anymore or he was going to do something unforgivable, like grab
her and run upstairs to his room, so he was just letting his eyes roam over the mess they’d made of
the dojo.

Leo looked stubborn. He stared at the floor, refusing to meet her eyes. He knew if he did, his will
would crumble and he’d do anything she asked. He was certain he needed to practice fighting
other planer warriors, and he wasn’t going to let her talk him out of it.

Just because this first time hadn’t turned out so well, didn’t mean he was ready to give up.

Luna turned her glare on Sol and crooked a finger in a come here motion. It floated toward her and
stopped in front of her face, slightly wilted and guilty as a flame could look.

“I can understand Leo and Raph wanting to learn how to use their powers offensively.” She said.
“After all, it would be for the family’s protection.”
That statement made Leo’s head snap up to see if she was serious. She was.

*So that’s what they were up to.* Raph thought. *Not a bad idea. I could get behind that.*

“But did you really think it was a good idea to jump straight into advanced energy manipulation and node formation in an unshielded workroom?” Luna continued.

Don choked behind her.

“I thought that looked like a modular energy vortex!” he declared excitedly. “But those are only theoretical at this point!”

Luna shot him a look that advised him to hold his tongue for the moment and turned back towards the slightly simpering blue flame.

“Somebody’s in trouble!”

A singsong voice echoed across the living area to the doorway where the intense standoff was occurring.

Luna paused in mid-tirade and turned to look, shock written all over her face. Donnie had told her everything was going to be alright, but she really hadn’t believed him until this moment.

“MIKEY!!” she shrieked.

Argument forgotten, she threw herself across the room into his outstretched arms. He spun her around and even tossed her up in the air a little before setting her back on her feet. He reached out and stroked a bit of her now red hair, and took in her amber colored eyes with a calm smile.

“I like the new look, Sis.” he said, right before Luna dissolved into tears.
Sister.

Michelangelo liked the way that word sounded. So much so, that he thought it over and over and every time it made him smile. He couldn’t wait to say it out loud again. He’d been thinking it since he woke in the infirmary tucked into her futon. It smelled like his sister. Like flowers.

He smiled again as he approached the living area stealthily and heard her lecturing his brothers about something.

“Would somebody care to tell me just exactly what is going on in here?” Luna asked, an edge to her voice despite it’s usual sweetness.

She was feisty, his sister. But then she would have to be to put up with both of his stubborn brothers as soulmates. He decided to hang back a little and see what they were up to this time.

He watched as Donatello sidled carefully away from her, as if he might actually be a little afraid. Raphael glanced up at Luna and his eyes widened before he flushed then looked away.

Raph’s got it bad. Mikey thought before turning his gaze to his oldest brother.

Leonardo’s mouth was set in a thin solid line that meant he was being stubborn about whatever was going on. Mikey had seen that expression so many times in his life. Usually it was directed at him when he was begging off training or trying to get out of something. Last night Mikey thought he was never going to see it again.

Michelangelo blinked rapidly as tears began to form at the memory of Leo comforting him as he passed into darkness. He hadn’t been alone. Even if he would have died, his brother had not let him go alone. He quickly shook off that thought. He was just happy to be back with them again.

As usual, Mikey had wandered away in his own thoughts and lost track of the conversation going on around him. But one thing was pretty obvious. Luna was ticked about something they had done. Mikey made a face. He wanted to side with his sis but his brothers had saved him, healed him, and called him back to the land of the living. This was his chance to start paying back a little of that by ‘saving’ them from a tyrannical sister. He chuckled to himself.

“Somebody’s in trouble!” He called out in a sing-song voice, guaranteed to distract.

Luna paused, her mouth open to continue her scolding, but as she turned toward him it dropped open further in shock. He chuckled again and held out his arms for a hug.

“Mikey!” She practically screamed, and threw herself at him.

He spun her through the air and set her down gently. She looked different with red hair and amber eyes. That must be Fina’s influence. But she also looked healthy, vibrant, and healed. He’d never seen her this way; she’d been injured as long as he’d known her.

He touched her hair gently and smiled into her eyes. She was stunning.

“I like the new look, Sis,” he said, trying to convey all his thoughts in his smile.

To his horror, Luna burst into tears.
Raph glared at Mikey and lurched toward them while Leo’s eyes flashed angrily, his hands tightening into fists; both instinctively reacting to her pain. Don intercepted them to keep the peace.

“Guys let’s go clean up the dojo and let Mikey have a little talk. Ok?” Don said. He leaned in close to them and whispered sternly, “She needs this. Everybody out.”

Reluctantly Leo and Raph let Donnie usher them into the dojo but before Don shut the door Leo jerked his head at Sol.

“Watch over her,” Leo commanded softly, as Sol went to join his goddess.

“Luna, sweetie, what is it?” Mikey begged. He hated to see her in tears and wondered what he’d done. He took her gently by the arm and led her over to sit on the couch. Now she was sobbing so hard she could barely breath and Sol was orbiting them worriedly.

“Luna,” he said, as he shook her gently, but he got no response.

Distressed, he pulled her close and stroked her hair.

“It’s ok. Just let it out lil’ sis,” he said. “Mikey’s here.”

She gazed sorrowfully up at him through her tears. Even though he was smiling gently down at her the only expression she could see was the agony on his face from her memory.

“I-I’m s-so s-sorry,” she managed through her sobs. “I c-couldn’t stop them! I c-couldn’t think of anything else to do!”

“Luna… I was there to protect you. That’s all that matters,” he said quietly.

“No!” she pulled away. “It was my fault! I’ve been fighting this war for thousands of years. I should have realized. I should have done something!”

Mikey stared into her eyes. She looked so lost. What had happened to his sister?

“Why am I even still fighting?” she cried. “What can I do? Just sit around waiting for the next shot in the dark to take out the ones I love?

I could feel you fading away,” she moaned. “And all I could do was take away the pain.”

She hid her face in her hands as she slowly fell apart.

“She’s still cryin’!” Raph said angrily, smashing his fist into an inoffensive and deactivated practice bot.
Not much cleaning was really going on in the dojo but then that had just been the excuse.
Donatello sighed as he righted a fallen rack of weapons.

“She needs this Raph. She needs to release the guilt before it tears her up inside,” Don said.

“What guilt?” Raph demanded. “Da’ only one who should feel guilty is Mikey for taken her out
d’ere where d’ose supernatural freaks could get at ‘er!”

“Luna’s mother said wraiths are power hunters,” Don snapped. “They would have sought Luna out
underground just as easily as they did on the rooftops. The only difference would be us cleaning
their blood out of the carpet.”

Don was suddenly the focus of two very hostile glares. He backed up, hands out in apology.

“I’m sorry, that was ill phrased and I plead exhaustion. But Mikey was not at fault.”

Raph grunted. “Still, Luna ain’t got nuthin’ to feel guilty about.”

“She blames herself for all of this,” Don said, gesturing around.

“All what?” Raph snapped.

“Leo’s pain, your fiery soul,” Don said pointing at Raph, “Mikey’s death.”

“So, what does she need?” Leo asked softly.

Don shrugged sadly.

In the blink of an eye, Michelangelo could see the situation through her eyes. She’d lain awake
most of the night reliving the pain and trauma. He knew what that was like. He was going to hear
her screams and tears from that night for a long time. And the moan of despair when she gave
up...it almost killed him. They hurt, those memories. They hurt bad.

They felt like failure.

And then he knew what she needed. He didn’t hold her responsible for any of the events of that
night but denials and justifications were not going to reach her in this state. So he gave her what she
needed for relief.

Permission to let it all go.

“I forgive you.” Michelangelo whispered. He put a finger under her chin and forced her to look in
his bright blue eyes, shining with unshed tears of his own. “I. Forgive. You.”

It was exactly the right thing to say. The only thing that could get through to her. Michelangelo
pulled her into his lap and held her close as she collapsed. She buried her face in his neck and
sobbed herself out. It was a long time before exhaustion overtook her and she finally fell asleep.

Mikey looked sadly up at Sol.

“Get Leo.” was all he said.
Luna slept most of the rest of the day in the infirmary, the place she had confided to Don that she felt the safest, snuggled down in her little nest. A watchful Leonardo curled protectively around her projecting safety, love, and adoration with all his empathic energy. He could feel the steady cadence of his reassurance eating away at the dark swell of her negative emotions.

Time was what she needed now.

Donatello and Michelangelo spent the day comparing notes on the battles. Mikey filled Don in on Luna’s brilliant plan to hide among the shades and their subsequent problems as, not one but three of the terrifying wraiths showed up. Don wrote copious notes from Luna’s descriptions and Mikey’s narrative as he spoke of their appearance, intellect, and strategies. If they were going to face these types of beings again, Don wanted to study them as much as possible.

Raphael retreated to his room. Ostensibly to deal with the mess that used to be his bed; really he needed to be alone. Watching Leo tenderly take Luna from Mikey and tuck her in protectively made him ache. He knew Leonardo was the best choice to reassure her. God knew he wasn’t good at doling out comfort.

And Luna’s needs were going to come first for Raph...now and forever. As long as Leo was what she required he’d stand down; even when it hurt.

But that didn’t mean he had to do nothing. As he dealt with the mess in his room, he planned a night patrol that would lead him past the rooftop where the battle took place and the alley where they had encountered Charon. Maybe he could find some clues to tie the two together.

Raph stayed out of sight until his brothers retired for the night. Leo stayed with Luna as Don and Mikey called quiet goodnights. When he was sure everyone was shut in for the night, Raph slipped quietly out to do some investigating.

Raph came up empty at the alley. The cops and emergency workers had already been through it and anything useful had been carried away. Donnie would have to hack the police dept to see what evidence they might have gathered. Raph growled in frustration and retraced his path to the abandoned building.

He didn’t want to go home empty handed, but he found himself rather reluctant to actually revisit that rooftop. There was just so much blood. It wasn’t that he was squeamish about blood, he cleaned enough of it off his weapons over the years to fill a swimming pool.

But this was her blood and his brother’s. For some reason that made him feel different about it

Instead, he decided to widen his investigation to the rooftops of the surrounding buildings, just in case there had been mortal instigators who might have left a trace behind. He’d spiraled out in a classic search strategy, using the battle rooftop as his center, and was at least 10 buildings away when he sensed something unusual.

The left side of his body had warmed, as if it was in the sun. Impossible. It was nearly 2AM. He glanced around to see if he’d walked too near to some sort of building vent but saw nothing that
he could create heat.

He walked to the edge of the roof and the sensation moved with him. Intrigued now, he turned to face the direction the warmth was radiating from and it warmed his front. He turned away and felt the heat on his shell.

It was like a full body version of the game hot and cold.

*What could be causing that?*

Raph faced in the direction of the warmth again and realized he was looking back at his starting point. The warmth was radiating from that building. The one where he nearly lost her. A sense of urgency overtook him and he began to run back to that rooftop.

Something was about to happen.

As he drew closer to his objective, his heart began to pound. Not from exertion but from anticipation. He heard his own pulse beating rapidly in his ears and then, strangely, heard another that beat in almost perfect counterpoint.

He stopped, still one building away, confused.

He froze then disappeared into the shadows when movement on the target rooftop caught his attention. The elevator doors opened. Instantly he knew whose heartbeat it was. Even blocks away her warmth had called to him.

Luna walked out alone.

*What is she doing up here? Where the hell is Leo, Don and Mikey?*

Raphael was about to leap to his feet, charge over there, and demand answers when a hand fell gently on his shoulder holding him in place. Raph growled and strained against the grip with all his might but it didn’t do any good. All his muscles had been locked in place.

He caught a glimmer of pale light in his peripheral vision as the owner of the hand move to his side.

“Shh,” the dark haired woman said. “Watch.”

He looked back at Luna when she began to sing. She stood, eyes closed, with her face turned to the sky. Her voice was soft, but achingly clear, and it chimed out in an unearthly descant that pierced his heart. It began quietly, like a child calling out for comfort in the night and slowly rose into a wail.

Shadows rose up around her and Raph struggled again to be free. Luna was in danger! He couldn’t sit here and watch her falter under yet another attack. He felt fire explode into life around his hands as five shades formed a circle that swirled around her form and danced in complex patterns to her song.

The strange woman snorted and waved a hand. Raph’s fire was immediately extinguished.

Luna’s song rose in volume and she was joined by a chorus of voices from the very air around her. They merged harmoniously into her melody, until the night shivered and rippled with their plea. The music rose to a great crescendo, then fell silent.
It was silent for a long time.

Even the shades stilled their frantic movements.

There was a rumbling crack, a detonation that sent shockwaves through the air like a super sonic jet breaking the sound barrier, and Luna was no longer alone on the rooftop.

“Lord Zeus,” she greeted formally, inclining her head. “As sworn, I submit these frail souls for entry to the afterlife for services rendered unto me and mine. Grant them entry, I beseech thee.”
The argument had been going on for a while. It was really more of a dressing down though since after Luna’s initial greeting she couldn’t get a word in edgewise.

“You were made mortal for a reason! You were sent here to learn the consequences of acting on your own without considering the larger picture,” Zeus began sternly. “Yet you continue to break with all tradition and associate with demons and monsters!”

“I-” she tried to interject.

“Then you embroil your father in this mess and become a half immortal creature! A complete unknown, who challenges the balance of the entire Olympic system!” Zeus bellowed over the top of her protest. “If your father wasn’t so indispensable I would never have allowed it,”

“He-” she started.

“Really! What were you thinking?” Zeus cut her off.

It was a good thing that Selene had kept her hand, and power, firmly in place over Raphael. With his first words Zeus had offended Raph and stirred his already riled protective instincts to levels Raph never even suspected he had.

“Granted, the human attack against you was unanticipated and it does seem that someone’s underling may be getting out of hand, but that is an internal matter for Olympians. It does not grant you blanket permission to unlock dormant gifts in monsters and start conflicts where mortals might see,” Zeus was lecturing.

“But-” she said.

“It seems you have learned nothing from your time here. Your rebellion remains unquelled. You cannot leave a single rule unchallenged,” Zeus continued to rage. “It had to be you who engaged in the first soul bonding to ever occur to a god. Yet you selected monsters instead of an immortal peer.”

Raph could feel that each separate remark was like a blade to Luna’s heart. His bond flared with her emotions, pummeling him with pain, insecurity, and regret.

His brothers had just quieted her guilt an’ put da poor girl back together! Now dis egotistical maniac had da nerve ta cut her down with his lies? She didn’t choose any of dis!

Selene had to extinguish his hands more than a dozen times and even had to throw a sound barrier around them, as Raph vented his rage incoherently at a volume that would definitely have caught the King’s attention.

“Such arrogance,” Zeus declared. “Not only did you bond two powerful beings, but you claimed the remainder as family! Did you not think the other gods deserved a chance at such a rare creature? I cannot condone such greed, young one.”

Raphael was not alone in his anger. Selene’s hand on his shoulder tightened with every declaration Zeus made and her face was set in a defiant mask.

“This current behaviour only further reveals your aberrations. Perhaps that was the reason you
selected monsters,” Zeus mused, as if it had just occurred to him. “You are so reviled among your peers, none of them would have you.”

That offhand comment was the final twist of the knife. Luna drooped to her knees in front of her King as if her feet had been cut from under her. Tears streamed down her face.

“Why ya holdin’ me here?” Raph raged at Selene. “He’s hurtin’ her!”

“I’m saving your life, my son,” she replied sternly. Raphael blinked, startled by the honorary term only Splinter had ever used with him. Her voice softened.

“He wouldn’t even have to look up to end you.” Selene continued. “Luna can take this. She couldn’t handle losing a mate.”

“After all of this, you have the nerve to summon me and beseech a favor?” Zeus’ incredulous laugh dripped with scorn and contempt and drew Raph’s flaming eyes back across the gap.

“You wish me to grant shades access to the afterlife,” Zeus tsked at her in disdain. “Luna, you are too soft hearted. Always trying to save the unsavable. Just like that child. If you had left well enough alone, none of this would have happened.”

She bowed her head.

“Please,” she begged in a small crushed voice that Raph had to strain to hear. “Grant them entry. If only to uphold the honor of an Olympian’s word.”

There was a long silence, but she didn’t look up.

“For the honor of the whole,” Zeus agreed.

He waved a hand at the hovering shades and with another deafening crash of thunder they all disappeared. Leaving Luna kneeling alone on the rooftop.

As she staggered to her feet, still weeping, and walked to the side of the building to stare out at the city lights, Selene released Raphael. He did not need her quiet plea to urge him to Luna’s side. Turmoil, pain, sorrow, guilt, anxiety, anguish… none of those words were enough to describe what was hammering at him through their bond.

Raph leapt the gap and approached her silently, not knowing what to say, but needing to be there. She knew who was behind her.

“Tell me you didn’t hear that,” she begged quietly without turning around.

Her cheeks flamed with embarrassment and she held her arms clenched tightly across her chest. Why did it have to be Raphael who witnessed her demeaning? The King had degraded her. Revealed her secret. She was soft. She was weak. She wasn’t fit to be a goddess.

Raphael was proud and strong. He would not want a weak partner, like her, for a mate. He had bound himself to her in a moment of desperation. Out of a need to save his brother.

He certainly wouldn’t want to stay with someone the King thought so poorly of. If he was Olympian, he’d demand she release him from her bond. And she would. He deserved better.

She waited for him to speak.
Raphael reached out gently and rested both his hands on her shoulders. It was the first time he had dared to touch her since he carried her home from the Fall. He had not allowed himself the privilege during the weeks that followed. It had not been his place. And yet he had yearned for it.

Emotions swirled so powerfully within him, it was all he could do to make his voice light as he answered.

“What I heard was a buncha hot air from a loud-mouthed bastard who feels threatened by ya.”

She flinched, at his touch and his light tone. He wasn’t taking this seriously. The King’s words were law. She had to make him understand. She was nothing. He, Leonardo, the whole family—mortal though they were—were much more important than then her, the lowest god.

Had she really been trying to protect them when she claimed them as family? Or was she just as selfish as the King claimed?

She snorted mirthlessly.

“Oh, so you politely ignored the part about me being completely worthless as a goddess, an unknown and unclassifiable being, an ignorant rebel who thinks only of herself, a no good busybody that always mucks things up for the rest, a greedy miscreant…” Luna trailed off with a little yelp as Raphael spun her almost violently to face him.

“Lies,” he spat with intensity, as he speared her with a look. “The whole pack of ‘em.”

She stared at him, eyes hot and still spilling over with tears. She saw anger on his face, and desire, yet his eyes spoke of some deeper conflict. He wouldn’t ask. He didn’t know he had the right. She had to offer.

“I will understand,” she spoke softly, “if you do not wish to be my mate. I know now that I am flawed, and a tie to me will only weaken you. You are strong. Powerful. You should not have to share. You have the right to refuse me…to withdraw your bond.”

She watched as his face changed. Now he knew. She closed her eyes in despair as more tears escaped. She did not want him to see how much she had been depending on his strength. She did not want to see his relief.

Raphael felt her heartbeat falter as his face went numb with shock.

She thought he wanted out? In what twisted universe would he want d’at? She wasn’t weak!

She saved a child knowing it would cause her banishment. She endured da pain of death, twice. She stood up alone against three terrifying apparitions to save his baby brother. She demeaned herself ta d’at fucking idiot they call a king so some poor souls she didn’t know could make it ta da afterlife.

She was tempered steel coated in velvet. She was perfect.

He reached out to her, gently placed his palm over one flaming cheek, and stroked away her tears with his thumb. She was so damn beautiful, it made his hands shake.

“No,” he said. It was a soft, emphatic, growling denial of everything in her offer.

She looked up into his eyes, startled. She saw only desire, awe, and… love. He wanted to be her bonded. The hole that had been tearing it’s way through her heart began to heal.
“But-”

Raphael closed the space between them and placed a finger across her lips. Stopping the protest before it could form.

“No.”

Raphael wished he was eloquent, like Donatello, and could explain away all of the hurtful things that awful creature said. He wished he was funny, like Michelangelo, able to banish her tears with laughter. He wished he was calm and compassionate, like Leonardo, to soothe her fears. He was none of these things.

He was, however, a damn good ninja. A fact that would save her life.

Even as distracted as he was standing that close to her, he sensed the danger. A slight buzz from a loose bit of fletching was his only warning.

With an oath that could have blistered paint, Raphael shoved her away from him with the hand that had only moments before been caressing her face.

Luna fell as a crossbow bolt shot directly through the space where her head had just been and impaled itself halfway to the fletching in the gravel of the rooftop. Three more followed, but she had taken the initiative and rolled into the scant cover provided by the knee wall at the edge of the building.

From that position, she frantically looked around as much as she could without leaving her protection. She couldn’t seem to catch a break. Her enemies were everywhere.

Raphael had disappeared, but she knew he hadn’t abandoned her. She could feel his heartbeat nearby, once again in perfect counterpoint to her own. His voice hissed out of the darkness.

“Luna, stay where ya are. These guys are not yer enemies. They’re old friends of mine,” he drawled sarcastically.

Raph watched from his concealed position as her eyes narrowed from surprise to hardened determination, and her hair burst into dramatic flames.

Mortals dared to threaten her mate? They must have a death wish.

“Luna,” he drew her name out warningly. “These clowns ain’t nothin’ I can’t handle. Let’s save the fireworks in case we need a surprise later.”

“I’m gonna draw ‘em away.” he paused. “Stay there until ya see all of ‘em follow me.”

She nodded and stroked a hand through her flaming hair, dousing it. She was willing to believe him when he said he could handle it.

“East a here three buildings we got friends. That’s over da wall yer leanin’ on.” Raph continued. “Da gaps are narrow here, I know ya can make da jumps. Take da North fire escape down four levels an’ knock on da window. You’ll be safe there.”

So I can concentrate, he thought.

Raph eyed her to see if she’d obey, and paused a moment to focus before the fight. He felt exhilaration fill him. This was exactly what he needed. He didn’t know why the Foot were out
here, but a good old fashioned beat-down, with an enemy he knew, would be great to clear his head.

Luna would be ok. She would be safe at April’s. He just hoped there weren’t more Foot concealed out there between her and the apartment. He suddenly wished Don had given her a phone or a tracking device. No one had thought about her having to go somewhere alone anytime soon.

He jumped when she spoke in his head a moment later.

*I’ll keep this line open,* she said. *So you can give me a play by play.*

He smiled. He forgot she could do that.

*Just remember to keep YOUR flames under control, ok big guy?* she said.

*I only burn for you babe.* He replied with a smirk, and launched himself at a dead run across the building to lead the Foot away.

Luna smiled at his answer and hunched down in the lew of the wall as first one, than a dozen more, black clad figures leapt over her as they raced after Raphael to the nearby rooftop. She heard him taunting and egging them on. No one stopped to look for her.

*So, who’s the friend?* she asked while she waited.

*Guy named Casey. He comes with sometimes when we’re, uh, out.* Raph paused to smack two black clad heads together. *Heck, ya betta invite ‘im to join me when ya get there. Or he’ll ride my shell about it for a week.*

When the area around her was clear, she stood up and leapt for the next building as quietly and unobtrusively as she could. She felt a rush as she cleared the gap. This was actually kind of exciting. She smiled hugely as she sank into the shadows of the nearest A/C unit and started slinking across the roof.

*Havin’ fun playin’ ninja, sweetheart?* Raph called. He’d obviously felt the rush.

She stuck her tongue out at him even though she knew he couldn’t see it. He’d still get the mental image. She glanced back at him two roofs away and saw he’d doubled over with laughter.

Two of the black clad figures looked at each other in confusion then shrugged and tried to take advantage of his strange behaviour. They got a quick backhanded fist and a kick instead.

*Keep going Luna or Casey’s not gonna have anyone left to play with.*

She picked up the pace and trotted to the next gap. It was a little larger but still looked do-able. Luna backed up a few paces, ran, and jumped. She gave a little mental cheer when she landed and raised her fists over her head like a gymnast.

*Crap!* She ducked quickly and went back to trying to slink through the shadows.

*Raph, eight more of those pajama guys just came out of the stairwell of this building.*

*They see ya?* he asked in concern.

She smiled again. Raph was so protective even his mental voice held a threatening growl.

*No, they’re headed for the fight.*
Stay low, only one more building to go sweetheart. he replied.

She blushed at the endearment, and considered the last building. It was taller than the one she was on by about two stories. What now? Climbing?

No, right there at the side nearest her was some sort of extra little out building. She stood on a protruding pipe and jumped to get the edge of it, then dragged herself up. Now there was only one story to go. She hesitated, unsure what to do.

um Raph? I’m a story too short, she said.

Straight ahead of ya there’s a ledge. Ya see it? It’s two feet deep. Ya can land it. D’en there’s a metal ladder on da far right.

Luna considered the jump carefully. It was a little farther than the last one and, if she jumped too hard, she might ricochet off the building and fall backwards. Two feet wasn’t really a lot of room for landing.

She thought about just using her power to levitate up but the silvery light would give away her position. Plus, she didn’t want to compromise the living arrangements of whomever these friends were by leading pajama men to their window.

Finally, she held her hands out in front of her and made just her fingertips ‘sticky’ with the tiniest amount of power. Then she ran and jumped as hard as she could before she lost her nerve. She made the ledge and slapped the wall with her fingers to cement the landing. It worked and she breathed a sigh of relief.

Ya ok Luna? he called.

I got this. She answered and began to climb up the ladder.

It took no time at all for her to find the fire escape and make her way down the four levels but it was 3 AM when she pounded on the window so she really hoped these friends were used to visitors at strange hours.

A light came on immediately as a dark haired man in a grey tee and plaid pj pants stumbled into the hall, yawning and scratching his head.

“I’m a comin’, hold ya horses Raph!” he said, then froze.

The redhead on the fire escape, while hot, was not the type of hothead he had expected. She pounded again.

“Casey! Let him in!” a woman’s voice called in irritation from the bedroom.

“April, babe, it’s not a him.” Casey replied over his shoulder, without taking his eyes off the window.

“What?” a slightly disheveled woman appeared in the hall behind him, pulling on a bathrobe. She followed his gaze to the window and did a double take. “Oh my god, LUNA!”

April rushed to the window, threw up the sash, and pulled the girl inside.

“You know this girl babe?” Casey asked, just as Luna asked, “You Casey?”

“Who’s askin’?” he said bluntly. April hit him up the back of his head.
“This the guy?” She sent Raph a mental picture of the man in front of her.

**D’at’s him.**

“Raphael says, and I quote, ‘Get dressed, ya numbskull. If ya don’t hurry I won’t save ya a dance partner. And I know how much ya love ta tango with da foot.’” Luna said, trying to mimic Raph’s Brooklyn accent as best she could.

“The Foot!” Casey exclaimed, his eyes lighting up. He ran back toward the bedroom shouting “Where are they?”

“Four buildings west, one north.” she replied.

“So close?” he called. There was a crash from the bedroom and the sound of a lot of objects falling over. “I got this!” he said loudly.

April covered her face with a hand.

The man came running back down the hall, dressed in torn jeans, an old sports jersey, and a hockey mask. He had a golf bag on his back with various sporting equipment inside. Luna exchanged a look with the woman.

“Don’t ask,” April said quietly.

“How many were there?” Casey asked eagerly, as he headed toward the window and the fire escape.

“Twenty-one by my last count,” Luna said.

Thirty-two Raph chimed in. **But he’s down by ten.**

Luna rolled her eyes, sensing where this was going. Casey was climbing out the window.

“Excuse me,” she corrected sarcastically. “Raph says 32 and you’re down by 10.”

“No way!” Casey said.

He stood up on the fire escape and shook his fist to the city at large.

“You’re not gonna beat me hothead!” Casey yelled, before dashing up the fire escape.
“Both of them?” April asked, amazed.

Girl talk over a cup of tea was a new experience for Luna. It wasn’t something Olympians ever did. Their daily lives mostly involved power struggles and political maneuvering and didn’t allow for something as simple or wonderful as a heart-to-heart with a like minded female.

It hadn’t taken Luna long to realize April was the benefactor who provided the clothes for her and a few indirect queries had revealed that it was also April who had helped Donatello treat her when the turtles first brought her home.

Apparently Donatello had been keeping her updated on the Luna situation, but hadn’t called yet to fill her in on the last two night’s adventures. Luna was mostly happy to do so, though she was a little hesitant to tell her everything.

April gave off a kind of big sister vibe about the turtles and Luna didn’t want her to think she was trying to take advantage of the guys sweet natures. Besides, she liked this April O’neil, and it would be nice to have a friend that she did not have to trade favors for or worry about politically.

She was actually relieved that April already knew about her heritage. Trying to explain or conceal her powers from this observant woman would have been difficult. But she still blushed at April’s shocked expression as she told the story of the battle on the rooftop and her second soulmate.

“It’s not as if I planned it!” Luna protested, laughing a little in nervous embarrassment.

“Well, all I can say is good luck to you,” April said, relieving Luna’s worry with a smile. “Leo is a dream, but Raphael may be a bit rough around the edges. Plus, I don’t think either of them has ever had a girlfriend, and at 28, that’s a lot of pent up sexual frustration you’ll be dealing with my dear!” April teased.

“Not a problem.” Luna replied, her mind only half on the conversation. “Thousands of years of experience here.” She paused then blushed again as she realized what she’d just said.

April’s eyes widened, “Just how old are you?”

The question slipped out before April could edit it, and it was her turn to blush.

“You don’t have to answer that,” she said quickly.

“No, I don’t mind,” Luna paused to consider. “I don’t know exactly, but I came into existence somewhere in the neighborhood of 650 BC, so just a smidgen over 2500? I’m one of the youngest.”

She looked down shyly.

April blinked, a little stunned by this information. As a dealer in antiquities, she was familiar with objects of that age, but people? Donnie had said Luna was an ancient goddess stuck in a human form and April had believed him, but the ancient part hadn’t really sunk in.

After being friends with the Turtles for more than 10 years, seeing aliens, and visiting parallel dimensions April thought that nothing much could surprise her anymore. But this was… astonishing.
“Zeus thinks that’s why I am so much trouble.” Luna continued as April tried to process the amount of history she must have seen. “He thinks the others give me far too much leeway. But after tonight… And Raphael...”

April looked up concerned. Something big had happened tonight, and she didn’t think it had anything to do with their sudden run in with the Foot. In that one statement Luna’s tone had totally changed from friendly conversation to one that was almost heartbroken.

“Luna, did something happen tonight with Raphael?”

April knew only too well that the guys were lacking social graces in the dating department, but she didn’t think Raph could come up with something that would offend a goddess with thousands of years experience.

“He refused,” Luna eyes were confused, fixed and far away. Her voice was so soft April wasn’t sure she’d heard her right.

“Raph? Refused what? The soulbond?” April asked, surprised. That didn’t seem right. Donatello said Raph was pining for the girl. And Donnie was usually not mistaken about such things. Luna shook her head.

“Zeus’ word is law, and I’m in disgrace,” Luna mumbled, thoughts still far away. “Raphael saw it all. He was angry, so angry. He is not Olympian, so he didn’t know it was his right to...leave,” her voice broke again, full of shame. “to distance himself from the dishonor.”

April blinked as she tried to follow this convoluted explanation.

“So you told Raph he could leave,” she said gently, nodding in sudden understanding, “and he refused.”

_Probably violently_, April thought.

Luna nodded, fighting tears.

"I have to tell Leonardo too. I- I don't know if I can even speak to him about it!" Luna said, panic in her voice. "His honor is above reproach. I cannot drag him down with me! He'll be so angry."

"Luna, I guarantee you that Leo will refuse as well," April said. "And he’ll be angry for the same reason Raph was."

“You understand this?” Luna asked April, her eyes wide and her voice lost.

April reached across the table and squeezed Luna’s hand.

“Honey, Raph and Leo don’t care about anyone else’s opinion. They care about _you_. Raphael was angry because you are hurting.”

"But Zeus is King and god of all, why would they dare his displeasure?” Luna did not understand.

"Zeus has not been a king on Earth for more than a thousand years." April replied. "And as far as I know, the guys have never worshipped a god.”

_Until now._ April thought, eyeing the pretty goddess in front of her.

Luna stared at April, shocked. This change in Earth culture was something she had not taken into account. It would bear some serious consideration.
Luna suddenly cocked her head to the side as if listening. And her expression changed abruptly.

“Raph and Casey are headed back,” she said. “I guess we’ll be going home soon.”

April took note of the word ‘home’.

“Luna,” she said seriously, still grasping the girl’s hand, “Where is home going to be when you’ve found all the missing pieces?”

Luna opened her mouth to say she didn’t know, that she hadn’t decided what to do. That her parents needed her. That she was the heir and couldn’t just abandon her responsibilities, even if the other gods reviled her.

“Wherever they are,” she whispered instead, just as Raph knocked on the window.

Raphael was in a much better mood as he and Casey returned to April’s after the fight. Letting out his frustration and aggression was one of the best ways of controlling it, and with this new firestarting talent of his, control was definitely something he needed to practice.

When he tapped on the window, April and Luna were sitting together at the kitchen table, chatting. It looked like they were getting on ok. Raph was glad, cause a little earlier, he’d felt some confusion and sorrow from Luna, and he’d been worried.

It was late, so it wasn’t long before they said their goodnights to April and Casey and climbed out the window back to the roof. Luna looked tired, but Raph wasn’t really in a hurry to get home and face Leo and a barrage of undoubtedly hostile questions. Besides this was the first time he’d been with Luna alone. He wanted to make it last a little longer.

“Back home?” Luna asked, turning to head toward the smaller metal ladder.

“Nope,” Raph scooped her up from behind into his arms. He looked down into her startled face and gave a sort of lopsided smile. “Care ta go for a run?”

She smiled back, the first carefree looked he’d seen on her face in days and nodded shyly.

Running with her was easy, even though he was tired. She weighed next to nothing and he was the strongest of his brothers. Carrying her would never be a burden. Raphael glanced down at her, still smiling up at him, as he jumped them over larger and larger gaps, until it felt like they were flying.

He admired the way her hair blew in the wind and the sparkle of excitement in her amber eyes as she looked out over the lights of the city. He couldn’t help but contrast this vision of loveliness to the memory of carrying her broken body home after the Fall barely a month ago.

That memory struck fear into him, and he held Luna a little tighter, fiercely glad that Leo and Don had taken out every one of those evil, god-forsaken, bastards. Thinking of them, made him want to run even further with Luna, to hide her away somewhere safe, where no one could find her but him.

Suddenly he knew just where he wanted to take her. There was a little grotto in the courtyard of an office complex, well tended but never occupied that he used to visit as a teen when he needed to
Luna was really enjoying the run. The night was warm, the stars were bright, and her heart leapt with joy each time she glanced up at Raphael’s face. Amazing as it was, he wanted to be with her. His strong arms held her firmly against him, but gently, as if afraid she would break.

She let herself relax and breathe his slightly woody scent in deeply as she considered the conversation she’d had with April. It had never occurred to her that her new family would not care about the priorities of an Olympian life, or even worry about offending the head of that hierarchy.

*Zeus has not been a king on Earth for more than a thousand years.*

April’s words replayed themselves over and over in her mind.

It was true that Olympians had been pretty much ignoring the mortal realm for a while. The focus had shifted from the politics of power on Earth to a more purified, cutthroat version amongst the gods themselves. Only a few who had responsibilities to the mortal realm, like her parents, dealt with the Earth on a day to day basis anymore.

She didn’t think many Olympians realized the extent of the change amongst the mortals living there. Maybe that’s why their immortal underlings were getting so restless. Most of them had been created to maintain power within the mortal realm and now they were being ignored.

Luna looked up from her thoughts, as Raphael tightened his grip around her, and she gasped in startled wonderment as he leapt off into open space. They were falling inside of an extremely tall office building. Raphael easily turned their fall into a controlled descent with the use of a few drain pipes and assorted ledges. He navigated the way down easily as if he knew this place well.

She soon understood why he would like to visit here. It was a perfect little courtyard completely hidden from the outside world. Only the interior offices looked out on to this heavenly little space, and this late there was no one to admire the view.

There were full sized trees, weeping birch and cherry, which cast a canopy of long trailing branches low to the ground. There was lush grass, so thick it was like plush carpeting. There were manicured hedges and even a little slate stone waterfall emerging from a giant boulder that created a burbling music all it’s own.

The moment Raph set her on the grass, she squealed with joy. She leaned down, tore off her shoes and began to dance around on the soft grass barefoot, before racing toward the trees. She hid behind the nearest one and peeked out at him with a smile.

With her red hair and pale skin, she looked like something he’d seen once in a children’s fairytale book, a tree spirit or something totally unreal. He stood admiring her until her chime-like laugh carried over the bubbling sound of the waterfall.

“Well, are you going to come and play?” she taunted.

Raph took off after her, suddenly not tired in the least.

She squeaked playfully and dashed between the trees when he almost caught her. She changed direction again, as he flipped around in pursuit. She didn’t escape for long. She was laughing too hard for running.

Panting great, heaving, breaths she collapsed, giggling, under the spreading canopy of a cherry tree
next to the little stream and lay back in the soft cool grass. One arm cushioning her head.

*God, she was gorgeous.*

Raphael approached her slowly, entranced by her actions. His eyes roamed over her body like a predator evaluating it’s prey, lingering on the smooth curve of her hip as she rolled to one side to watch him, then tracing their way up to the soft rounded edge of her chest, still rapidly rising and falling from her exertion.

He licked his lips but stood his ground, as needs long denied roared to life inside him. Never had he even dreamed that he would get the chance at romance, or anything more intimate, so now he was uncertain how to proceed.

Luna sensed his frustration. Desire was there but Raphael had quelled it for so long. Denied it. Buried it deep in his psyche, and used it’s frustration to fuel his rage. In order to act, he needed to rechannel it, but she could help bring it closer to the surface.

She looked up at him seductively through her lashes, her eyes wide and dark, and responded in kind by licking her own lips. Slowly.

*I have what you need.* Her mind whispered to his, below the level of thought, as instincts long suppressed began to re-emerge.

Raph’s breathing hitched, and his muscles tensed.

She eyed his muscular form with admiration as she climbed to her feet, equally slowly, and blushed while biting her lip. She glanced down shyly then back up at him.

*I am what you need.*

His blood began to boil, and his eyes ignited with desire.

She shifted her weight, dropped one shoulder slightly, and the neckline of her oversized T-shirt slid off her shoulder and slowly down her arm a few inches.

*You are what I need.*

Raphael moved.

In seconds, he had her in his arms and shoved back against the boulder that created the waterfall. His mouth fastened desperately on hers, and she wrapped her arms and legs around him as she kissed him back with passion.

His lips were needy and rough, but he gentled his strength for her. He balanced her weight with one hand under her hip and shielded her head protectively from the stone with the other even as he pressed himself against her.

Her hands roamed over him and traced patterns over his shell that drove him insane. He’d never felt like this before.

Raphael thought he knew his body. He thought he knew himself. But these sensations were nothing like what he felt when he had to relieve his own sexual tension. A growl began, deep in the back of his throat as he continued to kiss her fiercely, along with it came a growing need to possess her utterly.
Her lips left his and began to trace kisses down his neck to his shoulder and he threw his head back to give her room. She nipped him then, hard, and he gave voice to a deep thrumming purr that had been echoing inside him. A reflection of his need for her. He was almost startled. He’d never made such sounds before.

Enraptured, he recaptured her lips and moved them away from the boulder to the soft grass. He set her down gently under the cherry tree and removed his weapons, but set his sai carefully within arms reach. He didn’t want her injured on them accidentally, but he would not leave her undefended in the open.

Raphael returned to her arms and her soft feminine form entwined with his. She was intoxicating. Every move she made drove him into a further frenzy and he felt his world spinning out of control. But he didn’t care.

His heart and soul were on fire and nothing could quench it but her.
Raphael cradled the silent, limp form of his goddess close to him and strode rapidly through the sewer tunnels on the most direct route home. The strain of the night had finally caught up with Luna as they were about halfway back and she had surrendered to sleep, secured tightly in his arms, absolute in her trust that he would see her safely home.

The sun was rising as Raph located the manhole cover nearest the short path and adroitly maneuvered himself, and the sleeping girl, down the ladder. They had stayed out too long and Raph knew he was lucky that nothing untoward had found them. Leonardo was probably going to tear into him the moment they reached home. But it had been worth it.

Raphael shifted Luna to one strong arm as he approached the front door, preparing to pull the hidden lever that opened it, but before he could touch it, the door swung inward. There was a loud gasp and Raph glanced up surprised, as the dark form of his brother blotted out the light shining from the common room.

“Give her to me,” his voice snapped.

Raph took a step back, pulling Luna closer to him and blinking quickly to clear his eyes of the light, thinking he must be tired and mistaken. This angry voice didn’t belong to Fearless.

“Now.”

It was an order, the like of which he’d never heard coming from his quiet, reasonable, logical brother. Donatello never gave orders unless it was an emergency where his expertise was required.

As Raph hesitated in the corridor, Don huffed in frustration and cleared the doorway. In two strides he was at their side. Raphael could see the hardness in his eyes and the angry set of his jaw as he clenched his teeth.


But Donatello wasn’t even looking at him anymore. His eyes were running over Luna from head to toe, over and over again, searching for the damage. Behind his brother’s anger, Raph sensed an undercurrent of panic.

“What happened?” Don demanded, as he reached out to take her pulse.

“Woah, Donnie! She’s just sleepin’,” Raph replied, pulling her away. “Keep ya voice down.”

Donatello visibly took hold of himself, took a deep breath, and nodded once sharply.

“We have to talk,” Don said and stood aside so Raph could come through the door.

Raph entered and turned toward the infirmary, thinking to put Luna to bed first. He stopped abruptly.

The living room was in shambles. Parts of the sectional had been overturned, the recliner was on its side, the TV lay on its back sending sparks into the air, the lamps were knocked over, and their possessions had been strewn all about the room. There were long scorch marks across the walls and the larger overhead lights flickered ominously.
Weapons were discarded all over the space. Splintered wood and Nunchucks littered the floor. Throwing knives were embedded in the wall, and Leo’s favorite katanas lay in pieces near what was left of the couch.

This did not look like a sparring match that got out of hand, though the brothers had experienced a few of those over the years. This looked like all out war had been wielded in the living room.

The only upright piece of furniture left was the coffee table and rising from it’s center was a larger than life golden arrow which had been stuck through the surface like a dagger.

Raph’s head snapped back around to Don, adrenaline hitting his system.

“What da hell happened, Don?” Raph said, angrily, then after a beat added, “Is it safe for Luna ta be here?”

Luna came awake with a jolt as Raphael’s panic hit her through the bond. As she opened her eyes, he looked down at her and she saw fear and concern in his gaze. She looked past his face to see the familiar ceiling high above.

They were home, why was that cause for panic?

She struggled to get down and after a quick squeeze, that Luna thought was more to reassure himself than her, Raph set her on her feet. She looked around the living room in surprise, taking in the destruction, then her eyes narrowed as her gaze focused in on the golden arrow.

She drew in a breath with a sharp hiss and turned to Donnie.

“Everybody ok?” she asked intently.

Don shook his head wearily, “Mikey’s got a torn hamstring and a broken arm, Leo…”

As soon a Donnie shook his head, Luna was reaching through the bond for Leonardo. Her heart skipped a beat, then two. She couldn’t feel him. She turned on Don a sick feeling in her stomach.

“Where?” she demanded.

“The infirmary,” Don said quietly.

Before he had even finished speaking, Luna spun and ran for the hall. No longer able to contain her anxiety and anger, her skin burst into a silver glow so bright Raph could barely stand to look at her and her hair erupted into flames. The brothers followed on her heels.

Luna shot through the door of the infirmary as if fired from a gun but stopped short just inside, as Michelangelo raised pain filled eyes to hers from where he lay on the stainless steel table, his leg propped up and his arm in a sling.

His eyes widened in awe, as he caught sight of her face within the glow. Last time she had been so infuriated, he’d been out cold. But he smiled weakly in relief at seeing she was ok, and tried to get off the table to go to her.

Don pushed past, ignoring Luna’s flames and laid a hand on Mikey’s shoulder, pressing him back down, as Raph slipped in behind them, watching it all unfold with confused eyes.

“Sit tight, Mikey.” Donnie said. “Let her have a look at Leo first.”

At that comment, Luna’s head whipped up and her eyes searched the room until she spied
Leonardo standing oddly in the corner. He was frozen in place, his face a mask of rage, his body coiled tightly in an offensive fighting stance.

“Sol?” she asked Don, over her shoulder, as she went to examine Leo more closely.

“She took it,” Donnie said, apologetically.

“We tried to stop her, Luna,” Mikey said, his voice full of sadness at their failure.

Raphael had past confused and moved into extreme anger.

“Somebody betta tell me what da hell happened!” Raph growled.

Don eyed him warily, but thought he was contained enough to hear an explanation, since he wasn’t yet on fire.

“I couldn’t sleep, so I decided to put in some extra hours examining those new blood samples I collected from you and Leo,” Don began. “I’m trying to determine if your extra abilities are linked to our mutation.”

Raph made an exasperated noise and a hurry up motion with his hand.

“Anyway,” Donnie continued, “Leo was sitting on the couch alone when I came through on the way to the lab. Since he was supposed to be with Luna,” Don’s eyes flicked to where she was staring carefully into Leo’s face, “I asked him what he was doing.”

Raph made a grimace that said he was going to start beating on Donnie if he didn’t get to the point soon.

“Long story short,” Don said, hurriedly, “Leo said Luna had gone out. She managed to convince him she was meeting an ally, but it was another god, and she didn’t want us to be seen.”

“It was freakin’ Zeus an’ he wasn’t in da best mood. She only called on him, cause she promised d’ose shades she would send ‘em home. He didn’t touch her physically but he practically destroyed her emotionally. Da’ stuff he said ta her, I wanted ta kill ‘em.” Raph said in an angry undertone.

Mikey’s face hardened at this news, his eyes turning cold, but Don nodded sagely. That explained a few things.

“Well,” Don continued, “Right about then, Leo shot to his feet and said Luna was in trouble. But before he could get out the door, we had a perimeter breach.”

“A goddess,” Mikey chimed in quietly, “One we haven’t met. She made with the glowing and echo-y voice and all.”

“She wouldn’t let us leave.” Don said, lowering his voice further, still eyeing Luna. “Leo was freaking out, trying to get past her but this girl just laughed and kept the doors sealed. She cut off communications too so we couldn’t get a message to you, or even Casey.”

He frowned. Don hated having his tech messed with. It seriously annoyed him.

“Leo threw a couple of plasma bolts directly at her,” Don said. “It pissed her off. She waved her
hand at him and he, well... froze. She tossed that arrow, took Sol, and disappeared. We could finally get out, but none of us were really in any shape to go and the com units were, are, still shot.” he grimaced.

Raph grunted.

Luna had been listening as she examined Leo. Now she rested a glowing hand gently on his arm and sighed, extinguishing her light and flames. She turned to face the room and, as the brothers watched expectantly, she raised her eyes toward the heavens and spoke very firmly.

“Diana Selena Heliades, get your ass back down here right now.”
Donatello was surprised. He’d been hoping Luna would know how to free Leonardo, but her bold familial demand astonished him. He exchanged bemused looks with Raphael and Michelangelo. They looked just as confused as he felt; though Mikey’s gaze was fogged a little by pain.

“Diana,” Luna drew the name out warningly, her hands on her hips and her foot tapping as she scolded thin air, “If you don’t get back here right now and undo what you’ve done, I’m telling father how you snuck into Zeus’ pleasure palace.”

There was a moment’s pause then the other goddess reappeared, right in the infirmary.

Raphael tensed and reached for his sai, but Don put a hand on Raph’s shoulder and shook his head warningly. Don had already seen this goddess in action. Nothing they could do would change the outcome of this meeting. Luna had called her, so presumably, she felt she could handle it.

This goddess was tall and willowy, with long brunette hair captured in a tight bun against the back of her head. She wore loose white leather pants, a white blouse with billowing sleeves, and a strange sort of white leather vest that resembled a sleeveless hoodie. A silver bow was slung carelessly across her shoulders and a quiver full of large golden arrows crossed her back.

Donatello suddenly made the connection with her name. No wonder they couldn’t get a hit in edgewise earlier. This was Diana, Goddess of the Hunt; who, according to mythology, could control animals. He glanced at Leonardo’s still form and grimaced.

I guess we’re close enough to fall into that category.

“Hello Sister,” Diana said, mockingly. “I see you lived through Zeus’ scolding.”

Raphael eyed the goddess and fidgeted angrily but Luna ignored the taunt.

“Diana, what in Hades did you think you were doing? You attacked our family!” Luna was trying to keep her voice level, but she wasn’t really succeeding.

“Actually, they attacked me,” Diana replied. “I’m family and I don’t see you scolding them.”

“After you appeared without warning, didn’t explain who you were, held them against their will, and kidnapped a piece of my soul,” Luna hissed softly, her voice all the more menacing because of it, ”I think they had reason.”

“Look Luna,” Diana said, sharply. “Mother sent me to keep your precious family away from Zeus because she knew they couldn’t control themselves where you’re concerned. You should be grateful I acted.”

“Your actions provoked them without need!” Luna retorted, through clenched teeth.

Diana shrugged, “I needed the workout.”

Diana turned away from Luna’s glare and walked to Leonardo. She paced deliberately around him; lightly dragging her fingertips up one arm across his shoulders and down the other, with a look bordering on sinful admiration.

“This one’s quite the strategist,” Diana drawled wickedly, “He almost had me a few times. With a
little training he could be extremely...dangerous.”

From the tone of her voice, the kind of training she had in mind wasn’t restricted to the battlefield. Luna’s eyes went flat, and just the ends of her hair began to flicker.

“Remove your hands from my soulmate now or I’ll remove them for you,” Luna growled threateningly. “If I do it, you won’t have the use of them for weeks.”

Don’s eyes narrowed as he watched Diana’s little display, gleaning all the information he could. There was more than a hint of envy there. Resentment practically oozed out her pores and the little sneer on her face said she didn’t think much of Luna.

He saw Raph start to move in response to Diana’s antagonism and cautioned him to stay put with a sharp glance. There was a power struggle going on between the two sisters and Luna would only look weaker if Raph interfered.

The glare Raph sent Don in return said he was near his breaking point. Donatello was actually surprised Raphael had held onto his temper this long. It seemed his self control was improving further as his relationship with Luna progressed.

Michelangelo watched the drama unfold as if it were a soap opera. Of course he was confident Luna would win if it came to a fight. Donnie wasn’t so sure. Luna was not at full strength, Sol was missing, and there was an undercurrent of something else going on here. He just couldn’t pinpoint it yet.

“Now Luna, don’t be like that,” Diana pouted, her face the epitome of a spoiled child denied a treat. “We used to share our toys. Why don’t you give him to me? It would show Zeus that you can be civilized after all.”

Luna glared pointedly at Diana’s hands, still clasped about Leo’s forearm, and refused to dignify that last remark with a response.

Diana reluctantly released Leo, with one last lingering pat to his forearm, and walked away as Luna held on to her temper by the skin of her teeth. It was all the more difficult with Raphael’s outraged indignation flowing strongly through the bond.

Luna counted ten slow, measured, breaths before she spoke again, softly.

“Diana, they are family. You will treat them with the respect they are due or you will answer to a higher authority,” Luna reminded her.

Helios did not allow familial disrespect in any form. Bloodline and family name were paramount in Olympian society, and Helios’ penalties were harsh and immediate.

“Now if you don’t mind,” Luna continued, “I’d like Sol, and my soulmate, back.”

“Fine!” Diana said with venom, ”You can have your annoying little flame. But I won't release him.”

Diana gestured to Leo once again, her face a mask of jealous scorn.

"If he really is your soulmate, Sol’s all he’ll need to be free. If not,” she smiled deviously, "then all Olympus will know how deceitful you truly are.”

Raph drew a sharp audible breath. So that was her game. She wasn’t satisfied with Luna’s disgrace,
however unearned, she wanted Luna totally discredited as well. But why?

Diana waved her hand and Sol reappeared. She watched with smug anticipation, expecting the soul to float back to Luna. Instead, without delay or hesitation, Sol zipped straight into Leonardo and he melted back into motion.

Leo fluidly centered himself into a neutral stance as his gaze swept the room. If he was startled to be in a different location than before, he didn’t show it but his eyes widened when he saw Luna in front of him facing off with the other goddess.

With a snarl, Leo executed a fast turn and switch maneuver, and Luna was suddenly behind him as he took up a defensive posture. She could feel his boiling anger but he made no further move. He simply shielded her with his body and waited to see if the intruder would bring the fight to him.

Diana swallowed her shock and disbelief, trying to mask it behind a face stiff with indifference. But not before Don noted it.

She raised a brow. “Protective, isn’t he.”

“Who are you and what are you doing here?” Leonardo demanded, in a low threatening tone.

Luna glared daggers at Diana over Leo’s shoulder until she answered.

“I am Diana, Daughter of Helios and Selene,” she said grudgingly.

“And she’s here,” Luna said, sternly, “to clean up her mess.”

It was noon before Luna finally fell into bed, completely exhausted.

Another short, sharp, argument had ensued, but she’d managed to convince her sister to undo all the damage the fight had caused. Afterward, Diana was only too happy to leave the sewers; making frequent disparaging remarks about the unsuitableness of her surroundings.

Then, Luna carefully supervised Leonardo as he practiced his healing on Michelangelo. He was getting better at controlling his energy, but he had already taxed himself against Diana and Luna wanted to make sure everything went smoothly.

Donatello’s unquenchable curiosity drove him to record the whole procedure for later study. He set up a ton of cameras and lamented loudly about the lighting and lack of appropriate scanning equipment to capture it all.

Raphael refused to leave Luna’s side; his suspicious glare constantly traveling over the empty room, waiting for the next interruption. His temper was frayed, and staying in sight of her was the only thing keeping his fire contained.

But with the five of them packed in so close it was getting a little claustrophobic in the infirmary and Luna was beginning to show signs of stress.

Michelangelo lay quietly throughout, his gaze flicking from face to face as they all gathered about him. He ignored Donnie; more than used to tuning out his genius brother’s constant muttering.
Raph to Luna. Leo to Raph. Leo to Luna. His sharp eyes checked the emotional temperature of each relationship. But mostly he watched the parade of feelings that flowed over his sister’s face.

She was obviously overwhelmed. Anger, anxiety, fear, and dread were her most common expressions, tempered with relief at their safety and love as she surveyed them. But really, more than anything she was tired, confused, and needed some time to herself to regroup.

*She’s at the end of her rope. Dammit, why can’t she get even a moment’s peace?*

The second he was fully healed Mikey sat up, slid off the table, and faced his brothers.

“Look bros, we all need to compare notes, but everyone’s tired and quite frankly a little too cranky. Hows about we all hit it for a while and have a family meeting later?” he said.

Michelangelo wasn’t taking no for an answer, deliberately crowding his three siblings toward the door. One quick glance back at Luna’s relieved expression was all the encouragement he needed to keep them moving. He forced them out into the hall and shut the door firmly behind them.

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Michelangelo prowled from room to room restlessly. He’d managed to get his brothers corralled into their rooms, if not their beds, with the promise that he would stay up and keep watch over the lair. They were exhausted, but with his cells just reinvigorated from the healing Mikey felt like he’d had a good twelve hours rest.

The necessity of keeping watch in their own home was enough to make him nervous, but that didn’t adequately explain his current agitation. He felt outraged. No... angry and neither were emotions he was used to handling.

Luna was suffering and the situation just kept getting worse. The ‘powers that be’ seemed determined to degrade her. Charon wanted to destroy her for her soul and power. Her own sister was more inclined to discredit than support her. There had to be something he could do.

Michelangelo couldn’t help feeling that he was staring at a puzzle with large sections still missing. There was an awful lot of maneuvering going on that they knew nothing about. They needed more information on the situation. He sighed, frustrated, wishing he could see the bigger picture.

Everyone needed to come together, he decided. They were all holding some of the missing pieces. They just needed to start at the beginning and work their way through Luna’s story one step at a time. Then they might have some hope of finishing it and finding some peace.

It was definitely time for that family meeting. He’d call one as soon as everyone was up again.

Decision made, Mikey let his mind wander as he continued to patrol their space. And without fail, his mind wandered back to Luna. She was his first thought in the morning and his last as he went to sleep. This time, though, he wasn’t contemplating his brothers’ relationships or their current problems; he was just mulling over the goddess herself.

Luna was fascinating. She was a complex mix of, well...everything; and he never really tired of thinking about her. She had a mysterious past; a really, really long one. And even though Mikey was by no means a history buff, he wanted to ask her a ton of questions about the things she’d seen.
She also had strong, if somewhat unreliable, powers. This only brought her closer to his heart, as it made her more like the heroines he’d followed for years in his comics. It also made her more approachable. She wasn’t always the overwhelming goddess he’d seen burst into the infirmary this morning. Sometimes she was just as vulnerable as the rest of them.

Like yesterday, when she broke down on his shoulder. He had been surprised when she turned to him, thinking that one of her mates would have been chosen instead. But he was proud that she trusted him enough to expose her feelings that way and happy to know that even though she had his two strong brothers, she needed him too.

She had an amazing number of facets to her personality. She was fun, witty, and quick with a comeback, as he knew from his hours of conversation with her while she was recovering.

She was extremely intelligent. Mikey had listened in awe as she and Donnie held discussions about universal constraints and energy theory, and she posed some scenarios that even had his genius brother scratching his head and saying he had to think about it.

She was wise. She never just gave Don the answers he sought; she guided him, challenged him, and let him form his own conclusions.

She was compassionate, always trying to improve the situation of those around her. Mikey really wasn’t surprised to find she was working for a shelter before her attack. She truly cared about the lives of others. In that way, she and Leo were very much alike.

She had a bit of a temper. Nothing so extreme as Raphael’s constant rage, but Mikey definitely wanted to stay on her good side. He seen her scolding the others and was glad she hadn’t had a reason to take him to task.

Her true anger was amazing. He thought back to the sight of her this morning when she burst through the infirmary doors. Her face was stern and righteous, her hair literally on fire, but it was her sheer presence that had impressed him the most.

The overwhelming feeling of an indomitable will prepared to defend, or avenge, any damage done. The extra flare of anger in her eyes as she beheld his injuries had sent an electric pulse through him; demanded that he respond to her concern. He’d instinctively tried but Donnie had kept him on the table.

Michelangelo came out of his thoughts with a start to find he was kneeling next to Luna’s bed; staring into her face while she slept. Without realizing it, his patrol had brought him to the infirmary, and it seemed he had not been stopped by the closed door.

*That’s ok. I’m just checking on her. Brother’s are supposed to look out for their little sisters. After all, any immortal could have just popped in here behind the closed door,* he rationalized.

He went back to examining her face; disregarding the intimacy of the act. She was so relaxed in sleep, and she looked so peaceful lying there. Far cry from the angry and tormented woman she had been during his healing. He wished he knew how to make the peace permanent for her.

Because her joy was the most profound facet of all.
The Price of Genius

Donatello sat staring at the two DNA profiles spinning side by side on his largest monitor and let out a long suffering sigh as he rubbed his temple. Both samples were from Leo; one taken months ago before his contact with Sol, the other taken after the battle with the wraiths. He'd postulated a further DNA mutation and hoped to see a difference in the two samples. But no such luck.

Yet another theory to be crossed off the list of possible causes for the mental and physical powers his brothers had unlocked when they agreed to a soulbond with Luna. Though the others didn't understand the urgency, Don felt it was necessary to isolate the mechanism by which their powers had been activated as soon as possible.

More and more immortals kept intruding into their lives. Diana was just the latest and most violent occurrence. Donatello felt at a distinct disadvantage with Leo and Raph having to compensate for his and Mikey's inability to innately affect beings from the other plane.

Donatello had the strongest feeling that time was against them. It would not be much longer before Charon figured out that Luna was still alive, if he hadn't already, and then they could be dealing with any number of other planer creatures; possibly right here in their home.

If he could figure out what the trigger was and use it to unlock their powers, it would even the playing field. Don worried about the consequences of that, of course, but Luna had said they would grow into their powers eventually, so it shouldn't hurt to unlock them early. They certainly had need of them and now they had Luna to train them.

It had been a week since Diana had pulled her little stunt. Don had spent most of it closeted in the lab working on a multitude of tests designed to prove some theories or disprove others.

Luna was coaching Raph and Leo through a series of exercises designed to improve their energy control in case of another immortal perimeter breach. Even Sol and Fina were helping by providing the targets.

Michelangelo was trying to piece together the motives of the players in this drama, so he spent hours with Luna, learning about Olympus and day to day life there, combing through her enemies to see who might be involved. Even April dropped by a time or two to add her perspective.

*Something has to break soon.*

Everyone was jumpy and on edge, knowing an attack could come at any time. Patrols of the entire home had been assigned in eight hour shifts, during which they wandered from room to room, seeking any difference in their surroundings.

*It's a hell of a way to live.*

Don sighed again and stared mournfully into his long empty coffee cup. He needed a break but it just seemed like too much effort to get out of the chair to make more coffee. He hated to admit it but he was reaching burnout. He needed something new to concentrate on, something that could really get his creative juices flowing, or there would be no new breakthroughs.

The sound of light footsteps approaching made him suddenly jerk to attention; sitting up straight in his chair then slouching back down as he tried for nonchalance. It could only be Luna making her way toward him. All his brothers, except Leo, had heavier steps; Leo he never heard at all.
Her scent hit him next, as he kept his back diffidently turned to the door. Lilies and hyacinths, a combination that epitomized her essence, swirled around the doorframe and washed over him.

It brought to mind images of her that he should, in all propriety, forget.

She was no longer his patient. Now that Leo could heal, Don's skills were no longer required. He had no more need to be examining her in detail as he had before; not even in his mind. But it was hard to let go of those images. Even as damaged as she had been Luna was beautiful.

Donatello admired beauty in all its forms, but Luna embodied something special.

*She's like a work of art.*

Something one could gaze upon and worship from afar but could never dream of owning. He had been her conservator; carefully nurturing and restoring her for the benefit of others. Always for others.

Like all great works she was bound to attract attention. There would always be those who coveted her and those who would give anything to keep her safe and whole. Donnie classed himself firmly into the latter category.

Don shook himself and looked up with a grateful smile as another scent came to him. Luna stood beside him now holding out a steaming mug of fresh dark roast coffee; prepared just the way he liked it.

The fact that he had noticed her scent before the overpowering aroma of the coffee warned him that his thoughts were becoming too preoccupied with her. He needed, once again, to lock those thoughts away but he allowed himself one quick moment to run his eyes over her from head to toe. Just to be sure she was all right.

Now that she was fully recovered and mostly rested, she was more than all right; she was radiant.

Don quickly diverted his gaze to his coffee as she smiled at him in return. Her smile did things to him that he didn't even want to admit to himself.

He cleared his throat rather abruptly.

"Thank you, Luna. I really needed this," Don said, holding up the cup in salute. After a slight pause in which she said nothing, he added, "Is there something I can help you with?"

"Yes- maybe, oh I hope so. Donnie, this is driving me crazy!" Luna burst out in her bell like voice.

Donatello blinked. That was the first time she had ever called him 'Donnie' to his face. He knew she had latched on to all of their nicknames, and she'd probably referred to him that way to his brothers, but she'd never said it directly to him before. It felt special somehow; intimate.

*Donatello- focus! It's not decent to be thinking such things.* He berated himself sharply.

"Well, I'll certainly try. What's bothering you, Luna?" Don's voice, at least, remained steady even as his pulse began to race.

"There's a solution- I think- to the problem we've been having with the immortals just showing up here," she began and suddenly had his undivided attention.

This sounded like just the sort of distraction he needed. His gazed sharpened, he forgot his
misgivings, and looked directly into her face. Her eyes were blue and her hair was red. She had both souls with her; that meant she was operating at top capacity. Usually in this state she really challenged him.

_When we find the other souls I probably won't be able to follow her thought process anymore._

"That's welcome news," he replied. "What are you struggling with?"

"Energy conversion," she said.

Don raised a brow, intrigued, inviting her to continue.

"Ok, Remember when I was describing to Raph and Leo the kind of personal shields they should be practicing?" she asked. "Particularly the physical ones?"

Don nodded. He had hung on every word of that conversation. The idea that aural energy could be transformed into matter that would become a barrier to physical objects was a fascinating concept. Essentially, it was a force field they could activate at will, powered by their own personal energy.

When Luna had proven that concept with a demonstration, he had been amazed. Leo and Raph were slowly getting the hang of projecting those barriers but it took a lot out of them to maintain one. The longest they could hold it, so far, was around 3 minutes.

"There are other variations on that type of shielding. One of them only blocks what you've been referring too as other planer energy. Most immortals are composed of that energy and they would be unable to enter if we constructed such a shield around our home," she said.

_Our home. Not the lair, the sewers, or your home; ours. Could she really want to stay here with us long term?_

He buried his surprise, forcing a neutral expression. He had thought she would return to Olympus after her punishment ended; even if she visited to spend time with Raph and Leo. That she would want to live with them permanently? It seemed so improbable he hadn't even calculated the odds.

"That's sounds like a feasible concept, but how would we power and support such a construct?" Don said, forcing his thoughts back on track, "Right now, you're the only one who can hold a shield for any length of time."

"That's where I need your help. The construct doesn't have to be held in place by a person, it just needs to be a framework that supports a difference engine and a sensor that recognizes the other planer energy signatures. All it needs to do is tell the barrier to be on or off."

Don's mind reeled. "You're talking about a simple computer program."

Luna nodded. "Another program could provide the parameters to determine the actual structure of the barrier and it's location. Really, all the energy needs is a set of instructions."

"Ok, but even if I wrote such a program, where would we get the energy to power the shield?" Don asked.

"Leonardo already solved that one for us," Luna laughed. "Remember his little mistake in the dojo?"

"The modular energy vortex!" Don exclaimed. "Wait! Can he make another one?"
"He doesn't need to. I grounded the first one into a batch of crystal under us," she said casually. "It's been feeding itself and has become it's own stable energy node; totally unconnected to the local ley lines. It's strong enough now that we could probably shield all of Manhattan if we wanted too but that might draw some unwanted attention."

Don sat back in his chair, stunned. This might actually work, and if it did, it would provide them with the peace of mind to sleep at night. It would allow them to stop patrolling the house. Plus it would give them a defensible position they could fall back to if attacked outside.

"Luna... that's amazing!" Donatello said, a little breathless.

In his excitement, he rose from his chair and gripped her upper arms gently, staring into her eyes. Her intellect was staggering, but her ability to assemble disparate elements into a new whole was so akin to his own method of working that it was easy to fall into a rapport with her.

She made a little face, a sort of sideways grimace, and Don thought he might have overstepped. He dropped his arms and moved away; putting a careful distance between them.

"There's still a problem," she groused, turning to half lean, half sit on the edge of his desk and crossing her arms over her chest, "The energy conversion. Somehow we've got to get it out of the crystal and projected through the program. I've been thinking about it for days and that's the part driving me crazy."

_Ah, she's frustrated. That frown wasn't because of me…_

Don smiled.

"There I think I can help you. If this crystal formation is what I think it is, we're not going to have any problems." Don said. "It may take a little time to salvage the parts, but I think we can put something together."

*Before something really bad gets in here.*

Charon knelt on the top of the building in the pale light of the setting sun. There was just enough twilight left to make out the large blood stain, long since dried, near the elevator. But he didn't need light to know it was there. The Guardian of the Dead could sense such things. The blood called to him. A signal of a brush with death.

This was what he was here to see.

He hadn't truly believed the human magician when he claimed that Luna was still alive. The idea was ludicrous. She had been confined to a mortal, human body, and denied her powers. Charon had seen her death through the eyes of the mortals he had hired to end her.

But the description of the woman on fire, who had blasted his wraiths to pieces as they traced an echo of one of the souls, was too much of a coincidence to simply be ignored. If she were alive and if she had somehow regained her power than this had become a different kind of hunt entirely; with a far more dangerous and intriguing query.

There was more blood on the rooftop than Charon was expecting. Aside from the large pool, there were spatters all over the area. This battle must have been epic and yet someone, somehow, had kept it quiet.
At least four different beings had bled in this space. None of them were human, but one was definitely female. He brought that sample to his lips and tasted it. It burned in his mouth with a familiar cinnamon-like sting; igniting an almost irresistible desire for more.

Oh it was her. He'd never expected to experience that addictive flavor again. Yet here it was.

He forced himself to leave the rest of the sample untasted and brought his full talent to bear on the remaining blood; learning all he could. She was alive, with at least some power intact. She was and yet, was not, mortal any longer. This confused him. He could not tell her location, so she was obviously strong enough to block that.

It didn't matter. With this little bit of blood, he could send a bevy of creatures to bring her to him.

This was his chance. A chance to have the very thing he thought he'd destroyed because it was forever out of his reach. He would not make that mistake again. He would no longer settle for just her power. He would have the whole goddess. And in her weakened state, he would control her mind, body and soul.

Luna was screaming.

Horrible, pain filled cries that pierced straight to the heart. The agonizing screams of a tormented soul for whom there is no escape.

Donatello was awake instantly. His worst fears fully realized. Something had found it's way to them, evaded their patrols, and now she was suffering. Suffering horribly.

He vaulted out of bed and shot out the door, snatching up his bo from where it rested against the frame. He didn't pause, leaping straight over the railing of the balcony to land directly in front of the infirmary as the heart-rending cries went on and on.

Raphael was right behind him, a knife in his hand.

They burst through the door together, Raph going high with an immense jump and summersault; Don sliding in low on his knees, bent so far back his shell scraped across the floor. Neither where an enemy would expect them to be. Raph landed easily on the stainless table and immediately began fending off dark flying creatures that were almost, but not quite, bats.

If bats were the size of chickens and had talons as big as Don's hands.

"Luna!" Raph gasped in horror, as his gaze fastened on her still shrieking form.

A number of the creatures gripped Luna's arms, legs, and night clothes; straining to lift her towards a glowing portal that hovered above them. She struggled to break free. Her body was coated in silver but every time she she attempted to direct her power at the creatures her form was rocked with horrible spasms. It looked as if she were being electrocuted.

Rage blossomed and fire was born as Raph growled, "Let 'er go!"

He concentrated and the creatures nearest him began to crash down in flames. It was hard to tell how many of them there were. For each one Raph destroyed several more swooped in through the portal to take their place.
Don's eyes rapidly scanned Luna as he slid across the floor searching for the source of the current. If there was electricity running through her, he couldn't touch her without falling prey to it as well. Don reared up on his knees, still several feet away and took out a group of creatures with three sharp strokes of his bo. His lips thinned in satisfaction as they flew across the room.

At least these creatures have some sort of physical substance I can affect.

But Luna was still screaming; he had to help her. Finally he saw it, just as Michelangelo and Leonardo entered the fray. Around Luna's neck was a strange metal collar with a large green jewel in the front. The portal throbbed in time with the light in that stone.

Intuitively he understood. Luna was the power source. The energy she was releasing in her struggle to get free was not only generating the portal above her, but also causing the electric shock. She had to stop the flow.

Donatello had no way to get through to her. She could not hear him over her own screams. He couldn't speak to her soul like his brother's could and any moment now she might kill herself; her heart stopped forever by her own power.

Don saw only one way to end this. Though it practically killed him to do it, he swung his bo around her, reversed his strike, and landed a carefully gauged blow to the back of Luna's head; knocking her unconscious.

Leonardo watched in alarm, countering his own attackers, as Donnie raised his bo. He had seen Don perform this move before and could not believe he would follow through. But the trajectory was easy enough to read. Don was going to strike her.

"No!" shouted Leo, but he was too far away to stop it. Mikey and Raph spun to look just as Don's weapon collided with her head.

Luna went limp. The portal flickered and went out. The remaining creatures supporting her blurred into smoke and disappeared; she fell. Donatello dropped his weapon, launched himself into the air, and caught her. He landed hard, going down on one knee to absorb the impact and cushioning Luna with his arms.

Don looked up from his kneeling position to find Leo's katana at his throat. He froze.

"Raph," Leo barked in command, territorial rage in his eyes, "Take her."

Raphael swooped in like a stooping hawk and snatched Luna from Don's arms. Don released her quickly and swallowed hard. He locked his gaze with Leo's but said nothing. Mikey's eyes flitted to Don's face then back to Leo's.

Don remained motionless. Leo wasn't looking at him sternly like a brother who'd done something wrong; Leo was looking at him ruthlessly like an enemy who deserved to die.

Mikey approached them slowly, giving Leo plenty of time to see him coming, before he reached up and rested a hand on Leo's shoulder.

"You don't want to do this. Donnie is your bro and your best friend," Mikey reminded him quietly. "He loves Luna. He wouldn't have hurt her unless it was the only solution."

"He should never hurt Luna," Leo hissed, but his eyes were less piercing; less certain. Mikey drew back his hand in surprise.
"I'm sure there was a very good reason…" Mikey trailed off turning to Don.

"She was killing herself," Don said simply.

"That's a good reason," Mikey said, nodding in agreement.

"How?" Leo spat, his tone still hostile. The sword in his hand did not waver.

"There's a collar around her neck. It looked like it was draining her to produce that portal and shocking her." Don said. "The more power she poured into her defence the worse the effect. In another moment, her heart would have stopped."

"Raph?" Leo called roughly, asking his brother to check Luna's neck. Leo refused to look away from where he held Don at sword point.

Raphael had laid Luna gently out on the treatment table and was now examining the collar; trying to see how it worked.

"She has got something 'round 'er neck. I haven't seen it before. It don't look like jewelry," Raph said. He fiddled with it a moment longer. "It won't come off."

With Raph's confirmation, the anger died in Leo's gaze. Draining away as quickly as it had appeared. Horror at what he had almost done took it's place. His sword fell to the floor with a clatter and he dropped to his knees beside Don; his head bowed.

"I am so sorry, Donatello," Leo said. "You have never given me any reason to distrust your actions. I- I completely lost it. I must have been out of my mind, to even think that..."

Leonardo felt a gentle hand on his shoulder, stopping his words. He looked up to find nothing but forgiveness and warmth in Donatello's eyes.

"She is your mate," Don reassured him quietly. "None of us have experienced that before. There was no way you could have known, or prepared for, that kind of rage."

"I didn't see Raph holding a sword to your throat, Don," Leo said sadly.

"D'at's only 'cause ya beat me to it bro," Raph spoke gruffly from the other side of the table.

"Sorry Don," he added sheepishly.

Donatello smiled back. Two apologies from his older brothers in one day. That had to be one for the record books.

"S'okay Raph. I'm just glad I could stop her before it was too late. Now, let's see about getting that collar off. Then Leo can heal her. I'm sure there are some internal burns," Don said, worriedly.

Leo's hand on his shoulder stopped Don in his tracks as he stepped to Luna's side.

"Tomorrow, Don," Leo said, decisively. "As long as she's fit to move around, we'll take her to get those parts. We can't put it off, we need that shield."

Don nodded grimly. There was no other way. Tomorrow they would take her home.
Donatello was sweating. He didn't usually perspire much, not even during training, but right now he felt as if he was cooking under a heat lamp. He was nervous. No, not just nervous. Downright afraid.

Luna lay, still unconscious, across the large wood desk in the middle of his lab. He'd had Leonardo move her out of the infirmary when it became apparent that getting this gods-be-damned collar off her neck wasn't going to be as simple as he'd hoped.

He needed full access to all his equipment and scanners if he was going to find a way to remove it without hurting her. It was a clever piece of work, with all kinds of boobie traps built in to trip up the unwary or desperate.

Don panicked when he found the first one. General contact with any part of the collar didn't seem to do much, but pressing intently on the wrong surfaces when trying to remove it caused a sharp, telescopic spike to shoot out and pierce his hand.

Leonardo was able to heal the damage in moments but Don couldn't shake the fear of what would have happened if that spike had faced inward instead of out. If it pierced Luna's neck before they got the collar off then she could bleed to death on the desk in front of them.

Leo wouldn't be able to stop it because any energy directed at Luna was absorbed by the damned thing. Don had stopped touching it at that point and run a number of different scanners over it instead, trying to examine the internal workings.

He'd already run a metal analysis, but it was some unknown alloy. Nothing seemed to be able to cut through it. His diamond blade wouldn't even scratch it.

He had to hurry because when Luna began to stir, he had a pretty good idea what was going to happen. It was very likely that she would awaken in a panic and send a huge burst of power across a broad spectrum.

It could kill her outright if the collar reflected it back to her or it could level half of the city.

Right now, either was a distinct possibility.

Don rubbed the sweat out of his eyes with his forearm as he examined the latest scan of the device carefully. Beyond it, he could see Raphael fidgeting around; pacing up and down.

"Where'd it come from?" Raph blurted to Leo as the minutes wore on.

"Who knows?" Leo replied. "At this point Don could declare goblins popped up out of the earth and snapped it on her and I'd believe it. All that matters to me is getting it off her."

Raph shook his head, muttering to himself; unsatisfied with that answer.

"I mean," Raph clarified a moment later, "What's it for? D'ose bat things weren't really attacking her. They were tryin' ta kidnap her."

"It seems designed to do two things," Don said quietly. "One, to discourage her from using her power by creating a feedback loop in her body. That's the electric charge she was getting."
The second is to use her as a battery and provide instructions for what to do with that power. Just like the computer program we're going to write for the crystal shield. That's how it was generating the portal.

"That sounds like a pretty specific purpose," Leo said, thoughtfully. "Do you think it would have worked on her if she was a full goddess?"

"Um... no," Don said, after a brief moment's thought. "From what I've seen, the gods manipulate and absorb energy quite easily so the feedback loop wouldn't work and I'm not sure it would stay on her anyway. She could just phase out of it."

"What are the chances that something like that was already laying about somewhere?" Leo pressed. "I mean, would it have been a device they already had on hand to control mortals?"

"Slim to none, I would say," Don replied. "I don't think they could use mortals as a battery the way they are using her. What are you getting at Leo?"

"Whoever constructed that collar not only knows she's alive but they know about her current situation," Leo said grimly. "They know she's partly mortal and they know she's got some power. But they're not trying to kill her; they're trying to control her."

Raph's face hardened even further. But Don's lit up.

"Control!" Don breathed. "They have to be in contact with the collar to send it instructions. That means it has to have some sort of receiver. Maybe I can hack into it."

He rushed to the nearest terminal and began to type rapidly.

Nothing was heard for a few long seconds except the clicking of Don's keyboard and the steady beep, beep of the heart monitor attached to Luna. Suddenly that beeping picked up speed, and Luna's eyelids began to flutter.

"Leo! Raph!" Don shouted in alarm from the terminal, "See if you can reach her mind. She's waking up, and if she panics... she can't use her energy!"

They both rushed to her side. Raph wasn't sure what to do. Luna had always spoken to his mind first but it looked like Leo was meditating so he quickly followed.

Leo had her right hand so Raph took her left and closed his eyes; trying to calm his breathing. Finding the constantly flowing energy of their bond was easy. He could feel her thoughts stirring and began to project his own at her. He tried for reassuring but it probably came off as more urgent than anything else.

Luna. Can ya' hear me? Everything's gonna be alright now. Yer not unda attack. Don't use ya' power. I need ya' to keep it tagetha' for me. Leo an' me, we're both here.

Everything's gonna be fine. Wake up now, sweetheart. Just open ya' eyes and talk ta' me, 'kay? No need for any fireworks. Let's save those for lata'

He repeated over and over to her.

Leo's message was a bit more coherent.

Dear one, the attack is over. All is well. Donnie stopped those things from taking you. You are safe. You are home. I am here with you. Raphael is here as well. I'm sure you can hear him. Do not...
strike out. Save your energy. Please be calm.

Her breathing picked up and her pulse began to race. The beeping from the heart monitor was becoming closer and closer together. Neither received anything but chaos from her thoughts.

"Guys you have to get through to her," Don said urgently.

Leo stroked her hair and leaned in close to her ear.

"Luna," he said softly, "Everything is fine, please be calm."

But it wasn't helping. Her power output was steadily building. Silver coated her skin and the jewel in the collar began to glow. Any moment now the convulsions would begin and her response would be to use even more power.

Electric current ran up Leonardo's arm. His muscles spasmed and he was thrown back from the table. Raphael growled as the current hit him as well. His natural fire immunity seemed to help him tough it out and he tightened his hand carefully around hers. He would not let her go.

She shuddered as pain began to rip through her body.

"Luna! Please!" Leo begged, returning rapidly to her side.

Raphael had seen enough. He had to get her attention.

*What were you supposed to do with hysterical people?*

Something unexpected. Shaking or slapping would not be the answer here, but he couldn't bring himself to do that to her anyway.

*What would be the last thing she would expect from him during a battle?*

Raphael leaned in and picked her up; letting his smoky scent surround her. He wrapped his strong arms about her and pressed his lips gently to hers. He made the kiss as long and tender as he could, ignoring his brothers and the pain he felt from the current still flowing through them both. She relaxed almost involuntarily against his chest.

*Raph? What- what's going on...*

It was the first semi-coherent thought from the chaos surrounding her mind.

*Luna! Raph interrupted her.*

*Hit the kill switch would ya? Ya' hurtin' me.*

Instantly her silver light flickered and went out.

In the end, Donatello was able to hack into the collar's interface. After that, it didn't take him long to find the code combination needed to remove the device. He laid it aside carefully for additional study. Maybe he would be able to reuse some of the technology on the crystal shield; once the other parts were obtained. Besides, now that it was not *on* Luna, he had another problem to deal with.

Leo's bottled up rage.
Don had to admit that Raphael's plan had worked and his quick thinking probably saved all of them, and a large portion of the city, from being demolished. But he couldn't help but wish there had been another way.

During the kiss, Leonardo had gone absolutely rigid with pain and anger. He held himself motionless in a heroic display of pure willpower, but his eyes showed a stormy mix of emotions. It was terrible to watch, and when Luna ceased struggling and fell limp in Raph's arms, Leo's eyes went flat and dead. Once the danger to his beloved mate had passed, Leo quietly excused himself and left the room.

At least they didn't declare war in the lab. Don thought. Sometimes you just have to be grateful for the small things.

Of course Leo wasn't the only one whose emotions were stirred by that very public display of affection. So far Luna had been discreet with her soulmates; so none of them had to face the hard truth that she was one to their many. Seeing Raphael be so intimate with her, in his own lab, disturbed Donnie and kindled an ache deep inside. It was painful but he was no stranger to unrequited love. He could try to focus on the joy of having her in his family instead.

Unfortunately the situation was more complicated for his older brothers.

Raph had stayed by Luna's side until Don got the collar off; then he'd taken her back to bed, promising to remain on guard so she could rest. Which reminded Don that more permanent sleeping arrangements needed to be made for her. She shouldn't have to stay in the infirmary forever. Don sighed, put that on his to-do list, and went searching for Leo.

Concern began to grow when Leo wasn't found in any of his normal haunts. The dojo was empty. No tea brewed in the kitchen. His meditation area was barren; not even a trace of incense to show it had been used. His room, though meticulous, was also empty; the bed covers still thrown back from their rude awakening several hours earlier. Don checked his lab again and passed by his computer to check the door monitors. None of them had been triggered recently so Leo had to be in here somewhere.

Don paused and checked the computer again. He was sure he hadn't left that particular program open. In fact he didn't think he'd logged into that application in days but with more pressing matters at hand, he just shook his head and logged out again. He shut down the monitor, killed the lights, and left the lab to continue his search. Maybe Mikey had seen where Leo had gone.

The moment he was gone the computer screen slowly glowed to life once more as violet text began to flow in waves across it.

Leonardo sat quietly in a rarely used store room and sorted carefully through several boxes of items. A small, but growing, pile of memorabilia lay in front of him. Small reminders of happier family times from the past. He paused and gazed with great affection at a lopsided framed photo. It was a picture of the four of them when they were little, clustered around their Master. Slightly askew because, if Leo remembered correctly, the camera Donnie found and painstakingly repaired had slipped off the pipe it was balanced on just as the timer took the photo.

Still, Splinter peered out of the frame and saw straight into Leonardo's soul. His eyes just as piercing as Leo remembered. He wished he could read an answer in those eyes for his current predicament.
Leo sighed and added the photo to his pile. He didn't know what to do and that was a poor state for the plan maker and leader to be in. His instinct in the lab had been to lunge for Raph and, if he was being honest, beat him to a pulp. It would have felt good in the moment, but it wouldn't accomplish anything in the long run. Besides, he had conceded that right when he allowed Fina to bond Raph.

And he knew that Luna loved Raphael, even if it was in a different way than she loved him. Fighting would merely have increased her pain. Something he was determined not to do. No matter which way he examined the situation, one of them was bound to be hurt. Given a choice, he would always take the pain to spare her.

But once his anger had flared and dissipated, the despair began to creep in. He couldn't stand to stay and watch. While he rejoiced that his brother was able to reach her and stop her headlong rush toward destruction, he felt vulnerable and distraught that he, her first love, had not been able to. It seemed that fate had destined them to compete in all things, even love.

He gathered his small pile of reminders. If he spread them around prominently maybe he would be able to remember the happier times and resist this urge to remove his rival. Permanently.

Hours later, after everyone had grabbed some much needed sleep, Donatello, Leonardo and Luna made their way carefully through the many vast layers of the New York City underground. Don led the way, taking a circuitous route comprised of sewer, subway, and maintenance tunnels. Luna and Leo followed holding hands and trailing behind him. When they had to climb, leap, or maneuver through dangerous areas, Leo would carry her or Don would boost her up from below to Leo's waiting arms.

Both brothers were wary and remained on the alert for any approaching danger. They were taking no chances with her, even though she had enough power, now that she was not confined by the collar, to take out most potential threats.

Luna was excited. They were taking her to see a part of their past; and she was anxious to experience one of their former homes. They had several. Their own history was far from peaceful and at one time or another, each of their previous residences had been exposed to enemies, forcing them to move on to new locations.

Mikey and Raph were taking a different route through the sewers but Luna knew they would meet up at the old lair later. Leo had them on some kind of secret mission they refused to divulge, but Mikey had promised to regale her with all kinds of tales from their childhood.

This particular location was where they had spent the majority of their teenage years and where Donnie learned to drive. Just before they split up, Michelangelo had admitted in a dramatic stage whisper that this was the last place they truly called home as a family. When they had moved on it had been without their Master; so they didn't revisit it often or without cause.

This time, cause was an interesting piece of alien technology they had once used as an elevator to the surface. According to Donatello, this elevator was once powered by a crystal, though the crystal itself had long since been destroyed. Luna was hoping to test the remaining shards. If they matched the feel of the deposit containing the new energy node, than Don could probably salvage enough of the technology from the elevator to make the energy converter they needed for the new shield.

But despite her excitement, Luna was not oblivious to the behavior of those around her. As they drew closer to their old residence, Donatello began to tense up. While there had been many happy
memories made here, their exodus had been violent. Returning now stirred intense feelings of unease.

Don exchanged a look with Leo and saw that he was not alone in his discomfort. Leonardo was remembering the past as well. His brows were drawn in and his eyes were fierce. Even though both knew the ones responsible for their previous devastation were long since gone; this was the site of the families current divide.

Bringing Luna here, someone they held so dear, felt like a betrayal of trust. If Donatello believed in omens than bringing her here was a bad one. Thrusting her into their families conflicted past seemed to invite even more danger, this time of their own making.

Neither said anything, however, as Luna entered the old front door and stared around like one enraptured. Leo began to lead her through the old floorplan and tried to lighten the mood by telling stories of their adventures growing up. Donnie carefully cleared piles of debris from the wall entrance nearest the elevator.

Luna peered around wide eyed, taking in the two story vaulted great room, the large support beams with strange hieroglyphs, and the water pool in the center. Parts of it were in ruins now; the result of some great battle. Huge chunks of stone and steel were scattered about, but the structure seemed sound enough.

A tendril of power sent into one of the strange metal supports confirmed it's alien origin. There were particles in the metal that were definitely not native to Earth.

The architecture was unusual, but Luna could see the appeal of such a place for four young, rambunctious boys. Their master must have rejoiced in that much open area for them to expend their energy in.

Leo took her on a tour, explaining how they had used each section. Many were the same as in their current abode. The great room served as dojo, living area, and hangout room. A limited kitchen had been offset in an alcove, along with Donnie's old lab area and workroom. The four boys had each occupied a room on the second level.

But there was another door on the first floor that was closed and Leonardo seemed to veer away from it out of habit. Luna noticed that his jaw clenched and he swallowed hard as they walked by it. She laid a gentle hand on his arm and he stopped, but did not face her.

"Leo," she asked softly, "what was behind this door?"

"Those were Master Splinter's rooms," he said, his voice reverent but sad.

"You miss him so much."

It was a statement of fact. Luna could feel the ache flowing from him. He finally turned to face her. His expression solemn.

"We all do. We don't really understand why he left but someday he will return," Leo said, quietly but with conviction. "He has not abandoned us, his path has merely been... different from ours."

Luna nodded.

"I would like to know him," she said. "Would you mind if I had a look?"

"There's nothing much to see in there now," Leo said.
"That's ok," Luna replied, carefully. "I can learn a lot from the energy left in the space. Would you like to see?"

Leonardo nodded and Donatello, overhearing, drifted over to watch.

Luna walked over, slid the door open, and entered the room with great respect. It was mostly an open space with a curved ceiling and stone floors. Another smaller room, partitioned off the back, appeared to have been a bathroom at one time.

Luna walked into the center of the space, leaving the brothers waiting at the door. She bowed reverently and reached out to tap the energy in the walls. She found a startling amount of power sleeping quietly there. Each wall contained deep seated threads in all four of the turtles colors.

Around and around this room they wrapped; held fast with the strength of profound, if prepubescent, emotions. But also present was another color. Threads of a rich green were wound tightly throughout; binding the other four into a complete whole.

She had felt this presence before but their current home only held it in small amounts on certain objects. These walls were permeated with it, filled with personality and impressions from the past. It should not take very much to draw the memories out.

As Luna worked her will upon the power, asking with humble deference to see those visions, the space began to warm and the walls emitted a low pitched hum. Between one moment and the next the room was filled with life. Furnishings appeared, candles emitted a soft, yellow glow and directly in front of Luna there was a small Japanese table with a multitude of colorful, mismatched cushions set for tea.

Behind the table sat their Master.

She had seen him before in his son's thoughts but those memories had not captured his incredible vitality. He was, indeed, a rat hybrid but his fur was soft looking, well groomed and slightly styled. He was clothed in a comfortable old robe, but it was covered with a wide silver sash and badge. He held himself with great dignity; his paws folded gently in his lap. A walking stick lay on the floor nearby.

He sat now in silent meditation; eyes closed. The tea remained untouched in front of him. A steaming pot awaiting a visitor.

Twin gasps from behind Luna made her turn. Leonardo and Donatello had dropped to their knees in the doorway, mouths open in shock.

"Sensei," Leonardo breathed, barely above a whisper.

Luna turned back and examined Splinter again. He seemed older than the last image she had seen in Leo's mind. That was strange. He should be younger and interacting with young vision versions of his sons.

The vision of Splinter opened his eyes and seemed to examine her intently. That was also wrong. Figments of history could not interact with members of the present.

"At last," he sighed with a smile.

He looked past her toward the door and spoke with a warm, familiar, accent.

"Leonardo. Donatello. You may enter. Please, join us for tea and introduce me to your friend and
mate."
Master Splinter's face was kind and full of compassion as Luna hesitated in front of him.

"Do not fear, my dear," Splinter smiled softly. "I may look fearsome but this is only an illusion."

Leonardo laughed, mostly from shock, as he entered the room to join them.

"Appearance is something you don't have to concern yourself with Master," Leo said as he wrapped his arm gently around Luna's waist. She clasped her hand over his and leaned her head easily on his shoulder. It still blew him away that she was so comfortable around him.

"This is my mate," Leo said proudly, "Luna Heliades, the most incredible, kind, and beautiful woman on Earth."

Luna blushed and looked down. This was not how she planned on meeting her soulmates' father.

"It is a great honor to meet you sir. I did not realize my humble request would summon your consciousness. I was merely hoping to get to know you better through the memories held in this place. I am sorry if I have pulled you away from something of import," she said sincerely.

"Not at all, Miss Heliades. Nothing is more important than family. I have missed my sons dearly. Had I been able, I would have contacted them long ago," Splinter replied. He climbed to his feet and slowly paced around the table to reach them; his eyes shining with happiness.

"If I may ask, how did you know Leonardo and I are mates?" Luna asked, full of curiosity. Her own family didn't believe her yet Splinter knew the moment he appeared.

Splinter chuckled good naturedly.

"I know my sons well, Miss Heliades. It has been a while since I last saw Leonardo but I can still read his body language. He has always had a protective nature, but it is the way he orients himself towards you at all times that gave it away. It's as if you are the sun and he must, by his very nature, orbit around you," Splinter replied.

Leonardo gave her a small sideways squeeze, thinking his father did not really know how true that statement was, then dropped his grip and went to embrace his father. As Leo approached him, Splinter's face fell.

"I am sorry my son. This vision tests the limit of my power. I do not have the strength to hold a physical presence here," he said.

Leonardo's excited smile faded and his eyes dimmed a little. Luna stepped forward and touched Leo's arm. He looked at her questioningly and she held up her right hand and wiggled her fingers at him; lifting her brows in inquiry.

May I? she asked, silently.

She did not want to reveal her powers if Leo thought his father would be uncomfortable.

Leonardo smiled.

Of course, thank you love. Leo replied.
Luna turned to Splinter, clasped her hands together in front of her and bowed formally.

"Hamato Yoshi, Father of my mates," she said, softly but with extreme respect, "Please allow me to assist you."

She let her right hand begin to glow until it was coated in a pale silver light. She kept it small, contained, so as not to startle him and reached out as if to take his hand. Splinter smiled at her indulgently but did not reach for her in return.

"Thank you for the offer, little one. I foresaw that you would be powerful and I know you have been teaching my sons, but it would take an enormous amount of energy too..."

He broke off suddenly as Luna let the silver glow abruptly spread across her whole body; emitting a powerful light. Her hair burst into flames, her eyes began to glow an electric blue, and energy snapped and crackled around her.

"I have more than enough," her reply reverberated through the open spaces of the old lair.

Splinter's eyes widened in surprise and he stepped back a pace before controlling himself. Donatello laughed as he finally recovered from his own shock and joined them. It was rare to see his master flummoxed by anything.

"She's impressive, isn't she Master?" Donnie said.

Splinter's gaze darted to Donatello as he spoke.

"Most impressive, Donatello. I assume there is an explanation," Splinter replied, somewhat evenly.

"She's a goddess, Master," Leo said simply.

"Ancient Greek," Donnie chimed in.

Splinter's sharp eyes darted between his sons trying to decide if they were joking, then widened again when he decided they were not.

"I would be honored, sir, if you would accept my gift," Luna spoke again, all of her power echoing in her voice.

Splinter's eyes narrowed for a fraction of a second and then he smiled.

"Of course," he said with a small nod.

She stepped close to him and embraced his visionary form. Power flowed between them and his body solidified. As soon as she finished, Luna dimmed her glow and stood back, human looking once again.

Splinter examined his solid paws and arms for one moment in disbelief then darted forward and wrapped an arm around each of his sons, who collapsed to their knees.

"Father," Leonardo's voice was fervent as they embraced.

Donatello just laid his head on Splinter's shoulder and pushed his forehead against his father's cheek as he had done when he was very small, seeking reassurance. Both had tears standing in their eyes.

"My sons," Splinter breathed, his voice full of love and pride.
Luna stood quietly against the wall watching. With a brief twist of thought, she made the rest of the furnishings solid; they might as well have a comfortable place for their reunion. Now all we need are the rest of the players. She reached for Raphael.

*Raphael? Dear one?*

*Ya’ ok sweetheart? His reply was immediate and concerned. We can be there in five...*

*I'm fine, she reassured him, but there is somebody here who wants to see you.*

*Someone else is in da old lair? His tone was cold.*

*This somebody you'll want to see. Bring Mikey. Hurry. She said urgently.*

*We're on our way. Ya' just stay put. Leo and Donnie are there with ya' right? Raph asked worriedly.*

*They're busy at the moment. She confessed*

*Damn it! I neva' should have let Leo talk me inta splittin' up. But I neva' thought for a moment Leo'd find sometin' that would distract him from taken care of ya'.*

Luna laughed softly.

*Just wait and see.*

Raph's reply was a wordless growl that spoke volumes.

Minutes later there was a rumble as the front door powered open again. Leo was on his feet in an instant, swords drawn, blocking the doorway. Donatello was right behind him; bo ready for action. Splinter merely raised a brow and resumed his seat behind the table.

"Stand down, my sons," he ordered. "It is only your brothers."

"Luna?" Raph roared, pelting into the main room.

"In here!" she called.

Raph marched over to their Master's old quarters and exchanged hard looks with Leo in the doorway. Mikey ignored them both and pushed by, going straight to Luna where she stood against the wall.

"Luna? You ok? Raph said you needed us in a hurry!" Michelangelo said. He grabbed both her hands in his and his eyes raked her from head to toe confirming she was ok.

"I'm fine. I told Raph I was fine," she replied, a bit exasperated.

"It is good that you are all so concerned about Miss Heliades' well being," Splinter spoke, "But do you not have a greeting for your father as well?"

Dead silence fell as Raph's eyes snapped to their Master. Mikey turned his head in slow motion; disbelief written all over his expressive face. Each had been so concerned with getting to Luna, they hadn't even noticed the rest of the space.

"Splinta?" Raph gasped. He pushed past Leo and dropped to his knees on a cushion in front of the table, stunned.
Mikey whooped in joy and bounded over to Splinter, flopping bonelessly down next to him and throwing his arms lovingly around his father's waist. Splinter smiled.

"Michelangelo," he said softly, placing his paw on Mikey's head. "I have missed your exuberance."

"And Raphael," Splinter measured him with his gaze. "You have grown strong and controlled my son. I am proud of all of your accomplishments.

Please be seated, all of you. It seems we have much to discuss," Splinter said.

It didn't take long for them to settle into a comfortable ring around the table. Mikey stayed with Splinter on one side; Donnie, Raph and Leo sat on the other. Luna sat nestled snugly between her two soulmates.

Splinter poured the tea and they all took a moment to gaze around at each other in wonder.

"It is fitting that this room, which saw our separation, should be the location of our reunion," Splinter said at last.

"I know that you have all been affected by the divide in our family. Each in different ways; but you must understand that what I have done was necessary for us to remain together in the future," he sighed heavily.

"It is time for explanations, but for this I must first speak of the past.

I do not know how much my sons have told you, Miss Heliades, of our family history but I began life as a human before I received my present form. As a human, I suffered from psychic visions and dreams. When I was mutated the strength and clarity of these visions increased; but that change came at a cost. Each vision took its toll on my body and I would lie ill for days after each one.

Many years ago, when my sons were all still small enough to share a nest with me, I had a frightening flash of foresight. A dark figure threatened not only our unique family but also the balance of power in the human world. I saw that we would need to fight this evil with everything that we had in order to save ourselves and to protect those living above us."

Leonardo nodded along to Master Splinter's words. He had obviously heard this story before.

"That vision was so intense, I would have died without the attentive care of my sons. I was so ill I could not raise myself out of our nest but Leonardo and Raphael ranged far and wide searching for food and clean water; Donatello and Michelangelo stayed behind and tended to me," Splinter continued.

Luna smiled gently at all of them. She could imagine the determination on their little faces as they scurried around nursing their father back to health.

"Once I recovered, I realized that I had to equip my sons with the skills they would need to fight this great evil. That is when I began teaching them the secret arts of ninjutsu," he said.

"And we were awesome at it, sis!" Mikey quipped.

"Yes Michelangelo. You four excelled at the training; far surpassing all the human students I had trained in my past," Splinter said. "By the time they were teenagers, I felt a dark presence arrive in the city and I was certain the days of my vision had come.

Though I did my best to protect my sons, eventually they were forced to venture into the outside
world to face that darkness alone.

I taught them to embrace the shadows, to strike hard and fade away, leaving no trace, and this they did, over and over again. Chipping away at the dangerous power I could sense lurking in the world above.

At last a confrontation was unavoidable and the enemy was revealed as a dark remnant of my own past. A demon of a man by the name of Oroku Saki."

"He took a new name in New York. He went by da Shredder," Raphael said.

"He became our nemesis," Leonardo added. "We faced him many times. Each time rejoicing in his defeat only to discover later that he had somehow escaped his fate. But his reign was finally, definitely, ended about 10 years ago."

"I rejoiced with my sons and we lived peacefully," Splinter took up the narrative again, "until the day the remaining warriors of the Shredder's army located this lair."

Splinter paused drawing a great lungful of air, as if afraid to go on.

"They came at us in force," Leonardo supplied.

"They whipped our butts," Mikey said.

"Master Splinta' was sick and couldn't fight," Raph said.

Donnie was oddly silent.

"We fought hard but were driven away; into cover deep in the tunnels," Leo said.

"They searched for us for weeks before giving up," Mikey added.

"It was bad," Raph said quietly. "Donnie carried Splinta' from place ta place and desperately tried ta treat him. The rest of us split up, left false trails, an' scoured for food an' places ta camp."

"When it was finally clear we established a new home and returned here to salvage some possessions," Leo finished.

"That's when Splinta' told us he was leavin','" Raph said quietly. "Right here in this very room."

Luna could feel the uncertainty and hurt pouring off of Raphael so she leaned comfortingly towards him; creating contact between them from shoulder to hip and tilting her head onto his shoulder.

Splinter expected a violent outburst from his son at this. A demonstration of how much Raphael didn't need comfort from anyone, but Splinter's eyes widened in shock as Raphael not only accepted the gesture but nuzzled her hair with his cheek, inhaling her scent softly.

Splinter's gaze snapped to Leo as he emitted a small sigh.

Suddenly Donatello broke his silence.

"He wasn't sick," Don said softly.

"What?" Leo asked, distracted by this unknown turn in the story.
"He wasn't sick," Don repeated. He locked eyes with Luna. "He had power shock. I didn't know what it was then, but now that i've treated you several times..."

Luna's eyes grew huge.

"You had another vision?" she whispered to Splinter.

"I had the same vision," Splinter bowed his head in sorrow as his sons turned to look at him sharply. Luna was the only one who broke the tension laden silence.

"Why didn't you tell them?" she asked.

"How could I explain that the demon they had spent years hunting on my orders was not the one that was fated to destroy us? They deserved more information than I had," he sighed again. "I wrote for advice from the wise ones I knew of old. They could only suggest one thing; a consultation with the oracle."

Luna drew in her breath with a sharp hiss, her eyes narrowed, and all of them turned to face her. Splinter was fascinated that they looked to her for advice.

"The Oracle?" Raph prompted her.

"The Oracle of Delphi is a despicable creature," Luna practically spat in disgust. "A monster of the ancient world, her soul was granted immortality as long as her spirit could be transferred into a girl of the correct bloodline. She made a deal with Zeus so that bloodline was guaranteed in the mortal world for thousands of years."

"You know of her, Miss Heliades?" Splinter asked, surprised.

"Serra and I have been at odds for more years than I care to remember," Luna said with distaste. "She does have a remarkable clairvoyant ability and she can clarify events for you, but she manipulates those that come to her for assistance. There is always a catch with her."

"A catch?" Leonardo said.

"She requires a years service for every year she looks ahead for you. She plucks her petitioners off the face of the Earth and traps them in her fortress with no outside contact until their service is complete." Luna said.

"That is why we've had no word from you," Don said suddenly to Splinter, summing it all up for them. "You have been trapped with the Oracle."

"How many years have you been there?" Luna asked.

There was nothing but silence. She frowned at Splinter.

"He's been gone for seven years," Raph said.

"How many years do you have left?" she queried more quietly.

Splinter still would not answer.

"D'is is bad," Raph moaned, dropping his head in his hands. Splinter often withheld information he felt would injure his family.

Luna's eyes glittered with agitation and, with a fast hand gesture, she released Fina and Sol into the
room. Quick as a striking snake she reach blindly across the table and grasped Splinter's paw before he could move it. She felt his astonishment as he watched the flames take flight and begin to orbit around two of his sons. She heard him gasp as he absorbed her changed appearance.

"Miss Heliades? What is the meaning of this?" Splinter asked.

It is a long story for a later time. Just know I have released those who would inform your sons, and I will not reveal anything you tell me in confidence. She projected to Splinter's mind, Tell me how many years are left?

Twenty-five, Splinter admitted finally, but my lifespan will end in fifteen.

No. She declared flatly.

I have made an agreement; I will honor it. Splinter thought stiffly.

When is the danger from your vision? Luna asked.

Now. Was Splinter's soft reply.

And yet you asked her to look ahead another 25 years? Why? Luna asked, surprised.

I asked only to know when my family would be united once more. Splinter replied.

That manipulative... Your family is united now! This meeting would be your release. She chose to interpret your request as she always does; in whatever manner gives her control the longest! Luna raged.

I have suspected that for some time, Splinter sighed, but there is no one to represent me or the others she has trapped at a tribunal and that is the only way to challenge her contract.

Maybe there wasn't before, but your sons are my mates and I have claimed you all into my bloodline. Serra is not allowed to hold the gods. It voids her agreement with Zeus. Luna pondered.

Both Leonardo and Raphael as mates? Splinter thought in shock.

Luna flushed. It's a long story, and there will be plenty of time for it when we get you back. I will bring you home... father.

Splinter reached across the table silently and clasped his paw over the hand holding his own.

I have no doubt that you will, my daughter.
Tears Between Friends

Splinter's form started to blur. He and Donatello were engaged in an in depth discussion of their current plans for the shield and examining the pieces that Don had just salvaged from the elevator when it happened. Both looked to Luna to see if she could help.

Michelangelo watched as Luna got unsteadily to her feet across from him. Something in her expression was off. Her movements were stiff and her eyes were glazed and unfocused as she turned to move towards Master Splinter.

Raphael felt a sudden warmth suffuse his body and he put a hand to his chest as pain flared there. Leonardo mimicked his motion.

"Leo...Raph..." Mikey called softly as Luna started around the table, "Is Luna ok?"

Both looked up at her, just as she slumped into unconsciousness.

Mikey hadn't taken his eyes off her and leapt to his feet to break her fall as she collapsed; lowering her gently to the floor. A moment later everything around them in the room, including their Master, wavered and vanished.

Donatello was instantly at her side.

"Luna," he called to assess her. "Luna! Can you hear me?"

When he got no response, he checked her vitals. He found nothing.

"Leo! She's got no pulse! Can you do something? Or should I start CPR?" Don exclaimed.

Leonardo knelt next to them, his hands already coated in a strong blue glow. He laid both over her heart. He didn't know what the problem was but he closed his eyes in concentration and willed her heart to beat.

_Breathe love! Breathe!_ he chanted.

Leonardo felt like he was pouring water into a bucket that had no bottom. The energy he was sending into her was just disappearing with no sign of improvement. He wasn't sure he had enough to bring her back. His eyes snapped open and his brothers didn't need an emphatic gift to read the panic there.

"She needs more than I have!" Leo exclaimed.

Raphael's breath caught in his throat. Without thinking he clapped one large hand over Leo's and raised the other overhead. Donatello and Michelangelo backed off as red energy began to gather. At first it glowed softly but soon it became a beacon of flame in his palm. Raph clenched the fire in his fist and channeled its power violently through Leo and into Luna.

Her body jumped like it had been hit with a defibrillator. She coughed, drew in a breath, and lapsed back into normal respiration. Donatello reached in to measure her pulse. A strong, steady heartbeat vibrated under his fingers and he closed his eyes in relief.

"What happened?" Mikey said, bewildered.

"She over extended herself- I think," Donnie said roughly. He kept one hand on her pulse,
monitoring her closely, and carefully lifted her eyelid with the other to check her pupils. "She had
the power to keep Splinter here, but her physical body couldn't handle all the energy passing
through it. Her heart failed."

When Luna came around a little while later, she looked up from the empty floor into four identical
expressions of anxiety and concern as they all crouched around her.

Splinter, the furnishings, and everything else in the room was gone. She closed her eyes again.

"I'm sorry," Luna whispered the first thought that came into her head. "You didn't get to say
goodbye."

Raph threw his hands in the air in exasperation as anger contorted his features.

"Ya' stopped yer heart tryin' to give us time togetha' an' yer worried ya didn't give us enough?"
Raph yelled.

Fear for her sharpened his tone past what he had intended and Luna's eyes widened at his outburst.
She blinked rapidly, fighting back tears.

She had to admit, she hadn't realized how tired she'd become. She'd ignored her body's warning
signals and forgot that she was bound by the limits of mortal flesh. She'd been channeling a large
amount of energy for many hours.

But she'd done it so that her family could be whole for just a little longer.

"I'm sorry," she whispered again her eyes reflecting the hurt.

"Raph! Cool it!" Michelangelo said angrily, shoving Raphael roughly on the shoulder. "At least we
know now what happened to Splinter, and we have some chance of getting him back. She gave us
our father back. Don't you dare yell at her for it."

Raph growled and lunged toward Mikey.

"And if she'd died because of it? What then?" Raph raged.

"Stop it! Both of you," Leo said sharply, moving to separate them. "None of us realized what was
happening; not even Luna."

Donatello ignored their bickering; his eyes still fastened on Luna's face, watching her intently for
changes that might indicate further danger or relapse. She met his gaze with sad eyes; large tears
pooling at the edges to run down her pale cheeks.

"Donnie," she whispered. "Take me home."

Don glanced up at his brothers then back down to Luna. Her eyes pleaded with him to just get her
out of there; she couldn't take anymore. Without another thought, Don picked her up and cradled
her gently against his chest.

"Leo," Don called softly. "I'm taking her back."

Leo's eyes narrowed as he searched Don's face but finally he nodded once, sharply. "We'll get the
equipment you salvaged and be right behind you."

Don smiled briefly at Leonardo, despite the stress of the situation, before turning on his heel and
striding rapidly for the exit. He recognized this show of faith for what it was; Leo's way of saying
he still trusted Don completely.

Don strode into the darkness beyond the door and Luna's shoulders began to shake with silent sobs. They tore at his heart, even as he rationalized them.

*Really this is a fairly mild reaction to what she just experienced; tears and the shakes are a common response as the body goes through the phases of shock.*

"Hey- here now… hush," Donatello tried to soothe her as he walked rapidly through the tunnels. He held her closer and leaned his cheek down against the top of her head. "Everything's fine. We'll get you back where you can rest. Everything will be all right."

"I'm sorry Donnie," she sobbed, wrapping her arms around his neck.

She was not entirely sure what she was sorry for but the words seemed appropriate. She was always burdening him with her troubles.

"It's ok," he replied gently. "What's a few tears between friends?"

Her sobs eventually dwindled to quiet crying. When she finally ran out of tears, she looked up into his face. He glanced down when he felt her staring at him and his heart gave a little jolt at the fevered look in her eyes. He quickly raised his, keeping his expression gentle but resolute as he made his way with surety through the convoluted paths before him.

Luna considered him silently for a while. Donatello had always been reserved with her. He was the shy, gentle brother; hesitant to reveal his own feelings, always keeping a careful distance. But here, in this moment in time, it felt like he was opening up a little.

He held her tenderly, sheltered her, and when she gazed into his eyes she saw a glimmer of something he tried to keep hidden; a kind of puzzled desperation that tugged at her heart.

Donatello had watched over her since the moment they met, healed her physical her wounds, and addressed her emotional ones; even when it was awkward for him. He'd brought her to Leonardo. He'd resurrected her hope when she thought she had lost Michelangelo. He did not judge when she returned with Raphael.

He was the glue that held everything together. She trusted him completely. She wanted him to know how important he was before something befell her that he couldn't fix.

"Donatello," she began. She fidgeted a little because she knew it was hard for him to take a compliment, especially from her, but feeling she needed to tell him anyway.

He stiffened slightly at her use of his full name and the serious tone of her voice. Just minutes ago she'd called him Donnie, now they were back to formal terms of address. She fidgeted unhappily in his arms.

*What have I done?... I've made her uncomfortable, that's what. I've taken her away from her soulmates when she was at her most vulnerable and held her close like I had the right to do so. No wonder she's pulling away.*

He forced himself to loosen his hold on her, even though it went against every instinct he had.

"Are you feeling better Luna? Do you want to try walking for a bit?" Don asked quietly.

He set her on her feet and stepped away quickly without waiting for her answer. She stood,
weaving a little, looking at him in confusion. He watched carefully as she took a step and a wave of dizziness swept over her. She reached out to steady herself, but she didn't lean on the wall.

She moved toward him and he couldn't stay his hand. Not when her tiny one was searching for his in the darkness. He reached out for her and she gripped his hand tightly, practically falling into his embrace. He steadied her, then dropped his arms.

She stared up at him in the dim light. Something was wrong, why was he suddenly acting like she had some contagious disease?

"Donnie?"

He shuddered slightly when she said his name. There in the darkness, he found himself face to face with his own feelings for her. It may have been subconscious, but tonight he had manipulated his way into being alone with her and fooled himself, for a short moment, that she might care for him too. All from a few chance chosen words. A nickname.

\textit{I should've known. I DID know. I didn't stand a chance. I've done this to myself. And worse, I've frightened her.}

"Luna, I'll call Leo or Raph," Don said roughly, "They can't be too far behind us. I don't have to carry you back."

\textit{That should reassure her.}

She shrunk away, stung. Why would Donnie want to abandon her like this?

"What have I done?" she asked timidly.

"What?" Donatello was startled to hear her echo his own thoughts.

"How have I offended?" she said, her voice anguished. "I am sorry, whatever it was I didn't mean it. Please don't push me away. Just tell me so I won't do it again."

Chills ran down his spine and Don stared at her, flabbergasted.

\textit{Could I have misread the situation that badly? She wasn't trying to tell me to back off?}

As they stared at each other in silence, the rest of the family caught up with them.

Leo looked between the two of them, narrowed his eyes at Luna's tear streaked face, measured the tense silence, and said:

"Is there a problem here?"

Leo's blue-grey eyes were steely as he met Don's gaze; his voice held a note that said "Was I wrong to trust you with the most precious thing on this planet?" Don flushed.

"No, no problem," Luna said quietly. "Donatello carried me earlier when I was too upset, but I wanted to try my legs; see if I could walk. Now that I am standing, though, I think I am too dizzy to get far. Would you mind?"

She stepped shakily towards Leonardo and held out her arms. Leo instantly wrapped one of his around her waist to hold her upright, and thrust the equipment he was carrying into Don's startled grasp.
"Anytime," Leo said softly into her hair as he scooped her up with both arms.

"You ok?" he added in a whisper, as she placed her arms around his neck and buried her face in his collarbone.

"Fine," she replied softly. "I just want to go home and rest."

Leo strode off with purpose and called back over his shoulder to Don.

"You should be careful with that. It's one of a kind."

Don knew, very well, that he wasn't talking about the technology.
Raphael hadn't needed Leonardo's worried lecture this morning to tell him that something wasn't right with Luna. He was bonded to her after all. He could feel it just as well as Leo could. Or rather, not feel it. She had clamped down on their connection. Cut them off from her emotions.

It had started when they brought her back from the old lair. Leo had left her to rest in the infirmary and she slept for 36 hours straight. Over breakfast, Michelangelo asked Donatello if she was ok; but all he got was a sad shrug before Don mumbled "I hope so" and hurried back to his lab.

Mikey exchanged surprised looks with Raphael.

"He isn't checking on her?" Mikey asked. "I mean, she just basically had a heart attack, right?"

"His main priority right now is to get that shield up and running as soon as possible." Leonardo said. "I'm watching over her. She just needs rest."

Leo turned and left, tea in hand, to return to her.

Raphael furrowed his brow. "I know Leo's got d'at healin' thing now, but I'd still feel better if Don was keepin' an eye on 'er."

Mikey agreed.

A little later, when Leo went to check on the shield progress, Mikey made her a tray of food and tiptoed in to check on her. She was asleep, so he left it with her and quietly let himself out again.

Raph brought the tray back to the kitchen hours later when he stopped by to see if she was ok. She'd set it out in the hall untouched. When he'd tried to look in on her, the door was locked; something she'd never done. She wouldn't answer his knock.

Not that a locked door would stop a family of ninjas if they wanted to get in, but it was an obvious signal that she wanted to be left alone. So they worried quietly but tried to respect it.

That was yesterday. This morning, there had been an argument behind that closed door; followed shortly by Fina and Sol being evicted from the room. The brothers were equal parts shocked and concerned. They didn't know who she was arguing with. Another family member? Sol and Fina? None of them could really make out what it was about.

Leo had tried to speak with her, but all she did was mutter "I'm fine" through the door; refusing to see him.

Raph retreated to his room for a few hours, but was unable to stay away. He finally sat in the doorway so he could watch over the infirmary below. Eventually Fina floated up to stay beside him. Raph's temper finally got the best of him and he broke the silence.

"Ok, Fina, listen up," Raph snapped. "I wanna know what's goin' on with 'er and I wanna know now."

\textit{luna doesn't want raph to know.} Fina said bluntly.

"Who does she want ta know? It ain't Leo, cause she already sent him away," Raph spat.

\textit{no one, sol won't tell leo either.} Fina said.
"You've gone against things she's asked you to do before. Tell me what's goin' on!" Raph said.

**This is different. Luna has forbidden Sol and Fina to speak of it.**

Fina's reply was bitter and the way it emphasized the word 'forbidden' implied Luna had reinforced this command somehow. It also obviously thought Luna's decision was wrong. Raph growled, frustrated.

"Is she ok?" Raph asked.

*No.*

"Is she sick?" Raphael pressed.

*In a way.*

"Right. I'm helpin' 'er whether she wants it or not." Raph declared.

Fina gave a little hiss, the sound of water droplets hitting fire, that Raph had learned was it's equivalent to a sigh.

*Not sure Raph can.*

Nevertheless, Raphael leapt to his feet and pounded down the stairs. Leo and Mikey looked up from where they were consulting in the hall. Sol hovered nearby, flying worried patterns between the two of them. Raph stopped just outside the closed door of the infirmary and shuffled his feet nervously as Fina orbited his head like a little moon.

He raised his hand to knock, then dropped it; then raised it again.

*luna's not gonna bite raph's head off for knocking. just do it already!* Fina snapped.

He glared; then waved it away from him.

"If ya ain't gonna be helpful, just stay out 'ere." Raph said.

*luna won't let fina back in anyway.* Fina replied.

He knocked. There was no response.

"Luna, I'm comin' in there." Raph said, loud and rough. "Either ya' open this door for me or I'll let myself in."

"Dude, you're threatening a goddess," Mikey said in an undertone. "You don't think she can shield a door or reinforce a lock?"

"She ain't the only one with powers," Raph growled in return, flexing his shoulders and preparing to try a physical assault on the door first. But he didn't need to. There was a sudden soft click and the door opened a tiny amount. Raph glanced at his brothers then slipped in and shut it behind him.

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Something odd was going on in his lab and Donatello didn't like it.

If he'd continued his normal routine, it would have taken longer to come to his attention but Don
had been eating here, sleeping here, and in general living in his workspace for a few days, so he was bound to notice.

If he'd been asked why he was practically absent from his family's lives right now, he had logical and sound reasons. First, he had to complete the shield device, which was coming along nicely. Second, he needed to study that damn collar, which almost ended Luna's life, to see what he could use. And third, a whole new coding language had to be invented and compiled for the program he was supposed to write.

But mostly, he stayed in the lab to avoid Luna.

Donnie was embarrassed by what happened in the tunnel, though that wouldn't stop him from formally apologizing. He was just trying to figure out what to say. After all, it was his assumptions that had hurt her in the first place and if he could help it, he didn't want to hurt her again.

He'd always been an individual who self-corrected when he realized there was a problem. He thought that's what he'd been doing. Observing her behavior had led him to believe she was uncomfortable and unhappy with him so he tried to fix the situation; but it seemed his underlying assumptions had been completely wrong and that made all further extrapolations useless.

Don thought almost obsessively about what happened.

He thought about it while he pieced together ancient alien science and melded it with 21st century technology. He thought about it as he hacked again into the collar and downloaded it's contents to create a base language for his script. He thought about it as he examined his work under specialized scanners, electron microscopes, and x-rays.

He thought about it as he went to bed and he thought about it as he woke up, wishing once again that he was getting more than 3 hours sleep.

And after all that thought, he still hadn't decided what to do or say.

So he threw himself into his work as a distraction and a penance. If he finished this shield, at least she would be a little safer and perhaps a little more comfortable.

Since the other aspects of the work were coming together at a fair pace, Don started devoting serious time to the program that would control the shield itself. That's when he discovered that not all was as it should be. Previously he'd been writing and testing the code whenever he had a spare moment so he hadn't really noticed things like line count. Now that he was concentrating the majority of his attention on it, he realized each time he logged back in there was additional code that he didn't recognize or remember writing.

As a precautionary measure, he'd run an entire systems check to see if his network had been breached somehow, though he doubted it. He'd built the security protocols himself and everything was triple encrypted. As he expected, nothing turned up.

So he put a monitoring subroutine on the machine and left for coffee. When he returned to the lab there were 150 new lines added to his program. Now he was really concerned. Someone was definitely tampering and it was time to find out what exactly was going on.

He proceeded to close up everything for the night as he usually did. He turned off the monitor, the lights, and laid down on his cot by the door. It was a good thing Don had a lifetime of practice staying awake while hiding in the dark, because it was a long time before anything happened.

A small chiming noise from the terminal attracted his attention. First the monitor lit up, then it
began to glow a strange soft pastel purple color. As Don watched, a figure crawled out of the screen.

If turtles had hair, his would be standing on end.

Don rolled out of bed and crept closer. The figure was small; child sized. And looked very tiny in Don's oversized computer chair. It didn't touch the keyboard or mouse, but just stared at the screen intently as line after line of glowing violet text scrolled across it.

The tiny figure was almost totally transparent. Much more ghostlike than the immortals and gods he'd encountered so far. Don wasn't sure what it was but he didn't like it messing with his equipment.

Still, it seemed to be helping. The code it had added earlier, solved a problem Don had been wrestling with. So perhaps it was a friend. Maybe it knew Luna.

Don rose to his feet, cleared his throat, and flipped on the light. The glowing figure was even paler in the overhead fluorescents. It looked up at him frantically and Don just had time to absorb a small heart shaped face with wide familiar eyes before it stood on the chair and dove head first into the glowing screen; disappearing.

"Wait!" Don called "I just want to talk."

He dashed over to the computer and opened a blank text document.

"I know you're in there," Don typed. "Don't be afraid, I just want to talk."

He waited, eyes narrowed, starring impatiently at the screen for a long moment.

"Please, just tell me who you are," Don typed.

A one word reply in violet text lit up the page.

MEDES

At last! Contact! Don typed his next question hurriedly before the being had time to retreat.

"How did you come to be in my computer?"

This time the answer was more immediate.

STOWED AWAY. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT.

"When I hacked the collar you came along for the ride?" Don typed. "Why have you stayed, if you are now free?"

HELPING.

"You are a friend of Luna's?" Don typed.

I AM THE GODDESS.

Raphael felt an odd tingling sensation as he crossed the threshold. It felt cool, sort of like diving
into a pool on a hot day. It wasn't unpleasant, but he shivered with the unexpectedness of it. She had obviously erected some sort of shield, but its purpose eluded him. It wasn't like any that she had been teaching him.

What he found inside the shield, was not at all what he expected. From Fina's worried projections and everything else that had happened, he had anticipated finding Luna bundled in bed, in pain, weak or in any number of other unpleasant conditions.

That couldn't be further from the truth. The room was pitch black and cold. Only the fact that Raphael was far too familiar with it's contents kept him from bumping into anything as he made his way further in.

Out of nowhere, the smallest ray of silver light penetrated the darkness and came to hang directly in front of him stopping him in his tracks. Slowly it solidified, assuming the same small teardrop shape as Luna's soul pieces.

Raphael couldn't take his eyes off of it. Unlike Fina or Sol, this little flame shape was iridescent and pulsating; containing all colors and yet, none. He felt a powerful urge to hold it. It seemed so small and vulnerable hanging there. He needed to protect it with every fiber of his being.

He reached out both hands and cupped it gently; shielding its tiny shimmering form from the darkness.

The moment he closed his hands around it, the heartbeat began. A low thrumming that was at first imperceptible to the ear and could only be felt in the blood and bone. The sound slowly grew in strength as he gazed in helpless thrall into the tiny light.

It settled into his palm, making small, happy chirping noises and rubbing gently against his thumb. In a way he couldn't explain, holding this small light felt like the most fulfilling thing he had ever done in his life. The light grew brighter the longer he held it and beautiful, rainbow patterns formed and dissolved before his eyes.

He was so enraptured with it that he didn't even see the man in the room until he spoke. But that was understandable, because a moment ago the man hadn't been there.

"Release her," the powerful male voice commanded. "Now!"
Raphael's head whipped up in alarm. His left hand curled protectively about the little silver light; pulling it to his chest. His right hand held a flaming sai; the drawing of it and the release of his power an action he completed without thinking.

The man, that had startled him so, did not move. He wore a cloak of shifting shadows that made Raph's eyes hurt and he was extremely hard to focus on in the darkness. Even the flickering light from Raphael's weapon seemed not to touch him. It was almost, Raph thought, like those shades Luna had freed on the rooftop.

It was only in that moment, when he thought her name, that Raph realised he didn't know where Luna was; he'd been so caught up in the light. He looked around frantically sending his red flame higher to drive back the darkness.

Luna was seated on the stainless treatment table in the center of the room in a position of meditation. Her eyes were closed, her head bowed, and her hands laid lightly in her lap. With neither of her souls present, her hair had returned to a shade so pale it was almost white. Her skin had lost all it's color. She was so still she could have been a beautiful statue cast in marble.

She did not move when Raphael called her name. Only the sound of her steady heartbeat, ever present in the silence of the room, kept him from complete panic. As soon as he located her, he lunged to position himself between her and the dark shadowy form that lurked in the corner.

"Release her!" the figure said again menacingly. "I will not ask again. No one shall hold her against her will."

As he spoke his eyes began to glow a vivid yellow in the darkness and a powerful energy began to focus around him. He was incredibly strong. To Raph, he felt even stronger than Luna's father.

*Who was this guy?*

Raphael threw up his strongest shield. It wouldn't last long, but maybe it would be enough to convince this being to back off.

"I ain't holding 'er," Raph snapped. "Against 'er will or otherwise. I'm protectin' 'er. And I sure as hell ain't lettin' ya' anywhere near 'er,"

The man blinked in surprise, clearly used to having his every command cringingly obeyed. His eyes narrowed and he directed a sharp look at Raph that raked him from head to toe. One that seemed to assess more than just the physical.

What he saw puzzled him, and the man tilted his head to one side. The power that was poised to break over Raphael eased a little.

"I have not encountered a creature like you before," the glow in the man's eyes faded to brown as he spoke. "But as powerful as you appear, you seem ignorant of what you hold."

The man nodded to the silver light Raph still clutched protectively against his chest.

*There must be something wrong with me* Raphael thought.

He couldn't force himself to release it; not even to check on his beloved Luna.
"If you were not marked as hers so thoroughly," the man said seriously raising a brow, "I would destroy you for merely touching her in that manner."

"Marked?" Raph growled, confused by this guy's insistence that he was in contact with Luna. "I ain't marked."

"Oh, but you are. Your entire existence is there, mortal; written on your skin for anyone with the power to see," the man raised a hand and Raph braced for an attack, but all he did was flick his fingers in Raph's direction.

Light flared across Raph's body and red glyphs appeared. They ran all over his arms, down his legs, and across his shell.

"This one," the man pointed a finger and the glyph on Raph's left bicep glowed more brilliantly for a moment, "says you belong to the family clan Hamato."

Raphael's eyes widened. There was no way this guy could have just picked his family name out of thin air.

"This one," one that ran down his right forearm flared, "says you have an immunity to fire; and so on. But the ones that are important here and now are these."

Three figures across the center of Raph's chest ignited, this time in silver flame. The small light in his palm brightened in response.

"The left says the Hamato clan has been joined to the Heliades line. That alone would grant you respect and protection in most Olympian circles, though not necessarily in mine."

The man pointed to the other one.

"The one on the right says you have willingly given yourself to her; mind, body and soul," He raised his brow again in surprise. "and been accepted. You should know that acceptance is rare and will incite jealousy, or anger, as many godlings have longed to be her lover."

The glyph in the center, over Raph's heart, flared even brighter for a moment. It was larger than the others and much more complex.

"But this is the one that stays my hand," the man said.

"Why?" Raph spat, disconcerted that all this was written out where any immortal could see. "What's it mean?"

"There is no real equivalent in your tongue. Simply stated it means 'beloved'. But that seriously belittles the meaning of the mark. A closer translation is more like 'thou art bound unto my being for all of eternity, as am I to thee'," The man said. "It is so intertwined with the symbol for the goddess, Luna Heliades, that there is no longer a point of separation."

He closed his fist and all the glyphs disappeared.

"I have never seen it's like. To harm you would be to harm her, and that I cannot do. However," the man continued with a pained look, "I would still ask you to release her. You hold her immortal spark and consciousness. I do not like to see her so confined."

"Why do ya' care so much about 'er anyways?" Raph demanded. "Who are you?"
"I am Hades, Ruler of the Underworld," the man said quietly, "and I owe your young goddess a debt I can never repay."

With Medes assistance, the program for the crystal energy shield was being completed at a rapid rate. It helped that Medes was already fluent in the language needed to control the energy; being made of said energy itself.

Donatello was amazed at the knowledge the little thing contained. He had to constantly remind himself that all his other questions on planer energy transcendence, and everything else, could wait until the shield was complete and Luna's safety had been assured.

But mere mortals had to take breaks and Don was taking his; sipping on coffee while Medes proceeded with the program. He watched transfixed as line after line of violet text appeared on the screen. Most of it he understood but every once in a while he had to stop it and have it explain certain portions of it's writing.

Right now though, Don was thinking about the way Medes looked. Why had this soul piece taken the form of a human child and not hovered around like a flame as the others had done?

It can't have thought that Don would find that form more approachable, because it had only appeared when he was out of the room or asleep.

Perhaps it was because of it's intelligence. Descartes 'Cogito ergo sum' or 'I think therefore I am' sprang to his mind. Medes form could be dictated by it's own self-awareness. The more Don considered, the more convinced he became. 'Medes' after all came from the Greek word 'medomai' meaning 'to think, or be mindful of'.

Don was still considering this when the text ceased and the first of the cascade of firewalls that protected his network sounded an alert. Someone was attempting to hack his system and amazingly they were powering through his standard defenses at an incredible rate. But what angered him most was the single violet word now flashing in the middle of his monitor.

HELP

Medes was afraid.

Whoever these idiots were, they didn't know who they were dealing with. They had chosen to engage Don on his own turf.

Not a good idea. His brain kicked into high gear and his fingers fairly flew across the keyboard; enabling virtual counter attacks and quarantining the most sensitive data onto un-networked drives.

He cut off the hacker at every turn. Blocking them from the key terminal where Medes had taken refuge. Don didn't know if they were after Medes or if they were just trying to destroy the shield before it could be enacted. It didn't matter.

They were going down.
Devastating Decisions

Donatello continued his furious assault on the keyboard; narrowing the number of connections, again and again, until the terminal where Medes was hiding was completely isolated from the rest of the network. Satisfied that the soul was out of immediate danger, he bent to the task of eradicating the intruder. They were slippery, he'd give them that. Eliminating them from the system required his complete focus.

Moments later it was over as Don isolated the last of the intrusive code and neutralized it. He leaned back with a satisfied sigh and turned to Medes' terminal.

"You ok?" Don typed.

In answer, Medes small face appeared in the screen. Surprised, Don rolled his chair back, as it attempted to climb out. It seemed to be having some difficulty and it stretched one hand towards Don in entreaty.

Donatello hesitated. Would he be bonded if he touched the soul?

He looked up from the outstretched hand into the small soul's eyes. They were exactly like hers; pleading and completely irresistible. He found he could not stop himself from reaching out to help.

Their hands met.

Power surged from the small form and Don's body went rigid in shock. Pain flared from the top of his head to the soles of his feet and Don cried out. He tried to open his hand and release the soul but found he could not. The pain went on and on as his body convulsed and his vision began to blur.

He struggled to raise his head, but all he saw was a distorted smile on the once beautiful little face. It practically split the head in two and stretched from ear to ear. Its eyes had turned black and beady. Sharply pointed teeth gleamed as Don's eyelids slid shut.

Everything went black and he knew no more.

Hades…

Raphael was familiar with the name. Don had said Charon, the devilish ferryman, was his underling.

Charon had tried to kill her. There was no way he was lettin' Hades past him.

By the time Raph's thoughts caught up, his body had already reacted. Raph shoved the silver flame in Luna's direction, pressed the panic button on his phone, and drew his other sai. Flames shot up in front of him in a solid wall, as he turned and dove for Luna, sweeping her bodily off the table and twisting to shelter her from the brunt of the fall to the floor on the other side of the infirmary.

The silver light reacted instantly to his panicked adrenaline and shot across the space behind them, shattering the shield Luna had cast over the room before diving straight into to her unconscious form.

The door burst in as Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Donatello answered his call and joined the fray.
Donnie flipped the table on its side as Mikey grabbed Luna's limp form from Raph and shoved her down behind it. He and Don crouched protectively over her while Leo and Raph took point. Raph withdrew his wall of flame as Fina and Sol joined them, hovering overhead.

Hades had not moved. He clapped slowly and sardonically with a wry twist to his lips as the brothers arrayed themselves protectively around Luna.

"So, Luna has created quite the little family here hasn't she," Hades laughed. "Even as a mortal Zeus could not keep her instincts in check."

"Raph? Who is this, and what has he done to Luna?" Leo growled out between clenched teeth.

"Hades," Raph spat back, eyes never leaving the dark cloaked figure. "He's that devil Charon's overload an' supposed ruler of da underworld. I don't know what he did ta' Luna, she's been catatonic since I came in."

"Don?" Leo called to his genius brother to check her condition.

Hades eyes turned dark.

"As Luna's family, I've given you far more leeway than I would offer any other mortal or god. I've stood by while you've questioned my motives and identity. I did not destroy you for maligning my kingdom and my subjects," Hades roared, "But don't you ever, EVER accuse me of harming the goddess.

She is the sole reason my lineage continues. She has hidden and safeguarded the only thing that means anything to me in this blasted overworld. She is the savior of my realm; the only truly compassionate Olympian I have ever encountered and I would end this world, and my own, before harming a single hair on her head."

During this speech, Hades eyes had gone completely yellow and he had brought his significant power to bear on them. The air felt thick with it but if he thought it would cow them than he was mistaken. The three stood firm, weapons at the ready, as Donatello quickly assessed Luna as best he could in the flickering light.

Don paled and slowly rose to his feet. Just as slowly he reached for his bo. He bared his teeth at Hades and lunged; leaping over the table and bounding across the room in a motion so fast his figure was a blur. He caught the front of Hades' cloak in his fist and raised him off the floor; pulling the god toward him until they were nose to nose.

Don's eyes were wild and held nothing but absolute fury as he ground out two words.

"She's dead."

Five thousand miles away, on a small island off the coast of Crete, a Master of ninjutsu crept silently along the corridor of an ancient Greek temple. At the end of the hall were two large wooden doors that opened into the Oracle's private reception chamber.

As he neared them he disappeared completely into the shadows. One of the doors was slightly ajar and, with great caution, the Master approached and listened to the conversation taking place on the other side.

"Charon, it's been weeks," a petulant female voice said loudly. "Yet you have not presented me with a single piece of Luna's soul. You claim she is dead, so how hard could it be to track down the
little things?"

As he had begun to suspect, the Oracle was plotting against his daughter. Though, despite her
disesight, she did not have all the information he did. Luna had spoken with him mere days ago, so
unless something traumatic had happened, she was alive and well.

He had never expected a semi-mortal goddess as a daughter. In fact, he had despaired of his sons
ever finding acceptance and love. He had foreseen a powerful young woman entering their lives as
a teacher, but he never imagined that she would be more. Until he met her.

He had felt her power and emotions. Joined with her mind. Saw the joy and love she inspired in all
his sons, not just her mates. And he knew.

She belonged with them. Now and always.

An old proverb said "Sons may be the heart of the home, but it's soul resides in the daughters."

The Master knew this to be true. He had already lost one daughter in his lifetime and it had
stripped his soul bare. He was not about to lose another; no matter how unanticipated she had been.

His eyes narrowed and his whiskers slicked back as he listened intently and considered his next
move.
"What?" Michelangelo exclaimed, dumbfounded.

He shook himself and immediately went to his knees next to Luna to search for her pulse. He would not normally doubt Donatello, especially in the field of medicine, but he just did not want to believe it. His questing fingers found nothing and his face hardened as he turned towards the God of the Underworld.

"You said you'd never hurt her!" Mikey accused.

Years of training stopped Leonardo from dropping his katanas but his hands shook as he sheathed the blades and turned to his beloved. His eyes filled with tears as he summoned his power; coating his entire body in blue. Before the others could blink, he was kneeling at Luna's side, his eyes closed in a silent plea. His hands over her heart.

*Please... any god who might be listening... please...She is my light in the darkness, my voice in the silence, my reason for existence. Bring her back to me.*

If there was even a spark of life left he was going to wake her. He didn't care if it took every iota of power he had; even if it killed him. He would gladly trade his life for hers.

Raphael stood frozen in place. His heart stuttered then shattered into a million pieces. His legs collapsed and he dropped to his knees. She couldn't be gone. She just couldn't.

His brain kept protesting it was impossible even as a pain so intense it felt like the end of the world began in his core and radiated outward through his limbs. In it's wake, it left nothing but an intense aching void so vast that even his never ending rage could not fill it.

"No," Leonardo whispered.

There was nothing there for his power to latch on to.

"NO!"

This second denial was a roar, as Leo clutched her body to him.

Donatello attempted to keep his hold on the god but Hades simply phased out of his hand and walked slowly across the room toward Luna. Don wrenched his bo around and slammed it into Hades back as he walked away; it bounced off leaving Don's hands smarting from the vibration.

Mikey's eyes blazed in anger as he placed himself between the approaching god and Luna.

"Don't take another step," Mikey growled low.

Hades paused, his eyes flashed over Michelangelo, assessing his unseen symbols.

"Brave," Hades muttered, "but also foolish, son of Yoshi. For I am not a lesser god restricted by the physical planes."

Hades body became translucent, his cloak of shades separated, and the pieces swirled all around the room.

"I am a sibling of Zeus and Poseidon," his voice thundered.
"We defeated the Titans and divided the world."

Hades form grew to twice his previous size.

"Zeus chose the overworld; it fulfilled his never ending lust for admiration."

His eyes began to glow.

"Poseidon took the sea; its powerful ebb and flow melding perfectly with his mercurial personality."

He raised his hands and his power pressed them all nearly to the ground.

"All that remained was the underworld, the forgotten realm, the land of souls.

I laid claim to that.

My brothers laughed thinking they had the better part of the bargain but in the end I have absolute dominion. For everything dies eventually- even the gods."

As Hades spoke darkness swirled out from his body into inky black clouds that oozed across the floor and began to fill the room, made all the more frightening by it's absolute silence.

Mikey got the feeling that he didn't want that nasty stuff to touch him. He backed away slowly toward where Leo sat with Luna cradled in his lap. Raphael did not move; he merely watched with dead, flat eyes as the darkness grew closer; bringing with it the silence of the grave. He didn't care. His spark had gone out.

Fina was not ready to give up. It made a piercing cry of protest and flashed down to form a shield that shimmered and chimed softly over the motionless Raphael holding back the dark silence that billowed threatenly all around him.

Sol moved to shield Leo and Luna as well but as the black clouds drew closer and Michelangelo flinched back it expanded to cover him too. Luna's consciousness might be gone but her soul would not allow harm to befall her family.

Mikey raised a hand affectionately to the blue glow over his head.

"Thanks Sol," he whispered gratefully, before suddenly realizing his other brother had no such protection.

"Donnie!" Mikey called in a panicked voice. "He's outside Sol's shield!"

Raph's head snapped up as Mikey's frightened call pierced his veil of despair. Donatello had backed himself against the far wall, one hand outstretched in front of him trying in vain to ward off something he couldn't touch. The other hand he held fisted behind his back.

Raphael started to move toward Don, bringing Fina with him to share it's protection, but he only made it a few steps before a pure silver light began to leak out of Don's closed hand. It highlighted Don's shell against the wall and the same celestial chime that Fina and Sol were making sounded loudly through the muffled silence of the cloud.

Raph stopped in confusion.

Hades smiled grimly as his sharp eyes examined Donatello.
"There you are, little goddess," he purred. "I knew you had not gone far. You could never leave your family in danger."

Hades clenched his fist and it was all over. The darkness disappeared as if it never was. Sol dissolved back into it's familiar form and Fina followed suit. Hades solidified, returned to his normal height, and waved a hand. Donatello was pinned to the wall arms outstretched.

"Now," Hades said calmly to Donatello, "whoever you are, whatever you are, release her so she can return to her family."

"What are you talking about, dude," Michelangelo said hotly. "That's Donatello, our brother. Luna loved him, so you better leave him alone."

"Actually, he's not your brother," Hades quipped with a lopsided smile. "He lacks the family markings the rest of you carry."

Leonardo raised his head slowly finally taking his focus from Luna's still face. He may have lost the love of his life but his responsibilities as a brother and leader would not be ignored.

"Are you saying Donatello is not a member of my clan? Because you are dead wrong." Leo said while climbing to his feet.

Leo's hands shimmered as he began to form a blue plasma bolt. His voice was lethal, as he continued to address Hades. "We will defend him."

"Commendable," Hades replied. "But unnecessary."

Hades snapped his fingers and glyphs appeared on everyone in their respective colors; everyone but Don. Mikey stared at his arms and legs in awe, twisting his head this way and that trying to read the writing. Leo glanced down uncertainly at his own, then looked at Raph's.

"What are you saying then?" Leo's asked.

Raphael's gaze was riveted to the silver still leaking from Donnie's palm.

"He's sayin'," Raph growled, "that that ain't Donnie. An' da' silver light is Luna!"

Hades nodded to Raphael.

"If you would kindly free your mate then I can remove this...thing." Hades replied.

Hope, so intense it burned, rose to fill the emptiness inside of Raphael as he rushed forward and pried at the hand that held the light. He wrenched the creature's wrist around, despite Leo and Mikey's cries of protest, until a far too familiar crystal sphere filled with silver dropped into his palm.

Rage roared to the surface as Raphael realized she was trapped. He raised his arm overhead and dashed the crystal to the ground with all of his might.

Hades watched serenely as the small silver flame, freed from inside, floated across the room and entered Luna's still form. Fina dove into the goddess followed by Sol. Her body changed colors, first silver, then red, and finally blue. In seconds her heartbeat filled the room.

The blue faded and Luna's pale flesh resumed it's normal flush of life. Her chest rose and fell softly. Raph and Leo sprinted to her side, each scooping up a hand to hold tightly in his own.
Mikey grabbed a pillow from her bed and slipped it under her head, smoothing her red hair gently with his hand.

Mikey laid a hand on each of his brothers' shoulders and they all exchanged looks filled with relief and joy.

After a long moment, Leonardo looked up at the God of the Underworld.

"Why did you help us?" he asked quietly.

Hades met Leonardo's incredulous stare with a shrug and his own calm gaze.

"I was listening..."

Donatello tried to open his eyes but all he could see was darkness. He blinked several times in confusion but it didn't help. He suddenly realized his eyes were covered. What was going on? The last thing he remembered was that awful smile on the child he'd thought was Medes.

He gasped and tried to sit up. He had to warn Luna and the guys.

A hand caught his shoulder and pressed him back into a prone position. It was a warm human hand, five fingers, and way too large to be Luna. Don struggled against it, even though the motion was painful, but stilled when the human spoke.

"Woah, woah, Hey Don- cut it out. Lie still will ya'?"

"Casey?" Don asked, surprised.

A smaller more feminine hand softly touched his other shoulder. April's signature perfume came wafting over him.

"April," Donnie sighed in relief, relaxing back on the table.

"I'm here, Donnie." April said quietly. "How are you feeling? Do you have a headache?"

Donatello lay quietly for a moment, taking stock of his body and injuries. His head definitely hurt, it pounded in time with his heartbeat and made thinking difficult. But Don and his brothers had long ago been taught techniques to help them push past incredible pain to accomplish what had to be done. He invoked some of them now, locking down the throbbing so he could see past it and assess the rest of the problems.

His skin felt…tight and crispy. Flexing his muscles was agonizing. It felt like someone had beat him with a baseball bat, then set him on fire. And why were his eyes covered?

"I think I'll live," Don said, "April, where am I? What's going on? Why can't I see?"

Before April could answer that barrage of questions, Don's mind threw the memory of that horrible smile again behind his eyes. He gasped and tried to sit up.

"Donnie, I thought we settled this. Ya' gotta lay still!" Casey exclaimed.

Don laid back but reached out to grip April's arm urgently turning his face blindly in her direction.

"April, you have to warn the others. There's a...a... _thing_ loose inside the lair. It pretended to be a piece of Luna's soul. I practically invited it in. Damn it! But in the end it looked more like a..."
goblin or something." Don's voice was frantic.

If that thing had hurt his family, or Luna, he would never forgive himself. Don froze as a thought suddenly occurred to him and all the blood ran out of his face.

*Why were April and Casey taking care of him? Where were his brothers? Leo would have healed him by now. What has happened?*

"April," Don said carefully, "Where is everyone?"
April sighed. How was she supposed to sum up everything that had happened in the past 48 hours? She didn't understand all of it herself so how could she explain it without throwing Donnie into a panic?

"Casey, Why don't you go make a pot of Splinter's tea. It'll help Donnie get back on his feet," April said.

She did not want an audience for this explanation and Casey already knew far more than he should.

"Aye-aye, nurse April," Casey winked and walked out of the room.

He knew a dismissal when he heard one.

"April," Don said worriedly, "Spill it."

"Ok, let's see if I can put this in the proper order. I wasn't here for all of it so bear with me ok?" April asked.

Don nodded shortly.

"Luna never fully recovered from her collapse in the old lair," April began, then winced. That was probably a bad way to start.

"What?" Don shouted, struggling to sit up once more. "Why didn't anybody tell me? I've been developing a new scanner based on the way the gods use their light energy. I can … "

Don's brain shifted gears in mid-rant. "I don't understand! I thought Leo had the healing thing under control!"

"Donatello Hamato," April said raising her voice. "If you don't lie down this very instant I won't tell you the rest. Let me finish!"

Don subsided and lay back but his heart was pounding. Luna had never recovered? She'd been suffering and he'd been avoiding her? He felt sick.

"That's better," April continued. "Like I said, Luna wasn't herself. She locked the infirmary door for days, stopped eating, and refused to see anyone. She even kicked Sol and Fina out at one point."

Donatello was shocked.

Why would Luna evict her souls?

"I guess she didn't want them sharing her problems with the guys. Anyway, eventually Raph had enough and muscled his way in; you know what he's like," April said.

Don nodded. When his hot-headed brother thought he was right, nothing would stop him.

"Luna had put herself into some sort of... stasis and left her body to contact a god who doesn't live with the others. He owns a different reality or something. Hades?" April said uncertainly.

Donatello froze.
"Hades, the God of the Underworld?" Don asked, his blood running cold.

"That's the one," April said. "He appeared just after Raph found Luna catatonic so naturally Raph assumed they were under attack."

"Naturally," Don agreed grimly.

Raphael had always preferred to fight first and talk afterward. But Hades was Charon's boss, and they already knew Charon wanted her souls, so it was probably a fair assumption this time. And Hades was one of the most powerful gods there was, aside from Zeus himself.

"Raph sounded the alarm, everybody gathered and, well, there was a rather quick battle. I gather it's hard to get the drop on a god," April said. "The weird thing was... Donnie, you were there."

Don was stunned. He searched his memories but came up with nothing. The last thing he remembered seeing was that horrible smile. He shuddered and fear clenched his stomach.

*Is that why my brothers aren't here? Has Hades wiped out my entire family?*

"I don't remember any of that," Don said around the huge lump that gathered in his throat.

"That's because it wasn't really you."

The deep, unfamiliar voice echoed from the doorway. Don tensed and all his muscles screamed in protest. That echo meant a god and, at this point, the chances of it being friendly were slim.

"April, get out of here. Now."

Even blinded and injured, Donatello wasn't going to let April go down without a fight. He struggled upright, reaching for a bo that wasn't there, as April practically threw herself across his chest to keep him lying down.

"Calm yourself, Donatello. Miss O'Neil is not in any danger, except from your own flying limbs," the voice was amused at first, but it continued in a more serious tone, "And your family, all of your family, are safe. I am merely here to help you, if you will allow it."

"Donnie, this is Hades," April began, backing off when she felt like he was going to lie down again. "He and Luna are..."

"United in a common cause," Hades interrupted smoothly. "I believe I can answer your questions but there is no reason you should remain in unnecessary pain during our discussion. May I treat you?"

Don hesitated. He'd been naive before, blindly trusting the last creature he thought was associated with Luna. It turned out to be deadly. He might have caught it if he had asked the right questions. Of course this god could have just gone ahead without asking; the fact that he hadn't meant he at least had manners. Or was putting on a good front for April.

"April, have you spoken with Luna since Hades arrived?" Don asked skeptically.

"She vouched for him Don, if that's what you're worried about," April replied. "And Leo said he saved her life."

Somehow this didn't reassure Donatello. He needed some way to figure out if this was another attempt to trick him into letting something even worse into their home. His eyes were damaged. He
couldn't see. Was this really even April?

"April, what did Casey get you on your last birthday?" Don asked out of the blue.

"What?" April asked confused. "What does that have to do with anything?"

"Humor me. What did he get you?" Don insisted tiredly.

April sighed a bit sadly, not wanting to drudge up this memory.

"Well... nothing. You know Casey always forgets my birthday," April said simply.

"You can treat me," Don said quietly.

Leonardo sat at his desk and stared at the beautiful form of his beloved as she was caressed by the candlelight; memorizing the peaceful planes of her face and letting the shadows soothe him. Luna lay sleeping in his bed across the room since the infirmary was currently housing Donatello. He knew this was only temporary but he'd be lying to himself if he said he didn't want her there always.

He sighed. It hadn't been that hard, yet, letting Raphael have a claim on her. It wasn't as if either of them had been able to spend a lot of time with her. She'd been injured, they'd been injured, and there had been so many unexpected turns in the last few weeks.

Finding Splinter had shook them up. Granted it was a good thing. Leo rejoiced that his father was, at last, accounted for. But he still wasn't home, Luna was still missing pieces of her soul, and there wasn't enough time for any of them to sort out this new family dynamic.

He turned back to his desk and a scroll caught his eye. It was the poem he'd written all those weeks ago; before he even knew they were bonded. He didn't need to open it. He remembered exactly what it contained. He still felt that way. Confused and despairing about their future.

Leonardo felt his heart spasm everytime he considered it. He still did not know if she would stay with him, them- he corrected himself harshly, when her soul was fully recovered. Even if she did, she would be immortal and they... would not.

How many years could Leo and his family offer her? He'd be naive to think a normal human lifespan would be enough for her. It would be a mere blink to her once she was fully restored.

Could he bear that? Could she?

He reached for the scroll to return it to it's proper place among his collection but hesitated, his hand hovering above the rolled paper, his curiosity piqued.

Why was it even out in the first place? I don't leave any poetry out where my brothers might stumble upon it.

Leonardo unrolled the scroll and rapidly read it over. His eyes widened in disbelief, then wonder. Tears began and his heart soared. Luna had discovered his poem and next to each stanza she had added her own. Painted carefully in kanji were glowing moonlit symbols that interlocked with his own.

Echos of light, bring me peace.
Cleanse me of these desires.
Dreams and nightmares born of her,
igniting chaotic fires.

_Beg not of the echos, love,_
_for thou commandest the sun._
_And never wish that thy desires_  
_are to be undone._
_For as I lay each night in sleep,_  
_it is thy solace that I seek._
_Light thy beacon fires; we are one._

Must I ever walk in darkness?
Can she not light my way?
I am undeserving, but would
she even stay?

_Tis I, who drew the shadows and_  
_thy soul which lights the path._
_Yet I will stay for thee, my love;_  
_for long as we canst have._

Captured and no longer free,
I'm bound by soul and heart.
Hers to command, if she has need
and yet she will depart.

_Never will I leave thee,_  
_for thou hast claimed my heart._
_My soul exists entwined with thine_  
_and we can never part._

When she goes, then I would die.
and for her, I would kill.
Hope is lost, and darkness nie
to lie in ever still.

_Then thou shalt live forever, for_  
_together we shall be._
_I'll light the night with stars for thee,_  
_across eternity._

Leonardo looked up from the parchment, startled by a soft touch on his thigh. Luna had left the bed
and knelt on the floor at his feet. She rested her cheek against him and gazed adoringly up into his
face. She said nothing, letting the writing speak for her.

Leonardo dropped the parchment to the floor and scooped her up in his arms. He kissed her
passionately, holding her desperately close to him. She clung to him; then gently wiped his tears
away.

Together, they returned to his bed.

Casey stood in the kitchen and stared around at the cupboards, stove, and counters as if it were an
alien landscape and he was expecting something bizarre to leap out and kill him at any moment.
The only thing he usually did in this kitchen was rummage around in the fridge for pizza or beer.

How the heck was he supposed to make tea? And who was gonna drink it anyway?

He could tell from April's tone that this was just an excuse to get him to leave; on the other hand, if he didn't make the pot and April came looking for it later he'd be in trouble. He sighed, and began opening the cabinet doors aimlessly. He didn't even know what the tea looked like.

Raphael walked by the kitchen door, stopped, and backtracked. Casey was poking through the kitchen like a lost puppy looking for treats. Raph stood in the doorway and propped himself on one elbow as he eyed Case. What was he up too?

Casey started and jumped back when he finally saw Raph blocking the door.

"Raph, man, you nearly gave me a heart attack," Casey said loudly, "Make some noise buddy, you don't have to be all ninja-y at home."

Raph cracked a smile; his first in days. Casey could always lighten the mood and Raph was in sore need of some time spent with his pal. He pushed past Casey, went to the fridge and pulled out a couple of beers.

He nodded to the kitchen table and they both sat. Raph slid Casey one of the beers, pulled the top off his, and tilted his head back for a long swallow. It felt good going down, cool and smooth. A few more swallows and the alcohol took some of the edge off his raw emotions.

"Secret mission, Case?" Raph asked after a moment, tilting his head toward the still open cabinet doors.

Casey's face fell into a comically glum expression as he explained his dilemma.

"I know she just wanted me out, but sure as I don't make that tea, I'll get a tongue lashing." Casey said.


Raph grinned again as Casey burst out laughing.

Michelangelo stuck his head in the door and peered at the two at the table, suspicious of the laughter, then turned his gaze to the open cupboards and frowned.

"You raised in a barn, Case? You left all the doors open." Mikey said.

Raph snorted at Mikey's tone. To hear his little brother carry on like that was just too weird. The kitchen had been his domain for years now, sure, but Raph couldn't help remembering the whirlwind of chaos that Mikey used to be as a teen and the horrible messes that he left behind.

Raph snorted again at the memory and beer came out his nose. That set Casey off, he began laughing hysterically and Mikey grinned sheepishly as Raph coughed and choked through his own laughter.

"Raised in a barn?" Raph choked out, "You've, like, seen a barn twice in ya life!" He said to Mikey in disbelief.

That set Casey off again, and soon all of them were laughing so hard, they almost couldn't breathe.

"God!" Mikey exclaimed, wiping his eyes and falling into the chair at the end of the table. "I
needed that."

Raph nodded his agreement, and picked at the label on his beer bottle, cause everytime he looked at Casey, they started up again. The stress of the last few weeks had been so intense, he'd forgotten how good it felt to just hang out with his friends and family.

"So," Mikey said at last, "Let me guess, April sent you for tea?"

"Got it in one, Mellon-head," Casey agreed amiably.

Mikey grinned, pushed back from the table and went to make it, closing the cupboard doors with a deliberately loud bang before fetching the tin of tea off the back counter.

"You think Luna needs some too?" Mikey asked, looking to Raph.

Now that Luna was back in her body, Raphael could sense her feelings through their connection again. He had only been 36 hours without it, but it had felt like an eternity. He reached for her gently, then shook his head, just as Fina came swooping in from the living room.

Luna was discrete, always sending away the other soul when she was with one of her bonded so they wouldn't have to see, but she'd only been back a few hours so she couldn't bring herself to shut off her emotions from him this time. Raph got a head-full of her desire and quickly pulled back.

"They're … busy," Raph grimaced and flushed.

"Ah," Mikey said tactfully and let it drop.

Luckily, Casey was watching the little red flame orbit Raph's head in fascination, so he missed the exchange.

"Raph," Casey said, his eyes huge, "What is that?"

Raph and Mikey were so used to the little ones now, that they'd paid it no mind when it flew in join them, but Casey's question made Raph realize just how strange it must look.

Was it only a few weeks ago that he had looked at Sol in the same manner?

Then he realized there was a whole lot he hadn't shared with Casey yet, including his own fire starting ability.

"Good thing yer sittin' down, Case," Raph said quietly. "Cause this story's gonna take a while."

Some hours later, Don had a much better understanding of what had occurred while he was out cold in the lab. The evil little thing pretending to be a soul was a creature called a mimic. According to Hades, they were a lower form of demon with the peculiar ability to emulate their victims essential form and nature, including their voice and mannerisms.

Their mimicry was perfect, even a DNA scan would not show the difference. All they had to do to claim this power was touch their victim to absorb their essence and feed on their pain.

Mortals usually died from the initial contact.

Donatello was never happier to be a mutant turtle. His adaptations had allowed him to survive, albeit badly scarred, but he was horrified at what the mimic had done while wearing his image. It had trapped Luna's consciousness and celestial energy in one of those damned spheres and tried to
incite his brothers to war with one of the three strongest immortal powers in existence.

Donnie was extremely grateful to that power right now. Hades could have blasted them off the face of the Earth, instead, he had helped resolve the situation and revived Luna. And of course he had done an excellent job healing Don himself.

It had been the strangest sensation Donatello had ever felt. Hades hadn't even laid a hand on him but Don's body repaired itself from the inside out in a matter of moments. Pain melted away and he regained his sight. His skin was softer than he ever remembered it being, and his shell was perfect; not even a scuff or a scrape remained. That hadn't happened when Leo healed people. But then, Leonardo wasn't a god.

Leo had desperately tried to revive his brother when they discovered him, burnt to a crisp and blind on the floor of the lab after a frantic search, but nothing worked because the demon was a parasite. It continued to feed off Don's pain, and would, until Don was dead or it was banished. Hades hadn't banished it yet. He'd merely taken it away after the battle for questioning.

Leo's efforts kept Don alive but that was the limit of his power. Luna had been hysterical when she woke and saw Donnie. She tried to help but her physical weakness and imprisonment had drained her. She wasn't strong enough to separate the demon essence from him. She'd tried anyway and blacked out. Upon returning, Hades had found her unconscious in Leonardo's arms and vowed to help Don, if he would allow it.

Donatello was sure he didn't have the full story. He felt there was still something Hades kept glossing over in his explanations. But Don wouldn't be able to confirm that until he spoke to Luna.

In fact all Don could really focus on right now was his driving need to see her. To check on her physical condition, yes, but also to hear her bell like voice again. To apologise for his gaff in the tunnel and beg her forgiveness for avoiding her when she needed him most.

But for now he would have to wait. It was late, Luna was ill, and Leo wasn't letting anybody else near her tonight.
Apologies

Shortly after breakfast, Donatello made his way up to Leonardo's room. He stood outside for a long moment, gathering his thoughts, then gently tapped on the door. He still owed Luna an apology.

Leo opened it, saw Donnie, tensed, and frowned; his face hardening in suspicion.

"I'd like to speak to Luna, if she's up," Don said softly.

"She's up," Leo said shortly, but he just stood there blocking the door.

"May I come in?" Donnie said at last, his expression hurt.

"Are you my brother?" Leo said bluntly.

Don's face fell. He couldn't blame Leonardo for being suspicious. Someone who looked and acted just like him had nearly killed Luna. That kind of encounter was sure to leave hard feelings. But Don was weary of dealing with suspicious looks. He'd been fielding them from his brothers and friends all morning and it was wearing him down.

"Yes," Donnie answered sadly, his chocolate eyes proclaiming his pain, "I am. But I don't know how I can prove it to you."

"Leo, love," Luna's soft voice echoed behind him, "He is our Donnie."

Leo didn't move but his eyes softened at her words.

"How can you be sure?" Leo asked her over his shoulder.

Luna's bright laughter trilled out, filling the room and the hall. Don hadn't heard her laugh in weeks. She must be feeling better. She ducked under Leo's arm and stood face to face with a very startled Donatello.

She was wearing something Don had never seen before. Ancient Greek in style, it was a kind of flowing, gossamer white dress, pinned at the shoulder and crisscrossed with golden cord. Her beautiful red hair was half up, the sides pulled into combs that sported gilded leaves. Her blue eyes were sparkling with mischief. She looked every inch the Goddess and Don couldn't help but stare.

On closer inspection there were still traces of illness to be seen. Dark circles ringed her eyes, her usually porcelain skin was a bit jaundiced, and her muscles lacked some of their former tone. His eyes narrowed slightly in concern as he noted these small signs and compared them to his mental picture of her in good health. Something still wasn't right. Hadn't Hades healed her too?

But that was all the observation Don had time for as Luna reached both arms quickly around his neck and pulled his head down to place a soft kiss on his cheek before releasing him.

Don flushed and stood up quickly, uncertain what was going on.

"That's how," Luna said, amused. "But if you need further proof..."

She snapped her fingers and the strange glyphs that Hades had shown them appeared on Don's body, glowing softly in a pale violet. Leonardo relaxed, reached out, and placed a hand on Don's shoulder, his face morphing back into the more familiar lines of brotherly concern and responsibility.
"I'm sorry, Donnie," Leo said with a small, self-conscious grimace. "You've been through hell and I'm not helping with all this suspicion."

"It's okay, Leo," Don sighed. "Everybody's been looking at me a little cross-eyed today, especially Raph."

Luna's smile faded to a hard line and her brow furrowed in thought. She reached out to Don again, this time laying her small palm over the mark that shone on the left side of his chest. The one that declared the Hamato and Heliades line joined. The rest of the runes faded, but that one stayed a moment longer, it's soft violet outlined by her silver before it disappeared and she pulled back her hand.

"Touch it," Luna told Don.

He reached up and gently tapped that spot on his plastron. The symbol reappeared briefly before fading again.

"Now no one has to wonder. In fact," Luna reached up to Leo and placed her palm over the same location. His mark flared blue and silver before it too faded from sight. "Everyone should have it. These marks are your personal history. No mimic can duplicate them, so if there is any doubt about anyone's identity, the proof is right here."

She tapped Leo's chest gently. And the symbol flashed again. Donatello's smile as he tested his own mark was like the sun coming up and Luna's heart melted. She reached up and laid one palm against his cheek.

"I'm so sorry this happened Donnie," she said softly.

Don flinched slightly out from under her hand. Though he longed to lay his own much larger hand over hers and hold her palm to his face for a moment longer, he was uncomfortable with that display in front of her mate. Besides, he was the one that was supposed to be apologizing.

"Could we talk privately for a moment?" Don asked Leo, expecting to see objections in his eyes.

But Leo merely nodded.

"I'll be downstairs, dear one," Leo said to Luna. "It's past time we had a group meeting, so I'll get the others together. Come join us when you're ready."

Don followed Luna back into Leo's room. He shut the door but stayed standing uncomfortably in front of it. He opened his mouth to speak and... nothing came out.

Now that they were alone, his carefully prepared apology died on his tongue. He did not know what to say to the vision of beauty and power that sat on the bed across the room, regarding him with a weighty stare.

Words. Use words Donatello. She can probably read your mind, but it won't really count unless you say it out loud.

Luna got up from her seat and paced across the room to him. Don dropped his eyes to the floor, unable to meet her gaze, and shifted his weight from foot to foot.

"Donnie, look at me," Luna said quietly.

Her voice held only the faintest echo and, though it still chimed beautifully, she sounded a lot more
like the woman he had first come to know. He glanced up and stepped back in surprise. Her outfit had changed. She stood before him in leggings and an oversized sweatshirt. Her hair was swept up in a long ponytail, tied back with a scrunchie. Instantly he felt more comfortable. This was a form he knew well.

"It's still me," she continued, putting her small hands on his biceps and staring intently into his eyes.

"I'm still the same girl you so carefully mended. The one whose bones you set, the one whose cuts you stitched, the one whose blood you had all over your hands for weeks. I'm still the one you nursed through hours of tears and fears. The one you counseled and comforted.

You've seen me in my deepest pain, my weakest hour, and my darkest night. You led me to happiness I never imagined and you raised me from despair. Don't turn away from me now."

She released his arms and wrapped hers around his waist, hugging him tightly and stroking his shell. Automatically, his arms closed around her, hugging her back, and without conscious thought he leaned his cheek down and rested it on the top of her head. She hugged him tighter, nestling her face against his chest.

*God, that felt good! It felt right!*

It felt like they'd been apart for years. Like he'd missed her terribly and now they were together again. It felt like nothing had changed, even though everything had in the past few weeks.

Suddenly, Don felt like an idiot. He'd made such a mess of the situation. Yes, Luna was a goddess. Yes, she had power. Yes, she was mate to both his brothers. Yes, he still loved her.

And all of that was beside the point.

They already had a powerful bond. One that did not need to be quantified or compared to any other she might carry. No matter what, she cared deeply for him and he for her. She could tell him anything, confide anything, and he realized he could do the same with her.

"Luna, I'm an idiot," he said into her hair.

She laughed and looked up into his face without releasing her hug. Her smile was infectious and he grinned back at her helplessly.

"Yes, but you're *my* idiot," she said cheerfully, giving him another squeeze.

And everything was alright again.
"In the past…" Hades deep voice rang out.

He stood in the center of the small group in the living room and evoked a time beyond the distant memories of his listeners. With a wave of his palm, a pale mist formed above their heads and an elegant city appeared in rich detail.

It was unlike anything the gathered mortals had ever seen.

Huge islands of land ranged across a cloudscape and enormous waterfalls trailed from one level to the next; the spray sparking rainbows in all directions. Pearlescent, graceful, white towers rose from the land; piercing the blue of the sky like knives while delicate bridges connected the disparate spaces.

As the view pressed in towards the city, the sun traced intricate patterns of light and shadow across the masses of buildings in an intelligent design. Geometric and flowing nouveau lines led the eye in complicated paths that the startled viewers determined were actually streets.

No two buildings were alike, each boasting untold numbers of archways, walls, battlements, and columns encased in artful etchings of every subject imaginable. They flowed smoothly into one another with no discernable beginning or ending.

Sculptures of flame that actually burned, viscous liquids that formed intricate three dimensional art pieces and trees growing in living barriers that looked to have been carved by the finest artisans, decorated the open spaces and incredibly complex mosaics graced the pavement.

"In the past," Hades spoke more softly this time, "at a time when the battle of the Titans had just ended, the world was divided, and Zeus was a powerful new king; the city of Olympus was founded.

It was a haven for those weary from the ravages of war and hopes were high that this new order would allow our civilization to flourish. For some few centuries, these hopes seemed well founded. We, as gods, found focus and purpose in the universe.

Those with a certain affinity for the Earth we had left undertook responsibility for its harmony of systems; using their energy to maintain the delicate balance that allows for life on the planet. Helios and Selene among them.

Others took charge over the dimensional barriers, monitoring passage between them, and policing our realm. And Zeus ruled over all; content with the smooth running of his kingdom and adoration of his subject peoples."
The two humans and four turtles watched Hades story unfold in the vision above their heads with rapt attention. Michelangelo flopped back from his seat on the floor, laying flat so he could see everything at once. He poked Raphael.

"This is even better than IMAX," he whispered.

Raph extended a leg and kicked him in the shin.

Don was standing with his head in the cloud, examining the section where Helios and Selene were working. Luna had tried to explain the workings of celestial forces to him in scientific terms he could understand, but this actual look at what the gods were doing was irresistible to him.

April watched in fascination as a mythical history, that humanity had only grasped the edges of, played out in front her eyes. Casey was bored. He was hoping Hades would get to some action scenes soon.

Leonardo felt an ache begin deep inside as he watched the images unfold. It was a feeling of emptiness and loneliness. A deep longing that only increased as the story continued. He looked to his beloved. The feelings were hers; coming to him across their bond. She sat apart, a single crystal tear traveled slowly down her cheek as she watched with luminous eyes.

She was homesick.

Leonardo moved toward her with stealth to avoid disturbing the others in the room. He sank to her side and took her hand gently in his. When she turned to him, the look in her eyes was lost.

"We will find your souls, dear one," he murmured intensely to her. "Never doubt it. Then you can show us this marvelous city in person."

He smiled gently at her and she leaned her head on his shoulder.

Hades waved a hand and the cloud cleared to show a new scene.

"Our numbers gradually increased and this new generation of gods were true Olympians; bread from select pairings with the blessing of Zeus, they never knew anything less than this perfection. But as often happens, this younger generation grew restless and discontented.

They no longer appreciated the isolation and beauty of their home and were not satisfied by their contributions to the work of the whole. They began to travel to the Earth searching for their own amusement, and in doing so began interacting with the peoples developing there.

Some shared secrets known only to the gods; and the development of Zeus' subjects advanced far more rapidly than he had intended. Some dallied among the mortals, not out of love- for most gods lack the capacity- but for power and mischief. Crossbreeds were born. Heros that were mortal but had inherited incredible strength and hardiness and Monsters that appeared fearsome, lived long, and were enslaved.

Now, the peoples of the Earth, during their mortal life, were to be the sole domain of Zeus; as was the agreement set forth at the Division, and as Zeus discovered these...breaches by his progeny he became enraged.

Many were dealt extreme punishments, some were banished from Olympus, and others were completely destroyed."

Hades bowed his head in Luna's direction.
"I believe your brother was among them, my lady," he said sadly.

"Phaethon was head-strong," Luna retorted angrily, "but he was not a rebel. He was merely trying to learn his duty as heir and Zeus took advantage of the unrest to remove him. He was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. He did not deserve that thunderbolt."

She turned her face sharply away from the image and nestled into Leo's chest as the horrific story of the young god who could not control the sun played out before them and Phaethon's fiery body plunged to the Earth.

Leo gently wrapped his arms around her head and shoulders, holding her close and covering her eyes so she wouldn't have to see. He kissed the top of her head and rocked her in sympathy with the rolling feelings of grief made fresh inside her. He suddenly understood her hysteria at finding the charred body of Donatello in the lab. She had already lost one brother in a similar fashion.

Hades sighed and returned to his narration.

"This regrettable incident created a rift between the houses of Helios and Zeus, but Helios was too important to life on Earth for Zeus to remove him. Relations between the houses have been… tense, for centuries."

"Damn right!" Raphael exclaimed. "Tense is an understatement. Ya shoulda' heard the things that guy said ta Luna just last month. I wanted ta kill 'im where 'e stood."

Luna flushed, as Hades raised a brow at Raph and snorted.

"You are still here, so I assume that you did not make your move on the king," Hades said.

"Only cause Selene wouldn't let me," Raph groused.

Hades let the matter drop and continued.

"Zeus cleansed his mortal subjects of the majority of the cross breeds in an incident the gods refer to as the Purge; but he had seen their power among the populace and he was determined to create his own. He chose a particularly gifted mortal and came to her disguised, as was his want, for a night of passion.

Some years later, he tested the resultant child and found she had an incredibly strong gift of foresight, though only as pertained to mortals. He christened her the Pythia and made her the Oracle at Delphi."

Casey's eyes were riveted to the 'night of passion' scene, and Donatello discretely poked him from across the room with his bo, shaking his head. Casey glanced at April and blushed but April wasn't paying attention to him; she was too wrapped up in the history.

"I thought the temple at Delphi was dedicated to Apollo, a.k.a Helios," April said, "Wouldn't that make it under the control of Luna's father?"

Luna laughed bitterly.

"The temple was dedicated that way at Zeus' command; it was a way to humiliate my father. Zeus wanted the Olympians to believe that the Oracle was my fathers offspring in defiance of Zeus after the Purge. The records cite her birth correctly, but the rumor was more fun for the gossips to believe," Luna said darkly.
"Is this the same Oracle that's holding our Father?" Leonardo asked.

Luna nodded.

"So she's immortal? I thought she was a cross breed," Leo said.

"Serra is not an immortal although she has done everything in her power over the years to get Zeus to grant her that privilege." Luna said.

"I thought her name was Pythia?" Casey said, confused.

"Pythia is a title, Case," April sighed. "It means 'head priestess' and was applied to the series of women that held the position of Oracle over the centuries."

"Wait a sec," Raph said. "How can Serra still be alive if she wasn't immortal an' a buncha girls had the position?"

"That brings us to the next part in my tale, Raphael," Hades said smoothly. "Serra was always a clever girl and saw right away the benefits of having an immortal father. While Zeus held no love in particular for his crossbreed offspring, she did have his ear because of her gifts.

She began to play on his fears and made herself indispensable when it came to his rule on Earth. As she grew older, she began to hint at a disaster that would befall the Earth after her death.

Zeus had no intention of losing his stable of admirers; so to fend off this mysterious disaster he made a deal with Serra to keep her power active past her body's mortal lifetime.

He would maintain her bloodline on Earth and give her the ability to move her soul into any female in the line with a special ceremony. That's the way she lives on; taking over the bodies of other women in her family tree."

"That's despicable!" Mikey shouted. "What happens to the souls of the poor women and girls?"

"Like all souls, they enter my realm," Hades said quietly. "They are a special case and do not follow the same path as all the others. They are not judged, for they have had no life of their own. Some I offer reincarnation. Others are too damaged to return to the overworld. They spend their time in a solitary peace of their own making."

Leonardo nodded. Who would have thought he and the God of the Underworld would share a common morality? Hades was doing what he could for these souls who found themselves in a difficult situation.

"As you can imagine," Hades continued, "Serra keeps her female relatives close, but slowly the males in her family have come to outnumber the females."

"Why is that?" Raphael asked curiously.

"The women in the family have been taking drastic steps," Hades said sadly, "to keep their girls out of Serra's hands, they sacrifice all the female children."

They gasped.

"All of them?" Donnie asked sadly.

"It's been a slow process, happening over a long period of time," Hades said. "Out in the world, there have been a few stray female offspring from time to time, but the males usually hunt them
down."

"That's awful!" Mikey said.

Hades bowed his head, and Luna left Leo's lap, standing and touching Hades elbow in sympathy.

"I'll take it from here," Luna said, "In the present day, Serra has run out of bodies."

"But that's good, right?" April said, "I mean it's horrible that all those girls have died, but now it's almost over."

Hades stiffened and turned his back; walking quickly out of the room. The vision remained behind him but changed to be that of a single girl rotating in 360 degrees in the white cloud. She looked about 16 years old, had black hair, brown eyes and a sweet expression.

"She's the only one left," Luna said quietly, tears in her eyes as she examined the girl.

"Who is she?" Leonardo asked gently, feeling the turmoil this girl's image generated in his beloved mate.

Love, fear, anger, worry, concern, despair, and hope swirled palpably around the room. So strong that even Mikey, Don and the humans could feel it emanating from her.

"She's the child I saved," Luna said simply, "She's Hades daughter."
Machinations

Charon sat in a small room just outside the great hall of the Oracle of Delphi and fumed; his eyes solid red with irritation.

*How much longer must I put up with the insults of this woman?*

First, she had the gall to send for him as if he were one of her servants. *Him*, the Guardian of the Dead, an immortal created in a time beyond memory; summoned by a lowly crossbreed. Then, when he arrived, she'd kept him cooling his heels in the anteroom.

If he didn't need the support of her father so much he'd have stolen her ugly little soul by now and dragged her screaming down to the pits of Tartarus where she belonged. He smiled grimly at the thought of Serra writhing in the underworld. There would not be a place for her in Elysium when the Earth was finally rid of her. Charon would see to that.

When his goals were accomplished, *he* would be the Ruler of the Underworld and Luna would be his queen. She would inherit the cosmos and side by side, Darkness and Light, there would be nothing they could not accomplish. The realm of the Underworld would expand and eventually the Overworld would be his as well.

After all, Zeus hadn't done anything with it for a thousand years and it's people were ripe for the plucking. Perhaps, Charon mused, he would give it to Luna as a wedding gift. She was always overly fond of the little vermin running around there.

His irritation faded as he considered his bride-to-be. Luna was a gorgeous goddess, there was no mistaking that, and her inheritance was a powerful draw; but there was something more driving him when it came to her. He had tasted her blood and it called to him. It beckoned him across time itself.

He'd courted her fervently in the past but she'd rejected him. In his anger, he had sworn that if she would not have him than she would have no other. He waited patiently and bided his time; refining his plans until the moment was exactly right. When she was banished, when the high and mighty was brought low, it was his time to strike.

That long ago vow powered his rage and ultimately led to her death at the hands of those same humans she so admired. He'd watched through their eyes and laughed as they defiled and abused her. He'd intently viewed every moment of her torment, relished her screams, and reveled in the moment of her passing.

Her soul lived on, of course, and would power his bid for the throne of the Underworld. Her death helped him accomplish his goals where her life would not. But, as the days wore on, he'd begun to regret that action. He longed for her presence even though she was always against him. Her consciousness had defied him at every turn but it was that very challenge that inspired him.

He began to falter in his resolve without her. It showed in the way he lost the battle with those monsters. Lost a piece of her beloved soul that he *still* had not reclaimed. Irritation returned.

It was because *she* had it. Once released, it had gone straight to her.

When that fool of a wizard claimed Luna lived in a mortal form once more and was regaining her power; Charon couldn't believe it. In fact, he'd flogged the man to death for lying to him. But once he saw the rooftop and tasted the evidence, his spirits rose again. Here, at last, was his true chance
to own her. Not just her body or her soul but her mind as well; for she was weakened by her semi-
mortal state.

Now he just needed to get past her protectors.

He'd made several feints in her direction. The portal necklace had been an ingenious piece of work but he'd known better than to think she would go down in the first foray. The mimic taught him far more about her situation. There were four of those terrapin like beings, though the mimic had removed one from the running. But two of the remaining monsters actually believed they were her mates. He knew she felt in need of protection, but to sink so low as to deceive these creatures with promises of family?

The thought of Luna sharing herself with those things when she had rejected a superior immortal like himself was enough to inflame him once more. When he had her in his power, he would destroy those monsters in front of her, and show her what a real mate was all about.

Charon smiled evilly. This time he would not leave her debasement and punishment to others. This time he would enjoy it himself. And in the end, she would submit to him utterly; even if it took centuries.

Only then, when he owned her completely, could she rule by his side.

The sound of a discreet cough interrupted his reverie and he turned toward the noise in annoyance. Another monster faced him, this time a rat. One of Serra plethora of enslaved servants come to announce that she would finally see him.

Charon stood and straightened his robes. For now, he still needed this woman. Needed her to think she was in control. He had his role down. Today he would be the sycophant. He'd even brought one of the souls to show some "progress." Serra didn't want the things after all, only the information they contained.

He gestured silently to the rat to lead the way and fell in step behind him, oblivious to the servants and the surroundings.

If Serra only knew the power she was throwing away in her deal with him... He would make sure she understood, before the end.

His malevolent smile at that thought sent the mortal servants in the hall sprinting away in terror.

"I had forgotten," Luna said softly, watching the image of the girl that still floated in front of them, "and she has grown so much."

"Forgotten?" Donatello asked.

"How do you forget the reason you got kicked out of somewhere as cool as Olympus?" Michelangelo piped up.

Luna smiled. "I did not forget the reason, Mikey, I merely erased the details and her location from my mortal mind. I knew I was to be banished. I could not have Serra hunting me down in order to learn the girl's hiding place."

Leonardo nodded. It was a very Luna-like thing to have done.
"Did ya' know?" Raphael asked roughly, "Did ya' know who she was when ya' saved her?"

"I met her by accident, Raphael," Luna said. "It is a long story that I can no longer speak all of; but I will tell you what I remember, if you wish."

A chorus of "yes", "of course", and "would you?" assailed her from all sides and she laughed. She sank into the middle of the large sectional, as her family crowded close around her once more and prepared for a new tale.

Luna waved away the image of the girl and started with a blank 'canvas'.

"We have more in common than you think, dear ones," Luna began, "My family has always had an… affinity for the Earth. It was why my parents chose to balance the cosmos. My brother Phaeton was the heir to the Sun and my sister Diana, whom you met so violently, was heir to the Moon. We patrol the skies as you do the streets, making sure that certain events do not escalate out of control."

The mist swirled and parted to reveal the cosmos. It was the most breathtaking rendering of Earth's solar system imaginable. The sun at the center pulsed and flared and each planet, moon, comet, and star were rendered in minute detail. There were more heavenly bodies shown here than scientists on Earth had even speculated about. Masses of dark-matter masked additional planets and moons, clouds of dust flowed from distant galaxies, and unknown asteroids spun out at a tremendous distance from the blazing star at the center of it all.

Donatello's jaw dropped as he counted scores of new spacial discoveries without even leaving his seat.

"Is this current?" Don asked, amazed.

"Yer askin' Luna if somethin' she's showin' ya is accurate?" Raph drawled, "She's a goddess, Brainiac, what do ya' think?"

"I didn't ask if it was accurate, Raph," Don replied, with a withering stare, "I asked if it was current, i.e. today's solar system, and not one from oh, a thousand years ago."

Don stood up and waved his hand through the swirling cosmos. "Some of these planets, and the motion of those stars," he gesticulated wildly toward the opposite end of the solar system, "will change mathematical theorems that have been held as standards for centuries!"

"Let's not lose focus here, Don," Leo said quietly, "I'm sure Luna can show you the solar system again later, if need be."

Luna smiled gently at Don and nodded before continuing.

"It takes a great deal of focus and power to control the balance of the celestial heavens," Luna said. "So I found myself often apart from my siblings as they spent more and more time growing into their positions,"

Donatello resumed his seat reluctantly, as the scene faded back to Olympus and the shenanigans of a young Luna.

"Never being one to sit still, I busied myself around Olympus 'assisting' this god or that in their work and becoming what Zeus would later term the 'darling' of the cosmos," Luna said.

Leonardo smiled at how the adorable tiny Luna was driving Olympus to distraction.
"When my scampering began to wear a little too heavily on the King, he would invent a reason to send me to his brothers with messages or requests. Each designed to keep me out of Olympus for extended lengths of time," Luna said. "Poseidon and I never really saw eye to eye, but Hades seemed to appreciate my youthful enthusiasm and he began to teach me. He broadened my horizons and taught me to see beyond the narrow bounds of Olympus and the King."

"The beginnings of her corruption," Hades declared with a smile, joining them again from the other room. A few moments alone had allowed him to recover his equilibrium. Luna looked up at the dark god and smiled fondly.

"As I visited his domain more often, we became close. He was like my second father, and he began to take me on field trips to Earth," Luna said. "We weren't technically supposed to be there but since I was with Hades and not causing trouble on Olympus Zeus allowed it."

Many early Earth cultures rose and fell as time accelerated in front of their eyes, and the young Luna blossomed into an ever more beautiful goddess. She maintained her trips to Earth now, more often than not, traveling alone.

"As I watched the evolution of mortals and animals alike, I began to see patterns in the world. Some of good, others of misfortune. These I understood to be the way of the universe and as not all things being equal. I began to see the need for the gentle nudges my parents made to the cosmos, for the patterns of misfortune would have seen this planet consumed by it's own sun 'ere now had they not intervened.

But there was yet another force at work in the human world. Something that I could only define as evil. Those that created mischief and death to observe the pain and suffering of others. This I could not abide." Luna dropped her eyes sadly. "Many nations were destroyed by jealousy and hate, but as a child of Olympus I was bound to not intervene for this was Zeus' realm."

Hades took Luna's hand and patted the top of it gently.

"Luna is an unusual goddess," Hades said, intently eyeing her mates, "And unlike many of her peers, she has an incredible capacity for emotion. The pain of the world wore away at her spirit, and rather than see her consumed by it, I advised her to return to Olympus."

He released Luna's hand and dropped bonelessly into the recliner across from her swinging his feet sideways across the arm. April stared at him. She couldn't quite believe the Lord of the Underworld, a fearful king in Greek mythology was lounging about in the sewers with her, occupying a chair in the manner of a ten year old. But Luna's story was too interesting for her to be distracted by him for long.

"I must admit," Luna flushed, "to my shame, that for a time I stayed away from the Earth so as not to feel the sufferings of those upon it; but Olympus, though apart, was not immune to the spread of this evil force.

Many of my peers began to view the Earth as their playground and their mischief added to the misery of the people," Luna bit gently at her lower lip in and expression of pain.

"I went to the King and begged his intervention, not realising that envy and hatred had already made their way into his heart. Zeus struck back and it was then that my brother perished and everything changed."

Guilt and sorrow stabbed at her mates through the bond, prompting Raph to sit up straight and grab her chin, forcing her to meet his eyes.
"Yer brother's death was not yer fault, sweetheart," Raph said, as gently as he could. "Zeus killed him, an' from what ya' said before, he woulda done it whether ya' spoke up for the people of Earth or not."

"Your mate is correct, young one," Hades said soothingly in confirmation. "I fear my brother has come to envy your family and it's power. He has long been planning the breaking of it."

Luna shook her head silently, breaking Raph's grip, took a deep breath and continued.

"My family changed. My sister abandoned her duties as heir and took up control of the wild hunt. In this way, she fights back among mischief makers and those that would injure our family, but the strain of the hunt calls her own morality into question more often than not."

Luna sighed. "With my brother gone and no other to share the burden with, I became heir to all the cosmos has to offer. The Sun and the Moon will eventually answer to me, if I regain my position."

"And that," Leonardo spoke up suddenly, "probably scares the pants off Zeus. No wonder he demeans you and sets the other gods against you. He already fears the power of your parents separately, for you to inherit it all…"

"Means that one day she might challenge him," Hades said
Compromise

Splinter rapped his walking stick on the stones three times, loudly, before entering the audience chamber of the Oracle to make the standard visitor announcement.

"Charon, the Guardian of the Dead, seeks your wisdom. Pythia, will you allow his approach?" he said with stately difference.

Splinter kept a tight rein on his emotions, controlling his face and the pitch of his voice to give nothing away. It wouldn't do to betray his anger at this point. But those who knew him well would have noted the sharp, hard look in his eye and the subtle twitch of his tail.

Those slight signs would have sent his students running for cover. Luckily, no one here had bothered to know him. He was one enslaved petitioner among many, and his sole advantage lay in his tenure here. It gave him some slight power over the pages. He made their schedules and tried to keep them out of trouble. It came in handy today.

When Splinter had seen the messenger from the Underworld waiting the allotted time near the audience chamber he had quickly dismissed the page and taken his place. This was an official audience so he didn't expect to learn much, but Splinter wanted to an eye on these two when they were together. If he could do so legitimately, all the better.

Serra waved an indulgent hand and Splinter turned to Charon with a bow.

"The Pythia bids you approach," he spoke in formal tones, then backed away to stand silently against the wall.

Charon approached Serra calmly with a slight smile on his face; It wasn't really masking his true feelings which seethed just below the surface. He walked to the edge of the dais at the end of the room and bowed quickly.

Serra frowned at the lack of respect but the expression miraculously disappeared as Charon pulled a crystal orb out of his inside pocket.

"Pythia, as requested, here is the first of the items you bid me fetch for you, " Charon said lightly. "It was not easy for this one was incredibly fast and anxious to get away but here it is at last to answer your demands."

Charon wasn't actually sure how Serra was going to get her information since the souls were hardly forthcoming in their speech but that wasn't actually his problem. As long as the soul was intact when he left anything she tried would be fine with him. That had been their compromise.

"Clear the room!"

The Oracle's command was instantly obeyed. Servants, guards and petitioners alike scurried quickly out the door. Splinter frowned but moved to follow. He'd really hoped to learn more before being evicted.

"Rat," Serra called imperiously, "you stay."

Charon raised a brow. He doubted this would be anything Serra wanted others to see.
"I'm going to need a few things, Charon, and unless you want to be running to fetch them the Master of Pages is just the one to keep around," Serra said.

Splinter inclined his head and resumed his post at the back of the room.

Serra regarded the sphere in Charon's outstretched hand and forced herself not to snatch it away from him. She could not afford to let him know exactly how much these souls meant to her. He was already overbearing enough; the pompous fool.

Inside, though, she was dancing with glee for her current body was aging quickly and the anticipation of finally knowing where the next host was hiding energized her. Serra had rarely stayed in a body after it reached the age of 35, but the decrease in her stable had forced her inhabit this far one longer.

She was hating every minute of it.

Really, she should have seen the problems in her stable years ago but she had grown complacent and the slow decline of females in the bloodline had gone unnoticed for centuries. That was the loophole in her contract with Zeus, for there always was one. He had pledged to maintain the line, he had not guaranteed that there would always be women.

Still, she hadn't been too worried about her future until a freak tidal wave destroyed the women's quarters; taking the last of her in house stable with it. Now she was down to one legitimate heir and finding her was going to be tricky.

She was a wild one. Born outside of Serra's influence to a woman who had only a small percentage of the blood. But she was strong with mental gifts that bore watching even at a young age. It had made her an excellent candidate even before that wretched tidal wave.

The girl's history was vague. The mother died in childbirth and the father was a mystery but she had been thriving in a small fishing village off the coast of Japan. Even though she wasn't a native, one of the locals had taken her in and it looked like the environment was fairly stable. So, Serra had left the girl where she was.

It was unlikely the she would amount to anything in the mortal world. At least nothing that would take her out of that small village by the sea. Besides, Serra had a spy there. One that knew where the girl was at all times, so there had been little risk.

Now Serra cursed herself for not bringing the child in when she had the chance, for when the girl was merely 6 years old she had been spirited away by none other than Luna; highest ranking goddess of busybodies.

Luna had been Serra's nemesis for a long, long time. They had butted heads from the beginning and Luna was always trying to steal away Serra's power and influence over the King of the Gods. That had been merely annoying. A challenging game that Serra allowed because it helped keep her sharp. Now the interfering nincompoop was jeopardizing Serra's future and it was time to put a stop to it.

Luna had hidden the child away and she could literally be anywhere; the Overworld, the Underworld or even on Olympus. None of Serra's spies could find her. That put Serra in a sticky situation.

Eventually, she had been forced to approach her father and inform him of the problem. If Zeus wanted to keep utilizing her foresight among the mortals, than he would have to get Luna to give
up the location of the child.

Zeus requested the location of Luna as a favor. When that failed, he cajoled, bribed, and outright commanded the information from her. Each time, Luna refused, saying that if Serra occupied the girl it would change the balance of power among the gods.

In the end, Zeus had banished Luna to the Earth as a mortal for her disobedience. He made her task as difficult as he could, believing she would tire of her punishment and relent.

Serra didn't need foresight to tell him that wouldn't happen but she didn't say anything for getting Luna on the mortal plane was beyond what Serra could have hoped for.

As a mortal, Luna was at Serra's mercy.

Getting Charon to assist in the plan had been as simple as promising him Luna's death. The immortal was obsessed with the celestial goddess and fell prey easily to Serra's experienced manipulation. Once rid of Luna's consciousness, the souls should have been readily acquired.

But something had gone wrong.

Serra frowned again as she stretched out her hand, forcing Charon to place the orb in her palm. He was hiding it from her and since any future touched by the gods was a grey blank she couldn't really tell what it was. It would be revealed soon enough, she decided. Now was the time to focus on her own future and find out where Luna had hidden the missing girl.

A glint of light drew her eye to the sphere in her palm. She had to admit it was a clever device. That Charon had invented it, did not surprise her. After his millennia of ferrying souls across the river Lethe who would know better than he how to contain one?

She shook it lightly, watching the refracted glow.

Orange. Which part would that be? Ah, that's right, innocence.

With a quick twist of her wrist, the Oracle opened the orb and released the soul for questioning. She did not fear it's escape, despite the open room. Part of the magic of the orb was to keep it's contents from fleeing. Only the complete destruction of the sphere would free it.

The small orange tear drop leapt away from Serra at the first opportunity and flew madly about the space. Splinter's eyes widened in surprise. It was not orange like a flame from a candle or blaze but was electric and bright, glowing with a neon effect as it bounced around the room.

Splinter quickly hid his shock. He recognized this little being. He'd met two others and they were bound to his sons. This was a piece of his daughter's soul.

Not only that, but he felt the same vibrations coming from this little one as he did in the presence of his son, Michelangelo. It was innocence personified. And it was terrified. After a hurried sweep around the room it spotted Splinter and ducked behind him, peeping over his shoulder at Charon and the Oracle.

know you.

The whisper was so quiet in Splinter's mind that he almost wasn't sure he had heard it but it had the same feeling as his communications with the goddess.

luna loves you!
This second exclamation startled Splinter but the soul was so happy to find a friend it practically vibrated with giddiness. Splinter was hard pressed to maintain his neutral expression. He did not want to give this little one away.

The Oracle directed a piercing stare at the soul as it quivered behind his shoulder and declared, "Your goddess is dead."

The soul immediately froze and sank to the floor in the most pitiful fashion imaginable.

how?

The tiny voice chimed sadly through the hall for all to hear and Serra smiled malevolently.

"She overreached herself, child," Serra said. "She was defiled and murdered by the very humans she had sworn to protect. Charon was witness to her destruction."

At her gesture, Charon crossed the room and placed his hand upon a blue crystal mounted prominently on a pedestal in the center of the audience chamber. And Splinter felt dread gather heavily in his stomach. He suddenly understood why this meeting was taking place here.

Usually the Oracle used this device to project her visions of the future onto a large white silk curtain for the petitioner to see. Charon would use it to show the hideous death and destruction of the mortal Luna.

It was worse than Splinter had feared. Donatello had told him the course of events but seeing his daughter suffer it first hand was devastating. His eyes filled with tears as her screams echoed throughout the chamber and his anger blazed as Charon smiled.

This demon was responsible for his daughter's torment?

???

The query echoed through Splinter's mind, distracting him, as the little one tried to establish how much of what Serra claimed was the truth. Splinter bowed his head and closed his eyes in sorrow for what he had to relate. He could not lie to Luna's soul.

I am sorry, little one, this did occur.

There was a flicker of deep gold inside the orange light and true flame emerged for the first time as innocence raged.

NO

It was loud and directed at the whole room. Splinter winced at the tone and volume. He hastened to reassure it.

She lives! Her father, Helios, was able to revive her but you must conceal this from them.

Splinter projected it to the little one with all the mental strength he could muster but he couldn't tell if it was listening to him anymore. It swelled dramatically and burned hotly; suspended in the middle of the room.

"Yes. The humans she so loved betrayed and killed her," Serra continued, "They have changed. They have no honor. There is no reason to protect them any longer. In the name of Zeus and as vengeance for your goddess, tell me where the child is hidden."
Rage that would have matched Raphael's darkest turmoil rolled off the flame in a palpable wave and Splinter flinched away from where it vibrated in the air.

*THAT ANSWER IS DIVIDED.*

"Divided how?" Serra asked, her eyes narrowing.

Splinter couldn't believe it was answering her. Surely no part of Luna's soul would capitulate to this woman, she was the enemy. He had to stop it.

*Luna lives and my sons have nursed her back to health. They will free you. Do not give this woman what she wants.*

It was a desperate call in his mind but it was not getting through.

*WE ARE FOUR AND EACH HAS A PART.*

"Give me your part then and help me convince the others to reveal theirs," Serra said. "If you do, I will guarantee your vengeance and release your power to Helios."

Splinter could no longer keep silent. He leapt toward the flame from the back of the room as it spoke again.

*MINE IS THE LAST. IT...*

"NO, little one!" he cried out "Do not do this! My daughter lives!"

Anger made the soul flare brighter just as Splinter's paw connected with it's outer edge.

Orange light consumed his vision. Pain cascaded briefly over his form but was replaced quickly with blessed numbness as everything burned away into a light brighter than the sun.

Silence fell and a small dusting of ash drifted to the floor.

Nothing remained where he had been.
Serra concealed her surprise as best she could and gripped the crystal orb in her hand tightly. Surely, the soul could not harm her as long as she held it. She glanced at Charon, shaken, and noticed he shrank back infinitesimally.

Neither of them had realized just how powerful the soul would be and Serra had provoked it to anger. She needed time to consider. She held up the orb.

"Return for now," she commanded. "We shall discuss these developments… later."

The orb pulled and the soul resisted.

"Return, NOW!" Serra cried, putting more strength behind the demand.

For one moment, she was afraid it wouldn't work. But slowly the flame returned to its smaller tear drop form and was sucked back into the crystal.

It was bright, ever so bright, and he could not open his eyes more than a slit for fear of going blind, but that did not mean he was helpless. He left his eyes safely closed and brought his other far more accurate senses to bear. He listened carefully and his whiskers twitched with the slight vibrations around him.

He was in rapid motion, though it also felt as if he was standing still.

He swiveled his ears to follow the nearby sound of joyous chiming laughter that somehow reminded him of Luna. The vibrations that surrounded him were of total innocence and love.

you are awake.

It was the same voice from the Oracle's palace, but calm and full of peace. It spoke quietly, as if the rage from before had never existed.

"Yes," Splinter said, carefully. "Who are you?"

trine. you?

"My name is Splinter," he replied. "Trine, where are we?"

ley-line.

"I do not understand what has occurred," Splinter said, warily, "We were in the Oracle's Palace. You were angry about Luna's death and I feared you would divulge something you would regret. But Luna lives."

trine knows. splinter said reveal nothing.

Suddenly Splinter realized his mistake and he laughed loud and long in relief. Trine had not really been enraged and he had asked the soul to reveal nothing, he just hadn't meant to include himself in
that directive.

"You did well, little one. I did not suspect," he said, chuckling. "But still do not understand where we are."

ley-line. highway of the gods. trine sends splinter home.

"Sends?" Splinter was stunned.

evil ones think trine destroyed splinter, but pushed splinter into line instead.

"You are not coming?" Splinter asked.

want to. can't. orb holds me.

"Why did you do this, Trine?" Splinter asked.

why call luna daughter?

Splinter paused before answering. He wondered about this little being who was so clever. Of course innocence often sees right to the heart of things but what did it mean by answering his question with it's own?

"I call Luna my daughter because she is mate to two of my sons," he said, "and because my heart has longed for such as she for many, many years."

family and love. luna loves you too.

"I can only hope," Splinter said softly.

luna and splinter need one another. trine has seen.

"You have foresight, little one?" Splinter asked, startled.

There was no answer and the ground that Splinter stood upon suddenly heaved and rolled, tossing him to the ground. The bright orange light that surrounded him was fading quickly and outside of it was a darkness so deep it defied description.

trine can go no further. serra closes the orb!

The soul's 'voice' was broken now as if at a great distance.

call for ... luna will catch...

The voice cut off but there was a great shove and Splinter felt himself flying through the black even faster than he had before. Without Trine to shield him with it's glow, the journey was rough and he was pummeled on all sides by forces he could not see.

He could not stay in this darkness. The absence of everything sucked at his soul like a black hole and began to devour him. He closed his eyes once more and sank into himself in meditation. How was he to call Luna from this place?

As he settled into his mediation, away from the physical chaos of the outside, he felt surrounded by the comforting presence of his family. They were always here with him at the center of his being.

The calming blue of Leonardo, the vast red strength of Raphael, the bright orange innocence of
Luna had told her story throughout the day and far into the night. Now, she gazed sleepily at her family, still gathered close around her. April and Casey had left during the day and Hades had gone to check on his kingdom with promises to return, leaving Luna alone at last with her loved ones. No one wanted to leave the room and break the spell of warmth and family that surrounded them, so everyone had simply made themselves comfortable.

Raphael and Leonardo sat on either end of the sofa with Luna in between them. She lay half across Raphael's lap on a pillow and he stroked her hair gently. Her legs and feet were stretched across Leo's lap, and he rubbed the soles of her feet and stroked her calf soothingly.

Mikey and Don sat on the floor in front of her, using the sofa for a back rest. They leaned sleepily on each other in a way that made Luna smile softly and she rested her hand and arm across their shoulders. Mikey rested his cheek on her arm and Don reached up to clasp her hand gently.

She should have been perfectly content, surrounded as she was, but there was still one family member missing and Luna's heart ached that Splinter was not here. She had, as yet, been unable to fulfill her promise to free him and it ate at her heart day by day.

She was just dozing off, despite her guilt, when something struck a chord within her and she stood abruptly. At her motion all four ninjas sprang to their feet, weapons drawn, and placed their shells to her; enclosing her in a circle of protection.

"Luna? What is it?" Leonardo asked, as his eyes flitted over the room, searching for the danger.

"Someone is coming," she said softly. "Traveling on a nearby ley-line."

"A god?" Raphael asked menacingly.

"Call Hades back," Donatello said. "Only two of us are equipped to handle an immortal."

"Not a god," Luna said, concentrating hard. "This feels strange. It is a mortal, out of control…"

Her eyes were suddenly huge as the internal call repeated.

"Splinter!" She gasped.

The four turned to her as one with startled looks of hope.

"Clear me a space! I must catch him or he will hurtle right by!"

They sprang into action, sheathing weapons, and shoving the furniture away from her in a large circle.

"Stay back," she warned, "This is difficult and he is injured. Leonardo, make ready to aid him."

They fell back at her command, waiting anxiously by the doorway as she raised her arms. Silver power flowed out, encasing her arms and hands forming a globe, large enough to encase a man, overhead. As the globe expanded, tentacles of power crackled through the air. It searched for the
ley-line and, for one moment, they could see it. A thick black cord that absorbed all the light around it, stretched away into the distance.

The silver globe snapped on to the line. Strain crossed Luna's face as she braced herself and her power for impact. There was an explosion of light, a cascade of sparks, and the side of the globe buckled in; collapsing around Splinter's body like the magical equivalent of an airbag, shielding him from further damage as she slowed his velocity.

Luna's body shook and her knees began to buckle as more and more power flowed from her to the alternate plane and she fought against the pull of overwhelming speed.

Raphael broke away from the others at the door and dashed in to catch her, holding her upright. He could not stand by and watch her collapse under this weight. He threw his arms around her waist and lent her his strength but the burden was more than he expected. Much more than even his powerful muscles could support.

Raph refused to back down. His eyes narrowed, he dug in his heels, and he drew on his own fiery power. Red threads flowed visibly around him shoring up his strength and gliding over Luna to join with her silver ones. Together they threw power into the void and pulled the globe back.

Hand over hand, they reeled in the silver sphere that encased Splinter, peeling it slowly away from the black cord until it finally separated from the line, snapping toward them at great speed. Two pairs of hands, one large, green, and coated with red; one small, fragile, and covered in silver, 'caught' the glowing sphere like it was a giant ball.

Together, they set it on the floor and let the power lapse.

Luna fell back into Raphael's arms, but shook her head as Leonardo rushed to tend her, sending him instead to his injured father. She looked up into Raphael's rich amber eyes and smiled, raising a hand to his cheek tenderly.

"Thank you, love, I couldn't have done it without you," she whispered.

Then darkness claimed her and she was asleep in his arms.
Complications

Donatello sat in front of the main terminal in his lab and stared for most of an hour at a blinking cursor on a blank screen. He wasn't really looking at it, it was just a convenient place to rest his eyes while his brain worked overtime. And it felt like his was going a mile a minute.

He'd spent the last few days checking and rechecking the program for the crystal shield, going through the code line by line to establish if there were any nasty subroutines incorporated by the false soul. He needed to get this protection up and running soon. Things were coming to a head and with Master Splinter now back in the lair, Don was even more anxious to contribute to the family's protection.

But that wasn't his only project at the moment. Leo was helping him create some immortal boobie traps and he was putting the finishing touches on his new medical scanning device as well.

Of course, just because Don looked entirely spaced out, didn't mean that he was. He was more than aware of where everybody was in the lair at any given time. It had become vital for all of them to be on the highest levels of alert with gods and immortals popping in and out. So, despite appearances, Don knew that Hades had entered his lab long before the god reached the back of his chair.

If he thought to catch Don unprepared in some way, he was sadly mistaken.

"Be careful where you're stepping, Hades," Don warned without looking up, "That floor plate in front of you is charged with one of Leo's plasma bolts."

The god may not really have been testing Don's alertness but with him it was hard to tell. Hades was an odd duck and Donatello was still trying to figure him out. Sometimes he was as playful as a ten year old up to mischief, then he would revert to a soul older than dirt and you could see the years weighing heavily in his eyes.

Either way, Don didn't want to have a pissed off god on his hands. That trap would pack quite a jolt to any immortal who crossed it. Probably not enough to take out a god, but Don was positive it wouldn't feel very nice.

"Thank you for the warning, young one," Hades replied and proceeded to levitate right over the offending obstacle.

Don sighed and made a mental note to include some sensors on the trap that extended to the area above the plate before he pushed himself away from the desk and turned his chair to face the god. Hades was examining the prototype carefully.

"Sorry, Hades. It's not meant for you or any of Luna's family. Leo and I have just been trying to come up with additional ways to protect ourselves," Don said, "I know it won't trip up someone who's really paying attention but it might slow down the unwary."

"It's actually quite clever, Donatello," the god replied. "You'd be surprised by how many gods you would catch with such a device. We are far too used to being indestructible to pay attention to where we are putting our feet."

Despite his irritation over the interruption, Don felt himself flushing from the praise. He'd postulated that himself but hadn't wanted to offend by pointing it out when there were actual gods present.
"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" Donatello asked lightly, turning his attention back to his terminal.

In the two weeks since the god had befriended them, Don had learned it was best to inquire directly what Hades really wanted when he came calling rather than waiting around for some kind of clue. When you’d lived for thousands of years, Don assumed, getting to the point quickly wasn't too high on your agenda and Hades was prone to hanging about all afternoon if Don didn't immediately ask. Today seemed to be different.

"Luna is ill. She needs your help," Hades said bluntly.

Hades suddenly had Donatello's undivided attention. Don's head snapped around faster than a cracked whip and his eyes were sharp and focused. If he hadn't been a god, Hades would have taken a step back from the depth of intelligence revealed in those eyes and the fierce protectiveness that his declaration invoked. As it was, he merely blinked owlishly at Don and waited to see what that intelligence would make of his statement.

"I think you have the wrong brother, Hades," Don said carefully, his gaze unwavering. "Leonardo is the one with the bond and the healing gift."

Even as he said it, however, Don was cataloging a list of symptoms he had observed in the goddess over the last few days. His initial assessment of illness from the day of the apology notwithstanding, he had noticed apathy, lethargy, and despondence; despite Splinter's successful return and the discovery of the location of Trine. She was limp, lacking in her usual grace and self confidence. All her sparkle was absent.

He didn't have enough information to form a hypothesis yet for the cause, but he certainly did not like the effects. Only the thought that Leonardo had things under control where her health was concerned had kept him from investigating already.

"Not at all," Hades replied softly, his own gaze piercing and direct, "I have already spoken with Leonardo and though he is keeping up with the problem, barely... he can't fix it. And before you ask, neither can I."

Don sincerely doubted that. Hades had brought him back from the brink of death. Why couldn't he handle what was happening to Luna?

"What is it exactly that you can't fix?" Don asked suspiciously. "You give the appearance of being all powerful."

"It is not a matter of power, Donatello. It is a matter of permission," Hades said.

Then, as if to distract Don from that topic, Hades added, "I would be intrigued to learn what your new invention makes of her illness."

Don wasn't thrown by this seeming shift in the conversation. Hades was dancing around something he wasn't supposed to say. Something to do with Luna's current situation. Don had seen him pull this maneuver before with Raphael. It had driven his brother to distraction but Don had understood that, on some level, even the gods were bound to certain rules. And breaking rules had consequences.

Don was under no illusions that mortals would escape punishment if those consequences were enacted. So instead, Don considered Hades statement and tried to read between the lines of what he did not say. Apparently Hades thought Don would find some clue to her supposed illness with his
Truthfully, Don wasn't sure what his machine would make of a half mortal goddess. He'd barely calibrated it to a healthy human and had yet to do the same for his brothers, much less an immortal or god.

The new scanner tapped into the enormous power contained in the crystal node that Luna and Leo had created and was focused through a prism made from the same substance. Don had managed, with some trial and error, to cut the prism in such a way as to refract only a certain wavelength of power. Consequently, it produced the same silver-white light that Luna and her mother used to scan mortals for injuries.

But Don had discovered it did a lot more than just locate and report the severity of injuries. When diffused at a low level across a wide plane it could monitor all the vital signs of a person without any need for connected sensors. And, at a slightly higher intensity, the light infused mortal tissue with small amounts of energy and improved the efficiency of the cellular process, in effect making the cells rejuvenate. It wasn't healing, but it stopped cellular decay or at least slowed it down to a point Don could no longer track it.

In effect, Don had created his own Fountain of Youth. But he had no idea what that would translate into when applied to a healthy Luna, much less an ill one. Slowly he turned his piercing gaze back to the God of the Underworld.

"I suppose," Don said slowly, "that it is time to give the machine a test run. But not before I've calibrated it fully."

Don raised a brow ridge and a challenging look appeared in his eyes.

"I don't suppose you would care to volunteer to be a control subject?"

Splinter slowly raised his eyelids and contemplated the room around him, feeling at peace with his surroundings and almost completely whole for the first time in seven years. Outside of meditation, he had not felt his family's presence for so long that returning had been a most overwhelming experience. But now he was settling in at last and the joy he felt at being reunited with his sons, and finding them not only whole but thriving, was incomparable.

One by one, over the last two weeks, they had sought him out and reconnected with him. Each one sharing the vital elements and events of their lives during this time of separation. And though there were many more conversations yet to be had, Splinter was well pleased with the way his family had prospered and cared for one another during his absence.

His sons had matured very well indeed and he was proud of all of their accomplishments. But there remained a member of his family he had not yet consulted with in private. In fact, he had barely seen her in the public areas of their home since his return.

Luna had become reticent and withdrawn. A mere ghost of the confident and powerful young goddess who had done the impossible and brought his whole life and family back together with simply the force of her will. Splinter wished she would come to him. He did not know the root cause of her current trouble, but he wanted to help his daughter in any way that he could and Trine had suggested his involvement may be vital to the outcome of their struggle.

A light tap on the shoji screen that stretched across the entrance to his new quarters distracted him and he twitched an ear in surprise. He had neither heard nor sensed this visitor approaching, but the
shadowy outline of a female form suggested it was the very person he wished to see. She must be strictly controlling her aura to have approached so unnoticed. This should be interesting.

"Enter," Splinter called quietly.

The panel slid softly aside and Luna stood, wavering somewhat on his doorstep.

"Please come in, my child," Splinter said soothingly. "Have some tea."

He gestured to the low table in front of him where a steaming pot lay waiting as Luna slid the door shut and sank gratefully to the cushion in front of it. Splinter reached across and poured, mindful of her watchful gaze as he completed the tea ceremony and pushed the cup gently towards her with his paw.

She said nothing but her eyes were full of questions as she took the proffered drink and sipped it delicately. He raised his own cup to his lips as he waited for her to collect her thoughts and stretched all his senses to take the measure of this young woman in front of him.

For a moment he was overwhelmed with the information that returned but he hid his reaction, dropping his gaze to a nearby candle to contemplate what he had learned.

He knew she was not the tender age which she appeared. She had seen centuries come and go; empires rise and fall. But he had touched the auras of long lived beings before and it was not that which startled him.

Nor was it the fractured state of her soul which confounded him. When viewed with his second sight she appeared incomplete and misregistered, with many overlapping colored outlines that confused the eye, but he was well aware of her current plight and had been apprised of the various aspects of her complex tale by his sons.

No, his greatest disquiet lay in the in simple sound of her heartbeat.

There was a dark resonance in each, reflecting a duality of nature that had not been present during their last meeting. It echoed in bleak counterpoint to the silvery white light of her existence and conjured images of death, pain, and madness.

It felt far too familiar and Splinter searched his mind and heart for a parallel. Why did he know this darkness? Had he encountered it before? He closed his eyes briefly in meditation.

*What was this shadowy essence that lay on the pure heart of his daughter?*

Moments later his eyes sprang open again in horror. He knew this evil. It was the demon that had haunted his precognitive dreams since the youth of his sons. The darkness that had started all of them on this path, so many years ago.

Her clear blue eyes met his piercing black gaze and she stilled. Even her breathing ceased as she read the answer she had been fearing in his gaze.

He saw.

He *knew*.

With great care, she set the cup softly on the table and made a peculiar gesture over her forehead. Color drained from her eyes and her hair, taking on life of their own as Sol and Fina regained their forms beside her.
"Leave us."

Her voice was a ringing command to the two small souls, resonating with all the echoed power at her command. It should have sent them bolting from the room without hesitation. Fina went, dissolving right through the screen, heading straight for Raphael. Sol lingered, hovering with gentle curiosity near her face.

why?

This hesitant question, with all the love of her bonded behind it, was her undoing. She collapsed upon the table, hid her head in her arms, and wept.
A/N: We have reached chapter 50 and I never thought it would be this long. Still I must follow the story where it takes me. I hope you are enjoying the ride. Since 50 is such landmark this chapter is a little longer than usual. Let me know your thoughts!

Sol dipped and soared through the tunnels that separated the space it now called home from the strangeness and chaos of the outside world. It vibrated and pulsed in complicated patterns as it roamed, venting its uncertainty and confusion into the empty darkness.

It wasn't supposed to be out here, roaming alone, but it wasn't like it was powerless. It could protect itself if the need arose and it was too upset to remain with the family.

why?!

It flashed.

why does the goddess fear?

Sol did not understand. Luna had Leonardo. She should fear nothing.

Sol had selected a stalwart protector, a calm advisor, a powerful being with infinite potential to be her bonded. One who was not an immortal, for they were too caught up in the machinations of Olympus to truly support her. No, Sol had chosen one who knew this world. One who could help her navigate through it's perils and pitfalls. One who could protect her physically from further harm.

Leonardo understood dedication, perseverance, and sacrifice. He matched her selflessness. He could be counted on to soothe, heal, act, or avenge at need. He was competent, decisive, and strong. Strong enough to resurrect her mortal life.

And Luna was good for him as well.

Leonardo's soul had been aching and incomplete when Sol met him. It had cried out in recognition the moment Sol had presented itself and introduced the goddess. Luna was the ultimate answer to all his needs and desires, so when Sol wordlessly offered the bond, Leonardo's soul latched on with no reservations.

It had been the right choice. Helios himself had reinforced it.

Leonardo was utterly devoted to her. Not just soul bound but dedicated to her with mind and heart as well. Why then would the goddess reject him in her time of need? By driving Sol away, she was preventing Leonardo from fulfilling his purpose.

it hurts luna. it hurts leonardo. it hurts sol. so why?

Sol knew about the darkness that worried her. It could feel the shadow creeping in a little more each day. But Leonardo was helping. Unbeknownst to her, Sol hovered each night at Leonardo's
side as he silently poured his light and energy into the sleeping goddess. But Leonardo could not fix the problem for good if Luna would not tell him what was wrong.

Frustrated, the little flame dipped down into the dirt of the floor and spun up a powerful dust devil, sending debris spinning hard and fast against the tunnel walls. It had just begun a full blown expression of its irritation, flashing rapidly and flooding the tunnel with blue light, when another member of its family came into view.

It was the funny one, the one that made Luna good things to eat, the one who saw through her emotions without trying, the one who nearly died to protect her.

Michelangelo stopped suddenly and held up a hand to shield his eyes from the still flying rocks and Sol's bright glare. Caught in the act of throwing a temper tantrum, Sol dimmed suddenly and sank to the tunnel floor in shame. It forced the wind to disperse and the dust to settle quickly.

"What the...? " Mikey said, looking around and finally focusing on the small teardrop huddled just above the floor. "Sol? Is everything ok? What are you doing out here all alone?"

Sol bobbed a little shrug. It did not like to speak much to others but for the family it made exceptions. Especially for this one. He had given so much for Luna.

Luna said go away.

Michelangelo's eyes softened at the incredibly sad, confused, tone of the soul's projection. It's normally happy little chime was completely absent.

"I'm sorry, lil' guy," Mikey said, comfortingly. "Don't you usually hang out with Leo when Luna is busy?"

Leonardo is recharging.

Michelangelo's face scrunched up in confusion. It was the middle of the afternoon and he didn't think Leo was taking a nap. Sol sighed a little hissing sound. This was why it rarely spoke to others. It was too hard to make them understand.

Leonardo sits very still and asks the world for power. It comes.

Mikey's eyes finally lit up with understanding. Leo was meditating. Again. It seemed he was doing that more and more in recent days. When Mikey had gently teased him and inquired why, Leo just said it helped him focus and pierced Mikey with a look that said he might benefit from a little focus as well. Mikey had beat a hasty retreat before Leo could order him to join in.

Meditation as recharging. That was a new perspective for Mikey. It turned his thinking in a different direction. Suddenly Leo's frequent sessions began to concern him. What was he using all his energy on that he needed to spend so much time refueling? There hadn't been an immortal battle in weeks and no one was currently in need of healing.

Could it be something else? Maybe to do with Leo's emphatic gift? Come to think of it, Luna had been practically absent for days. And when Mikey had seen her, she looked drawn and tired. Perhaps Leo was spending his energy trying to cure her of some ailment.

Mikey frowned then smoothed out his expression when he noticed Sol shiver. It still hovered below his knees just above the floor. He hated to see the little soul so down, especially after it saved him of its own accord during the Hades catastrophe.
Mikey didn't know why Luna had sent it away, but it was obvious that Sol felt lonely and lost. A
distraction was in order and that was something Mikey could easily provide.

"You can hang out with me if you want, lil' guy," Mikey volunteered. "I'm headed out to meet April
for the weekly groceries."

Sol perked up a little at that and floated up to Mikey's shoulder. It rarely associated names with
individuals, preferring instead to refer to them by their relationship to the goddess or Leonardo, so
it didn't know who this April was. When Leonardo or Luna was around it didn't matter since Sol
could pick the image of the person under discussion from their mind. Sol couldn't do that with this
brother. It hissed again in frustration at having to ask.

April?

"You know...April. Human woman, red hair, green eyes, bright and bouncy personality," Mikey
said.

Ah. mortal sister.

Michelangelo was startled. April was like their sister. She had known them so long, she was more
than just a friend. She was a vital connection to the outside world but he certainly thought of her as
family. He was surprised, however, to hear Sol refer to her that way. He chuckled softly.

"Yeah, sister," Mikey agreed.

Sol had paid attention to the mortal woman because Leonardo felt great affection for her but it
immediately realized she was family. Sol didn't need to read glyphs like Hades or Luna to know
that this human woman carried the Hamato mark, regardless of her lack of blood ties. In fact, Sol
sensed this human sister was going to be good for the goddess in ways that even her own blood kin
were not. She was practical, supportive, and Luna respected her advice. Maybe that was the way
forward. Perhaps it was time for Sol to reach out again for help, as it had with Leonardo. This sister
might be able to lead the goddess to sense.

Ok. sol go.

"Alright! Let's go lil' buddy," Mikey said enthusiastically. "We shouldn't keep a lady waiting."

They proceeded down the tunnel at a good pace, quickly outdistancing the area Sol would have
dared on its own. As they left its comfort zone, Sol began to fidget a little in distress. It had not
been this far away from Luna or Leonardo since the wraith attack and it was concerned for their
safety.

But Luna, and the home, had many protectors. There were two mighty fathers, Fina, the red
brother, and Leonardo there. This brother needed someone with power to keep him safe. If Sol had
known the orange one left home weekly, it would have followed him before now.

Since the attack that claimed Luna's first mortal life, Sol regarded other humans and the outside
world in general with deep suspicion. It didn't trust them around its family. Because of this, it
harbored great concern about any of the unempowered that left their home. That included the
mortal sister. She lived outside the protective circle. She had nothing to assist her if their enemies
discovered her location.

It had run this worry by Leonardo on several occasions and though he shared the emotion,
Leonardo would not insist that April join them. Sol did not understand this but had accepted the
decision. That didn't mean it was satisfied.
Sol had a bad feeling about what was coming. It wouldn't leave any member of its family undefended, so as they traveled further from the relative safety of home, Sol swooped down to the tunnel floor and picked up a small polished rock. It concentrated hard on the stone, imbuing it with power and purpose as they traveled along. Before they reached the mortal sister, Sol would create a solution.

Trine pulsed brightly, then dimmed and pulsed again, seeking any cracks in the protection of the crystal orb. The prison was too good. Trine couldn't find any weaknesses to exploit. The crystal had been immersed in the river Styx, the river of hate, deep in the confines of Hades. Like all the waters there, the Styx main purpose was keeping souls from escaping and it was doing a good job. Trine flare again in frustration.

It had been weeks since it pushed Splinter into the ley-line to help him escape and despite the promise that the family would return to set Trine free, nothing had yet occurred. Normally, this would not have concerned it but over the past few days the feeling that something wrong was approaching had put the usually bouncy and innocent soul on edge, inciting an unwelcome restlessness.

Also, keeping up the charade of indignant anger and rage for the Oracle was draining. Trine didn't like having to feign such emotions, it went against the clever little souls natural spirit. Luckily, the Oracle was intimidated by Trine's show of strength. She only opened the orb every few days or so but she seemed convinced of Trine's corruption.

Trine eventually had given her a bunch of nonsense coordinates, assuring her that it would only make sense as a location when she had all four. There was just enough truth in the deception to make it believable. Luna had divided the coordinates and given one piece to each of the souls but there was no way Trine would ever divulge the correct information. Even if Luna was killed.

Trine hissed a sigh and abandoned its efforts. Nothing it could do from the inside would weaken its bonds. Suddenly, it ceased its pulsing and dimmed as it felt another presence enter the room.

It wasn't Serra.

Trine stretched its senses and felt an immediate affinity for the person who slipped through the door. Angry innocence pulsed against the outside of Trine's prison as a young boy made his way across the open floor with all the stealth an eight year old could manage.

The boy stopped about 3 feet away and glared at the orange glowing orb. Trine waited, to see what drove this young page to break the Oracle's rules and enter this forbidden room.

"Can you hear me?" the boy demanded in an angry tone.

Trine flashed an affirmative, curious and impressed by his daring.

"Is it true?" the boy growled low. "Did you kill the Master of Pages?"

Trine dimmed. This innocent boy was grieving and angry because of its deception. It could feel the emotions pulsing across the small distance between them. The boy's expression twisted up in despair.

"Why?" the boy wailed, "Was it because he was a monster? It wasn't true. He might have looked scary but Splinter was nice! He was only one here who cared at all what happened to us."

The boy gestured toward the door and Trine realized he wasn't alone. Two young girls and three
more boys were crouched in the doorway, watching the daring one with frightened eyes.

The girls were teary eyed and Trine could feel their fear but they stood firm to find out what had happened to the kindly rat who watched over them.

Trine chimed softly to calm them and made an instant decision. These children were prisoners here, just as it was, and it could not bear to inflict further grief or pain upon them. In fact, when the family came, Trine would insist on the evacuation of these children as well, if Luna or Splinter didn't take care of it first.

When he didn't get an immediate answer, the boy clenched both fists, his jaw, and took a threatening step forward. He froze when Trine's quiet voice rang out.

Splinter is well.

Trine had to focus almost all of its energy to force a projection past the orb. Even the short distance was exhausting but it was worth it to see the anger melt off the child's face.

"What happened to him?" the boy said, his eyes wide at hearing Trine's 'voice'.

He escaped. the light fooled the oracle.

"He escaped?"

Trine flashed an affirmative, saving its strength. The boy's face fell.

"So he won't be coming back."

He is sending help.

Hope blossomed in his eyes.

"Will you ask them to help us?"

Trine flashed again and the boy flicked frightened eyes toward the door.

"We better go. Don't worry, we won't tell," he promised sincerely, and all the others nodded in agreement before crowding out the door.

Just before it closed, the boy stuck his head back in.

"Don't forget us," he said softly, worried.

Trine glowed as brightly as it could through the restriction of the orb and chimed again to soothe his fear.

Never.

Medes rested, conserving as much of its energy as it possibly could, knowing that its suffering was far from over and refusing to draw any more power from its tiny remaining link with the goddess. It had long ago lost the power to hold it's preferred form and retreated instead to a small teardrop shape. It was just easier.

Now it was all Medes could do to hold back the sucking void of darkness that surrounded it.
It knew it deserved punishment. After all, it had only itself to blame. Medes had been taken in by the deceptive face of evil and played right into its hands.

When Charon had first approached it, Medes had been ecstatic. It had spent almost two years seeking Luna with no result but it recognized this immortal. It was aware of his intense desire for the goddess and Medes had thought to use that longing to its advantage.

Charon could find Luna where Medes could not.

But in its eagerness Medes did not look past the fair mask to realize that Charon had sunk into the tainted blackness of hatred and obsession. By the time that came to light, it was too late. Charon betrayed Medes. He corrupted the pure power of the soul with the touch of a mimic. Its poisonous embrace slowly drawing the will from the soul of knowledge.

Medes shuddered to think of the damage the mimic was causing with its form and knowledge. For days into weeks it consumed Medes power until one day, unexpectedly a small shot of silver, pure celestial energy from the goddess herself, flowed back into Medes instead.

At first Medes rejoiced. The goddess had discovered its predicament and was sending much needed aid. Perhaps now it could regain enough power to escape this wretched existence. But after a lot of contemplation, it came to the horrible realization that the mimic must have touched the goddess directly. That was the only explanation for that tiny lifeline.

So now Luna knew that Medes had betrayed her. Unintentionally perhaps, but its form had been used as a mask so a demon could accost her. That was an unforgivable sin and Medes wallowed in the shame. After a time, the nefarious presence of the mimic disappeared and the drip by drip death Medes was experiencing from the power hungry creature ceased, but the little soul had lost faith in being rescued.

Time passed, and though Medes felt it didn't deserved the forgiveness of the goddess, the tiny silver thread linking them remained. Power slowly flowed back in, recharging the exhausted soul. Again Medes rejoiced. The goddess had somehow survived.

But its happiness was short lived. Charon didn't need the mimic to torture the little soul. Thousands of years of experience ferrying whole souls into Hades for judgement had taught him more than a few painful tricks for restraining one.

Each hour spent in Charon's company became an agony of spilt power and disgrace.

Medes had long ago lost the last of it own resources. Now all that was keeping it intact was a slightly stronger influx of power that appeared each night. Medes almost wished it would stop. All it meant was one more day of painful existence.

It didn't want to hurt anymore. It didn't want to slowly bleed the goddess to death. The spirit of the little one had been corrupted, perhaps past all repair.

All it wished for now was peace.

Fina whirled around in dizzying circles leaving a vacuum of air behind it that snapped shut with a loud crack as it swept across the lair, seething from Luna's abrupt dismissal. And yet, despite its anger Fina knew that goddess was very upset. Not only hurting, but afraid, and that was something it would not tolerate.

If anyone could make Luna feel safe again, it was Raphael. Fina thought it was long past time to
get him involved. It knew Luna depended on his strength a lot more than she let on. Leaning into his vast bulk was physically soothing but his leashed rage was just as reassuring. It bespoke a tremendous power and a surprisingly strong will, both of which Luna found extremely comforting.

Even if Raphael could not erase the darkness that was troubling her, he could help alleviate her fear. If only she would let him see it.

Fina growled a little rumbly sound and sparks flew in all directions. Luna had her emotions on selective lockdown and had been avoiding the entire household for more than a few days. It was driving Raph nuts. Splinter had advised Raphael to wait for her to approach him, but Fina knew better. After today's eviction, it knew Luna had no intention of involving her mates in this issue.

Fina swooped into the gym, drawn to Raphael's location like a magnet. The hotheaded turtle was punching the living heck out of his third best punching bag, which meant he had already destroyed his first and second best. If Fina possessed eyes, it would have rolled them.

raph! stop a second.

Raph grunted as the little red flame made a dash in front of his eyes in an attempt to break his focus.

"What?" Raph snapped irritably. "Fina, I'm tryin' ta concentrate here."

snap outta it, tough guy. Luna's out there cryin' and shaking in fear. she needs you.

All motion ceased and Raphael froze with one arm partially extended to strike as his entire body locked down in response to that statement. He closed his eyes and inhaled deeply to restrain the enormous surge of raw rage and fiery power it conjured.

If he hadn't, the whole lair would have gone up in flames.

He reached deep, searching the emotions flowing between himself and Luna for the same sign that she was in trouble. Before he could angrily protest that she felt fine, Fina piped up again.

she ain't fine. she went to talk to splinter about the darkness. it's worse than she thought. he knows something about it that is making her freak out but she doesn't want to involve you.

Raphael looked up to where Fina floated above him, an internal conflict plain on his face.

"Splinta's talkin' to 'er?" he asked. "I should probably stay outta it. He's usually good at this sorta' stuff."

raphael, shut your trap and get in there now. she is totally freaked! she won't ask for your help but she needs it. she is scared to death.

Pain crossed Raph's face and he back away from Fina, hands outstretched and palms down in defeat.

"Leo should probably go. I ain't good at that stuff," his voice was sad and slightly ashamed.

you are her mate! why would you deny her?

Raphael wanted to be the one to comfort her, God knew he wanted to, but it was probably better if he didn't try. Desire and self-hatred warred inside him. Face it, he knew he would only make whatever it was worse. Leo was the one with all the empathy.
"Someone else should..." his voice trailed off, as Fina moved abruptly.

Fina had enough. It knew when Raphael reacted he would do the right thing. He was overthinking this. Fina zipped into Raph's forehead with such force that it rocked him back on his heels and sent power rocketing through the bond. It broke Luna's selective barriers and let the full force of her emotions through to Raphael. Suddenly everything was revealed to him and the effects were frightening.

Darkness had begun to blight the silver purity of her consciousness. Her brilliant light was slowly being corrupted. In a flash of insight Raphael saw the world fade into shades of black and white as all color drained from his vision. Without her fire, there would be no visible bounds between light and dark. No golden hues or calming blues, nothing but dull grey world filled with despair.

Fury at her fear and helplessness roared to the surface as her terror hit him in the gut. That feeling hurt more than the worst beating he'd ever received. His chest heaved as he fought for breath against a pressure that felt like a vice, crushing his hopes for their future.

Luna thought she was becoming the foretold destructor. The one who would end his family and change the balance of power on Earth towards evil. And she was considering drastic, permanent, measures to stop that possible outcome.

"no."

It came out as a hoarse whisper. He didn't have enough air to vent the pain with a scream.

He had felt this way himself once, poised on a ledge at the top of a twelve story building. Knowing that just one more step would change everything. A ending and a new beginning for those he'd leave behind.

Raphael had stood on that ledge for hours that night as Leo pleaded with him to move back. He'd thought he had considered all the ramifications but, in the end, he realized that most of his fears were unfounded.

Leo had to explain it to him. Raphael had been unable to see the alternatives. Now Luna was the blind one. She could not see past the horror of this realization. There was no telling what she would do but it wasn't going to be good.

Raphael found himself moving at top speed across the lair to his Master's quarters. As blasphemous as it felt, he didn't even pause at the shoji screen door. He shoved it violently out of the way, fell to his knees next to his mate, wrapped his arms tightly around her limp form, and crushed her to his chest.

Luna gasped in his embrace and turned a swollen tear streaked face to his.

"I can stop this," she cried. "Let me end it now and save everyone."

He raised a hand to her face and gently wiped her tears.

"You can't save everyone, Luna," he said gruffly. "Can't you see what losing you would do to Leo? or Don? or Mikey?"

Her eyes snapped to his, stricken.

Then he added more softly, "Don't you know what it would do to me?"
In that moment, Raphael opened his heart to her fully. His whole body began to glow a deep pulsing red as thoughts he'd never revealed and emotions he'd never exposed flowed across their bond. His aching need for her. The world's need. His love and adoration. His experience on the rooftop and his enlightenment.

That light reached out and wrapped tightly around her, enclosing them together in a perfect union.

Raphael's strength silenced her fear. He would not let her fail and fall into ruin. He would hold her up and help her face any situation. He understood the darkness. He held her close and together they pushed through her terror.

Finally she could see past it to the dawn. To the fiery sunrise burning in his eyes.
Fighting the Darkness

In the end, Luna released it all to him. The pain, the terror—her confusion and Raphael held fast against the storm of her emotions. He held her close to his chest, buried his face in her hair, and supported her until her sobs eased into quiet sniffles. He could feel that she was still afraid, but she was no longer considering removing herself from the equation. That danger had passed.

As Raphael raised his face in relief, he became acutely aware of the quiet gaze of his father. Splinter was still seated across the table from the embracing pair and his piercing look analyzed every aspect of their body language.

To his surprise, Raph did not feel the least bit embarrassed that his father had witnessed the scene. Luna had needed him and he would never apologize for answering that call. He was only sorry he’d waited so long to come to her aid. He owed little Fina an apology.

Splinter's eyes rested on him solemnly a moment longer and Raph defiantly met his gaze, expecting some sort of scolding or rebuke for this public display of affection. Instead, he was startled by the spark of pride in his father's eyes. Splinter shifted his attention to the girl still huddling and shuddering in Raphael's arms and his expression softened even further.

"You have done well, my son," Splinter quietly uttered. "It is hard to bear the sight of my daughter in pain. Harder still to know that I added to the burden she carried."

Raph's eyes narrowed as he assessed what his father was saying.

"I counseled you to wait until she was ready to speak but I was in error," his master continued. "Her fear only grew in the silence until she could no longer see her way around it. Instead of helping her face it, I only confirmed what she already knew to be true."

Splinter dropped his gaze to the table, trying not to antagonize Raphael any further. It was obvious that his son was not ready to hear about the issues facing his mate, but further delay was just going to make the situation worse. Splinter mentally braced himself and continued down the path that he had chosen.

"There is a grave darkness encroaching on her spirit, Raphael," Splinter said quietly. "One likened to that of the demon we all feared."

Raphael's grip tightened on the resting goddess and he was surprised to find that he was actually growling at his father, the vibrations rising from deep within his chest. He tried to choke it off, appalled at his behavior, but his protective instincts were firing on all pistons and he couldn't stop.

"Be at ease, my son," Splinter said, raising a paw and holding onto his own calm as best he could. "I do not declare her the demon, merely observe its taint upon her."

Raphael swallowed a sharp retort and instead settled back onto a nearby cushion. He gently placed Luna in his lap, treating her as if she were made of spun glass. He sheltered her in his protective grip, his arms a hardened steel cage that nothing would penetrate.

She leaned limply against him, resting her cheek on his plastron. Her eyes slid closed as she listened to his heartbeat. It's steady cadence a constant reassurance that she would not face these trials alone. She was exhausted from the emotional strain and he rocked her gently, trying to soothe...
"How did this happen?" Raph rumbled softly, his voice dangerous, promising retribution to the parties involved.

The wise old rat closed his eyes and considered the scared young goddess with his second sight. He thought about all he had learned from his sons concerning her and his intelligent mind pieced together the series of events.

It was a tale filled with woe, and yet it also contained great heroism. Pain and redemption. Darkness and light. A reflection of the balance of the universe played out upon her soul.

Unfortunately, it was a story that had yet to be resolved and Splinter feared there would be even more emotional turmoil ahead. His family was standing at the edge of an abyss and their response to Luna's needs would either save them or send them all plummeting into the depths of darkness with her.

When Splinter opened his eyes again, they glistened with unshed tears. He did not wish to burden his son with this knowledge. But he knew, as he had known since that dark day more than 20 years ago with his first vision, that there was no avoiding this future. They could only hope to direct it in the proper direction.

Raphael was watching him with a wary, but expectant, look. He wasn't going to leave this room until he heard what his father had divined. Splinter spoke softly, hoping that Luna had left consciousness behind for the moment, wanting to spare his daughter further pain.

"This is a battle that you and your brothers have been fighting since she came into your lives, though you knew it not," Splinter barely breathed the words, knowing his son's excellent hearing would let him pick them out easily.

"The seeds of corruption were sown with her defilement. Hatred and terror were heaped upon her before her demise. The demon was there. His spirit a blight upon the alleyway."

The memory of her broken bloody body flashed across Raph's mind, followed by a torrent of other horrid images. Ones he could never forget.

Luna's agonized gasp as she came back from the grave. The horrible feeling of her broken limbs just dangling as he carried her back to the lair. Her blood pooling around his feet in the shower before swirling down the drain. Her screams as Donnie set her bones. Her battered face, black eyes, and swollen lips as she lay unmoving in the infirmary. Leo losing control and pleading with her to wake.

Hatred was something he understood.

A slight vibration in Splinter's paw brought Raph's focus back to his father's face abruptly. His paw clenched tightly around his walking stick, his jaw was tight, and Splinter's whole body tensed with fury. To the outside observer, nothing much had changed, but Raphael knew better. This expression on his father was frightening. The only other time Raph had seen this much anger from him was when they were facing the Shredder and one of his brothers had fallen.

"Father?" Raphael asked, his voice edged with concern.

"I saw it, Raphael," Splinter hissed, still keeping his voice low though his black eyes flashed in anger. "In the throne room of the Oracle's palace. Serra displayed my daughter's pain, violation, and death for all to see. And the demon laughed. Laughed!"
Splinter's tail lashed out and smashed against the floor, as he vented his anger as quietly as he possibly could. He had meditated upon that memory for many hours, over many days, and could not make peace with it.

"Her screams haunt my dreams. Yet another daughter I could not save," Splinter muttered to himself as he bowed his head.

Raphael drew back in shock and the Master forced himself to regain control, breathing in deeply and using his breath to forcibly expel the anger from his body. There would be a time for venting rage, at this moment it helped no one. After a minute of silence he continued.

"The seeds of darkness withered away under the dedicated care you and your brother's provided. Donatello's insistence that she not withdraw into her pain and Leonardo's bond almost eradicated them entirely, but they were drawn to the surface and fertilized once more when Michelangelo nearly died to protect her," Splinter said sadly.

"Her despair was so great, her guilt at his injury so profound, those seeds sprouted and grew. And, they were well watered when Zeus berated her. He filled her heart with self-doubt and shame."

It was Raphael's turn to control his rage as that memory caused the anger boil to the surface of his being. Small licks of flame appeared on his form and Luna stirred restlessly in his arms. With great care, Raph pulled his anger, and the fire, back. Not focusing it inward but, like his father, promising it a far better target later.

Splinter's gentle voice brought him back into the moment.

"You saved her then, my son," Splinter said. "Your ferocious denial of everything the king had implied made her question his words. Your... passion that evening spoke volumes."

His father left it delicately at that, knowing his temperamental son did not like to share his more personal emotions so openly. Splinter stared at the table as he considered his next words.

"The battle should have been won, but a new betrayal brought the seeds back from the brink. A betrayal so deep it has wounded her soul," Splinter whispered. "That betrayal must be addressed, and I'm afraid only your brother can do so."

"Whatever it takes, Father," Raphael said, with a small nod of his head.

Raphael knew that Splinter could see the pain reflected in his eyes. The thought that he couldn't fix what ailed Luna was like a knife in his heart, but he had already come to accept that there were some things he simply could not provide for her. She needed Leonardo too.

"I will get Leo as soon as she wakes," Raph said. He glanced down at his beloved where she lay sleeping quietly in his embrace, and held her close while he could.

"Ah... my son," Splinter said mournfully, knowing this was going to hurt even more, "Leonardo has already tried and failed. It is not he that can address her injury."

Disbelief made Raphael's jaw drop as he raised his eyes and stared at his father across the tabletop. Leonardo had already tried?

"Not Leo? But you said only my brother..." Raph trailed off, and his expression changed to one of horror.

"Another bond?"
Raphael's voice pleaded with Splinter to say it was not so.

"I am sorry, my son."

Michelangelo had to admit it was fun to hang out with Sol. Even though the little guy was quiet it had an innocent sense of humor that reminded Mikey of his younger days. All it took was a little bit of slapstick and a funny voice to make Sol laugh.

And what a laugh! Sol's was just like Luna's. It chimed through the tunnel and echoed back on itself so musically that Mikey was almost overwhelmed with its perfection. He kind of wished the journey to April's apartment would take a little bit longer, just so he could spend some more time with the little guy. But, they didn't have much further to go. Just a few more blocks until they would head topside and up the side of the fire escape to April and Casey's apartment.

Mikey glanced over at the little blue flame and suppressed an almost painful desire to have one of his own. Instead he kept a large smile fixed firmly on his face. They weren't pets, after all, but pieces of Luna's immortal soul. But that was why he really wanted one, he thought wistfully.

Michelangelo loved his sister, perhaps more than was proper, and the close connections his brothers had formed with her left him feeling a little envious and left out. Not that he would ever admit that.

Mikey glanced again at the little soul. At some point in their journey, Sol had picked up a dark, water-smoothed pebble and had been playing with it. Sol would change its own shape and let the pebble slide up and down its little form. Throwing the pebble into the air and catching it again. In the pale gloom of the tunnel, it almost seemed as if the pebble were glowing, just like Sol.

It was so cute, Mikey had to inquire.

"What ya got there little fella?" Mikey asked.

was rock.

"It was a rock?" Mikey was confused. "What is it now?"

present.

"A present? Is it for Luna?" Mikey asked.

This was the cutest thing he'd seen all day. Better even than the tiny kitten washing video he'd downloaded this morning on Raph's phone to tease him. Sol made a little growl of discomfiture.

no, for mortal sister.

"For April?" Mikey said, "Aww.... I'm sure she'll love it."

April hadn't really seen much of the souls. Usually, they were with Luna when April was over though Mikey had seen April eye them on occasion as they flew overhead. She seemed as fascinated by them as Mikey was and he was sure she would appreciate this 'gift'.

Sol stopped in the middle of the tunnel and Mikey stopped with it, unsure why they had paused, but afraid he had somehow upset the little soul.

"What is it Sol?" Mikey asked. "I didn't mean to make you self-conscious. She really will love it, I'm sure."
"Of course she will," Mikey hastened to reassure the little soul. "On her. Always.

"Oh," Mikey wasn't sure what to say. "Um, why is that, Sol?"

Michelangelo took a moment to digest that. This conversation had taken a turn he had not expected. All this time he thought Sol had been playing it had actually been up to something else. It was so easy to underestimate these little beings. They looked and acted so innocent one didn't expect such forward thinking from them.

"What sort of protection?" he asked.

"Huh?"

Sol tossed the little pebble in the air and Mikey snatched a nunchuck from his belt and landed a solid blow to the rock. It should have sent the pebble flying down the corridor. Instead, his nunchuck bounced back so rapidly, Mikey had to duck to avoid his own weapon. The rock remained floating exactly where it had been in the middle of the tunnel.

Then Sol moved back and shot a bolt of its own energy at the stone. The rock absorbed it like it never was. It just glowed a little brighter. Mikey's mouth dropped open and Sol bobbed a little in place, satisfied.

"Too much power will take her home.

"So, if an immortal shows up and tries to use too much power on her it will, like, teleport her back to her apartment?" Mikey asked, "That's awesome! Wait, what if she's attacked in her apartment?"

Sol made a noise of disappointment that this one still didn't understand.

"Home. Not apartment.

"Home? The lair?" Mikey asked and Sol gave a little flash of acknowledgment.

Michelangelo nodded sharply.

"Ok, so here's what we're gonna do. Can you make a small hole at the top of the rock?" Mikey said.

Sol tilted itself a little to the side, curious, then flashed an affirmative.

Mikey nodded again and pulled a length of black, super strength silk cord from his belt. It was a climbing rope of Don's own design. Super thin, but strong enough to hold more than 500 lbs. Michelangelo drew his knife and sawed carefully through it, creating a short length. He held it up to Sol and released it. Sol held it in the air beside the rock, which now mysteriously had a hole in
Mikey blinked. He hadn't even seen Sol change it.

"Put that cord through the hole and tie the ends together," he instructed. "It will be a necklace that April can wear next to her skin, under her clothes. That way, she'll always have it."

Sol flared brightly in response. Glad that it had shared its plan with this clever one. Sol did not know what a necklace was, but if this brother said it would keep the amulet on her… well, that's all Sol really wanted. Their project complete, the two picked up the pace and headed up into the light to meet April.

Donatello was impressed. Not only had Hades not flinched at the challenge of being the first god in his new scanning machine, he had practically jumped at the chance. Hades had smoothly glided over to the modified table and hopped right up on the scanner.

Don's machine was basically a scaled-up version of a computer scanner. It was a six-foot long, four foot wide table made of a semi-opaque, glass-like substance that the light energy could pass right through. The subject would lay flat on the top and the prism refracted the light from below in a bar that made a pass from the subjects head to their feet.

Don knew from experience what it felt like when the machine turned on. The light was warm, and for some inexplicable reason, calming. Casey claimed it felt like getting a massage. Relaxing and safe.

Don didn't know what the god would feel, but he hastened over to the computer bank that controlled the unit and started the warm up sequence before Hades could change his mind.

The light started. The beam formed. It refracted up at the god and produced a reaction Don could never have anticipated. Data was rolling in, crossing Don's monitor at a speed far too rapid for comprehension, but Don wasn't even looking at the screen. His eyes were riveted to the scanner itself.

The white light of the scanning beam struck Hades and refracted again, converting his form to one of pure yellow energy. He no longer looked like a solid human form lying on a table. Instead, the humanity was a transparent outline with no surface. It was filled with tiny yellow and orange sparks that spun, zipped, and darted around rapidly. Some smashing into each other and forming larger particles that drew many more particles to them as if they had their own gravity.

Each moment the light shone the particles got larger and fewer, until Hades entire form was merely one giant yellow light, sending rays in all directions. By the time the scan reached Hades' feet, the light was so bright that Don had to shield his eyes with his hand and turn his head away.

The scan ended. The light faded. Hades hopped down and came over to the stunned Donatello to see what his computers had recorded. He placed a palm on Don's shoulder and Don flinched, startled at the touch.

"That was…interesting," Don said shakily, turning back to his computers to cover his shock. Hades laughed.

"I'll leave you to your calibration, Donatello, but don't wait too long. Luna needs resolution soon." Hades said.

Don's eyes sharpened from their previous confused blur at Luna's name.
"Give me an hour," Don said decisively. "I'll have it all sorted out by then."
Shutting Down

Leonardo held as still as possible and breathed slowly, inhaling the spicy incense that swirled around his motionless form. Letting the familiar scent and surroundings of the meditation room soothe his frazzled nerves. Once again, he forced away all conscious thoughts, shutting his anxiety and frustration in a small mental compartment where he hoped it wouldn't interfere with the vital influx of power he drew from the earth.

Right now, he must recharge. He would be no use to anyone if he didn't. He smoothed his features into a calm mask, trying to maintain at least the facade of control, both for the team and Luna.

As always, they required his confidence and resolve. She needed his strength, for something was horribly wrong with the young goddess. Night after night, life and light drained from his mate, weakening her energy and celestial power.

Leo spent last evening, and several previous ones, by Luna's side, though not in the way he wanted. Knowing she would object to his plans, he stayed away until she fell asleep, then crept into her room and poured every iota of energy he owned into her. He couldn't prevent the drain without knowing the cause, but he would stop it from consuming her, at least, for a little while.

Panic stabbed through the bond and Leo jolted to his feet. Startled out of the light trance he worked so hard to achieve, he spun wildly about seeking balance. How much time had passed? Minutes? Hours? Fear smashed into him like a physical blow. He launched himself in the direction of the disturbance letting the terror lead him to...Master Splinter's room? He tempered his steps out of habit as he approached the screen and stopped altogether when Raphael's angry growl reverberated from the other side.

"Be at ease, my son," Splinter's voice, barely reached where Leo stood. "I do not declare her the demon, merely observe its taint upon her."

Shock at those words kept him from announcing his presence and Leo sank into a crouch where he stood, concentrating on his father's voice as the story unfolded. He lingered for the better part of an hour, his muscles locking down with each new revelation.

His father witnessed the horrible rape of his mate? The thought was horrifying, for Splinter knew Leo experienced it as well. Equally startling was the discovery that Donnie had acted as Luna's therapist, working patiently to draw out her pain like poison from a wound. His brother accomplished far more than Leo gave his credit for, and Leo gave him a ton already.

Guilt overwhelmed him as his father recounted Mikey's sacrifice and jealousy burned when Splinter evidenced pride in Raph's actions. The jealousy was not for his father's affection but for every second that his brother spent alone with Luna. The image of their kiss in Don's lab burned through the forefront of Leo's mind but was smothered by Raphael's next words.

"Whatever it takes, Father," Raph said. "I will get Leo as soon as she wakes."

Raph's quiet statement made Leo pause to re-examine his own feelings of inequity. Raph had set aside his ego and accepted he was not the solution Luna required.

After a poignant pause, Splinter spoke again.
"Ah... my son, Leonardo has already tried and failed. It is not he that can address her injury."

Leo collapsed as if sucker punched. He might admit to his shortcomings in private, but how did his father know? And if neither he nor Raph could help, then who?

"Not Leo? But you said only my brother..." Raph said. "Another bond?"

The devastation in his voice matched the incredible pain welling up in Leo's heart and Splinter addressed both of them when he said, "I am sorry, my son."

Leo couldn't move. The agony of the revelation so intense that he remained frozen in place. So motionless Hades might have missed him if he hadn't been specifically seeking the blue banded leader.

Their eyes met. Leo's pain filled and broken, Hades' glowing, yellow and warm, with sympathy.

"You did everything you could," Hades said, sensing the source of his agony "this simply isn't your battle to fight."

He extended a hand that Leo hesitantly accepted and easily pulled the nearly six-foot turtle to his feet.

"Come," he said. "It will be some little while before we can act, but we must be ready when the opportunity presents itself."

Leo cast one longing look at the screen dividing him from his beloved, then inclined his head to Hades. If Raph handled this without breaking than he could as well and if Luna needed this...there was no question about his response.

Four humanoid turtles, a bipedal rat, a human, two fiery souls, and two ancient Greek gods crowded into the lab. Really, it was too much for one space to handle, even a room as large as Donatello's studio. But no one wanted to leave, despite the narrow confines.

Luna lay full length on Don's newly enhanced and calibrated scanning bed with Raph and Leo on either side. Splinter stood back out of the way with Michelangelo and April while Don manned the computer controls.

Hades positioned himself at the head of the table leaning against the nearby wall, his posture lording over the rest of the room's occupants. He viewed the proceedings through slitted eyes, a slight smile resting on his lips.

Luna fidgeted. Shame colored her cheeks with a rosy blush and she wanted nothing more than to retreat to her new room and hide away until her emotions cooled. Instead, she lay at the center of attention. She had tried in vain to protect her family from the horrible truth that she might be the enemy in their midst. The demon everyone most feared.

They were having none of it.

Since she awoke, a little less than an hour ago, each of the people standing around her had taken her to task for her reclusive behavior and her refusal of their assistance. Even April had put in her two cents, saying Sol worried so much it broke its habitual silence and spoke to her, a human, about talking some sense into the goddess.

Luna blushed and stuttered through the whole ordeal, finally giving in to their demands to allow
Donatello to examine her though she wished she'd insisted on privacy. Now she lay on a piece of cool glass in the center of Don's lab wondering once again at his clever meshing of technology and magic.

When the genius set his heart on something, nothing would stop him from accomplishing it. Goose bumps formed on her skin at the thought. Last time she checked, Donatello set his heart on her.

When Don glanced up from his console across the room, Luna's eyes were wide, her face pale, and her lower lip trembled. His gaze softened and he smiled more gently than ever before, wishing he knew of a better way to offer comfort in this unnerving situation.

"Ready?"

The single word, uttered with such compassion and care, made tears form in Luna's eyes and she looked away to keep herself focused on the task at hand. The others stared in Don's direction but he ignored them. He only had eyes for one person.

The goddess braced herself, closed her eyes, and nodded. He flipped a switch.

Warm, gentle, nourishing light emerged from the entire surface of the table beneath her. She drew a sharp breath and let out a subdued, yet satisfied, hiss. This was like basking in the combined strength of her parents power! Healing in a deep, sublime, way. Her lips relaxed into a smile for the first time in days.

"That's stage one," Don explained, he eyes flicking back and forth from Luna to the read out on the screen in front of him. "It's pretty basic, tracking vital signs and whatnot. In mortals the light enhances the cells making them more efficient and self sustaining. In immortals, it reads and reinforces general power levels."

He frowned at the screen, the line between his brows becoming more prominent. Her results were lower than expected but she did occupy a mortal body and had only regained two parts of her celestial soul, so they wouldn't be the same as Hades.

But Luna's readings were so low as to almost not register at all. He punched a few buttons and turned a dial to double check those numbers, wondering if he somehow miscalibrated. Stage two would show him more.

"Leo, Raph, let go of her so I can start the main scan," Don said.

Both reluctantly released her hands and Don activated another switch. An almost imperceptible keen announced the increased power flow from the crystal beneath the lair. Master Splinter twitched an ear and winced in response.

The scan bar lit up below her feet and moved smoothly upward, but the moment the concentrated light struck Luna's form, it shattered. Her physical body remained on the table, but five images of her projected above the table in different colors.

Far left, a blue 3-D like hologram shone strong and clear. Her whole body being reproduced with incredible detail in exactly the same position as her mortal one. Two short energy tethers extended from it. One stretched to Leonardo, the other connected to Sol.

Next to the blue Luna lay an equally sharp red one with lines connecting to Raph and Fina. A dim, silver, goddess held the middle position, so faded, it was hard to make out her expression.

To its right, an orange glow with no tethers appeared. Blurry and more like an orange blob, it was
hardly recognizable as human shaped.

Far right was a violet Luna. Clear, not fuzzy like the orange, but dimmer even than the silver. Blackness obscured the form from its feet to its waist. What little violet remained, dimmed and brightened in irregular patterns as small shots of blue from Leonardo appeared and disappeared.

All the brothers exchanged glances as the the significance of the colors and tethers registered. Previously, none of them connected Sol and Fina's colored flames to Raph and Leo's preferences, or if they had, the anomaly was dismissed as simple coincidence. But with it laid out in front of them like this, the correct conclusion was impossible to ignore.

Raphael gasped out what everyone else was thinking in harsh surprise.

"All of us?"

His eyes narrowed, his jaw tightened, and he turned away from the projections. He clenched a fist and kicked a small piece of discarded equipment that lay conveniently unattended on the floor. It smacked into the wall with a loud clatter and fell back with an even more significant noise. Luna flinched at both, surprised at the sound and his tone.

"She is going to end up bound to everyone?"

The fury was plain in his voice and Hades glared across the room at him.

"You would prefer her bound to no one?" Hades asked.

The quiet menace in his voice drew all eyes, as he pushed away from his casual stance against the wall and loomed over them. Luna reached out a hand in silent protest, but he ignored her.

"Nothing lasts forever, young one." Hades said, and his aura displayed substantial power. "What is done can be undone, if an ancient god gets involved. As weak as she is right now, Luna could not stop me. I can make it painless for her, but for you... casting her away has consequences."

Everybody tensed. Some intending to leap toward Hades, others preparing to cover the goddess from any flying debris that might result from the coming brawl.

"You can't," Leonardo said. His calm, even, tone cut through the tension in the air with the same ease as his katana cut through everything else.

"Oh, I don't doubt you could undo the bonds, and you certainly have the capacity to punish us for the insult to Luna," Leo said. He turned and gave a small bow of apology to his beloved before leveling a grim glare of his own at Raphael, "but if you do, you will be interfering in a punishment set by Zeus. That would violate the contract among the old gods, igniting a war you have done your best, so far, to avoid."

"Wars come and go, young one." Hades replied with a small shrug but the undercurrent of danger had gone out of his tone.

"You've battled with your brother before, my lord, but you are the one who taught me how to hold a grudge," Luna said, her voice flat as she raised herself on one elbow to stare in the direction of the older more powerful god. "Even if you erased my bonds you couldn't take my memories. Harm my mates -my family- and my vengeance will be unreal."

Her statement ended in a threatening growl that would have done Raphael proud. Seizing energy directly from the crystal core, she supplemented her strength. Eyes blazing, she prepared her
defense. She would not allow threats, even idol ones, against her loved ones.

The five projections of Luna disappeared as she diverted energy from the machine but not before the monitor registered a significant increase in clarity and power from the center silver form. Her celestial essence had been reinforced.

Hades mouth quirked ever so slightly into something Donnie swore was a smile. Perhaps this had been his plan all along, but the smile, if that was indeed what it had been, disappeared so fast Don thought he might have imagined it.

Instead the dark god dipped his head in her direction and gentled his aura. Luna followed suit, releasing her stranglehold on the crystal node, before lying back down. Don took in her still murderous expression and switched the machine back into stage one. The ambient light projected on the surface seemed to calm her.

"Why was mine fuzzy?"

Everyone stared at Mikey. Don even jumped a little as his voice cut through the silence and Raph growled something low about stupid interruptions that nobody really caught.

"What?" Michelangelo said, fidgeting. He rubbed the back of his head and tightened the knot of his mask, a habit he'd picked up in childhood. "Donnie?"

His older brother always had the answer to such trivial puzzles, but this time Don just shook his head in response to Mikey's prompt.

"Distance."

Master Splinter, almost entirely forgotten in the drama of the moment, supplied this succinct answer.

"Trine remains confined in the Palace of the Oracle, many thousands of miles away, so its presence is abstract. Sol and Fina are present so their representation is sharp."

"And Medes?" April asked. "The purple outline was clear. Does that mean it's somewhere nearby?"

Donatello's eyes hardened at the name. He had been betrayed by that soul. Except of course, it wasn't Medes at all but the mimic wearing its likeness. Still, he wasn't inclined toward liking that particular soul right now.

"I suppose it must be in the city to be so focused," Don said, keeping his voice deliberately dispassionate.

Logically he knew the soul was no more responsible for Luna's near death than he was. The mimic stole both their forms to invade the lair. But he hadn't yet forgiven himself for the role he played, so he was having a hard time seeing the soul as innocent either.

Don felt eyes on him and looked up. Mikey stared at him intently from across the room, his face serious. Mikey rarely got that look in his eyes and ,when he did, it made Don wary. The others didn't notice.

"We must locate Medes and extract it from Charon's hold," Leo said, walking over to Luna and taking her hand. "The darkness that's tainting her is obviously coming through its connection. Charon is probably doing something unfortunate."
Leo didn't want to distress Luna further by speculating on what the unfortunate thing might be. Raph grunted in angry agreement.

"Tomorrow we will plan," Splinter said, "when we are all thinking clearly. Tonight, Hades and I will secure our home. All of you need rest if you are to attempt a raid on the demon's stronghold. I suggest you all retire now to prepare."

At that barely disguised order, his sons and daughter filed out and headed to their respective rooms. Though Raphael and Leonardo paused to see Luna safely to her door before taking to their own. Don closed his door quickly, looking distraught and Mikey eyed it as he retreated to his own room.

Don was reluctant to go after Medes, Mikey realized. Not because he didn't want to save Luna, for Don obviously loved her. And not because he didn't want to be bonded, but it was clear that he felt betrayed by the little soul who had never even set foot into their home.

Something had to be done.

"Initiating shutdown sequence..."

A smooth female voice echoed from all sides of the room as hidden speakers throughout the warehouse announced a mechanical acknowledgment to the commands being entered into the main terminal.

"Shutting down."

A shadowy figure typed for a few more seconds, his large green fingers flying over the keyboard with practiced ease despite the lack of light in the space. If his brothers could see him now, their jaws would collectively drop.

"Shutdown sequence complete. Opening containment unit."

He paused and checked his six as a small skittering noise reached his ears. A rat scurried out from the pile of boxes behind him and stood on hind legs to observe this intruder. The turtle noted its location and turned back to the complex lab set up before him, feeling slightly guilty. His father probably wondered where he was. He shook his head and pushed the thought aside to concentrate on the task at hand.

Finding the secret lab buried in the abandoned warehouse had been easy, once he 'borrowed' the sensor that detected other planer energy from Donatello's prototype trap. Patching it into his phone to use as a tracking device took longer than he thought but he still got it done before the evening was out.

Now, if he could just finish this and get back to the lair, Donnie would never know he took it.

He hurried over to another section of equipment and peered into a glass-like cylinder emitting a faint purple glow. With a snap and a faint hiss the container withdrew into the machine below, leaving the small tear-drop shaped form floating alone in midair.

For one second it flared a deep violet, before it sank to the surface of the table becoming pale and motionless. Alarmed, the turtle leaned closer. Dull and lifeless, it hardly emitted any light at all, unlike all the other parts of Luna's soul.

This put a kink in his plans. Escape was vital at this stage, leaving no time to hang around. He reached out a hand to assist, then drew back. Should he touch it? What if it bonded to him? He
wanted one of his own, of course, but not this one.

"Medes?" Michelangelo whispered instead "Can you move?"

No response.

Mikey sighed. He wished he knew how his brothers convinced Sol and Fina to come back to the lair with them. Deep in thought, his eyes flitted over the other equipment on the table and caught on a small crystal looking sphere.

He remembered Donnie telling him about those. One had trapped Fina and another held Luna’s silver essence for a short time. But forcing Medes to come with him sounded like a bad idea. The other souls were quite capable of defending themselves and he didn't want to explain to Leonardo why he needed help healing from plasma burns.

Another noise startled him into raising his head for a stealthy look around. He tensed as a pigeon fluttered near the ceiling, landing on a steel beam high above him. This warehouse was a maze of boxes with the lab in the center, so Mikey felt confident he would hear anyone entering long before they got to a point where they might locate him, but that didn't stop him from jumping at every little sound. Infiltrating an immortal stronghold alone was a tricky business.

He made a fist around the softly glowing stone hanging from his neck and relaxed again. At least he had an 'out' if Charon did discover him here. April had loaned him her amulet in case of emergency, but he hoped not to use it.

Wait, maybe the necklace could help now! Medes might recognize Sol's essence and trust him. It was worth a try. He turned back, took the amulet off, and dangled the stone by the cord.

"Medes, I only want to help," Mikey said. He gingerly extended his hand towards the little soul. "Luna is my sister and she can't get well without you. The other pieces trust me... See? Sol gave me this to protect our family."

Each time the pendant swung near Medes, it brightened for a moment, so Mikey set it as close to the purple flame as he could without touching it. His eyes widened as a tendril of blue energy emerged from the stone and sought the edge of Medes small form. The flame changed from lavender to violet as it sucked up the power and the blue faded around the stone until it once again resembled a plain river rock.

help.

The telepathic request was so weak and forlorn it was almost non-existent, but the thought reverberated through Mikey's mind like thunder. Realization hit him hard. Medes wasn't ignoring him, it simply lacked the strength to move.

Panic flooded Michelangelo's stomach, and he hopped from foot to foot as his anxiety sought a physical outlet. He expected to find Medes trapped, not near death. No wonder Luna wasn't recovering! There was nothing in his plan for this eventuality.

"How can I help?" he asked.

more.

The plea accompanied a horrible sense of thirst and Mikey panted a moment before he understood the sensation belonged to Medes. Drained and tortured the little soul required energy now or it was going to expire.
Mikey laughed at the irony. Luna was always telling him he was full of power but he hadn't been unlocked yet. How was he supposed to share something he didn't have any control over?

Medes flashed once, resigned. No more energy was forthcoming so it settled back on the machine to await its fate. Anger bubbled up inside Michelangelo. This little one was an important piece of Luna and he was not going to stand by while it disappeared.

He thought hard. Digging through the past for a solution. A foggy memory of Splinter first teaching them about chi, their lifeforce, bloomed behind his eyes. Their father said they could use their chi to shift energy from one plane to another without losing their own, and...

Mikey struggled to remember the rest of that long ago lesson. Something about focus, balance, searching, finding, breathing, and giving.

Eyes tightly shut in concentration, he didn't realize anything significant happened until a quiet chime sounded. A noise so filled with disbelief and gratitude that Mikey opened his eyes, startled, to find the cause. Medes hovered in the air before him, glowing softly, and almost purring, as it lapped up the energy flowing in a gentle stream from his outstretched arm.

He glanced down, surprised at the stance he'd instinctively chosen. His hand extended in front of him, palm open, facing the injured soul. He held a pose of perfect balance. Both feet solidly grounded in the earth beneath him, as a swell of power rose from somewhere below. Energy entered his legs, traveled the length of his body, and exited his hand in a growing wave. Medes latched on to it, starved.

On closer examination, Mikey discovered his arm was coated in a pale orange glow, though the power emanating from his hand was pure white. He wondered about the difference but ran out of time to consider as an alarm sounded.

Blaring a deafening, growling tone, the noise brought armed guards pouring in through the doors at a frightening rate. Mikey lost his focus, dropped his arm, and the energy faded away. Medes sank back, a little stronger, but not yet strong enough to flee.

They say desperation is the mother of invention, and at that moment, Mikey was desperate enough to invent a whole science fair full of projects on his own. All he really needed though was one particular flash of genius. It came without warning, and he found himself reacting before he had a chance to think at all.

His hand shot out and grabbed the crystal sphere from the table. He wrenched it open, dashed one half to the floor, and scooped Medes up in the remaining bowl. He snatched the amulet from the machine and bolted into the maze of boxes just as the guards reached the lab.

"STOP!"

"Over there!"

"What IS that?"

The cacophony of exclamations fell behind as Mikey pushed himself even faster. He charged up a set of metal stairs to a catwalk and sprang into a series of flips in an attempt to dodge the gunfire of the humans below. A bullet grazed his leg and heat shot through his system. He ignored it, continuing across the linked catwalks in a fluid combination of moves.

Right in front of them, a window beckoned with the promise of freedom and Mikey rushed toward it at top speed. But black smoke began to curl up from the beneath the catwalk before the exit,
pouring through the perforated flooring and forming a dark wall.

It was going to take more than smoke to derail Michelangelo. He plunged into the edge of the fog, holding his breath, only to fall back screaming as his skin burned everywhere it touched. He staggered back and fell, landing roughly on his shell, but still somehow managing to keep his grip on the bowl holding the precious soul.

A large man in a black shadowed cloak stepped out of the smoke and walked toward where Mikey lay with a slow cocky saunter. His eyes blazed red and a smirk twisted his lips into an ugly grimace.

"What do we have here?" the man said. "I do believe it's one of Luna's new 'family', wouldn't you say?"

The man turned back to the smoke as a woman in a white grecian gown followed him out of the blackness. Her eyes slid to the bowl Mikey was holding and fastened with greed on the little purple flame.

"It's located another one of her souls," the woman said. "I wonder if it knows those things destroyed its adoptive father?"

She batted her lashes at Mikey with an evil smile waiting to see how he took the news. When no response was forthcoming, she clarified. "I do miss that old rat. He was so good at keeping the pages in line."

"And the soul he's holding now?" the man couldn't resist taunting, "That one betrayed the goddess and let the mimic in to kill his brother."

Mikey eyed them warily from the floor, considering. These two must be Charon and Serra. Nice to know they still didn't have a clue as to the real state of his family. Despite the agony of his burning skin, he rolled swiftly to his feet and held the bowl up in front of him.

"Stay back," Mikey said, raising an arm threateningly and making a complicated, swirling little gesture with his hand, "or I'll use my power to send it back where it belongs!"

Charon threw back his head and laughed, long and loud.

"You. are. powerless."

Mikey grimaced as Charon called his bluff, but then thought again. If Charon hit the amulet hard enough, Sol's protection would transport them back to the lair. Or at least he hoped it would. Since Medes had drained the stone, he wasn't sure it still worked, but it was probably their best chance at escape.

With that in mind, Mikey dropped the stone in the bowl with Medes and fell back on his tried and true methods of baiting an opponent. Years of practice made him a master at pushing people's buttons. All the time he spent teasing his brothers finally paid off.

"You're right, dude, but I don't need powers to kick your scrawny butt!" Mikey said.

He jumped to the railing of the catwalk and proceeded to bounce around like a children's toy, despite his injuries, throwing shadow punches and making derogatory noises.

Charon's eyes flared.
"Oh! I'm so scared. Big, old, mean man has glow-y eyes," Mikey said, while sticking out his tongue and moving even faster than before.

Charon fired off a few bolts of power which missed by a mile.

"You're gonna have to do better than that, old timer!"

Finally the bolts got strong enough Mikey thought they would suffice. During the next Mikey didn't move. The bolt hit the bowl, the soul, and the amulet. All three disappeared, leaving Mikey standing on the catwalk facing the two ancient creatures empty handed.

"uh-oh."
Luna shot straight up in bed sensing a rip in the fabric of power surrounding her home and struggled to untangle herself from the quilts, sheets, and pillows that seemed determined to keep her trapped. Her struggles alerted Leonardo, who slept on the floor, unwilling to leave her alone now that he understood the threat to her soul.

Though tonight the terrible draining had not commenced, he stayed apart so he wouldn't be distracted by her physical presence and she wouldn't be inconvenienced by the blades he still wore.

"Luna?"

He barked only her name, already on his feet with a katana in hand as he glared around suspiciously at the darkness, but she understood what he was asking.

"Living room," she managed to gasp out, despite her predicament.

He simplified things by knotting one large, green hand in the covers at the foot of the bed and removing them with a swift tug. She paused to admire his strength for a moment, looking him up and down. He gave her a quick tight grin, appreciating the visual compliment, even as he hustled her out of the room and down the hall toward the disturbance.

"Hades, the bowl!"

Master Splinter rarely shouted and the sound of his raised voice brought his other sons out of bed with alacrity. Raphael cleared the balcony in a single bound with Donatello hot on his heels. Everyone skidded to a halt at the various entrances, shocked into stillness by the sight of Hades holding a tiny crystal bowl aloft in the center of the chamber.

A purple flame faltered within.

"Medes?"

Luna's startled exclamation made them all jump and a whimper escaped her lips for the tragic, pale, and injured little being. Leo stepped in front of her when she moved as if to go to it.

"We don't know what it is yet," he said, placing a hand on her arm and pulling her gently to him.

The soul flickered once, dark then dull, but made no response.

"Where did it come from?" Don asked.

He raised a single brow ridge and the set of his mouth said he clearly didn't believe it to be the real Medes, not after last time.

"Well?" he asked again when no answer seemed forthcoming.

"Patience," Hades said. His mild rebuke quieted them all as he examined the bowl and its contents carefully. "It appears to have a homing amulet."

April, the only human in residence was slowest to react. She stumbled in rubbing the sleep from her eyes, but she was armed, a single katana on her back. At the words 'homing amulet' her eyes widened and she groaned. "Oh, no."
Raphael turned on her with a storm in his eyes. "Ya know somethin' about this?"

"Sol made me the amulet," April said. She crossed her arms and squared her shoulders against the looming bulk of the angry turtle. "To give me an escape if something immortal attacked me outside the lair."

Leo turned to her sharply and she shrugged.

"It's a sweet thing and it worries. Like you do," she said, nodding in Leo's direction. "It couldn't convince me to spend all my time 'at home' so it offered me another option."

"How did you lose it?" Hades asked, his inquiry direct and his voice rough.

"I didn't."

"April, where is Michelangelo?" Splinter asked.

Don's gaze bounced around to all the entrances, expecting his tardy brother to pop in at any second, but Splinter's eyes never left April, waiting for an answer. She blinked.

"I don't know," she said. "He went after Medes." She nodded to the soul in the bowl. "Looks like he found it."

The silence was deafening. Leo, Raph, and Don stared at her with shock written all over their faces.

"Ya let our crazy, little brotha' out of the lair to hunt for an immortal stronghold- ALONE?" Raph yelled.

"Raphael Hamato, I am not now, nor have I ever been, your brother's keeper!"

There was a sigh before she spoke again, hanging her head in evident guilt. "But I did help him plan, and I gave him the amulet as a 'just in case'. I didn't think he would find anything."

Donatello gave her a look of disappointment which hurt worse than Raph's outburst, but Luna shook off Leo's arm and glided across the room to April's side, taking her hand.

"Michelangelo is impetuous, but it is his heart which drives him," Luna said. "No matter what you did, he would have gone."

"Still could've told us about it," Raph said, grumbling. "He shouldn't be out there alone."

Luna caught his eyes, frowned, and indicated the young woman to her right with a jerk of her head. April's usually stoic face had misery written all over it. His gaze softened.

"S'okay April. I know how he gets," Raph said, trying to make his voice less accusatory.

Splinter blinked. Not in the least used to his hot-tempered son backing down and apologizing for his anger. The goddess was working miracles.

"What's important now is we find him," Don said, heading for his lab and his terminal. "I can track Mikey's cell phone and barring that his DNA, body mass, or temperature."

Hades cleared his throat and held out the faded soul pitiful in his grasp.

"This, I believe, is a more pressing matter," Hades said, his voice grave.
Don barely flicked a glance at the bowl and continued from the room as if Hades hadn't spoken.

"So it is Medes?" Leo asked.

"What's left of it," Hades replied, sighing quietly. His eyes held an infinite sadness for he had seen far too many damaged souls.

"What can we do?"

Hades shook his head. "If it had a soul mate, it might heal, but it hasn't bonded."

Luna's face crumpled and she crept closer to the bowl, reaching a gently glowing silver finger toward the soul in offering. Medes shrank away, a little curve forming in its teardrop form as it flinched. It did not deserve help from the goddess.

"Don't!"

Donatello came rushing back into the room and knocked Luna's hand away, interposing himself between her and the bowl. He thrust her back so hard Raphael jumped to catch her before she fell. Raph balanced Luna and glared at his younger brother, but Don ignored him, panting harshly, his eyes wide with fear.

"Do not touch that thing!" Don yelled.

He remembered well what it felt like the last time he did so. April put a hand over her mouth. Donatello almost never raised his voice. She had never seen him so worked up.

"Don," Leo said, laying a hand on his shoulder, "calm down."

Donatello jumped, spun on his brother, and lost it.

"She was about to touch it, Leo!" Don yelled, his voice pitched high and his words coming fast. "She could have been killed! Fried! Just like what happened to me. It's probably what happened to Mikey! And you were gonna stand there and let her do it!"

Leo returned his glare with a calm eyed stare and a raised brow.

"Are you finished?" Leo asked.

Don emitted a noise that was half frustration, half growl and twisted his shell to Leo, crossing his arms.

"Do you really think I would let anything harm her?" Leo demanded.

"Get rid of it please, Hades," Donatello said in a calmer tone of voice.

"No," Hades said, his eyes raking the intelligent turtle. "It would lessen her. I am surprised at you, Donatello. I did not think any of the Hamato family would deliberately injure the goddess, you least of all."

Don's eyes widened at the denunciation and he sputtered a little before answering.

"What are you accusing me of? I spent hours helping Luna heal. I set her bones, stitched her wounds, cleaned the blood off her skin! I stopped that damned collar, invented a new computer language, integrated alien technology and magic into a shield for her and created a machine to harness the power of the gods to diagnose her illness."
Don's voice rose with every sentence and he gestured vehemently with his hands. As he reached the end of his rant, he placed himself squarely in front of Hades and held his finger in the god's face.

"I will never harm Luna, I love her!"

The statement hung in the air as Leonardo, Raphael, Splinter and April stood stunned at this outburst. Don was the last person they'd ever thought to hear spouting declarations of love loudly in public.

"Many love her," Hades said, at last. "Yet simple adoration is not enough. To keep this family together, to save the goddess, you have to do more. You must forgive yourself, Donatello, for all the things you did not do, and accept your fate."

Once again, Hades thrust the small bowel forward toward the inventor and waited to see if he would take it.

Luna's soft gasp broke the tableau as she realized what Hades couldn't say. Donatello flinched away from the ancient god, his anger draining away as fast as it appeared. He glanced around, suddenly aware of the audience surrounding them and flushed before dashing from the room to his lab, slamming the door behind him.

Hurrying over to his desk, he swept it clear with one arm, sending experiments and paperwork crashing to the floor. He sank into his chair and laid his head down, resting his hot, face against his arms, totally mortified.

What had possessed him vent in front of Luna and his brothers? Bad enough she witnessed his anger, far worse his declaration of love. Even Leo, who was usually quick to forgive, was never going to let that go.

Despite the earlier revelation they may all end up bound to her it was far from certain and it had been inappropriate for him to reveal his secret. For one thing, there was no way he could trust Medes, for another Luna would always be the unattainable goddess to him, out of reach on a pedestal of his own construction. He had no right to ask forgiveness, or to ever expect to stand beside her as a mate.

Michelangelo gritted his teeth against the pain, sat up to hide his movements, and pulled again at the handcuffs binding his wrists behind him. His arms strained against his shell in this confined position making the cuffs much more uncomfortable for him than for a regular person.

Of course, if these were the human variety they wouldn't have held him. The chain on most of those being no match for his enhanced mutant strength. These had been dipped into some sort of magic water, at least Charon claimed so.

Whatever the cause, Mikey found he was well and truly caught. The cuffs were not coming off unless his captors took them off, or he shattered his own hand. But he wasn't desperate enough to try such methods of last resort- yet. Then there were his burns. His skin stung all over and he sported a series of red rash-like abrasions from the acid.

The captain of the guards noticed his change in position. With an evil smile on his face, he
marched up to the captive turtle and smacked him back into his posture of abject humiliation, prostrate in front of the Oracle.

The man deliberately ground the butt of his spear into the back of Mikey's neck forcing his forehead all the way to the cold marble floor of Serra's receiving room, stretching his arms even further. Much more of this and Mikey would end up with two dislocated shoulders. He grunted as the abrupt change reopened the gunshot wound in his leg but made no other response to the sadistic treatment.

"You poor, sweet, innocent thing," Serra purred.

She lounged on her side in a flowing white Grecian gown, her knees tucked up beside her on a velvet divan on the dais, displaying her lush figure to best advantage and pouting into a small silver hand mirror. She analyzed her own face intently as she spoke.

"Tricked into captivity by a goddess who doesn't give a damn about you," she said, patting her hair into place. "You nobly sacrificed yourself and for what? A weak little piece of soul that won't even tell anyone what happened."

She laughed, a deep rich chuckle which might have been attractive, if she were someone else, and set her mirror down on the small mahogany side table next to her with a little flourish.

"Well," she said, "let's have a proper look at you."

The Oracle swung her legs off the divan and strode majestically down the steps to stand in front of her captive, appraising him. She gestured the Captain back and lifted Mikey's head up by the simple expedient of hauling on his mask tails. He gasped as the jarring movement sent another shot of pain through his leg, but though he felt the slow trickle of blood running down his thigh increase, he was grateful for the easing of the strain on his arms.

Serra ignored the blood and place one hand regally on his head, closing her eyes. A moment later, she opened them again and growled a tiny frustrated noise.

"Too close to the goddess to see your future," she declared, "but your aura is that of an innocent."

She smiled, but it was not sweet, wickedly tilting his head up with a hand under his chin, forcing him to meet her gaze. His large, baby blue eyes met hers with devastating effect. She knelt before him on the floor and took his face in her palms, staring as his eyes glistened and pled silently with the ancient being to let him go.

She laughed.

"All kinds of captives come through here, monster," she said, running her thumbs caressingly over his cheeks, "and I have seen every possible emotion on the faces of those that came before you; hatred, defiance, petulance, fear, aggression, and even ambition."

Without warning, she pulled his face in and kissed him full on the mouth, her wet lips hot against his. He froze, wanting to pull back, yet motion was painful and there was the guard to consider.

Taking his stillness for submission, she sought to deepen the kiss, probing at him with her tongue and moving her hands to hold his mask tails tightly. In the end, he simply turned his head away as much as he could. She chuckled.

"Your innocence will not sway me in the least," she said, licking her lips. "But I like the way it tastes."
The Captain grimaced in disgust but blanked his expression when Serra turned her gaze on him with an arched brow.

"When you live as long as I have, Captain, you learn to appreciate the exotic."

Serra waved dismissively, "Clean him up and collar him."

She sashayed to a side door and turned casting a sultry glance over her shoulder.

"I want him stripped and chained in my pleasure chamber," she said, and as an afterthought added, "He can keep the mask."

She turned once more toward Michelangelo, her hand on the door.

"See you later."

Her voice promised dark, dangerous, things and Mikey found himself utterly unprepared for his body's response. A rush of adrenaline, anticipation, and dread he didn't know how to interpret. She laughed again at the confusion and consternation on his face and closed the door behind her. Michelangelo shuddered and dropped his head as the quiet thud echoed through the room sealing his fate.
Ruins

Donatello's hand shook as he placed the only remaining alien power crystal from their old lair into the niche carved at the edge of the doorway. So hard, in fact, he struck the fragile item twice against the stone of the wall before fitting it into place. He flinched at the boom preceding the opening of the door in front of him and scuttled through into his safe haven.

Ruins of a vast underground civilization spread out before him and, as his eyes adjusted, more details became clear. The architecture, swirling and strange, was like nothing else on Earth. Not surprising, since the city had been left by an alien race.

He let himself into his favorite house but for once, wasn't soothed by the view. While the front facade of the domicile was solid, the main room's back wall featured an open balcony with fluted marble columns supporting a lattice roof.

The building overlooked a tremendous courtyard, complete with sculptural fountains and mosaic mural patterns on the ground divided by gravel paths. The craftsmanship reminded Don of a cross between Greek and Italian, but the entire city incorporated tiles emitting unnatural light of blue or green and the water glowed fuchsia without any artificial illumination.

Some five years ago, this place housed a rogue group of mutants, but after they cleared out Don claimed the underground space as his own little sanctuary. Not even his family was aware he set up an entire townhouse within the ruins as a retreat.

He furnished his personal lair simply; books, mementos, and soft candlelight. He didn't invent or do experiments here, this was a getaway but, being Donatello, it wouldn't be complete without electricity, security, and plenty of computers.

Usually, he spent time here admiring the vista and winding down. Perhaps opening some wine and reading in one of the oversized arm chairs. Today he headed to the computer banks to log in and start looking for Michelangelo. This was the first time he used the place to retreat from a domestic disgrace but even in a self-imposed exile he could be productive.

Don twisted uncomfortably, his mind only half on the search algorithm he was writing. No sign of Mikey's phone in the NYC area, but the device might be off or destroyed. Time for the second option, a satellite scan for body mass and temperature. He uploaded the program to run as it orbited the Earth. For good measure, he absently hacked a second one on the other side of the planet to speed things up.

His current mission accomplished, he allowed his eyes to drift around the room and out over the landscape of the dark city. He had fantasized about bringing Luna here someday to share its beauty, but now, staring out at its emptiness, he felt sick and more alone than he'd ever been in his life.

Remorse overwhelmed him. He'd thought, after their last misunderstanding, he'd come to terms with their relationship. He was her friend and confidant, nothing more. He shouldn't desire her. He shouldn't dream about her.

But he did.

Luna Heliades haunted him, waking or sleeping. Even the most complex projects and problems could not drive her from his thoughts. He'd meant to keep it to himself. A secret fantasy.
It hadn't remained a secret.

Regret burrowed under his skin filling him with an intense frozen pain and a deep shame, as he remembered the faces of his family and friends this morning. Every single one of them looked shocked, horrified even, by his declaration.

Even Luna.

Especially Luna.

Her frightened gasp replayed in his mind and his heart clenched at the memory.

*She doesn't want me.*

The solution, of course, was simple. All he had needed to do was reach out and take Medes from Hades outstretched hand. If he bonded to the soul everything would change. Her feelings would alter.

The temptation had been almost more than he could bear. After all, the elder god obviously wanted him to. Accept his fate, Hades said. But Donatello could not reconcile that fate with the idea of forcing Luna into any sort of relationship she did not already desire. To make her take him as mate for the sake of saving her soul was underhanded and deceitful.

Besides Raphael and Leonardo were required to agree to the bond. He knew they would, to save her, but how could he hurt his brothers? The anguish had been written all over Leo's face in the lab and Raphael's little temper tantrum left no doubts as to his feelings on the subject. Now they knew he desired her. Their anger would keep them from giving permission.

Knowing all possibility of a bond with Luna was gone hurt more than he wanted to admit, but it had been the right decision. Restlessly, he left his desk and moved out onto the balcony. His heart as empty as the city below him.

There was more than one way to resolve every problem. To let her soul perish was not an option, so he would have to find another way to heal Medes. Perhaps if he modified his scanner to feed it energy directly from the node...

Focus on another solution eluded him. His grip on the balustrade tightened as images of Luna flashed through his head way the sunlight from the skylights caught on her hair. Her impish smile as she challenged his theories and lead him to new conclusions. Her peaceful sleeping countenance- glowing in the light of a single candle in the infirmary, and how right it felt to hold her in his arms after she exhausted herself locating their father.

Too bad those weren't his only memories. Darker ones followed. Her anger and despair at Michelangelo's injuries. Her magnificent fury. His own jealousy as he watched Raphael's mouth descend to hers in his lab. Leonardo taking her up and carrying her home when he refused to do so, and the quiet pain in her voice when he asked about her exile.

But the worst memories, by far, were those of her physical and emotional injuries when they brought her back the first time. He would never get over the shock of seeing what had been done to her.

Her moans still rang again in his ears, his hands were slick with her blood and it flowed in dark runnels over the edge of the stainless table to pool on the floor. Her screams as he set her bones were heartrending. Treating her had not been easy, and though he only intended to heal, he had left lasting marks of pain on her psyche.
Suddenly he understood. Luna could never stand to be with him. Any intimate form of contact from him, the softest caress, would only serve to remind her of the worst moments of her life. The ones right before her death.

*Luna, please... forgive me. I never meant to cause you pain. I wanted a life with you so badly and yet everything is wrong. I wish things could have turned out differently!*

Quiet tears streamed down his face, as he grieved for what might have been. His heart cracking and breaking as he forced himself to come to terms with his decision.

"Oh, Luna." he whispered.

*She's a goddess. Can she hear me calling for her under the hard uncaring stone? No. No sun or moon exist down here. There is no Luna.*

For a long, long time he sat, staring out at the emptiness surrounding him. Several hours passed and he concluded bitterly it would be better for all concerned if he stayed away from home.

He would help his family find Mikey but he didn't have to leave these ruins. Information sent digitally would guide his brothers. The others, Luna included, need not see him for a while. Besides, this was the ideal spot to bury the ashes of his broken heart. An empty place no one else would ever lay eyes on.

Automatically, he rose and stumbled back to his computers, determined to spend all his time working so he wouldn't feel the numb void left inside.

A small chime rose from his phone, filling the silence of the dead city sometime near dawn. Leonardo's name flashed on the screen. Don turned dull eyes on it and sighed as he reached for the device. He'd been staring at a computer all night and he didn't want to talk to Leo, but they would only mount a search if he didn't answer.

"Donatello here."

"Don?" The leader's voice came over the line again, much more softly. "Are you ok?"

Don froze with the receiver pressed to his ear. He had analyzed a thousand mental conversations regarding the incident this morning, trying to prepare an acceptable response, but none of them began with Leo showing concern for him. Where was the anger? The fierce protectiveness he needed to hold his weakening resolve together?

"Fine. I just- I thought it would be best to give everyone space for a little while."

"You didn't need to leave." Compassion was thick in Leo's voice. "You were embarrassed, but you were only looking out for Luna. Raph and I, we understand. We know what it's like to... love her."

Undertones implied he knew intimately how Don felt; lovesick, haunted, desperate.

*So my secret was never a secret.*

"I don't want to talk about it, Leo."

"Donnie," There was a short but significant pause on the line. "We need your help."

Those five words were so familiar, he snapped back into some semblance of normality. Of course they did. His younger brother was missing, Medes was still in danger, and he was a member of the
Hamato family. He would fight to protect his own, even knowing his heart's desire would never, could never be his.

He switched into report mode, his voice firming.

"I'm already running the search algorithm for Mikey. He's not in New York anymore. If the immortal he went up against was Charon, ley-lines might have been used to transport him away, so I've got a pair of satellites doing a worldwide scan. It'll take a few more hours, but I'll get the results to you as soon as they are finished."

"Thanks Don. We're all worried about Mikey, but I called because-"

"Oh. The shield? I turned it on before I left. It should hold up ok and keep out any unwanted guests. The coverage extends past the area we've claimed and stretches into the surrounding tunnels for thirty feet or so. Tell Luna will you? She and Hades might sense some odd reflections near the borders, but it's keyed to them from the medical scans so it should let them pass without effort."

"I'll tell them, but that wasn't it either."

Don waited for his brother to continue, instead there was a long pause. After another moment of silence, he shoved back his computer chair and stalked back out to the balcony, totally uncomfortable with this conversation and wishing Leo would get on with yelling at him.

"Spit it out, Leo." he said, his voice grating. "I'm not a mind reader."

"Don, I- I want you to know, of all of us... you're the one who deserves her."

Donatello stopped in his tracks, completely flabbergasted. Finally, he uttered a single word.

"What?"

"Luna. You deserve her. You're the best of us; kind, strong, compassionate, intelligent, loyal, protective, open minded, and caring. With Raph and I, she only gets pieces. With you she'll have the whole package."

"I don't understand. What are you telling me, Leo?"

"She's coming to you. She wants you. She deserves you."

Each word echoed inside his head, unexpected and astounding. His brain, as complex as it was, fought to assemble the syllables into anything intelligible, but his heart grabbed onto them like a lifeline. He sat down hard on the stone of the balcony, his knees collapsing beneath him.

The silence on the line lasted so long, Leo spoke again in concern.

"Donnie, did you hear me?"

"Yes. You said Luna is coming here."

The answer was an automatic and mechanical response to the question, flat and unemotional. He couldn't wrap his head around the truth of the statement.

"Don, you don't sound so good, are you somewhere safe?"

That reminded him, he was off the radar. He'd turned off his phone tracker and no one in the family had knowledge of this hideaway.
Luna could not be coming for him.

He began to laugh, a horrible mocking sound that echoed off the walls around him until the noise filled the entire room. He hadn't thought his brother so petty as to punish him this way but he supposed he deserved it.

Leonardo should torture him with no remorse. Don should never have lusted after his brother's mate. No redemption awaited him at home.

"Good one Leo. You really had me going for a minute."

His hollow tone cut through the conversation like a knife and Leo's startled gasp was clear on the line.

"So you know, I'm already beating myself up about hurting you, not to mention her. It's unforgivable." Donatello paused to take a steadying breath before proposing his solution. "So, I've left the lair. I planned to stay away for a few months, but... just say the word and I won't ever come back."

"Don!"

"I never meant to tell you." Don said, cutting Leo off, trying his best to explain, "This love was a dream, it kept me going. It was selfish and I knew better, but without her I'm just an empty shell. So if you're looking to inflict the most damage, go ahead. Tell me you're done with me."

He tried to stifle his frenetic breathing to hear Leo's reply.

*Is this the end of life as I know it?*

*no. A soft mental whisper stated. it is the beginning.*

As weak as it was, the words rang through his head and heart. A whiff of scent followed on the breeze; lilies and hyacinths.

*I am going mad.*

Don pulled his knees to his chest and wrapped one arm tight around them, the other clutched the phone to his ear as he stared out between the baluster railings at the empty city beyond.

*She isn't here. She can't be. She doesn't know about this place...Can you go crazy from a broken heart? Is there some chemical reaction which destroys the mind?*

He clenched his teeth and only then realized they were chattering. The scent grew stronger and Donatello covered his eyes. He began to shake all over and whimpered into the receiver.

*Luna isn't here! By rights, I should never see her again!*

The more potent the smell became the more frantic Don's reaction and the less logically he thought.

*What is happening to me?*

"Don! Donnie?" Leo asked, and he realized Leo had been calling his name for some time.

"Yes?"
"I don't know how your thinking got so twisted, but I have to tell you something and you need to listen, okay? You were on the rooftop so you will understand. Raphael and I..."

It was overpowering. He wanted to drown in her scent or jump off the balcony to get away, he wasn't sure which. Either way he seemed destined for death by desire and hallucination. The first had shattered his heart, the second was breaking his mind.

"We concede."

Everything stilled with those words. His shuddering, his breathing, even his heartbeat. 

_Leonardo would never joke about that. So the other things he said..._

The phone fell from numb fingers and exploded into bits as it hit the stone floor.

"Donnie?"

A voice, _her voice_, full of chiming echoes and concern, sounded behind him as a delicate hand landed gently on his shoulder and his heart thudded into motion again. He drew a shuddering breath and gasping, reached up to close his hand over hers.

"I heard you."

Michelangelo glared at the powder puff pink frippery surrounding him in Serra's 'pleasure chamber' and snorted his disdain, his blue eyes ice hard but his actions unusually docile as the guard latched the collar at his neck to a long chain attached to a pillar in the center of the room and left.

He felt uncomfortable without his weapon's harness and pads. Strangely naked, although he wasn't shy and none of them wore clothing at home unless they were going topside. He supposed his physical discomfort was simply mental dread of his next meeting with Serra.

He never anticipated this outcome.

He wrapped a length of the chain around his hand and tested its strength, but wasn't surprised when it didn't give under his hard pull. He avoided touching the collar.

Unfortunately, the damned thing looked to be the same model as the one Don took off Luna and though he didn't have magic to electrocute himself, the mechanical booby traps could make him just as dead. The guards had a remote so it seemed prudent to comply, for now.

Satisfied nothing would break it, he flung a section of chain behind the pillar and hauled himself up, climbing high above the floor to inspect the bolt point. He shook his head at the idiocy of humans. They thought putting the eye-bolt up a story or two would keep him away from it.

Tentatively, he turned the anchor but he lacked the proper leverage to work it free of the hard stone. He needed a long metal bar, one thin enough to clear the hole, but strong enough not to bend when he put force against it. He slid down and searched the room, finding nothing to do the job within reach.

_A fireplace poker would be perfect._

There was a fireplace in the room, but it was empty for the summer season and lacked any kind of tending tools. Servants must bring those in as required. As if the thought of servants summoned them, the doorknob rattled and Michelangelo dashed back to lean defiantly against the column.
A small boy with a mop and a bucket of soapy water entered the room. No more than six, he wasn't tall enough to carry the sloshing bucket properly. And the mop kept turning diagonal in his arms, catching on the door, and comically impeding his entrance.

Eventually, the young one dropped his cleaning implement and set the bucket on the floor. With both hands on the rim, he pushed the container into the room, watching to make sure he wasn't leaving any scratches. He turned, trotted out to the hall to retrieve his mop, and jogged back in on little legs, shutting the door with a triumphant smile on his face.

Until he saw Mikey standing in the middle of the room.

The boy stopped and Mikey hurried to cut off the scream he was sure was about to burst his eardrums.

"Hey little dude! It's ok. I'm not gonna hurt you, see?" Michelangelo said in his most cheerful voice, holding up the length of chain. "I can't even reach you over by the door."

His claim was a total lie, but he hoped the child couldn't tell. The boy stayed put, clutching his mop in both hands and examining the turtle in front of him with the same intense focus he'd given the floor a moment ago.

A little gleam came into his eye and he pulled himself upright to bow to Michelangelo before falling into a basic ready stance, holding the handle like a bo staff.

Mikey's eyes widened. "You know ninjutsu?"

The boy gave a short nod and grinned, wiggling his mop exactly like Donnie had his bo when they were sparring as kids. A little impatient 'come on' motion. Mikey smiled at this unexpected diversion, bowed back, and took a defensive stance as familiar as breathing.

Squealing with glee, the boy ran at him, pulling off a few striking moves which Mikey easily avoided. When he saw the boy tiring, he moved in with a lightening fast leap and tickled his sides, the same way he took down Donnie when they fought as children.

Amazingly, the squeals of laughter did not turn into shrieks of fear at his touch. The child giggled and rolled around the floor with Mikey, wrestling happily. They were both winded when Mikey propped himself up with his shell to the pillar and scooped the boy into his lap. The youngster settled himself before staring up into Mikey's face.

"What's your name, little fella?" he asked.

"Jacob," the boy said. "I clean the rooms on this side of the hall."

"And you are excellent at it. I can tell," Mikey said, nodding and looking around in a careful show of attention, before adding. "So, um, Jake. Can I ask you something?"

"Sure!" the child replied with a huge smile.

"Why aren't you afraid of me?"

The boy laughed and wiggled like this was the best joke he ever heard.

"Cause I know ninjutsu, Michelangelo Splinter-son!"

Mikey started violently. If he hadn't already been sitting, he would have fallen over in shock.
"What?"

Jake's brows pulled together. He stood and faced the turtle with a solemn expression.

"You are Michelangelo, yes?"

"Yes, but-

"You are Splinter-Sensei's youngest son! He said you liked the color orange and were the most fun to be around," Jake said. He frowned and added seriously "Although you are much bigger than Sensei said."

Mikey's mouth dropped open and he closed it with a click. Master Splinter worked in this palace for almost seven years and he was, ostensibly, the Master of Pages, but it hadn't occurred to him 'pages' were children, or that he would ever meet them.

Or that Sensei would have taught them ninjutsu and told them about his family.

Mikey realized suddenly how much their father must have missed them, and how much he loved them to sacrifice so many years of his life for their continued happiness.

"My father is a good man."

Mikey said without thinking, but Jake shook his head.

"Splinter-sensei is a monster."

The emphasis on the word contained only awe and pride, not fear. As if being a non-human equated to being a celebrity. Perhaps in this strange circle of children it did.

A thought occurred to the boy. Mikey saw it brighten his eyes, as he crept closer and lowered his voice, looking furtively around for listeners.

"You are here to save the little light, yes?"

"Little light?" Mikey asked, confused at this description.

"The little light helped Splinter-Sensei escape. At first we thought the fire killed him, but Ben yelled at it until the light told him no. Ben said it sent for help. Ben said it promised."

The boy nodded, clearly believing in the power of the 'little light'. As well he should, for it could only be the remaining piece of Luna's soul, always protecting the innocent. Michelangelo breathed a silent prayer, thanking all the gods and goddesses personally for sending him this gift, then smiled at the boy.

"I am here to rescue the little light," he said, letting confidence leak into his voice. "But I'm going to need you and the rest of the pages to help me do it."
Luna left her hand in his grip a long, long time. She said nothing, simply letting her presence sink in and gathering her aura around him. Eventually, she crouched behind his beautiful, dark polished shell and rested her forehead against it, knowing this was hard for him to handle, uncertain how to make things easier.

Hades had seen this coming, she mused. He had known Donatello's intelligence and sweetness would draw her like a moth to a flame. Medes or no Medes. Or maybe he'd just understood the connection was already in place through the medium of the mimic. It had fed on Medes then Don, forming a sort of twisted bond of its own.

After all, she had been fighting an urge to be in Donnie's company for some time. She had studied the desire, but thought it was Charon's corruption trying to drive a wedge between her family members and had fought the impulse to seek him out.

Now she knew he was destined to be hers. They all were.

Donatello flinched as her free hand made soft reassuring circles over him; her light touch as she traced the patterns on his shell a sensation he'd never experienced. Her caress set fire to his emotions once again, reigniting his forbidden desire.

God, I want her!
I need her!
And my brothers conceded!

A yearning more powerful than ever before slammed into him like a wrecking ball, leaving his spirit crushed between its weight and the unyielding determination of his mind.

It changed nothing.

Luna was pursuing this course under duress. He would hold to his decision.

Don wished she would stop touching him, but at the same time, thought he might die if she did; so he said nothing. As she shifted, her sweet, warm breath grazed the back of his neck and a shudder ran down his spine. She leaned in and, before he realized what she was doing, kissed him above his shell in an inordinately sensitive spot. All his new nerve endings fired at once, driving him insane. Muscles clenched in his stomach and groin.

He moaned aloud before he could seal his lips and tensed, locking himself in place. He fought his body with everything he had, resisting the nearly overpowering inclination to pull her violently into his arms, lock his mouth to hers, and never let go.

Ruthlessly he suppressed his urges. Desire, like pain, existed in his mind and his mind could control it.

But it was hell.

He did not look at her as he gasped and found his voice.

"You don't have to do this."
His words denied her, but despite them, his grip tightened almost imperceptibly on her hand. Luna moved to face him and knelt, not releasing her hold as she tried to read his expression. He kept his eyes shut and his head turned from her as he ground out between clenched teeth,

"You don't want this. You have my brothers to protect you and love you to the ends of the time. I can only offer painful memories and such things can't be atoned for."

Luna furrowed her brow. Painful memories? She had plenty of those, but she didn't understand how they related to him. She mentally reached for him and brushed across the surface thoughts of his mind searching for answers. When she finally grasped the tenor of his argument, she was startled. She hadn't even considered this and she blurted out the first thing that came to her.

"You are right."

Donatello hissed, realizing from the fresh surge of agony he'd almost allowed himself to hope he was wrong, that Luna had come to him because she wanted him. She flinched as she realized how bad her statement sounded.

"Some things can not be atoned for because they've already been forgiven, nay even forgotten," she said, trying to make him see she hadn't even considered it.

Don shook his head. She reached out and clasped his other hand, but he kept his eyes shut. He remembered how fast Leonardo, and even Raphael, capitulated when they stared into those beautiful eyes.

It was how he had fallen into the mimic's trap in the first place.

"I will not force you into this, Luna! You do not have to yield to me against your will to save Medes. All that's waiting down that path is regret."

And madness, his heart whispered. I could not live with myself.

"I will find another way to heal it," he said more softly. "I swear on my honour, I will."

He squeezed her hands gently to reassure her, than released them and tried to pull away. She wouldn't let go.

"Donnie-"

"I shouldn't have said what I did and the others shouldn't pressure you into this. Not even for Medes sake."

Her hands were shaking in his.

'I will take myself out of the picture if you wish," he whispered, "leave here and never return if it makes things easier for you."

Something hot and wet hit the back of his hands.

"Donatello, please!" she begged, a strangled little hitch in her voice, "Do not torture me so.

If you go, I will seek you to the ends of the universe and I will find you because... I'm already in love with you."

He opened his eyes at that and stared up into a face so perfect it stunned him. She was ethereal, her eyes a deep violet and her long hair the palest lilac, curly, and caught half up on her head. She was
more beautiful than he'd ever seen her. Even in his dreams.

Luna looked like an angel, but this angel was crying. Red rimmed her gorgeous eyes and silvery tears trailed down her cheeks, falling on their clasped hands. Each one burned into him like acid.

*What have I done now? She's hurting!*

Donatello stood in one fluid motion, drawing the vision to her feet and released one hand, to brush his knuckles over her face, wiping the tears away. He barely dared to breathe when she closed her eyes and leaned into the caress. He opened his hand and cupped his palm against her cheek as delicately as he could.

Her skin was so soft he couldn't resist running his thumb over it. He was fervently grateful Hades had given him a fresh start; hands without callouses, burns from experiments, and scars from past battles. It seemed a sin to subject her to such roughness.

She gasped and shivered at his touch, but not in pain or revulsion. He crooned to her in response, almost involuntarily, and pulled her against his chest; tucking her head under his chin and wrapping his arms around her. He buried his face in the silky softness of her hair as she melted into his embrace. Her body molded itself to his contours as his thoughts raced.

*How?*

His analytical mind worried at the impossibility of her love as if it were a puzzle he could solve, examining it from all sides, turning it over, twisting his memories of their experiences; experimenting. He couldn't see it, couldn't determine how or why she loved him.

*What am I missing?*

*stop thinking.*

The answer came from a soft voice deep in his mind. It pulsed with knowledge and certainty so he complied, ceasing his internal battle and surrendering to the torrent of feelings seething under the surface of his consciousness.

Emotions whirled within him like air rushing to fill a vacuum, each one appearing faster than the one before and colliding to form a whole before he could understand, separate, or analyze.

Light crept into his heart, driving out the shadows. With her in his arms, the doubts drained from his mind and he found true focus. This was the goddess, his Luna, and she would not lie to him. She loved him and wanted him, even without a bond.

His need for the 'hows' and 'whys' fell away. With this realization his choice was clear. He was only hurting her further by refusing to heal her soul. He pulled back from her.

"Where is Medes?"

Luna's eyes widened in startlement but she raised her empty hand and the violet drained from her, forming into a pale, flickering form that danced on her palm. Her soul had been merely fractured before, but Medes was torn asunder.

There wasn't much left of it and it shivered, fearing exposure.

Donatello considered the broken soul. The goddess would never be a goddess again without it and the thought made Donatello frantic. The 'what if's' surrounding its destruction did not even bear
thinking about. He met her eyes again, still unsure he could trust it.

"Medes is corrupted and none, save its mate, can heal it now," she said and he noticed her hand shaking again under the flame. She was afraid, he realized. She feared he would refuse her. "The darkness in my spirit, the madness you sense," she paused, "all comes from Charon's influence. He hurt Medes to bleed me dry. He would have me submit to his desires."

Her whole body shuddered at the thought and Don's eyes turned flinty, hard as stone. The powerful assassin lurking inside his intelligent form reared to the surface and he wrapped a strong arm around her waist.

"He'll never have you." Donatello's voice was fierce and firm. "Never. I will do whatever it takes to protect you."

He placed his other hand, palm down over hers, forming a cup above Medes, all uncertainty gone from his being.

"Little one," he said, "If you will have me, I will join with you and bond to the Goddess Luna, Heir to Helios- Master of the Sun and Selene- Mistress of the Moon. My strength will be hers to wield as you see fit. My body shall worship her, my mind cherish her, and my soul nourish her until the end of time."

The same deep mental voice Don had heard before resounded through the room.

*donatello is worthy, my mistress, and gives himself to thee; body, mind, and soul. dost thou acknowledge the gift?*

Luna raised her hand to caress his face before placing a glowing silver fingertip on his chest and tracing a complicated pattern directly over Donatello's heart.

"I do," she whispered, "and with this mark, thou art bound unto my being for all eternity, as am I to thee."

Medes flared and both were enveloped in light. Donnie burned a brilliant violet and Luna was coated in silver. Power flowed through their joined hands and Medes began to pulse, brighter and faster than before. Their palms separated as the force of the two collided and Medes floated alone between them, whole and deeply violet once more.

It flashed one final brilliant time and dissolved. Half of it recoiled into Luna the other part reached out in welcome to Donatello's soul.

Don started as he sensed the deep connection forming between them. Energy flowed back and forth in a constant stream. Emotions, too, traveled across the bond until he no longer knew which were his and which hers. They had become a single pulsing being of heat and light, melding, twisting and creating new patterns under the stone skies of an abandoned city.

Energy encompassed him and he became aware of his body in a way he never had experienced before. He felt strong, unbreakable, as it pulsed through his blood. His mind opened and he flew free of his physical form.

Before him the universe formed, the stars expanded, the gases ignited, and life began. The explanations to so many of his deepest questions be they scientific, philosophic, or simple unknowns became clear. The answers were his for the taking.

He had bound himself to the soul of knowledge and more information than he could handle
exploded into his consciousness. There was too much. He was overwhelmed and suddenly afraid of what he might become.

Luna sensed his distress and entered his mind, her power a shimmering presence amidst the chaos. She wove a shield around his thoughts, protecting the core that was Donatello from the incredible weight of such amassed intelligence, for there were some things mortals were never meant to know.

He shivered and discovered himself back in his body, Luna held tight in his arms. He locked eyes with her violet gaze and sought her lips with his own.

The kiss was searing.

Desire burned through them both and magnified as it traveled from one to the next through their new connection. Her skin, or was it his?, ached to be touched. He caressed her wonderingly, his hands tracing first her shoulders, then her hips as he swept them down her sides. Her hourglass was so appealing he did it again.

It felt even better the second time.

Don fell to his knees in front of her, his hands continuing their long caress from her full hips down her legs. Only then did he realize her clothing had changed. When she first came to him, she was wearing street clothes, a simple t-shirt and jeans.

Now she was devastatingly beautiful in a wedding dress.

Long, medieval, white chiffon sleeves split at silver clasps on her shoulders and trailed to the ground next to him, before catching at her wrists in silver cuffs embossed with crescent moons. A low cut, sweetheart neckline displayed a smooth white expanse of bare skin and curved breast, adorned with a huge amethyst crystal necklace. A complex silver beaded belt pulled the dress tight under her bust and the skirt fell away in voluminous white layers, splitting in places to show silver fabric glittering underneath.

Tiny white flowers and delicate silver chains were woven through her hair.

He gasped, looking up at her with adoring eyes. Hers twinkled with mischief.

"Doesn't it hurt, kneeling on all that stone?" she asked.

Confusion lit his expression for a moment. His knees felt fine. He was wearing pads, after all. He glanced down only to discover he wore nothing but his mask and his knees sank into something soft.

A portion of the floor had become a decadent sunken mattress, covered in satin and surrounded by plush pillows. The balcony was now draped in royal purple velvet and the lighting was dim. Candles, hundreds of them, coated every flat surface. It was all terribly romantic.

"Luna, this is incredible!" Don said, awe coloring his tone. He had seen her change the furnishings in the old lair when Splinter first appeared, but this was something different.

"It is incredible, my love, but it's not my doing. It's yours."

He stared at her, in astonishment. He looked closer at the items nearest him as she sank gracefully into the comfort of the cushions and leaned back looking every inch the goddess at rest in her boudoir.
Suddenly his curiosity about the objects could wait.

Donatello could not keep his eyes off her as she kicked out of her silver sandals and ran her toes through the luxurious sheets, a smile of unadulterated pleasure on her face. She raised a hand to him and drew him down beside her, kissing him soundly.

He pulled her closer to him, wrapping his arms around her until they were pressed together from chest to knee. He wanted to be nearer still, but her dress, gorgeous as it was, frustrated his desire.

She broke the kiss and laughed as his thought flowed through the bond, a rich, throaty, melodious sound which made his heart swell in his chest. Teasingly, she reached up to the silver clasps at her shoulders and unfastened them one at a time.

The front of her dress slid sensually down her luminous skin, revealing her form one glorious inch at a time to his hungry gaze. It sparked a wildfire of desire. Unable to resist, and no longer afraid, he raised his hand to her breast and stroked her. Her body responded, hardening under his caress as Luna moaned and arched back into the cushions.

His hand moved of its own accord, sliding over the sensitive surface repeatedly, causing her to gasp and press herself against him. He leaned in and trailed kisses over her skin, between her breasts, and down the gentle rise of her stomach as his hand explored lower. He drew it lightly over the ever so soft skin of her side to the slight curve of her back, shoving the dress down.

She rose to her knees beside him and allowed the garment to slip past her hips. She wore nothing underneath and Donatello gasped as her position revealed everything to him. Her natural perfume of lilies and hyacinths deepened as the musk of her arousal hit his nostrils, and he couldn't resist leaning in to inhale the scent.

As before, the fragrance drove him mad, but this time he could do something about it. He tackled her playfully, laid her out on the mattress, and buried his face between the heaven of her thighs.

Her sighs and moans shook the room as his tongue caressed her, and he groaned into her soft flesh. She tasted exquisite and he hauled her leg over his shoulder, desperate to have as much of her as possible. She grabbed his head and wound her hands into his mask as she writhed under his ministrations.

He explored her thoroughly, nipping and licking as his moment with her stretched into infinity. He felt the hot rush of her passion as it flowed between them and adjusted his technique until all her muscles clenched, winding tighter and tighter.

Ecstasy overcame her and she shuddered, shouting his name in release.

He smiled like the Cheshire Cat, rising from between her knees and stalking up her body. He slid an arm around her waist and in one smooth move, rolled them so he rested on his shell and she straddled his plastron. His hands resting on her hips.

She ran hers gently over every inch of him and he stared up at her in adoration as she taught him things about his body that he never knew.

Several hours later, she lay quietly on her side. Her steady breathing and constant heart rate would have told him she was resting peacefully, even if he couldn't feel the sluggish satisfaction emanating through their bond.

He rested behind her, stroking one finger along her cheek, her arm, and her side, contemplating how much had changed. His soul had gone from completely broken to undeniably whole in the
space of a few hours and the experience was staggering.

He tucked her hair back behind her ear and ran his hand down her side, stopping to rest his palm in the curve of her lower back. It fascinated him, her back and that curve. The way it swelled into the fullness of her hips and tapered down into her legs. Only human females were built this way and he was definitely drawn to it. He chuckled at his thoughts and realized it was the first time in days he'd done so.

Luna stirred in his arms and snuggled closer, shivering a little. It wasn't exactly cold down here. The city maintained a pretty even temperature, but for a bare skinned human, it probably was a little chilly. Don frowned and glanced around for something to cover his beloved with.

His questing hand only found cushions, and frustrated, he held one up in front of him.

"Why couldn't you be a nice, soft blanket instead of a pillow?" he groused in a whisper "We already have far too many pillows."

A strange type of head rush overcame him and his vision blurred slightly.

*Woah. Guess I haven't had enough to eat in the past 24 hours.*

He blinked rapidly to clear his eyes and stared at the object in his hand in astonishment. It wasn't a cushion anymore. A beautiful green blanket with the same pattern as the swirls on his shell was draped across his palm.

As he watched the slight remaining glow of dark violet power faded away from it, leaving it solid and unexplainable in his hand.

"What the hell?"
Faith

Serra stalked through the halls of her palace fuming as servants, pages, and guards scurried to get out of her path. Even her steward took one glance at her furious face and attempted to scuttle away. Unfortunately for him, Serra saw him first.

Her arm shot out and gripped his coat as he tried to detour around her.

"Where. is. he?"

The words were ground out through clenched teeth with more than a little menace. The steward swallowed hard and audibly, but kept himself from flinching by a force of will. Who could his Mistress have misplaced? He hadn't heard any alerts from the guards. He ventured a guess.

"The...turtle, Your Grace?"

"No, you imbecile! The sniveling immortal who lost my prize! I was supposed to get the soul he tortured and he let that monster spirit it away."

"Ah," the steward shook off his shock and regained his composure. This, at least, was a question he could answer. Straightening up as much as he could with Serra's fist twisted into the arm of his tailcoat, he stared straight ahead and spoke in the perfected monotone of butler's everywhere.

"I believe he is in the private receiving chamber examining the orange orb of light."

If the steward thought this bit of information would appease her, he was sadly mistaken.

"He's WHAT?"

Serra released her butler's coat in astonishment.

"Where are the guards? Who gave him permission to be alone with the soul? Don't you know he's obsessed with the girl? Oh he thinks I don't know, but he's bound to do something stupid..."

While Serra ranted on, the steward raised a white gloved hand and a half dozen armed men appeared seemingly out of thin air in response to his summons.

"There is an uninvited guest in blue room. Please see to it that he finds his way to a more appropriate waiting area," the steward ordered.

The soldiers saluted and trotted off in perfect unison down the corridor. Serra stared at the man with wide eyes for the ruthlessness with which he sent those men to their deaths.

"You know Charon is going to eat them alive," she said, raising a brow.

"I know, Madam," was the serene reply. "But they will provide a few moments diversion so you can make the appropriate entrance."

A slight smile crossed Serra's formerly angry face as she gazed at the man.

"I knew there was a reason I keep you around."

The steward bowed and Serra chuckled her rich, decadent laugh as she swished down the hall in the wake of the doomed guardsmen to chastise her partner in crime.
Charon stood in front of the orange orb deep in thought.

Something was wrong.

Nothing had changed in the crystalline structure of the prison. The soul was still contained, a slave to the darkness of the waters coating the inside of the sphere, but it flickered and flared oddly, straining against the walls as if increasing in power.

He realized with a growing sense of unease he had seen this before, but where?

Searching his memories yielded nothing. Perhaps because it wasn't his personal thoughts which contained the vision. It must be something he'd seen when linked to the eyes of the mimic during it's last battle.

With a twist of his fingers, Charon summoned a bone from the unfortunate creature. Hades had kindly returned the charred remains of his servant as a barely veiled threat to back away from his adopted daughter, but truthfully he'd done Charon a favor.

With the bones in his possession, he could walk through the demented memory of the thing and examine that which he wished to see.

He rubbed his hands gleefully over the oddly twisted femur, muttering the Incantation of the Damned, a powerful spell for those sentenced to the dark underworld for their crimes. It forced them to relive their actions from the perspective of their victims for all eternity. He added his own little embellishment to it to pull the memory unchanged from the marrow of the beast.

As he released the spell, the room in which he stood wavered and changed.

This new location formed underground with tons of stone, iron, water, and the construction of humanity between him and the sky-levels of Olympus. No wonder he could never get a solid fix on Luna. All these things made his servants uncomfortable and even his most feared punishment would not drive them past this much running water. It was why the portal had been successful when other methods had failed.

Luna was clever at finding such hiding places.

Shaking his head, he turned his attention to the diorama of frozen life in front of him. Hades dominated the scene, creating a poisonous black cloud Charon himself was fond of using.

The monsters bound to Luna's service were spread across the space.

Set apart, under a shield of red, a powerful warrior knelt; crushed under the weight of his own emotions. His despair a palpable force in the air. Charon made note of this weakness. The red one would do anything to spare the goddess pain.

Under a dome of blue sheltered the young turtle he recently captured, Luna, and another armed with twin swords. This was the leader, the eldest, and first of her bonded. He was trying to revive the lifeless mortal body of the fallen goddess, unaware her immortal essence was being restrained mere steps from him.

The sight made him grimace in distaste. How could she submit to the touch of ones such as these? She lay there while he pressed his hands over her heart, his silent mental pleas so powerful they repeated themselves over and over. Even in the dead air of a demon's memory.
Please... any god who might be listening... please... She is my light in the darkness, my voice in the silence, my reason for existence. Bring her back to me.

Charon clenched a fist. How dare this insignificant, mortal monster think to lay such a claim to his wife? The Guardian of the Dead reached out, ran a hand along Luna's shadow cheek, and forcefully calmed himself.

This was the past. He would be her future.

He turned to stare at his reason for visiting this unpleasant place. Sol and Fina, the remaining two portions of Luna's soul were separated from the unconscious form of the goddess. Interestingly, they had taken it upon themselves to protect her bonded while the monsters were too distracted and distraught to do so.

Each piece flared with enhanced energy, drawing strength from the turtle beings and magnifying it out of all proportion. Exactly the same behavior the orange soul displayed.

Could it also have formed a bond? Had it discovered their lie? Had Luna sullied herself further with yet another monster as a lover?

Charon's eyes blazed red in fury and jealousy as he raised a hand and banished the spell with an explosive burst of power. The receiving room of the palace came glaringly back into focus and the stones shivered from the force of the implosion.

It was then Charon discovered he was surrounded.

Six foolish mortals, armed with nothing but primitive spears and swords unworthy of the metal they were forged with, ringed him. A grim smile crossed the immortal's face and before the leader could even ask him to vacate the room, he released his clenched fists.

All his pent up rage at Luna's betrayals detonated.

The mortals disintegrated, blown back into thousands of tiny black shards that shot in all directions. They collided with the marble walls with enough speed to embed themselves in the rock.

It was not enough to assuage the demonic anger roaring forth inside him. He turned evil, glowing eyes on the only piece of Luna that lay within his grasp. He would rend her innocence into a thousand pieces as retribution for this slight.

His hand glowed black with a forbidden spell, one designed to break a human soul into its component parts and effectively remove it from existence. He didn't know what it would do to an immortal one, but he was willing to bet it wouldn't be pretty.

Charon reached for Trine, murder in his gaze.

His hand, mere inches away from the orange glowing orb, froze when absolute power coiled its way into the space and wound itself around him, locking him in place.

He struggled against it until Serra threw open the double doors of the receiving room and strode through like a queen with Zeus at her back.

Michelangelo was frustrated. The small page, Jacob, quite happily provided him with any number of long pieces of metal throughout the day and he had been suspended near the ceiling for hours
trying to break the eye-bolt holding his chain out of the column. Despite some clever ideas, it had
didn't budged, no matter how much leverage he obtained.

He was getting tired and the injury in his thigh reopened.

Blood ran in a small trickle down his leg and made the pillar slippery and wet. At last he admitted
defeat and slid slowly down, leaving a smear of bright red along the pale marble. He returned the
latest lever to a convenient hiding place under a nearby chaise then sighed as he searched around
for something not pink to bandage himself.

Finally, he tore a strip of fabric off a grey bed sheet, and wound it carefully around his upper thigh,
keeping the pressure tight. Blood seeped through the first two layers, but the third seemed like it
would hold for a while.

Mikey leaned against the pillar, exhausted, and watched the evening glow through the window.
The sun burned red and orange as it slowly sank into the sea. Michelangelo liked the sunset. It
reminded him of the majestic, incandescent mane of Luna's hair when she was furious.

A memory of Luna, blazings with wrath as she burst into the infirmary to see him lying injured on
the table, crossed his mind. What he wouldn't give to see his vengeful goddess now because,
despite the distractions of the day, Mikey was afraid.

Serra was something he'd never had to think about before. Oh, it wasn't his first day in the victim's
chair. He'd been captured, even tortured, before. But the idea of Serra taking advantage of him?
That frightened him more than he wanted to admit. He hadn't been with anyone before and he
didn't want to start with Serra.

But what if his body betrayed him?

As night fell and the moon rose, thoughts of Luna were the only things keeping him from pure,
adrenaline fueled panic. He was so worked up he almost attacked poor Jacob when the boy brought
in dinner.

Mikey turned with a terrifying snarl when he heard the door, his posture tense and defensive.

"Michelangelo? It is only me..." Jacob said timidly into the dark of the room.

He felt like slapping himself.

"I'm sorry, 'lil dude. I'm a teensy-bit on edge. I didn't mean to snap at you."

The boy placed a tray of hot food on the table and went around the room lighting an array of
candles. When they could see each other clearly, he shrugged and stared at the floor, not meeting
Mikey's gaze.

"It's ok, everyone in here is nervous at night."

Mikey's eyes widened and he winced, wondering what this child might have seen. He decided he
didn't want know. He changed the subject.

"Thank you, Jake. This food looks awesome, have you had any?"

Jacob nodded eagerly, "We eat early with the staff. I'm actually supposed to be in bed soon, but I
begged Cook to let me bring your dinner."
Mikey ruffled the boys hair.

"Thanks. You better get going now, before someone wonders where you got to."

Jacob's smile lit up the room and sent Michelangelo's heart soaring. The innocent smile of a child was worth protecting. Worth fighting, suffering, and even dying for.

Luna understood. It was how all this began.

Deep in his mind a soft voice whispered its agreement.

*without innocence, hope is only an illusion.*

As the youngster darted out the door with a parting wave, Mikey sat down to eat. He wondered what Luna and his brothers were up to, knowing they were probably planning his release and praying it came soon.

He reached up and brushed the upper left corner of his plastron, watching as the sigil of two houses entwined flared orange surrounded by silver. It faded quickly but its implied promise bolstered his courage.

*have faith.*

The soft mental voice whispered and for one moment, Mikey thought it was her.

His eyes grew heavy and he began to feel disconnected from his surroundings. He touched the place again and stared, fascinated, as this time the sigil appeared in slow motion. First the familiar Hamato clan symbol glowed then the silver flourishing Heliades mark traced languidly over the top.

He didn't even realize his eyes had closed as he slumped down across the table and his half eaten meal.

Michelangelo woke with a start, completely confused as to where he was and what was happening. His mind was sluggish and his body would not respond to his commands. A thick drug induced haze limited his vision.

Darkness surrounded him and he was flat on his shell in an unfamiliar bed.

His first instinct was to leap up and back into the nearest wall, seeking a defensive position. He struggled with himself for some moments before he realized movement was impossible. A chill ran down his spine as he fought against inch thick manacles stretching his arms above his head. His ankles were similarly fastened but separated.

He lay spreadeagle and helpless.

Fear surged through him and his heart beat erratically at the sound of the door opening to his left. Serra entered, a single candle lighting the space around her as she slipped sensually through and approached him on the bed.

She wore a sheer floor length white Grecian robe showing enough of her smooth skin to titillate. It split up both sides revealing long stretches of leg as she moved across the room.

Michelangelo turned his head to watch her approach and his stomach flip-flopped. He thought he was going to be sick, but he couldn't take his eyes off the advancing woman.
"Hello young one," Serra purred, her voice deep and throaty.

She lit a few more candles near the bed and sat down next to him. He shuddered as the mattress dented beside him and she examined him minutely. She reached above his head to his bound arms and trailed her fingers down his forearm and over his biceps. She shivered delicately before reaching to undo the collar at his neck and tossing it to the floor.

"I've been looking forward to this all day."

She licked her lips and her tone was that of a spider about to devour her prey.

"You're so strong... you'll make me scream."

She ran her hand over him again, this time swirling it up and around his face. He turned sharply away from her as much as he could.

She slapped him. A stinging blow across the cheek that tingled and burned.

"Focus on me!"

He growled and kept his face turned away, so she crawled up on the bed and straddled him. A thick, soft thigh landed on either side of his plastron and the silk of her gown gathered on his chest.

She wore nothing underneath and he could feel the heat of her desire as it pooled and ran into the seams of his chest plate. He stared up at her, shocked, and was locked into her gaze. Her pupils were huge and hungry, her eyes filled with pure carnal lust. His blue ones melted into wide pools of fear.

She laughed.

"Did you expect some sort of salvation? Perhaps you thought your goddess would appear to chase away your fears and exile me to my doom?"

She ran a hand over the upper left of his plastron and sneered as the sigil appeared.

"I can't believe she brought mortal monsters into her household. I mean, you'll make a fabulous lover, but family? Never."

She leaned down and her breath was short and hot as she nuzzled and kissed around his neck. He squirmed beneath her as she trailed kisses up his jaw. She ground herself against him and traced his lower lip with her thumb while staring into his eyes, before gripping his head tightly in both hands.

"I will make you lose yourself in me tonight," she ordered, "and afterward you will be mine and mine alone. I guarantee you'll never regret leaving that slut of a goddess behind."

She ran her hands all over him as Michelangelo flinched at her harsh words, but his gaze turned flinty as she insulted Luna.

"I will never submit to you," his voice cracked, but he meant it with every fiber of his being.

"You know, they say betrayal begins with just one kiss..." Serra said before she clamped her mouth over his.

Her soft lips massaged his and he felt her tongue probing for entry. Ruthlessly, he sealed his lips but opened them in shock and pain as she reached behind and dug her thumb into his leg wound. She swept her tongue through his mouth and moaned at the contact, stroking his tongue firmly
before breaking the kiss and sliding down his body.

She left a hot, wet trail behind her.

Despite himself, muscles tightened in his stomach and groin as the scent of her arousal hit his nostrils and the animal side of him roared to the forefront. Mating instinct began to overwhelm him and he felt himself expand.

*NO! I do not want this!*

Michelangelo tried to compartmentalize things in his head, shutting away the sensations of his body—the same way he would pain. But it didn't stop his mental screams.

*Luna please! Can you hear me? I need you!*

He turned hooded eyes on the woman crouched between his thighs. She stroked his legs and lower plastron. Licking and kissing, trying to make him crazy with lust. His drug induced haze kept him from being as successful in ignoring her as he would like. But no matter what, he would resist.

*Luna PLEASE!*

When he didn't respond, Serra pouted up at him with large dark eyes.

"I want you Michelangelo, that's more than your stupid goddess can say. She has two love slaves already. Why not give yourself to me?"

She distracted him again with pain and he lost his focus. She dragged her nails down the outside of his leg and licked at the blood that welled up. Her hot, wet tongue stung as it swabbed over the wounds.

He closed his eyes and clenched his fists, his whole body tensing against her.

"Gods, you're sweet!" she murmured as she leaned over him.

His member was swelling but he refused to let this evil seductress have him. He panted and tried to control his breathing and thus his mind, enough to have a chance at reaching the woman he loved. The one he knew was deeply connected to him.

*please, Please, PLEASE! HELP ME!*

He didn't expect a reply, he simply cried out in need. He inhaled sharply and groaned aloud as his mind and body fought for dominance.

Serra sensed his will weakening. She sucked a finger into her mouth and leaned over to stroke the opening of his hidden sex with her wet digit. He jerked, his whole body spasming, as she ran it over and slightly inside his sensitive slit. He pulled futilely at his restraints, bucking against her, and flung his head from side to side.

*NO!*

Titanic rage overwhelmed his mind.

He would have been terrified if he thought for one second any of it was directed at him, but it was all for the evil witch crouched over his form. Instead he whimpered softly and the anger immediately turned to concern.
Hang on, dear one! I'm coming!

Luna's voice was clear and powerful in his head.

Michelangelo's eyes snapped open.
Complete bliss. That's what Donatello would be in, if not for his missing sibling. Not only had he spent the morning rapturously in his true love's arms, but his long awaited gift was unlocked and Medes had blessed him with infinite knowledge.

It was all a little overwhelming. Scratch that, incredibly overwhelming.

He glanced up from his bank of computer monitors to see his Luna padding out of the little kitchenette with a plate of steaming eggs and a huge mug of coffee prepared exactly the way he liked it. She slid a bunch of his equipment and his keyboard aside with a little mental push, as both her hands were full, and set the food in front of him. He smiled.

"Aren't I supposed to be spoiling you on the honeymoon?" Donnie asked.

Luna laughed, her bell like voice echoed off the stone walls and filled not only the house but the entire city, reminding him once again she wasn't human. Stronger now than ever before, she practically glowed as she moved around the place, looking far more immortal than mortal.

Three of her souls had come home.

He turned away from her, briefly dazzled by her glory, and Luna frowned.

"Eat, Donnie! I know you feel fantastic and full of energy from the new bond, but you still need to fuel your body," she said, reaching out to stroke his cheek.

He sighed happily, closed his eyes and leaned into her palm for a moment before turning to his plate and picking up his fork. Per usual, the moment he went to do something for himself an alarm sounded from his computer. This one from the second bank of networked machines across the room.

Luna turned an irritated glare on the offending machine and the sound cut off abruptly with a funny little hiccup and one last bleep. Don raised a brow at her.

"Eat!" she commanded pointing at his plate before she glided over to read the reason for the alarm.

He watched her go, his eyes tracking her movements and tracing the lines of her as she walked away. The curve of her back, her hips, her legs; she looked so damn sexy in nothing but a tee and panties. Her hair was mussed from their early morning activities and she was so enticing he almost left his breakfast to scoop her up and head back to bed.

Until he noticed her face.
He'd missed the concern at first because she was leaning over; causing her shirt to ride up and expose even more of her tempting attributes, but as she examined the screen her expression became solemn and less than a second later her intense worry stabbed at him through the bond.

He snapped to his feet and was instantly at her side, reaching for a weapon on his back which wasn't there, and then suddenly was. The transformation happened so fast, that he didn't even register the fact a moment ago he was bare except for his mask and now he was geared up, ready for a fight.

"What is it?"

She mutely turned the monitor to face him. The computer had located Michelangelo and was displaying his coordinates. The little flashing dot was on an island off the coast of Greece. Don frowned, as he replaced his bo, concerned.

"Serra?"

"I should have guessed," Luna said, disgust coloring her tone. "I hate to cut our time here short, Donnie, but we need to get back to the others. We need a plan to get Mikey out of there."

He could feel her worry building. A great mass of tension, like a major storm flickering on the horizon. If he could feel it, his brothers could too. They were probably trying to call right now, to see what caused her anxiety.

Don sheepishly examined the mess on the balcony which had, a few hours before, been his phone. They weren't going to get through.

"Yeah, I guess we'll have to do it in person."

Luna saw him staring at the pieces and furrowed her brow, turning to him in confusion.

"Just fix it. We'll call and let them know we're on our way back."

He stared at her blankly and turned again to the mess.

_Fix it? There isn't anything left of it._

Thousands of tiny components littered the stone floor, most of them broken beyond repair and he didn't have any tools.

Luna touched his surface thoughts and sighed. When Donnie didn't force it, his talent functioned perfectly; forming whatever he wished out of any matter around him. Dust, dirt, stone, air, water; He understood them instinctively on a molecular level. He commanded a change and they would obey. Unfortunately, his conscious mind hadn't grasped it yet.

Maybe if she took him through it step by step. She wrapped her arms around his neck from behind in an intimate embrace, pressing her body against his shell as she insinuated herself into his thoughts. He shivered at the feel of her both inside and out as she latched on to his gift.

_This way..._

With a thought, she lifted the tiny pieces from the floor en masse, coating them in violet power, and brought them back to float in front of Don. His eyes flicked from piece to piece as they coiled through the air.
Donnie, you know exactly what these were, where they fit, how they functioned. Tell them to be that way again. Order it and enforce it with your will.

He concentrated, remembering the first time he assembled one of their special phones. How everything connected. This went here and that went there. He mentally fast forwarded through the updates and upgrades until he had a blueprint of the final product in his mind. He focused his will.

Be whole again.

As he held the picture of the complex phone together, a strange surge passed through him. He experienced the fast head rush and wavered on his feet, but Luna kept him upright. A moment later, he held a perfectly assembled phone in his hand.

It was ringing.

Luna!

Leonardo threw the thought at her as hard as he could, forming her name into the mental equivalent of a spun shuriken. His panic forced it beyond all her barriers, even past the blocks she erected to keep them from intruding on each other's private moments.

Ten minutes had passed since he and Raphael felt matching surges of concern, and Donnie wasn't answering his phone. Both had rushed to the meditation room and were trying their best to contact her mind with little success. So far, her emotions hadn't escalated into full blown panic, but something was definitely wrong and they didn't know the location of Donnie's hiding place to come to her aid.

A moment, my love. Keep calling.

The instant her calm mental voice reached out to him, Leo slumped forward from his stiff pose in profound relief. Her gentle contact communicated so much more than simply her words; overpowering love and soothing warmth permeated his being as she re-established a full emotional connection with him. Leo opened shining blue-grey eyes to tell Raph everything was alright, but saw him lying on the floor with a silly smile on his face.

So. Raph had reached her too.

It didn't surprise Leo, for his beloved was not only safe and uninjured but more powerful now than before. As when Raph had joined with them, Don's addition boosted her celestial energy exponentially. Leo was more prepared this time for the incursion of power and awe, though it would still take him some time to adjust. He wondered what his brother made of the sensation.

Leo met Raph's eyes. They were more than a little glazed as he tried to absorb the impact of power. Their golden color was extremely pronounced and the amber flecks practically glowed. Raph grinned weakly at his sibling from the floor.

"Was it like this last time?" Raph asked.

"Remember how I was a drooling idiot you had to drag to Luna's side?" Leo said, "Yes. It's a pretty powerful punch when she reconnects after a new bond."

"She explain what the problem was?"

"No," Leo said reaching again for his phone, "but she said to 'keep calling.'"
He lifted the receiver to his ear, and to his surprise, this time Don picked up on the second ring.

"Don here."

Unlike their previous call, mere hours before, Don sounded whole and in control though a little awestruck. His voice was competent and intelligent, but there was something else there as well. Something Leo hadn't realized was missing from his brother's life.

Joy. Donatello was happier and more content than Leo had ever heard him.

"Don, uh, sorry to interrupt. Um... Is Luna ok? It's just that we, uh... felt a lot of concern from her."

Leo blushed as he couldn't seem to make a complete sentence come out the way he wanted it to. Raph growled without real threat and rolled across the floor to snag the phone from his hand. A wave of bubbling energy Leo knew was the goddess laughing tingled through his core and he gave up the handset without a fight, blushing even more furiously.

"Don, put Luna on the phone," Raph demanded.

Her musical chiming laughter came through the speaker loud and clear, and Leo realized they were both grinning like idiots at the sound.

"Raph, everything's ok. We got an alert from the computer on Mikey's location, is all," Don said. "He's in Greece, so we're heading back to the lair to talk plans. We'll be there soon, a half hour max."

"Why didn't ya pick up the first time?" Raph demanded.

Leo's eyes narrowed and he lost his smile. Did Raph really want Don to answer that? Leo had no illusions about what his brother had been up to in the hours since his bonding, but he preferred not to think about it or he'd go insane with jealousy.

Don's voice came back with no hesitation.

"I dropped the phone. It smashed but Luna showed me how to fix it."

"Ya needed a goddess to help ya fix a phone Donnie? You're slippin'."

Donatello was too euphoric to take offense at the mild jab.

"You guys, this is so awesome. I can't wait to show you. It won't matter what breaks anymore, I can make anything better than new."

Raph smiled again, this time more gently at the excited tone of his younger brother's voice.

"Ya always did, Donnie. Ya always did."

Charon smacked a hand up against the transparent wall of power holding him in Serra's private receiving room, distracting the elder god who shared the space from the projection in front of him. Zeus sent him a quelling stare before turning away.

He had been watching Serra assault the youngest member of the Hamato family for the better part of an hour and normally, Charon enjoyed such shows, but he hated being imprisoned like some lesser creature.
Besides, Serra's technique was about as subtle as being hit in the face with a sledge hammer. He had nothing new to learn from her. In fact, he could show her a thing or two.

"She's taking too long, my lord," Charon said, letting his tone insinuate Serra was either incompetent or dragging this out on purpose. Of course he suspected the latter was true. Serra always did have a thing for the unusual.

Zeus turned again to gaze at the Guardian of the Dead.

"If you hadn't thrown a tantrum, Charon, you could be in there helping," Zeus said. The elder god's face showed no emotion. "It was unwise of you to attempt the destruction of the soul."

"I was merely... overcome in the moment," Charon said, "It won't happen again, my lord."

Zeus considered the immortal for a long moment before he waved a hand and the walls holding him disintegrated. Charon approached the king cautiously, aware he was on dangerous ground. He dropped to one knee in submission.

"May I ask the reason this particular piece of soul is important? You had no qualms about me damaging the soul of knowledge," Charon said.

Zeus regarded him steadily for a moment.

"Your 'master plan' is but a small part of my own, godling."

Charon started and gazed warily up at the king from his kneeling position. What did Zeus know of his plan?

"You wish to obtain ultimate control over a goddess of Olympus. Did you believe this could be accomplished without my blessing?"

"N-No, my lord," Charon stuttered. It was the only sane answer to give the king but inside his mind was racing. Zeus had been aware of his plan all along?

"She was too well fortified on Olympus," Zeus said, "Surrounded and protected by those who would support her simply for a chance to claim a boon against the Heliades name and her future power. To bring her low required subtlety and an intimate knowledge of her motivations, neither of which you possess."

Charon realized he was gaping at the king, closed his mouth, and stared at the floor. The silence stretched for a time before Charon ventured a small probe of his own.

"I didn't realize you required her removal from Olympus, my lord."

The king did not reply for some time. Finally, he raised a hand and a vision of Luna, as she was now- partially mortal, partially immortal- formed in front of them.

"Do you consider yourself astute, godling? Tell me what you see."

Charon risked a glance at the king from the corner of his eye before turning to stare fully at the projection, seeking some clue to this test. Luna appeared different. Though still confined to a mortal shell, power constantly surrounded her.

The hue of her eyes changed from moment to moment. First the pure blue of the sky on a cloudless day, then amber- rich like jewels from the Earth, and finally a deep violet not found in mortals at
all and seldom seen in nature. Her hair shifted as well from palest blond through fiery red to light lilac. One moment long and straight, the next curly.

Her form was ever shifting with her mercurial moods. Sometimes she was a combination of these. Red hair and blue eyes, or pale blond with violet. And when her eyes narrowed in anger her whole body burst into flames.

Charon was confused. Before her exile the goddess manifested in silver or gold, depending on the side of her heritage she was calling upon. Now it seemed her powers were being influenced by outside forces and the gold was no longer apparent at all.

Zeus eyed him when he did not respond and gestured again. Three of the four turtles appeared at her side. The leader in blue; solid, dependable, confident- a healer and an empath made of light. The warrior in red; forceful, full of passion and fire. The inventor in violet; open minded, benevolent, compassionate and wise. All arrayed next to a goddess now coated in silver from the heavens.

Charon gasped.

*Muses. Luna was creating Muses.*

Light of Healing, Fire of Passion, Knowledge of Creation. They embodied her own hierarchy of power, and bound as they were to her, each would magnify her own strength exponentially. She had divided the plentiful gifts of heaven and earth and given a fourth she would personify...

"An Incarnation." Zeus said, finishing Charon's thought.

The Incarnation of Universal Power? The one prophesied to bring Olympus down and usurp their position for the next generation of gods? Charon thought Incarnations figments of godly mythos. Legends for the legends, so to speak.

Luna was strong and sensual, sensitive and powerful but the ultimate expression of this galaxy's unconscious will? He didn't think that likely, despite the evidence in front of him.

Some of this uncertainty must have shown on his face.

"You need further proof?" Zeus asked, becoming annoyed. "Consider her history. She is the daughter of the Sun and Moon, the granddaughter of the Titans Hyperion and Theia, and the adopted child of my brother, one of the three Elders of Olympus.

She was a third child and thus held no inheritance so she should have been ignored, yet she became beloved by most Olympians before she turned 6 years of age and, unlike any other, has roamed freely amongst the three kingdoms and the Overworld all her life."

Charon considered. The girl's history was comparable to the gods themselves; one of constant change. The young overtaking the old. The Titans, her grandparents, stole power from the heavenly bodies of creation just as the Olympians, her parents, wrested control from them.

Charon himself was contemplating revolution. Given the opportunity he would overthrow the king, his time was long past. Luna's power would help him, but he could not accomplish his desires if Luna's resistance could not be overcome.

"But my lord," Charon said, probing further, "her powers are limited. The violet one is dead and without Knowledge of Creation she can surely be diverted."
Zeus turned dark eyes on the obsessed immortal.

"My fool of a brother, Hades, interfered at her request. With your creature's death the monster not only lived it was reborn."

Charon cursed, spewing vitriol at his master, Luna, and everyone else involved, then blanched as the king raised a brow.

"My apologies, lord. My plan to remove at least one of her guardians should have succeeded."

"Therein lies the difficulty," the elder god admitted. "I have been 'diverting her' as you say, her entire existence, but something intervened at every turn. As a child, I cultivated her, kept her close to the throne. However, her inclusion into the realms of the Elders merely provided an education more complete than I could condone. And an opportunity for my brother to grow... close to her."

Charon grimaced. This would certainly be easier if Luna didn't have the support of an elder god. Especially his own master, the Lord of the Underworld. But her knowledge of Hades weaknesses would be an asset when it came time to take him down.

"I removed her brother, Phaeton," Zeus said, "so she would inherit the Sun; hoping such a divergence in paths would change her fate. But it merely strengthened her support on Olympus and earned me the hatred of the Heliades family."

Charon frowned, not liking in the least knowing the king had been manipulating the object of his obsession her whole life. If he had left well enough alone, she might have welcomed his suit. Might have accepted him without the need for such grand schemes.

But he didn't want Zeus to stop his explanation. Perhaps, if he knew what was coming, Charon could still claim Luna as his bride.

"Every move I made was countered, but not by any direct action on her part. So I had no reason to exile or remove her without raising an outcry among my subjects." Zeus continued, seemingly oblivious to Charon's plotting. "Thus, this conflict with my monster of a daughter was carefully contrived and I shattered Luna's soul into thousands of shards, impossible to locate."

"But they assembled into entities with personalities of their own," Charon said.

"Despite that, Luna was made mortal and the battle ended with her death and defilement at your hands."

"And yet she rose," Charon whispered in awe.

"It appears the universe will not allow Luna to be destroyed." Zeus shook his head in a very human expression of frustration. "So my plan by needs must change."

Zeus turned to the guardian, and for one moment Charon saw actual fear on the face of the king. No one knew what the true strength of an Incarnation would be, but the dread Zeus displayed made Charon anxious. What if Luna did become all powerful?

Zeus did not miss the spasm of doubt on the immortal's face. He dismissed the images of Luna and her three chosen ones with another wave of his hand.

"You are now a player in this game, Charon, whether you will or no. But you must understand your role. Like the King on the chessboard, your movements are limited, yet you remain powerful. I shall have you withdraw and not engage 'till the last."
"I will do as you bid, my lord," Charon replied standing and giving a bow. "What is this new plan? If I may be so bold."

The eyes of Zeus, King of Olympus, bored into Charon’s, his thoughts pushing past the outer barriers of the immortal’s mind and penetrating deep inside, seeking his desires. The dark demon lurking within Charon shrank away from the elder god, but Zeus offered it something irresistible. A small portion of Luna’s essence stolen from her at the moment of her change to mortality. The demon drank deeply from this cup of obsession, feeding to the point where Charon would do anything Zeus commanded, if only for another chance at the goddess.

Since I cannot destroy her, I will bring the girl to her knees and you will keep her there for all eternity. You shall have Luna as your reward and your punishment, for she will require your full attention and all your strength to contain. Never can your vigilance flag for the universe will quite happily steal her away from you again and again.

Charon blinked, wondering what happened as Zeus extracted himself and blanked the directive from the godling's conscious thoughts, for now.

"And the monster, my lord?" Charon gestured at the tied form of the turtle shaped being in the projection. "Should I take it with me? Shall we not keep it separate from the soul?"

Zeus' eyes flicked from the turtle to the glowing orb in the corner and back, so quickly Charon almost missed it. He smiled.

"No, godling, for that would change the nature of the bait."

Charon regarded the god with some confusion, so he clarified, returning to his chess analogy.

"Sometimes you must sacrifice a Knight, to capture a Queen."
Luna and Donatello returned to the lair and they all convened once again in the living room. Casey joined them, sitting by April and holding her hand. Splinter silently observed, worrying and listening as his family discussed the best way to go about freeing his absent son.

He worried because Serra was a despicable monster in every sense of the word. She had twisted desires and he knew she would find his son's innocence and unusual form irresistible. During his seven-year tenure in her palace, Splinter had seen many young men stumble fragmented from her bedchamber, and those were the ones who had gone eagerly to her door. Ones she took by force seldom rose again.

He could not stand to imagine his most joyous son, the brightest soul, among that company.

Not only for his sake, but for Trine and his daughter's as well. Trine was Michelangelo's match and they were destined to bond, but would it accept him if he had been despoiled? Luna would. There was no question of that, but could the pure soul bind itself to him?

Splinter shuddered to think what the results would be if Luna lost her temper over his treatment. Donatello's description of her rage during the wraith attack was terrifying. How much worse would it be if Michelangelo's spirit were truly broken?

"The fastest way to get there is using the ley-lines," Luna said, drawing his attention back to the conversation at hand.

"Charon will be watching them," Hades said. "Besides, your mates are mortal and so, dear one, are you. You will have to erect a travel sphere."

"Not a problem," Luna said.

"It could be. One large enough to take all of you will consume a lot of energy, and make a lot of noise. Plus you'll be restricted to the largest lines," Hades cautioned.

"How much energy? What kind of noise?" Leonardo asked, his inner tactician coming to the fore.

"Luna is the only one who could hold it, the rest of you aren't strong enough yet. Even in her newly empowered state," Hades smirked at Donatello, "she would be exhausted when you got there and helpless to defend herself."

Leonardo frowned. He was hoping Luna didn't have to go at all, though how he was going to broach the subject with her, he wasn't sure. What he was sure of? The idea wasn't going to go over well.

Despite that knowledge, he was going to insist. He had a horrible feeling about the mission whenever he thought of her there. Something more than his overbearing protective instinct told him she needed to stay out of it.

"Hades, could you do it?" Leo asked.

The elder god shook his head.

"Right now, this conflict is between two of Zeus' subjects over a mortal. A relatively minor affair by Olympian standards. But Serra's palace is the domain of my brother. If I invade it, it will be a
declaration of war among the elders."

"And the noise?" Raphael asked.

"The 'noise' is an energy discharge which causes wave patterns," Luna said, "An object as large as
the sphere can't ride inside the line, it needs move more slowly and hop along the top. Every time
it touches, it will create pulses he can track."

Raph blinked at Luna and exchanged a glance with Leo. Hades and Donatello nodded.

"You wanna try and translate that down a few notches for the rest of us Donnie?" Raph asked.

"It's like skipping a stone on the surface of a pond," Don said, "We're the rock and when we
bounce off the water of the ley-line it creates ripples that spread in all directions. Charon can sense
them. They're 'loud.' Traveling that way would be like trying to sneak into Foot headquarters while
sounding an air horn with every step, or letting Mikey sing into a bullhorn."

Raph shuddered. "Okay, I get it- loud."

"What if we don't go together?" Don said. "Trine sent Splinter back here on its own. If we divide
up and each soul takes its bonded, we could travel inside the streams instead of on them. It'd be
faster and we can use smaller conduits."

"How do we get Mikey home?" Raph asked. "You think Trine will carry him?"

"Assuming it's still there and we can free it," Don said. He turned a mental question inward.

Unlike his brothers bonded, Don and Medes could speak internally at anytime, no matter that
Mede's currently resided in Luna's petite form. Don wondered if it was because the soul needed so
much of his own to be complete. Whatever the reason, he was glad to be able to consult it at a
moments notice.

Medes, can you guys carry double and still stay in the stream?

yes.

"Medes says they can transport two with no problems and still keep the noise down. We can take
the whole Clan. Casey can ride with Raph, April with Leo and I'll take Sensei. We can go on
separate lines and strike multiple locations at once."

"You know the palace, Master," Leo said. "Can you draw us a map?"

Luna leaned across the coffee table and placed a hand on Splinter's arm. Sensing her intention, the
wise rat closed his eyes, focused his mind, and pictured the place. Luna waved her other hand and
white mist appeared above them with a perfectly formed 3D model of the villa.

Without thinking, Don reached out to the mist. His hand glowed violet and abruptly contained a
blueprint of the same structure. He blinked at it, startled, and smiled shyly at Luna before bending
to spread it in front of them.

Leo, Raph, and the two humans stared as Don got out a marker to make some notes.

"What was that?" Casey asked, blinking as if he couldn't believe he saw the map form out of thin
air.

"That is Donnie's main talent," Luna said, a twinkle of pride in her eyes. "Transformation of matter;
from anything to anything."

Casey's eyes lit up.

"Really?"

He rushed to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water.

"Can ya' make this into my favorite drink, bro?"

Don glanced hesitantly at Luna. She smiled and nodded. He needed to practice conscious control of his gift. Don furrowed his brow. His palm glowed again. The second his fingers brushed the glass it changed and Casey was holding a six pack of beer by one can. Raph blinked dumbly at them for a moment and reached across to snag one. He popped the top, took a loud slurp, grinned and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Donnie, that's one heck of a talent. But next time, make something a little higher quality, will ya'?" Raph said, eyeing the cheap beer in his hand.

"Casey said his favorite, Raph," Don objected. "Not yours."

"Could we get back to the plan?" Leo asked with a frown.

"Trine will be in the Oracle's private receiving room," Splinter said, pointing out the appropriate space on the blueprint. "Under heavy guard, no doubt."

"Raph, you and Casey will head there," Leo said.

"Are ya' sure about that, Leo? It's not like I have the best track record of talking to the 'lil guys," Raph said.

"You two are our heaviest hitters. If the way is blocked we'll need you," Leo said.

"Trine is not reticent, like the others," Splinter said. "It has Michelangelo's personality; vibrant and outgoing. It will speak with you. It recognizes our family and you will have Fina to help. All you need to do is release it from the orb."

Casey was confused.

"We find the orange glowing thing and bash it," Raph said and Casey nodded solemnly.

Splinter made sure both were paying attention before he continued.

"Michelangelo will either be in the detention block or..."

"Or?" Raph asked with a sinking feeling.

"Or in her dedicated pleasure chamber," Splinter said with a sour twist to his mouth and a furious twitch of his whiskers.

Luna's face hardened.

"April and I will check the detention area," Leo said, "Don, you and Sensei take the... other option, that way there will be medical and emotional support on both fronts."

"We'll free Mikey and Trine, take out Serra for good, and meet in the main throne room, here,"
Don pointed to a large room in the center of the structure. "We'll go out the same way we got in, the ley-lines."

"I like it," Leo said, standing and crossing his arms with a smile as he looked from the blueprints to the model and back. "In and out with no noise and Luna doesn't have to go."

"Wait, what do you mean, I don't have to go?" Luna asked with a raised brow.

Leo winced. He hadn't meant to let that slip. Unconsciously, his body shifted until he was standing across from her, one foot sliding out in a defensive stance. Raph started in recognition. Leo did that when his mind was made up and Raph objected to a plan. It meant impossible force was about to meet an immovable object and one or both of them usually ended up hurt. Except Luna really was an impossible force. Why was he going to fight her on this?

"I mean," Leo said, "you don't have to go."

He kept his voice calm but firm and stared over her shoulder so he wouldn't bow to those gorgeous eyes. Eyes flashing blue as the color drained from her hair.

"Let me get this straight," Luna said. "You want to lead my whole family into mortal danger against my enemy and you expect me to stay behind?"

The silence was deafening and all three of her mates flinched slightly as her shields slammed shut, cutting them off from the emotions surging beneath her heavy-lidded gaze. They didn't need it to know what she was feeling. Her breathing sped and icy waves of anger flowed off her. The feeling made Don's skin tingle with trepidation. It was like the sun had disappeared behind the darkest of storm clouds. Severe ones about to unleash holy hell on them.

"You cannot keep me here against my will, Leonardo."

Her voice cracked and echoed with cold, like an indomitable glacier.

"Leo, she's a goddess and more powerful now than ever. Why should she stay?" Raph interjected. "She can mop the floor with Serra and we can come home twice as fast."

Leo's eyes flicked to Raph and back to Luna. He shook his head. He didn't have an answer, but he held his ground, squaring his shoulders to his mate. Don frowned, staring back and forth between them.

"Why hasn't she moved against Serra directly before this?" Splinter asked the room at large. "Why haven't any of the others the Oracle has damaged?"

He was using his 'teaching' voice. The one that implied the answer was right in front of them if they would just examine it. Nobody spoke and at last Hades broke the weighted silence.

"Because Serra is a daughter of Zeus, despite being mortal. There will be... consequences for her death."

Luna shot him a look of deep betrayal and lowered her head, dropping her eyes to the floor.

"What kind of consequences?" Don asked, coming forward to stroke her arm soothingly. He hadn't wanted to get involved when she and Leo were squaring off, but he couldn't stand to see her upset.

She deflated, all the anger running out of her at once under Leo's unwavering gaze. His eyes softened as she wilted visibly in front of him, but she didn't answer and Hades narrowed his eyes,
his mouth set in a grim line.

"Since she is already in exile, Zeus would be free to hunt her down and destroy her."

"No!"

Don clutched Luna close to his chest then pushed her back to stare into her face; his deep brown eyes wide and frightened. He shook her gently. "Don't do it Luna! Stay here, love, please!"

Leo was stunned. She had been planning to go in and eliminate the woman without telling them that doing so would sign her death warrant. Suddenly, he couldn't breath.

"Will the same apply if we take Serra out?" Raph asked. He stared across at Luna, pain in his face. She kept her eyes on the floor.

"If you kill her, yes," Hades said. "Anything less can be excused as familial right in regaining your brother."

"New plan," Raph said, his fingers twitching over a sai. "The bitch lives, but I'm leaving her screaming."

A corner of Hades mouth twitched up and Casey gave Raph a high five.

"I will bring Michelangelo back to you, Luna. I swear it. But I cannot have you risking yourself," Leo said, his voice fierce as fear for her practically froze his blood in his veins.

"Leonardo is right, my child. If there is any chance this is a trap, and Zeus is waiting to take you down, you shouldn't be there," Splinter said.

Luna looked up into seven pairs of concerned eyes and relented. "I will stay here."

Deep ringing tones, as of the oldest bells on Earth, resounded through the room; cutting her off. Don released her and backed rapidly away as she stiffened and burst into multi-colored flame.

"What's going on?" April shrieked.

Casey jerked her away from the burning goddess and the others scattered reaching for their weapons. Hades cursed in a dozen languages unspoken for a thousand years.

"What is it?" Raph demanded, shaking his head, trying to clear the ringing from his ears. "Is she under attack? Why didn't the shield stop it?"

His own red flames began snaking out over his arms and he spared a quick glance at each of his brothers. Don, coated in violet, was consulting one of his tablets. Leo held a katana in one hand, a plasma bolt in the other.

"Nothing's touching the shield!" Don yelled. "It's not coming from the outside!"

"It's not an attack," Hades roared over the cacophony of bells. "It's a prayer! A soul plea from a loved one in dire distress!"

The next few seconds were seared forever into their collective memory.

Luna's eyes flared. Red, blue, then violet flashed across her irises before they settled on solid orange. Her arm shot out and she expelled Sol, Fina, and Medes into the room as balls of colored
fire from her open palm. The flames coating her became pure silver.

An implosion of power centered on the goddess as she pointed at the floor and connected to the crystal resource under her feet, ruthlessly stripping it of energy. Her mortal body began to convulse as more than it could possibly handle surged through her. She ignored its protest.

Her gaze focused upward.

A huge rush of air pushed everything and everyone away from her in a ten-foot radius and whipped her burning hair into a frenzy of tangled flame surrounding her face.

"Michelangelo!" Luna screamed. "NO!"

She thrust both hands into the air and fury erupted from her small form. Silver light shot out of her fingertips straight through the ceiling, taking her consciousness with it.

The bells fell silent, her eyes dimmed, and she collapsed; hair and body still aflame. Without her celestial presence to shield it from the raw energy, she was actually burning. Her clothes turned to ash and the rank scent of charred flesh and burnt hair permeated the air.

Don made a grab for her as she fell, but Raphael shoved him out of the way. As Don rolled with the unexpected blow, the trailing tip of his bandana touched the silver flames and all he could concentrate on was the fire right next to his face. He ripped off his mask and beat the flame out with his staff.

Raph caught the goddess inches from the floor and waved everybody back, coating her in his own fire-proof aura. He smothered the out of control flames with the sheer force of his will. The moment the fire was out, he peeled back his red light and rolled her gently face up.

It was bad. The surface skin was crispy and flaked. Her long hair singed so short she was almost bald. Her cheeks sank in and her eyes clenched shut.

"Leo, she's not breathing!" Raph cried, and his brother's glowing blue form thrust him out of the way.

Leo extended one hand to Sol, laid the other on her forehead and poured his soul into her healing. With Donatello now in the bond, all their talents must have strengthened, for in front of Raph's eyes Luna's face filled out and her skin formed anew. The old layers flaking to dust around her and the burns vanishing as if they never existed. Another moment and her hair was long and full again, but she didn't breathe.

With a roar of raw pain, Leo released Sol, clenched his hands palms together and brought them down on her chest in a hard blow. A low, thu-thud began to echo through the room as he jumpstarted her heart. She drew a breath, then another. In seconds, she regained normal respiration, but she did not awaken.

"Luna," Leo moaned low, "Don't do this! Where are you?"

"Yamete!"

Splinter's voice brought all the frantic motion in the room to a halt.

"She is not here, my son," Splinter said more gently to his eldest. "She is defending your brother and we have no time to spare. We must join her and stop her from killing the Oracle! Hades will stay and guard her mortal body, but we have to go!"
The dark god gave a sharp nod and crossed the room to kneel by Luna's side as Leo hesitantly stood.

"Sol, Fina, Medes- take up your bonded and follow your mistress!" Splinter commanded.

The souls whirled and expanded into perfect spheres, swooping down on their mates and partners; engulfing them in light. Sol enveloped Leo and April sprinted fearlessly to his side. They disappeared in a flash of blue. Fina followed with Raph and Casey.

As Medes lunged toward Don and Splinter, Donnie held up a hand.

"A moment, Medes."

Donatello leaned over his beloved on the floor and laid a glowing palm against her cheek. When he backed away, her beautiful form was no longer bare. She lay in state, dressed in stunning white robes on a soft pallet; resting atop a marble bier in the center of the room. Her heartbeat was loud in the silence and her chest rose and fell evenly.

He bent and kissed her, ever so gently, lingering on her lips before rising to give Hades a weighted stare.

"Take care of her."

He nodded to Medes and they were gone.

Serra hovered over him, a lascivious smile on her lips as Michelangelo thrashed beneath her hand. She continued stroking him, reveling in the hot liquid flowing out to coat her palm. She had yet to get him to reveal himself, but he was so close now, it would only be a matter of moments. She inhaled his scent and moaned with lust.

Michelangelo's eyes snapped open as she dropped her wet hand lower between his wide spread thighs and brushed against his tail. He jerked and whimpered in horrified arousal as she caressed it, pinching him between two wet fingers and dragging them along it's length.

She gazed up at his unique body, her eyes tracing over his shell and natural armor as he twitched. She had never had a conquest like this before and thus wanted to drag the experience out as long as she possibly could. The anticipation was driving her wild.

She locked eyes with him as she repeated the stroking motion on his tail and leaned in to taste his desire. Slowly, she extended her tongue and brought it to bear against his lower plastron, sealing her lips over the seam in his plates and sucking hard. He shut his bright blue eyes tight and turned his face away in shame, fighting against his bonds as a tortured groan escaped his lips.

Serra achieved her goal. She pulled back, her eyes wide as he lost the battle of will against body and rose.

With all her attention focused on Michelangelo, she did not register the presence of the shimmering silver outline forming next to them. Instead she reach a greedy hand towards him, mouth dropping open in lust.

A shriek of unadulterated rage pierced the air and Serra turned face first into a plume of molten silver fire. She screamed as the heat drove her backwards off the bed. She rolled away and crossed the room, her hand clutching at the protective amulet her father, Zeus, placed around her neck. It was the only reason she was still alive and whole.
Lances of silver energy shot across the space, and Serra ducked and wove among them, calling for the guard, for Charon - anybody who might distract or corral this enraged goddess.

Luna's silver outline swelled to twice her normal size. She towered over the room, more than ten feet tall and her voice hissed with wrath as she strode with deadly intent toward Serra.

"You DARE?" she roared, her accusations punctuated by bolts of blazing silver fire. "You dare to assault and abuse a member of the Heliades family? You dare to force one that I love?"

The room trembled in response to her fury and Serra stumbled, falling back. Luna was on her before she even hit the ground. Her hands glowed and Serra screamed when Luna grabbed her, leaving marks burned deep into her biceps.

"You are vile!" Luna snarled. "A demon who preys on the innocent and I should have done this long ago."

Human guards burst through the door, and started towards them, spears raised.

"Kill the monster!" Serra ordered, through teeth clenched tight in pain. Even her amulet could not stop the full force of the goddess' will, and Luna was willing her pain, plain and simple.

The humans turned and headed for the bed. Luna released Serra and spun, thrusting a hand toward them. A huge blast of pure power shoved them against the stone wall. None rose a second time. More humans ran in, some rushing to the struggling Serra, others heading for Michelangelo.

While Luna was dealing with them, the guard captain reached the monster and drew a knife, pushing it hard against the thing's throat with a gleeful smirk. Blood leaked out and dribbled on the bed.

"Unhand the Oracle or I'll slit his throat!" the captain yelled.

Luna locked her fiercely glowing gaze on the man and overwhelmed his mind. She forced him, muscle by muscle to lift the blade from Michelangelo's neck then drove it towards his face. The captain screamed as he saw the knife approaching but couldn't stop himself. He collapsed with a gurgle and fell back, the knife still lodged in his skull.

She whirled around and leveled a deadly glare at the rest of the room occupants, counting the hundreds pouring in around her. She turned back to Serra and grabbed the girl's head in both hands, her grip crushing. Luna drew her to eye level, lifting her off the floor, leaving her feet dangling.

"I warned you," Luna whispered, "and Charon, and your masters..."

Serra glared back into burning eyes that held no softness, no mercy.

"Now I'm going to destroy you."
Luna's mind whirled, thoughts lost among an endlessly circling cry of Michelangelo's pain and despair that melded with her own.

*No! Get away, get your hands OFF! I don't want to! *Hold on, dear one!* This can't be happening. *Breathe, just breathe...* Luna! Luna where are you? Why won't you answer? *I hear you! I'm coming!* Leo? Raph? Anyone! *GET AWAY FROM HIM!* Please... no. NO! I can't be responding to this... I can't. *It doesn't matter. It's not your fault* Donnie why is this happening? I don't want this! *I'm going to KILL her!* Father! What can I do? There must be something! *I will destroy her utterly.* *GET OFF!* *The universe will shudder at her fate.* *Something must be wrong with me. I can't WANT this. *I am so sorry.* No-no-no! I'll lose her, lose my chance... *Too late, too late!*  

*Trine is pure. I failed the test. How could it accept me now?*

His final prayer was a question she could not answer.

*Michelangelo, forgive me...*

A blinding blue flash appeared to Luna's right and a violet glow split the air on the opposite side of the room as her mates arrived, but neither distracted the murderous goddess for one instant. Relentlessly her gigantic glowing hands pressed together around the Oracle's head as Serra screamed in pain.

Only the amulet kept her in one piece.

All around Luna, human guards tried to free their despicable mistress. She ignored them. They pierced her luminous form with spears and swords until she began to dim, light draining out of many wounds. Still she would not relent.

A deadly dance of silver swords, glowing with blue fire traced Leonardo's path across the room, cutting through the mass of humanity gathered around her. Where he went, death followed. His graceful moves and shining blades lethal to those who dared to attack his beloved. He reached her side and threw out a circular blast of power, forcing the ring of attackers to retreat in every direction.

April slid to a halt beside him, panting from the run. Her silhouette and sword also glowed blue as Sol hovered above her, coating her form. The little soul appointed itself her guardian the moment they arrived and was taking the task of shielding the mortal sister very seriously. She needed it too. Leonardo and Donatello were sending power spinning throughout the room, not always under the best control, and the celestial rage coming off Luna herself was staggering.

April batted an arrow out of the air and leapt to deflect a flung knife away from the goddess with her katana. Keeping up her guard, she moved to Luna's side and gazed up at the enraged face towering above her.

"Luna!" She yelled over the noise, tugging on her glowing robes. "You have to stop! Leave her! Let the guys take care of it!"

The goddess ignored her, calling out words of power in a booming voice which echoed throughout the room. Parts of the ceiling came crashing down around them. Two enormous chunks of marble headed their way, but Leonardo saw them falling. He sheathed his blades and backflipped between
them as they landed. He tackled April in a flying leap and shoved her out of the way as a third
deadly hunk hit the ground near where she stood. Together they slid across the floor with the
smaller rubble.

"Stop her, Leo!" April said as he climbed off and extended a hand to help her to her feet. "She'll
listen to you!"

Leonardo paused and a strange expression crossed his face. He tilted his head as if listening
intently and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, his steely blue orbs were hard as
diamonds.

"She does not wish to stop," he said. His voice sounded odd, echoing with its own form of power
and anger, "and neither do I."

He raised a hand and a plasma bolt sprang to life in his grip. Turning abruptly, he launched it
across the room like a missile, striking part of the wall. It exploded in a frightening shower of
gravel and small stones.

"Protect her, Sol," Leo ordered as if he hadn't noticed it already was. He drew his swords and
began to carve a path back to Luna's side.

"Leo wait!" April shouted, wading after him. Slipping on the bloody floor. "What are you doing?
You have to stop her before she kills Serra!"

She grabbed hold of his arm and Leonardo turned on her. He snarled and bared his teeth.

"I will do as my mate wills!" he roared.

April flinched away dropping her hand. She stood still for a moment, stunned by his unexpected
behavior.

"Sol, what happened?" she asked, her voice numb.

_luna is mad._

"I can see that! What happened to Leo?"

_madness seeps through the bond._

"You mean she's out of her mind?" April yelled. "I thought she was just angry!"

_luna is lost in the orange one's pain._

April let out a string of very unladylike words.

"Can you help Leo? Cut him off from her somehow?"

_no, sol must guard._

April cursed again and began to run across the room toward Donatello. Perhaps if she kept him
from getting too close to Luna, he'd be able to stay in control long enough to talk her down.

She dodged another group of guards coming in the door, vaulted over the remains of a crushed
column in the middle of the room, and slid under a small side table. She narrowly avoided a heavy
sword as it shattered the table behind her, countered a knife thrust toward her side and rolled out of
the way of another piece of falling debris. She regained her feet and surged across the open space
toward Don, countering attacks from all sides.

The white marble under her feet began to glow.

*jump!*

Sol's agitated command came in the nick of time and April threw herself forward with all her might as the floor simply disappeared, dropping dozens of people to the level below. She flew through the air, stretching her arms as far as she could, but was going to fall short of the edge.

A strong paw grabbed her arm and swung her back to solid ground.

"April! Are you ok?" Splinter asked, whipping his tail through about to clear some space while she caught her breath.

"Yes, Sensei."

She raised her blade at an overhead angle, blocking a downward strike from a soldier behind her, slid her foot out and swept the man's legs from underneath him. He overbalanced and fell through the hole in the floor.

Warily she lifted her eyes to search for Donatello. He fought grimly in the corner, his bo in constant motion. Occasionally his palm glowed with devastating effect. He flung an empty arm out in a circle and shuriken appeared from nowhere, flying in all directions with deadly accuracy. He pointed and ropes formed, snaking up the ankles of the combatants around him. Walls materialized blocking off reinforcements.

Watching this, April realized the floor had been Don, cutting off a whole group of guards before they could reach this end of the room. He glanced up and she met his eyes, relieved to note intelligence and not battle madness there.

"Donnie!" she yelled. "You have to get through to Luna somehow! Leo got sucked into her rage and I can't get him to see sense. She's going to kill Serra!"

Don's eyes went distant for the briefest moment.

"I can't reach her. Medes says if I touch her mind, I'll be pulled in too!"

"What are we going to do?" April asked.

"What has affected Luna so?" Splinter countered with a question of his own.

"She's caught in Mikey's pain," she said, realizing she hadn't seen the orange banded turtle anywhere. Her eyes skimmed the huge room, seeking places Michelangelo might be confined but not finding him. "Where is he?"

"The bed," Donnie ground out between clenched teeth as he repelled another attack.

April focused on that area of the room and gasped. He didn't look conscious.

"Donatello," his father said, "Can you keep your wits if you get nearer to Luna?"

"Medes will help," Don said nodding.

"We will distract her and release the Oracle from her grip," Splinter said, "April, Free Michelangelo and try to awaken him, perhaps this will bring the goddess to her senses."
As April moved towards the bed, Don recreated the floor. Master Splinter charged across the newly formed surface engaging enemies as he ran. Donnie circled to the left and April lost sight of them among the heaving mass of people.

Glad to have a mission beyond the endless fighting, she waited for an opening and dashed through to the bed. But when she got her first solid look at Mikey, she froze, devastated; wishing this task had fallen to someone else. Her throat closed and her eyes prickled with suppressed tears as she examined him from three feet away. She glanced around quickly to see if Don was still nearby, or Splinter. Even Leo would probably break out of his desperate rage to help at this sight.

There was no one else, only hundreds of guards trying to kill them both.

Frantically she shook her head, attempting to organize her thoughts as another small group engaged her. Thankfully, years of practice had honed her responses and her body reacted without needing conscious direction from her mind.

She had to do this.

Mikey needed her.

Focus on the task at hand.

Tackle one problem at a time.

Resolutely swallowing back her horror, she raise her blade above her head and drove the attackers away with a violent series of blows. When they retreated and did not try again, she turned back to her friend.

*Step one- remove the chains.*

Three hard strikes with her katana freed him in short order.

"Step two- get rid of the cuffs," She mumbled under her breath.

She sheathed her sword, climbed rapidly up beside him and drew a lock pick from her boot. Seconds later, the manacles fell from his wrists and ankles. She hissed as she discovered the raw wounds underneath. His repeated struggles had torn the flesh and dug the bindings deep in to his muscles. Blood ran copiously from them.

*Step three- evaluate the patient.*

Breathing hard, she performed a field exam on the rest of him, as Donatello taught her long ago; searching for other injuries and ranking her treatment. She found the bullet wound in his thigh and the long bloody gashes Serra left in the thick muscles of his opposite leg. She turned his head, exploring the cut on his throat and gently probing the back of his skull with her fingers for contusions.

The revulsion and shame etched on his normally carefree face nearly broke her heart.

Crying openly now at the obvious nature of his torture, she reached for his exposed privates and tucked them back into place, before pulling a small pack from her back and removing a medkit.

*Step four- treatment.*

As odd as it seemed, outlining each action was the only way April was staying sane. It helped to
She wrapped his wrists, ankles, and the long wound on his neck with gauze. The slashes in his thigh were shallow, but the skin kept pulling apart, causing massive blood loss, so she fumbled in the bag for Donnie's special 'field stitches'.

She peeled the strange kind of rubbery layer from its waxed paper backing and slapped it over the wounds. Instantly it dissolved, the edges puckering together and closing the slashes tight. The gunshot leaked slowly and it took her some time to remove the old wrapping, forced into the wound by Serra's thumb. She packed it with fresh gauze and applied a compression bandage over it.

*Step five? Get off this thrice damned bed!*

She needed to get Mikey somewhere more defensible. She gripped his hands, gritted her teeth, and tried to pull him to the edge. He was too heavy for her to shift.

*We can't stay here!*

Her frightened eyes flicked over the room again and her gaze landed on the little blue flame hovering worriedly above her.

"Sol, can you help me?" She pleaded.

Immediately, it flew to Michelangelo's chest and extended its glow. Little by little, his body grew lighter until April was able to shift him to the floor. She propped him against her legs so he sat upright, and knelt behind his shell, sliding her arms under his. Locking her hands across his plastron, she stood and dragged his unconscious form to a corner of the room, leaning him on the wall.

Anxiously, she tried to wake him. Calling his name and patting his cheeks with no response. Her tears falling freely across him.

"Sol, can you reach his mind?"

The little flame dimmed and flared, trying its best, but Mikey did not open his eyes.

 Across the complex, a red light flashed brilliantly into existence then faded, leaving Raphael and Casey Jones hiding in the shadows. They ducked behind two nearby columns outside a huge pair of double doors.

Raph directed an irritated glare at Fina, who flitted overhead.

"Fina, turn it down, will ya? Ya gonna give us away."

The little red flame pulsed briefly in protest, but the bright light died away to a dim glow. Suddenly, Raphael realized there was no one else around, although he could feel Luna's rage nearby beating in time with his heart.

"Fina, where'd you take us? Where's the battle?"

_our job is freeing trine, remember?_
"You're worried about Trine when Mikey could be dying and Luna's trying to commit homicide?"

Raph sputtered.

luna is trapped in a circle of anger and pain caused by michelangelo. he must wake if she is to recover. he will not without trine, so get a move on!

They were only a few feet from the room where the orange soul was supposed to be imprisoned, but the doors in front of them were so large Raph wasn't sure he'd be able to force them open at all, much less take whoever was inside by surprise. He eyed them a moment in consternation.

A slight, scuffling sound from behind them made them jump and Casey spun, dipping low to haul something small and struggling out from under a stone bench against the wall. It yelped.

"Who do we have here?" he asked, confused to find himself holding on to a child.

Fina flared a bit brighter so they could see. The child yelped again. His frightened eyes flashed from Casey's shadowed face, to Fina floating in midair, to Raphael. Raph winced and braced for the scream sure to bring guards running, but the boy's face lit with hope and he reached a hand towards the red banded ninja instead.

"Raphael Splinter-son! Help me!" he begged, barely above a whisper.

Casey practically dropped him in shock and the moment he was free the boy ran fearlessly to Raphael. He ducked behind the turtle's shell and peeked out to stare at Casey, eyes wide. His little hands fixed firmly to Raph's belt.

Raph blinked down at the little guy, confused to hear Splinter's name as well as his own from the mouth of a strange child and shocked the boy wasn't cowering in fear at his appearance. It took a few seconds for his mind to catch up. This must be one of the pages his father spoke of!

"It's ok kid," Raph said, turning to pat the head of the small form clutching at his side. "This big lug is with me."

"Are you here to save the little light too?" the boy asked, gazing up at Raph's face.

"Um..."

he means trine.

The child's eyes snapped up as Fina 'spoke'.

"You have your own?" he asked. "And it talks?"

"Do you know where they're keeping the orange one, kid?" Raph interrupted.

The boy pointed wordlessly to the room in front of them.

he has a name you know. it's jacob. you don't have to keep calling him kid.

Raph shot Fina another irritated glare but didn't respond to the barb. He turned back to the doors instead and cracked his neck. He took a few steps and, seeing no other way in than brute force, rolled his shoulders and prepared to charge.

Jacob tugged frantically at his belt.

"Don't! Splinter-sensei said the door will hurt us bad if we touch it when the Oracle isn't here!"
Raph paused and Casey smacked his stick into the bench next to them, breaking off a small piece of the corner. He tossed it at the door. One intense hum and tiny yellow flash later, the rock disintegrated.

"I'll say," Casey said with a grimace. "Any idea how we're supposed to get in there now, big guy? Mikey don't have a whole lot of time."

Raph frowned and the boy stared up at them. "Michelangelo needs help?"

The turtle started again at his brother's name. "Uh, yeah kid, I mean- Jake," he replied.

Jacob ducked his head, thinking.

"Ben knows how to get in. He went there after Splinter-sensei disappeared."

"Is Ben around somewhere?"

Jacob nodded and immediately trotted off down a side corridor. Casey and Raph exchange a shrug, following after. It wasn't far before they turned into a maze of much smaller hallways. These were obviously used by the staff and after a few turns the adults were thoroughly lost. Raph hoped the kid knew where he was going.

They were halfway down the next one when a thunderous vibration shook the complex, rolling through the marble halls like an earthquake.

"What the He-"

Raph elbowed Casey before he could finish the curse in front of their little guide. He was only about six and Raph swallowed back his own string of curses as debris knocked loose by the furor came crashing down at the little guy. He jumped forward to pull the him to safety, but the boy smoothly dove and rolled out of the way with perfect form. Casey's mouth dropped open.

Jacob smiled from further up the hall, gesturing them on. They raced ahead with a greater sense of urgency, until they reached a short door at the end of the corridor. The young boy burst through, slamming it against the wall and yelling.

"Ben! Guys! Get up!"

An older boy grimaced and said, "Jacob! What did you do this time?"

"Raphael is here!"

Across the room, five small bodies immediately struggled out of bed, leaving a very confused turtle facing an unfamiliar situation. He didn't know what to do with all these smiling children who greeted him by name, like a long lost friend, and hugged all the parts of him they could reach.

"Hey now, step back a minute guys, uh and girls," he corrected as he realized two of them were definitely female. "Which one of you is Ben?"

The older boy stepped forward.

"Are you here to help us escape like Splinter-sensei?" Ben asked.

"I'm trying to get to the orange light, so we can free my brother," Raphael said. "This little guy said you knew a way to open the doors of the receiving room."
Ben shook his head and Raph suppressed a growl at the wasted time.

"I can take you to the side entrance though," Ben said. "Only the servants use it."

"Lead the way."

He and Casey found themselves amid a veritable flock of children, hurrying down the darkened corridors of the Oracle's palace. They exchanged a loaded glance over the heads of their charges as they ran and both gave a nod. They would not be leaving without taking these six with them.

Ben lead them confidently to the hidden entrance and Raph gestured for Casey to keep the kids back as he approached the door. He threw a small pebble at it and was reassured when it bounced and skittered across the floor in one piece. He drew a knife, cracked the door and angled the highly reflective blade through, using it as a mirror to inspect the room. What he saw made him gasp in surprise.

He pushed on the door and stumbled in, his mouth dropping open in shock. The room was expansive, at least a hundred times the size it should be from the outside dimensions. Inside stood row upon row of pedestals, each supporting a crystal sphere with a glowing orange light.

Casey peered around the doorway and froze. There were thousands of them. He entered and shoved the nearest with his hand, hoping they weren't real. It tipped over with a crash, shattering on the floor.

It would take days to destroy them all.

A sharp bark of laughter near the ceiling drew their eyes. Zeus, King of the Gods of Olympus floated above the sea of endless orbs watching them, a smirk of derision on his lips. Raphael recognized him from that long ago rooftop. His eyes hardened as he recalled the king's amusement at Luna's broken heart.

"Zeus!" he roared. "What's this about?"

"Zeus?" Casey said, tugging on his arm. "Easy Raph, this is the head-honcho. The one we're not supposed to piss off. We don't want to start a war, 'member?"

"Warrior," Zeus acknowledge Raph with a small nod. "You expected to walk in, and claim it? Retrieving her soul is Luna's task. Why should I allow one who is only her agent to recover it?"

"Agent? I am her mate!" Raph spat.

Irritated, Zeus aimed a hand at them. Golden energy, reminiscent of lightning angled down toward them. Raph blanched. He knew his shields were not strong enough to stop it all and he didn't have enough power to cover himself and Casey.

In a split second decision he threw the shield over his best friend and raised an arm to protect his head, hoping against hope his natural fire resistance would keep him from turning into a crispy turtle kabob.

Before it reached them, Fina shot through the door, trailing flames, and collided with the bolt in midair. There was a bright flash of light. Fina wobbled a bit and circled slowly down to them. Zeus stared as Raph raised a hand and the little soul perched on it like a tiny bird, shivering. Raph's palm began to glow as he and Fina passed power back and forth between them for a moment, stabilizing the flow.
"Hmm... perhaps you are an extension of her will. We shall see if you are worthy," Zeus said, gesturing to the room. "You may attempt the puzzle, but you best hurry. I believe your precious goddess is about to break another law, and I will not be so forgiving of a second infraction."

He waved a hand and a huge projection of the battle raging on the other side of the complex appeared overhead. The screams of the injured and the desperate calls of Raph's family rang out, echoing across the space. But the furious goddess towering over the scene caught and held his eyes.

Luna was tearing the room, and the guards, apart with her bare hands. So infuriated she was beyond focusing her energy for any other means. Or perhaps she was simply worried about striking her family if she used her power for Master Splinter had Serra by the wrist, running, dodging and dragging the woman away from Luna's outstretched hands. Donatello followed a step behind, putting as many non-injurious barriers between the goddess and her prey as he could.

Holes opened in the floor, walls appeared in front of her, mirrors lead her astray. Leo kept pace at her feet, deflecting any humans away from her as best he could for she had no regard for her own safety. Her eyes still blazed a solid orange.

There was nothing but madness in them.

Michelangelo lay unconscious in the corner, April stood over him, trying everything in her power to get the youngest turtle to open his eyes.

"April!" Casey yelled, raising a hand in concern.

Zeus laughed mockingly at their predicament and disappeared with a clap of thunder; leaving them desperate and running out of time in a room full of possibilities.

The moment the sound died, Casey attacked the nearest orb, smashing it with his stick. He spun in wild circles, doing as much damage as possible. Raph concentrated and ten orbs at a time imploded in heat and flames. None contained Trine.

"Fina! Can you tell which one it is?" Raph yelled.

"Trine! Yo! Triny! You here?" Casey shouted.

Drawn by the noise, the children crept to the edge of the door, wondering what was going on. Ben pointed to the projection high above.

"Look there's Splinter-Sensei!" he said.

The other kids stared at the battle overhead with rapt attention, but Jacob watched Raphael and Casey dancing madly across the floor. He peered around the room suspiciously, trying to decide what they were doing.

Casey was swinging a big stick around very fast and Raphael struck in all directions with many advanced katas the little boy had never seen. The red light hovered, flitted and dove above them.

It was all very impressive, but what were they fighting in the middle of the room? Didn't they need to save Michelangelo?

Hesitantly, Jacob left the other children and crossed the empty space giving the men a wide berth. He passed the large stone throne with a glance of trepidation and walked to the single plaster pedestal at the back of the room.
As he approached a happy little chiming sound came from the orange light. Jacob glanced around to see if anyone was watching, worried this would get him in trouble. Convinced everyone was busy for a moment, he lowered his lashes shyly and looked up at the glow.

"Hi," the little boy said.

Trine pulsed in greeting.

"Do you want to come out?" Jacob asked. "I bet you'd like to fly like the red one does."

Trine flashed again and the little boy grabbed the edge of the pedestal, going up on tip-toe to reach for the orb. His tiny palm closed carefully over the glass ball. He pulled it down and stared into the bright glow. He tried to twist it, but it didn't move.

Jacob struggled with it, his little pink tongue poking cutely out the side of his mouth as he worked out how to get it open, but the crystal was smooth, slippery and hard to hold on to. A moment later, it jumped right out of his hand and smashed against the marble floor in a stunning burst of light.

Jacob stared at the shards around his feet in horror and raised his eyes to see Raphael, Casey and all his friends staring at him from across the room.

"I'm sorry!" Jacob wailed, "I didn't mean to break it!"

And the little boy burst into tears.

Donatello never felt so bone tired in all his life. His energy was fading fast, down to a dull lavender even with Medes support. The obstacles he created were weaker and it became harder to keep the Oracle out of Luna's grasp. Especially since Donnie wanted to kill the woman himself.

And the fact he was fighting his beloved was taking an emotional toll.

She wouldn't engage him directly. At least she wasn't so lost to the raging tempest she would harm her family. She wasn't attacking him, but every cry of frustration and scream of rage she uttered when she ran up against one of his impediments injured him deeply. He hated causing her pain, but he had to save her life.

He glanced to the corner where Mikey lay limply, supported by the wall. April was tiring. Sol was compensating for her fatigue as best it could, but it didn't have access to Leo's healing abilities. The only positive note was Luna and Leo had cleared most of the human soldiers from the room. There were only a few left trying to breach April's defenses.

He shouldn't have turned his back.

The moment he did, Luna lunged and caught Serra's trailing hair, jerking the Oracle from Master Splinter's hand and holding her high above the floor.

Luna laughed, loud and maniacally.

"I made a promise Serra and because of you it is broken. He is broken. Innocence turned to madness, joy to despair. For this I will give you a hundred lives and rend them from you one by one! I will make your pain last for a thousand years! I will see you damned to the darkest pits of Tartarus and by my will you shall burn for all eternity!"
However, before she could carry out any of these dire threats, the battle was over.

Ended by a single word. It sent chills down her spine. Made her release Serra unharmed and resume her natural size. It caused tears to pool in her now gloriously silver eyes.

One quiet word, whispered by an orange banded form who staggered to the center of the chamber. He leaned heavily on April. One arm thrown over her shoulder as blood seeped through the bandages wrapped tightly around his wounds. But he was awake.

And he would not let the goddess be corrupted by the demons of his mind.

He met Luna's tear streaked gaze and smiled. A smile filled with the purest joy she had ever seen. He raised a glowing orange palm in front of his face in wonder before placing it on her cheek. He wiped away a tear with his thumb and murmured the word again, this time suffused with a boundless adoration.

"Enough... my love. I am answered."
Lost. I am lost.

Somewhere, far away, he heard fighting. The noise raging and fading by turns. Chaos reigned around him, circling like vultures. Metal clashed against metal and he thought he heard, for one brief moment, the sound of Luna's voice.

Luna.

His goddess, his love. Why hadn't she come? He called and called but his voice got lost somewhere in the emptiness. Echos returned to him. His own screams reverberated through the infinite space and left again.

I must be insane. I am alone. So alone.

No family had answered his silent pleas, no one came. No one cared. Caught in the turmoil of his mind, Michelangelo twisted and writhed.

No, that's not right. They did come, didn't they? Serra tried to break me but...

He listened for the distant conflict again, catching the hoarse shout of his Master calling out for April.

April? And my father?

Yes, his father would never abandon him. He began to fight the darkness, concentrating on the sounds around him.

Focus, Mikey, focus.

Donatello stood nearby. He recognized the whir of his brother's staff as it swung through the air and the dull thuds as he connected with multiple targets. Donnie came. But who was he fighting? Serra? They had been alone when...

No, don't think about that now.

April. She landed somewhere beside him. He smelled her perfume and fought to open his eyes, to see her. He failed. A tug, something pulled on tender flesh and strained his bruised muscles, but the tension relented and his arms fell. He tried to move, but his body did not respond to his desperate commands.

He shuddered and moaned, but his best efforts made no difference.

An enraged bellow echoed across the emptiness. It sounded like Leonardo.

Leo came too?

But his calm, controlled brother would never utter something so angry and reckless; unless Luna was in trouble.

Luna is in danger!
The thought reverberated through the empty space, followed quickly by confusion. From what? Or who? Serra? The goddess was more than a match for her. Charon? The dangerous godling lay in wait somewhere, but the more he considered, the more he realized he wasn't seeing the bigger picture. Something, no someone else was involved.

He searched his thoughts, his memories floating by in the empty landscape around him, like multiple movies, playing simultaneously. One thing stood out as he viewed them all.

_Bait. They used me as bait._

And Luna had come. The goddess heard his cries, his pleas, and she had responded. She'd come to take his pain away, but stepped neatly into their trap.

The woman he loved fought and suffered because of his weakness. Screams echoed all around.

_My fault. Even April is crying. Leaning over me, seeing my guilt. My shame._

Anger flared anew. He had resisted! He had! Until the very last moment. He studied the memories as they moved faster now. He actually saw Luna appear. Recalled her reassurance as she rocketed to his side across a vast distance. Felt her rage careen out of control.

_*Michelangelo, forgive me...*_

Her final intelligible thought echoed through the emptiness. Fading and returning, again and again. Guilt swirled around him.

_It's not her fault. It's mine. I failed the test. Lost my innocence._

Trine would take one look at his damaged soul and reject him. Without a bond, he had no purpose. His brothers and their goddess would be forced to leave him behind. He lost track of the battle again.

_Are any of them still alive? I can't tell. How much time passed?_

He moaned, feeling even more isolated and alone. For a moment, he was overcome with grief and disappeared into the darkness, until his body prodded his mind awake again with sharp pain, reminding him despite its unresponsive condition he was still alive.

_Someone is moving me, touching me! Someone small and female._

He wanted to retch but could not move. Had Serra returned to finish what she started? No. Luna wouldn't let her. Besides, the scent was familiar. April hovered over him again. Powerful relief overwhelmed him and he began to weep.

She struggled, dragging his dead weight across the floor to a sheltered corner before standing between him and danger. His friend, his beautiful big sister, stood guard over him. She shouldn't be here.

_Guarding was his role. Another failure._

_stop that._

The quiet command echoed through his mind and jolted Michelangelo awake. He sat up, leaping off the infirmary table in reaction to his nightmare, clutching for weapons he wasn't wearing.

His violent movement startled Luna, who rested in a nearby chair, reading, and she swept to her
feet, body igniting, as she peered around the room for danger, be it mortal or immortal.

There was nothing.

She turned softer eyes on him where he stood trembling against the closed door and extinguished her flames, not concerned in the least for his false alarm. She would answer a thousand to see his faith in her restored.

She watched him solemnly from across the room as he regained control, leaning down to put his head between his knees. He breathed in slowly, fighting the dizziness and unreasoning fear. One by one he forced his muscles to stop shaking.

When he felt more steady, he stood and met her gaze. Pain and guilt reflected in her eyes before she quickly masked it, hiding her emotions. It made him flinch. Despite her mask, he still sensed her longing. She wanted to rush to his side, to drive away the nightmare that was simply his mind trying to cope by reliving every horrible moment of the tragic escapade.

But he wasn't ready. He couldn't stand for her to be too near. Not yet.

Trine circled above him and floated down, landing briefly on his shoulder before flitting around his face, stroking his cheek with gentle tendrils of power and chirping soothingly. He closed his eyes and leaned into the caress as warmth and peace flowed from Luna to the soul to him.

don't worry. she understands.

The orange flame flared and Luna nodded, resuming her seat. Her soft moonglow returned to light the space. She would not leave him. She would not let him suffer alone, nor would she pressure him into speaking. She was his savior, the one thing that made all this ok simply by being with him.

Michelangelo sighed and debated getting some more sleep. He listened for a moment, trying to make out the time by the sounds of the lair. All was quiet. Still. It must be late, or early. Either way, no one else was stirring yet. He sighed again and sat back up on the stainless steel table forcing himself to lie down. It was the only place he could get any rest at all. Beds made him shudder in fear.

Three days.

That's how long they had been back in New York. Leonardo healed his physical wounds, the bullet hole, the cuts and scrapes, but his mental ones ran quite a bit deeper. He was trying to adjust to Trine, his bond, and an overwhelming new series of phobias all at once. It wasn't going so well.

it's going fine. Trine soothed, darting about the room to let off excess energy. It zoomed back to him, hovering next to his face.

you relived the bad, now it's time to remember the good.

Without waiting for his consent, it crashed into his head with a bright splash of light and Luna smiled.

Trine thrust him back into that awful moment. The time before his bond. The darkness before the dawn.

Despair. Overwhelming despair still froze his body. Luna remained caught in a trap of his own
making. His family fought all around him, against tremendous odds. Even his human friends—his sister—faced destruction trying to free him. They did not know he was no longer worth saving.

*It's all my fault. No more! Please no more!* He mentally cried to the emptiness surrounding him. *Let me go. Save yourselves. I am worthless. Despoiled.*

The answer from the wasteland was light. An orange glow, brighter than the sun embraced him. Carefree chiming laughter, like the stifled giggles of children before dawn, echoed across the landscape. A warmth and peace greater than any he had ever known suffused his being and he found himself smiling with his eyes closed.

He struggled to open them, amazed to discover this time they obeyed and stared at his surroundings. Paradise formed entirely of radiant beams unfolded before him. All he could see from horizon to horizon were ribbons of light forming a fantastic world. A playground of vast proportions. He gazed around in childlike wonder, his previous pain momentarily forgotten as his eyes adjusted to the glow.

*hello.*

The gentle greeting came from right next to him, and Michelangelo started, looking down into the eyes of the most adorable child he had ever seen. For one moment, the child peered intently back and he was struck by an uncanny feeling of weighing and measuring.

Then it smiled. A dazzling, charming grin, at once so full of joy and mischief Mikey couldn't tell if he should be happy or worried.

*been looking for you.*

"You have?"

Confusion furrowed his brow. Moments ago, he could have sworn the world was ending yet now all his fear and despair were gone; faded into nothing like ice melting on a summer's day.

"Where are we?"

The little child gazed around, a delighted grin still playing about its lips.

*don't you know?*

"I've never seen this place before, but it's wonderful," Mikey replied.

The child laughed and it blended perfectly with the chiming background as it reached up and took his hand in its own. One tiny set of fingers gripped his and the other patted the back of his hand gently as if recognizing he needed the reassurance.

*this is your soul.*

He stood stunned as the little one continued to pat his hand. This? This luminous, glorious wonderland was his soul? Impossible. He was despoiled, doomed. His soul was black, filled with a sickness he could not fight, darkness. He frowned down at his companion.

"Don't joke about such things," he said. His mood shifted abruptly and around him the sky dimmed slightly. He flinched and gazed about uncertainly. "What happened?"

*doubt.*
"Doubt?"

_and fear. don't worry. neither can darken this place for long._

It was right. In a few seconds the bright light returned, shining stronger than ever around them.

"Who are you?"

_an expert on your soul._

It was a smug response Mikey might have made himself if he had been asked. Suddenly he understood why his brothers sometimes found him irritating.

"This can't be mine," he protested. "I am no longer innocent." Despair tinged his tone and the world dimmed slightly again before rebounding.

_what do you know of innocence?_

"It's precious. Amazing. Worth protecting. Even dying for."

The child nodded along with him and waited with its head cocked in question when he finished.

_That all?_

Mikey hung his head. "I know mine is gone."

_how?_

"It was taken, against my will."

The child's eyes grew solemn and wise. For one brief moment, he was reminded of Hades ancient gaze. Knowledge weighed heavily in those eyes and sadness.

_ah. is it such a tangible thing then, innocence, that someone relieved you of it?_

"No, it's..." Mikey didn't know how to answer and the sudden shift in language confused him. Like its eyes, the child's speech had aged, undergoing a change from basic sentences to an abstract and intellectual tone. It echoed slightly in a way he thought he should recognize, but couldn't quite put his finger on.

"It's fairly complex," he said at last.

_like you. innocence seems simple, but it has more layers than most imagine._

"So you're saying I only lost one?"

_chastity, virginity, call it what you like. it's the one society gets hung up on._

"So there's still a chance? I mean, maybe if I have some of the other layers left, Trine might accept me."

_the word innocence has so many meanings it's practically meaningless. guiltless, naive, ignorant, guileless, simple, harmless, innocuous, free from moral wrongdoing, absence of cunning, purity..._

Mikey's heart fell as he failed to meet any standard on the list.

"Uh... oh. None of those apply," he said and tears began to gather in his eyes. It was hopeless after
why do you believe trine would only accept an innocent?

"Because it embodies innocence."

so what need would it have of more?

"um..." Mikey was stumped.

would it not search for one who values it instead? one who possess other qualities to support it?

"What kind of qualities?"

joy, intelligence, determination, courage, sensitivity, forgiveness, compassion, protectiveness, kindness, generosity, balance, harmony, selflessness.

"That's quite a list."

yet you possess them all.

Mikey raised his brows, skeptically. "I don't mean to doubt the 'expert' but how do you know?"

Once again, his memories began to appear. Hundreds of projections enclosed in small rounded rectangle like screens zipped by, constantly replaying their contents, movie-like. They spun shifting and changing as they morphed through their surroundings.

Mikey's mouth fell open as the child raised a palm and four particular ones gathered and stopped in front of them.

"Splinta?" Raph gasped. He pushed past Leo and dropped to his knees on a cushion in front of the table, stunned. Mikey whooped in joy and bounded over to Splinter, flopping bonelessly down next to him and throwing his arms lovingly around his father's waist. Splinter smiled.

"Michelangelo," he said softly, placing his paw on Mikey's head. "I have missed your exuberance."

Mikey grinned sheepishly as Raph coughed and choked through his own laughter.

"Raised in a barn?" Raph choked out, "You've, like, seen a barn twice in ya life!" He said to Mikey in disbelief. That set Casey off again, and soon all of them were laughing so hard, they almost couldn't breathe.

"God!" Mikey exclaimed, "I needed that."

Michelangelo had to admit it was fun to hang out with Sol. Even though the little guy was quiet it had an innocent sense of humor, reminding Mikey of his younger days. All it took was a little bit of slapstick and a funny voice to make Sol laugh. And what a laugh! Sol's was just like Luna's. It chimed through the tunnel and echoed back on itself so musically Mikey was almost overwhelmed with its perfection.
falling into a basic ready stance, holding the handle like a bo staff. Mikey's eyes widened. "You know ninjutsu?"
The boy gave a short nod and grinned, wiggling his mop exactly like Donnie had his bo when they were sparring as kids. A little impatient 'come on' motion. Mikey smiled at this unexpected diversion, bowed back, and took a defensive stance as familiar as breathing.

-000-

joy. The child said simply. you bring it wherever you go.

"Ok, I can be a pretty optimistic turtle," Mikey said, "but intelligence? That's Donnie's strong suit."
The child frowned. your solutions are often more creative. It waved again and other screens swirled in to replace the first.

-000-

"This looks like a job for... the super spy copters!" Michelangelo declared happily. "Mikey, you're a genius!" Don exclaimed. "Let's head back home. You get the copters, I'll grab my laptop, and we'll set up our own search and rescue opt. just under that alley."

-000-

sister must keep it on her. always. Sol said, concerned.
"Ok, so here's what we're gonna do. Can you make a small hole at the top of the rock?" he asked. Sol tilted itself a little to the side, curious, then flashed an affirmative. Mikey nodded again and pulled a length of black silk cord from his belt. He held it up to Sol and released it. "Put the cord through the hole and tie the ends together," he instructed. "It will be a necklace April can wear next to her skin, under her clothes. That way, she'll always have it."

-000-

Mikey's shadowy figure typed for a few more seconds, his large green fingers flying over the keyboard with practiced ease despite the lack of light in the space. If his brothers could see him now, their jaws would collectively drop.
"Shutdown sequence complete. Opening containment unit."
They say desperation is the mother of invention, and at that moment, he was desperate enough to invent a whole science fair full of projects on his own. All he really needed though was one particular flash of genius. His hand shot out and grabbed the crystal sphere from the table. He wrenched it open, dashed one half to the floor, and scooped Medes up in the remaining bowl. He snatched the amulet from the machine and bolted into the maze of boxes as the guards reached the lab.

-000-

As the projections faded, Michelangelo stared at the child. "Those things had to be done. It was nothing special," he said.

and yet, many would not have tried.

Mikey glanced at the next set of memories and his face paled. "Why are these here? I wanted to protect Luna and I failed. I should have listened when she told me to be still. Failure is not a quality Trine will be looking for."

no, but what of courage and determination against all odds?
Michelangelo watched in horror as two more of the stupefyingly scary creatures appeared over the
dge of the rooftop and settled in front of Luna. She shocked him when she stood up and paced
toward the wraiths, and now he was certain they could see her. His face hardened, and he shook
off his fear to began easing his way towards her.

Michelangelo stirred at her moan, and struggled to lay Luna gently down at his side. "Don't worry,
Sleepy Moon," he whispered, as if reading her mind. "You are the best thing that ever happened to
us."
"No," she wept, "I've destroyed you."
With great effort, he summoned a smile. It was tired and filled with pain but completely genuine.
He reached out to her slowly, stroked her cheek and tucked a stray hair behind her ear.
"I love you, little sister. I'll always protect you. No matter what." Then, despite his mortal injuries,
he struggled to his feet and limped in front of her prone form; prepared to make his last stand.

A bolt of sadness ripped through him as he thought about leaving his brothers behind. And his
father, who he would never see again. Would Splinter have been proud of him? Accepted his
sacrifice?
Yes.
A soothing, calm voice, a voice he would know anywhere, answered the unspoken question. Leo?
Mikey was startled.
I am here, little brother. And Splinter could not be more proud of you than I am in this moment. I
will never be able to thank you. Luna lives because of your courage.

Tears rolled down his face as he relived the moment. Leo had been so proud and though he had
been scared, knowing he saved Luna's life made it worthwhile. But the child was moving quickly
on.

you are sensitive, quick to forgive and compassionate.

With the five of them packed in so close it was getting a little claustrophobic in the infirmary and
Luna was beginning to show signs of stress. Michelangelo lay quietly throughout the healing
process, his gaze flicking from face to face as they all gathered about him. Raph to Luna. Leo to
Raph. Leo to Luna. His sharp eyes checked the emotional temperature of each relationship. But
mostly he watched the parade of feelings flowing over his sister's face. More than anything she was
tired, confused, and needed some time to herself to regroup. The second he was fully healed Mikey
sat up, slid off the table, and faced his brothers. Deliberately crowding his three siblings toward
the door. One quick glance back at Luna's relieved expression was all the encouragement he
needed to keep them moving. He forced them out into the hall and shut the door firmly behind
them.

Mikey didn't hold Luna responsible for any of the events of that night but denials and justifications
were not going to reach her in this state. So he gave her what she needed for relief. Permission to
"I forgive you," Michelangelo whispered. He put a finger under her chin and forced her to look in his bright blue eyes, shining with unshed tears of his own. "I. Forgive. You." It was exactly the right thing to say. The only thing that could get through to her. He pulled her into his lap and held her close as she collapsed, burying her face in his neck and sobbing herself out.

Don was reluctant to go after Medes, Mikey realized. Not because he didn't want to save Luna, for Don obviously loved her. And not because he didn't want to be bonded, but it was clear he felt betrayed by the little soul who had never even set foot into their home. Something had to be done.

you protect those who cannot help themselves...

"Maybe it's not too late to untangle you," Luna said. "Perhaps I could get one of my cousins to shelter me and just disappear. I couldn't bear it if any of you got hurt."
"That'd just hurt us in a different way, dudette," he replied quickly, "Maybe you're not used to it because you didn't need anyone when you were all god like, but now you're a lot more fragile. We can protect you. We want to protect you. You're our family now, Leo's mate, and we want to help you pick up the pieces."

Jacob nodded, clearly believing in the power of the 'little light'. As well he should, for it could only be the remaining piece of Luna's soul, always protecting the innocent. Michelangelo breathed a silent prayer, thanking all the gods and goddesses personally for sending him this gift, then smiled at the boy.

your kindness and generosity know no boundaries.

A smile lit Luna's face and Michelangelo basked in it. There was something truly uplifting about making Luna smile. Somehow it made him feel complete, like everything was right with the universe. He'd found himself spending more and more time with her and doing everything he could think of to make her smile appear.

Selene dropped her hand to actually touch Mikey, reaching up to stroke his forehead and face gently. Softly glowing tears formed in her eyes, and spilled over her cheeks.
"He took such pains to care for my daughter," she said, "I watched him feed her, tend to her, befriend and distract her. He did his best to make her feel welcome and happy, a part of your family. Even in so short a time, he loved her."
Don's eyes filled now. Michelangelo had always been their joy, and he had embraced Luna as family even before they had learned of Leo's bond. He was their hope when things looked darkest. What would they do without him?
"Wait," Michelangelo protested, throwing out a hand to get the child to stop. The constant parade of memories was overwhelming. He stared at the one still in front of them as it played through again, more than a little surprised to witness Luna's mother crying over his still form. "That's not my memory."

it's Donatello's.

"That's not possible."

The child shrugged. with the gods, many improbable things are possible.

Michelangelo frowned. That sounded suspiciously like a diversion. What wasn't this little child telling him? Before he could raise another question, the child waved its hand again, calling another set of memories.

you have an instinctive understanding of balance and harmony which your family depends on far more than you know.

Mikey began to pace in the darkness. "They'll drive poor Luna crazy," he muttered under his breath. He turned decisively to Don. "So, how do we get back? Without us, they'll kill each other!" Don reached out, hugged his little brother, and smiled.

Raph stuck his head in to the infirmary to see his brother was no longer laid out all stiff and unmoving, but had assumed a classic Mikey sleeping posture on the stainless steel table. He lay on his front, head turned to the side, one arm shoved up under his pillow. His knees were tucked up under him pushing his butt high in the air. The other arm was hanging off the side of the table, dangling halfway to the floor, his sheet sliding off the other. And just like that Raph's dark mood lightened. His baby brother was back. Mikey was gonna be ok. There was still hope. Life would go on, and he would learn to control this power.

Everyone needed to come together, Mikey decided. They were all holding some of the missing pieces. They just needed to start at the beginning and work their way through Luna's story one step at a time. Then they might have some hope of finishing it and finding some peace. It was definitely time for a family meeting. He'd call one as soon as everyone was up again.

"Ya' stopped yer heart tryin' to give us time togetha' an' yer worried ya didn't give us enough?" Raph yelled at Luna, his tone sharp. Her eyes widened at his outburst. She blinked rapidly, fighting back tears. "I'm sorry," she whispered again her eyes reflecting hurt.

"Raph! Cool it!" Michelangelo said, shoving Raphael roughly on the shoulder. "At least we know now what happened to Splinter, and we have some chance of getting him back. She gave us our father back. Don't you dare yell at her for it."
Mikey shook his head. One of those memories belonged to Raphael!

_What is going on here?_

"Who are you?" he demanded again of the child.

A slight mischievous smile crossed its face and two final projections, larger than the others filled his field of view.

-000-

_Luna screamed, panicked, unable to escape. Mikey's head snapped around at the scream. He dodged and charged back toward her as fast as he could, leaping over her as a wraith raised its arm to strike. With no options left, he took the blow meant for her. A swipe of seven horribly long claws. He dropped to his hands and knees crouching over her body, using his larger form to shelter her. He may not be able to strike at them, but to get to her, they were literally going to have to go through him. He held his breath, and prayed he was strong enough. He closed his eyes, breathed out slowly, and relaxed. Briefly, he touched his forehead to hers, a frighteningly tender action that silently accepted his end.

"I swore," he whispered. "I swore to protect you..."

-000-

_Jacob's smile lit up the room and sent Michelangelo's heart soaring. The innocent smile of a child was worth protecting. Worth fighting, suffering, and even dying for. Luna understood. It was how all this began. Deep in his mind a soft voice whispered its agreement. Without innocence, hope is only an illusion..._

-000-

As the final vision came to an end the exact same voice continued, but now it stood right next to him.

_without selflessness there can be no delight. Without joy, innocence is as ash. Without innocence hope is lost. Truly Michelangelo, you are selfless and embody all the qualities I require.

Mikey jerked away, his eyes huge as awareness dawned. "You're Trine!"

_and I would join with you. You are everything the goddess needs.

His eyes filled with tears. "You really want me?"

Trine nodded and hugged his leg before gesturing to the landscape around them.

_say you'll share the beauty of this soul, your joy and harmony with the goddess. Luna deserves this happiness._

He couldn't agree more. With a huge smile Michelangelo held out his hand to Trine.

"I would be honored."
Power Struggles

Donatello tossed and turned in his bed. The covers were too warm, the air too cool. His brain wouldn't shut off. He glanced at the 80's glowing digital alarm clock on his bedside table. It read 2 A.M. Medes pulsed and hovered up from its position at his feet, lighting the room as he sat up.

"It's not gonna happen. Sleep is definitely not on the cards for tonight."

Several thoughts floated past the front of his mind. Options for gaining the rest he so desperately needed. Melatonin tablets, Sensei's special tea, even a change of scenery. Maybe he could crash on the cot in the lab.

"Medes, stop. I'm tired, but there's something else going on. Something..."

Don hated when a thought hovered out of reach. The persistent feeling of something he needed to do annoyed him and nothing was going to help him sleep until he figured out what he missed.

The soul gave a little wiggle he interpreted as the equivalent of a shrug. A sort of 'suit yourself.' They were so connected it didn't need to speak to say volumes. Obviously, Medes wasn't convinced he needed to get up.

Donnie shook his head and rolled out of bed. The lab was as good a place as any to think his way through whatever bothered him. Out of habit, he veered into the kitchen and reached for the coffee machine, but Medes swept through the door and swatted his hand away.

"Alright. ALRIGHT!" Donatello said in frustration as the little purple light made another pass, this time at his head. "I get it. No late night caffeine." He poured a glass of water instead and rubbed his eyes blearily as he trudged on to the lab.

He flopped into his chair and waited as his monitors glowed to life, absently flicking through the security feeds. Just as absently, he twisted his fingers and a pen appeared, spinning between them, glowing violet before solidifying completely.

The cameras were clear and the system fully online. Medes rested at his side as he checked the structure of the shield and sent a brief surge of energy to make sure it functioned correctly. Even with less power in the central crystal after Luna's desperate grab, everything appeared ok. The barrier should hold for some time.

He leaned back in his chair, tapping his foot with the pen. Possibly this agitation came from the goddess herself. Despite the rescue of Michelangelo and the recovery of her final soul, she was still fragmented. And the guilt didn't help. Their youngest sibling was scarred. His smile had disappeared. He moved through the day on autopilot and he didn't sleep well alone. Most nights Luna stayed beside him, even though his brother couldn't bear her touch.

Don sighed.

Emotional recovery was a long process and they were all suffering with him. The goddess assumed guilt because she did not arrive in time to save him from the assault, but Donnie knew the blame lay with himself. Mikey only acted and got caught because he didn't react. Too stubborn to rescue Medes and do what needed to be done.
Donatello tried to keep his own regret cut off from his beloved. He didn't want her to feel any worse, but the internal shield he erected kept him detached from her feelings. Now, he deliberately dropped the barrier and probed at the bond like a sore tooth. Endless exhaustion and sorrow overwhelmed him.

He shot Medes a glare. "Why didn't you say something? She's beat."

Luna needed to rest. He could sit with Mikey tonight. He pushed himself to his feet and sleepily trudged toward the infirmary. As he crossed the main room, Raphael descended the stairs, trailing a red glow as Fina swooped in behind. Donnie raised a brow.

"You feel it too?" Raph asked.

"Restless? Exhaustion pushing at the back of your eyes, but not sleeping by dent of pure willpower?"

His brother nodded.

"Yeah," Don said. "It's time she took a break." He glanced around. "I'm surprised Leonardo isn't down here too."

The hot-head grunted. "Leo is part of the problem."

"Oh? I wasn't aware we had one. Besides, you know: a homicidal king, a traumatized brother, a soul-stealing demon godling, and whatever else the universe decides to throw at us."

Raphael gave him a level look.

"Don't, Don. You don't do sarcasm well."

Mikey slept but Luna straightened in her chair as they rounded the corner. The brothers exchanged a loaded glance. She was a mess, drooping and wired by turns. Her hair was limp, her clothing rumpled. Silver light pulsed and spilled out as fatigue undermined her control. And she pressed her fingertips to her temples in response to an ever present headache.

Donatello nodded to Raph who, without a word, scooped the goddess up in his arms.

"But---"

Donnie cut off her brief protest with a kiss and laid a hand on her arm. In seconds, her skin and hair were clean while her clothes shifted to a comfortable, cotton, thigh-length night shirt.

"Get some sleep," he commanded.

Raphael met his eyes, a silent question lurking in their depths. Don nodded and Raph strode rapidly with her from the room. Donnie checked on his sleeping sibling, patting his shell briefly and settled himself in the nearby chair.

Luna's shields were weak with weariness, so he wasn't surprised to sense what happened next. Raphael had been... hungry. And the change of her clothes sparked a natural reaction. Passion flared in an instant. Their lips were locked before they reached Raph's room. In the next half-hour, his brother wore her out completely, ending her restlessness in the best possible way.

Donatello's eyes drifted shut and he let himself enjoy the situation vicariously without shame. He could have re-raised his own internal shields and blocked them out, but he didn't feel the jealousy
Leo did. At least, not anymore. That emotion died sometime during his own painful transformation.

Perhaps because he wasn't her first bonded, or possibly because he had chosen her anyway, knowing she would end up bound to them all, but since the moment of his acceptance, he understood. They belonged to Luna and she to them. Pleasing each other was natural and necessary. Eventually, such feelings would spill over and there was no use getting bent out of shape over it. Besides, it wasn't like he experienced Raph's side of things...

The tension in Don's body faded as a dreamy lassitude crept over him. He chuckled at the satiated feeling and, as Luna drifted into the oblivion of sleep, he opened his eyes.

Michelangelo sat straight up, staring at him. His eyes were huge, his face flushed, and from the uncomfortable way he shifted, his shell was way too tight.

_Crap. Way to go, Donnie. You should have shielded him. He doesn't have enough control to raise his own yet and he DIDN'T need an explicit reminder._

His eyes darted around seeking Trine. It wasn't in the room and it hadn't gone with Luna.

*Why didn't the soul protect Mikey from this?*

He scanned his brother's face to see what reaction his mistake had triggered.

"Mikey, I'm-

"That was nothing like what happened with Serra."

Don blinked. His brother had not spoken at all of what occurred in that cursed room and no one wanted to force him to talk. But from the state they found him in and his current behavior, they assumed the worst. If he wanted to share, admit what occurred, it was a good sign. He focused, giving Michelangelo his full attention.

"Luna is not Serra," he said, knowing it was obvious, but deliberately expressing the comparison to reassure Mikey and keep him talking.

"She did some of the same things, though."

_Shit. Oh shit. I've probably set him back months of healing time. I don't know if I can fix this..._

Donnie stared him straight in the eye, chocolate brown offering unwavering support to fragile baby blue.

"I'm sorry, Mikey. Luna is fairly aggressive with Raph, but he likes aggressive. She's not going to pressure you into anything you're not ready for. I'll talk to her and we'll make sure you're doubly shielded--"

"I know," Michelangelo said with a shake of his head, "That's not the problem. I want to want Luna."

"Oh. So..."

"I didn't want to want Serra," he whispered, staring at the floor. His face filled with tension and his lips trembled. "But it happened anyway."

*It? What does he...*
Don's eyes narrowed then widened as Mikey gestured to his lower torso. Because his body responded to Serra's sexual abuse he thought he was responsible.

"Michelangelo," Donatello said, voice low and fierce. "Look at me. Nothing was your fault. You hear me? Nothing."

"But I couldn't stop it, Donnie!" he said, words bursting forth in a heedless flurry. "She touched me and it felt- I don't know!- disgusting. And yet... She used her tongue and I fought, Donnie! I fought! I tried those techniques Splinter taught us, but she hurt me. Shoved her thumb into my thigh." He whimpered and his eyes glistened with unshed tears. "And I still couldn't stop myself from... Why? Why couldn't I stop, Donnie?"

Michelangelo's pleading broke Don's heart. Obviously, he'd asked himself the question for quite some time and there was an explanation. But scientific descriptions of physiology would probably be too complex, so instead he asked a query of his own.

"Mikey, when we spar and Raph clobbers you, what happens?"

His brother looked at him like he had lost his mind at the change of subject, but he answered anyway.

"I hit him back."

"No, I mean to the spot you got kicked?"

"It hurts for a little while. Sometimes turns into a bruise if he landed a good one." He raised his brows confused and his eyes cleared a little. "This going somewhere?"

Don nodded. "Can you stop the pain with those techniques Splinter taught?"

"Uh, well they help me ignore it some, but I can't say the pain actually stops. They focus me on something else."

"And can you keep the bruise from forming?"

"Of course not."

"Why?"

"The damage has already been done. Blood is escaping under the skin. I can't do anything about that."

"Exactly right. There are certain ways your body reacts to a physical stimulus you can't consciously control. What you're asking about is the same thing."

"No, it's not. Bruises don't come from emotions, but this does. I-I must have secretly wanted her. I-I betrayed Luna. So I-I can't let her near me."

"I can see how you might think so, but we're not talking about physical attraction here. The sexual response is triggered by sensations; touch and pheromones. This was something done to you, Mikey, just like the bruise."

Raphael paused to wipe the sweat from his brow before turning again to the bag in front of him and unleashing another round of intense strikes. He precisely placed each blow, as muscles long used to such demands flexed smoothly in response to his commands. He fell into a light trance, lulled by
the repetitive rhythm of the motions. His thoughts drifted.

Somebody had to say something to Leonardo. His older brother's moodiness and self-imposed isolation were hurting Luna. Raph understood his feelings and would usually let him deal on his own terms, but the second the goddess became involved he made it his business.

Approaching any of his brothers to talk seriously about emotions was not something he enjoyed contemplating, but after his success with Mikey this morning, it might turn out ok.

He was surprised to find Michelangelo in the dojo after breakfast. His brother usually avoided their training room unless ordered in, but today the orange-banded turtle occupied Raph's accustomed space; beating the crap out of a suspended punching bag.

He raised a brow but didn't interrupt. He grunted a brief mornin' before heading to the back to throw himself into a set of pull-ups. His brother drifted nearer, moving his own workout to the open mat in front of Raphael.

It didn't take a genius to figure out Mikey had something on his mind and needed to work up the courage to spill it. Raph dropped to the floor with a deliberate thump, making the younger turtle glance up from his stretching.

"Wanna spar?" he asked.

The eagerness with which he agreed was almost frightening. When Michelangelo wanted to fight he was a force to be reckoned with, but that didn't dissuade Raphael from taking his place on the mat opposite.

With a formal bow, they began.

Mikey dove into the session with no hint of his former playfulness. He struck hard, pushing the boundaries of the safety rules they practiced with to minimize injuries, but Raph met him blow for blow.

As the intensity of the encounter increased, the hot-head smiled. He knew his little brother could be lethal but rarely did Mikey let out his feelings on the dojo floor. Today, if his face was anything to go by, he was furious.

It was a step in the right direction. For weeks, Michelangelo had been a ghost of himself and they all worried about his withdrawal, despite Trine and Luna's constant reassurance. But Raphael understood fury. Channeled correctly, it could cleanse.

Twenty minutes in, they were both starting to flag as the non-stop movement took its toll. Raph pushed him hard, but though the workout allowed for the venting of some anger, Mikey needed something more.

On the next round, Raph let his foot slide slightly out of place. The position was a minuscule breach of form, but Michelangelo pounced on the mistake and laid him out with a complex series of attacks ending in a sweeping kick. In seconds he landed atop the older turtle, pinning him in place, the gleam of victory in his eyes.

Raphael grunted sourly and scowled up at Mikey before he tapped out, but inside he smirked. His brother simply needed a little reassurance, proof he wasn't helpless anymore. As Michelangelo pulled him to his feet, Raph clapped him on the shoulder in congratulations.

The younger turtle's eyes widened. Such a move equaled a hundred 'good jobs' from Leonardo.
"Raph, I-" Mikey began, but emotion overcame him.

Liquid pooled in his baby blue eyes and trailed down his cheeks. He dropped his gaze rapidly to the floor and grabbed one elbow, trying to hide the weakness of tears. He hadn't cried since they returned. He thought only Trine knew about the pain he held inside.

He was wrong.

When the larger turtle's arms wrapped around him, engulfing him in a bear hug of the type they hadn't shared since childhood, he gasped. Abandoning all propriety, Michelangelo began to sob, burying his face in his brother's sweaty shoulder as Raphael pulled him close.

"It's gonna be ok, Mike. Everything's gonna be alright."

Leonardo relaxed from his stiff meditative posture with a sigh. He had been concentrating all afternoon, but no matter how hard he tried, true peace was destined to elude him. Even the quiet and soothing incense of the meditation room didn't help.

Every time he closed his eyes the rage and guilt rushed in to overwhelm him.

He had thought himself beyond such issues, but he never had to contend with the immense force of Luna's out of control frenzy before. Madness that could have been prevented. But as guilty as he felt about losing his cool during the battle for Michelangelo, it was nothing compared to the regret of failing to protect his little brother in the first place.

The remorse ate away at his emphatic shields until he couldn't keep the sentiments of the others at bay. Luna, Donnie, and Mikey were consumed with guilt and Raphael with anger. Each day their emotions weighed a little heavier on his soul and he slowly succumbed to despair.

A light tap on the entry surround made him turn though he might have predicted the visitor from the disturbance which preceded him. His youngest brother crouched stealthily in the doorway, altered so much by recent events he was almost unrecognizable.

The innocent little turtle who always wore a cheerful smile and brightened their home with his light had disappeared. In his place lurked a suspicious being who hid in the shadows and jumped at the slightest provocation.

Leo hated seeing him this way, yet as Trine swooped into the room, he was reminded Luna's soul chose Mikey anyway, despite the tragedy. As if reading his thoughts, Michelangelo offered him a small, wry smile and a tiny wave.

The expression was a pale reflection of the past but more than Leonardo had seen from his brother since their return. Perhaps his light still burned; trapped under the pain and sorrow. Hope swelled in his chest. If that was the case, Leo swore he would not rest until he had unburied it. With an answering smile, he turned and beckoned his brother in beside him.

"I do not know how to help him."

Luna spun as she reached the end of the small room Splinter claimed as his own and stormed rapidly back toward the other side. Worry and pain evident in her every motion.

The wise rat's head tracked her movements as she swept back and forth, a wild bird seeking an escape from a cage. Her frustration battered at the walls like frantic wings and her voice fluttered
with concern. Each stride consumed a quarter of the space so her pacing was extremely curtailed, adding to the tension.

Silver light seeped from her form, pulsing and flaring with her temper in waves she could not seem to suppress.

"He is steeped in guilt. He believes I do not see, but it shadows his eyes every time I am in his presence," she said, a note of panic in her voice. "He won't even stay in the same room with me. His mind and soul are in chaos and he burns himself with shame."

She drew in a deep breath and collapsed on the cushion in front of his tea table, dropping her head into her hands and pressing her temples in pain. Splinter narrowed his gaze and engaged his second sight, scanning his daughter carefully. The light shone even brighter to his inner eyes, the pulsing rapidly, out of control.

"The headaches persist?"

He kept his tone calm, despite his deep concern. Not about his son, for he knew why Leonardo felt guilty. That would work itself out in time. It was not her problem to solve. No, his anxiety existed solely for the goddess in front of him, because a quiet word with Hades confirmed what the old Master already guessed. His daughter was suffering.

She regained full access to her immortal life force and all her strength with the addition of Michelangelo’s bond. Perhaps even eclipsing her premortal levels of energy, if the old god could be believed. But the excess took an extreme toll on her physical form and he feared what would happen if her mortal body, created by another, ceased to be.

Would she be free to return to her life as the immortal goddess she once was? Or was she now something completely different? If so, would she, could she retake human shape to remain with their family?

And what of her soul?

Sol, Fina, Medes, and Trine though reunited were still parts of a whole.

He sighed, uncertain what outcome to hope for. With Zeus revealed as the architect of her misfortunes, it was unlikely he would honor the conditions of her banishment and allow the fragments to properly recombine.

But if they did, could his son’s manage without them?

Though occasionally a nuisance, the little ones had become a vital part of their lives. Bestowing adoration and wisdom wherever they went in slightly unequal measure. He smiled at the thought. He was fond of each of them.

They stopped by to 'speak' with him several times a day. Sometimes with words, but mostly with sincere projections of love, determination, reassurance, protection, honor, and hope. The manifestation of his family’s ideals.

In his eyes, their clan was no longer a small unit of five but had grown to a staggering total of ten. Losing them would cause consternation and grief. He hoped recombination wouldn't be necessary for Luna’s redemption.

None of the little ones currently graced the room. As usual, the goddess requested their absence so she might confer with him in private. It was the sole time she allowed herself to vent, to articulate
her very human fears.

In the past, this practice left her effectively blind, but now... At full power, she no longer needed one of the fragments with her to see. Luna stared up at him with beseeching silver eyes. They were striking, the embodiment of the stars.

Splinter's heart melted as she winced and nodded in answer to his almost forgotten query. Donatello had diligently sought the cause and reluctantly reported after several scans the most probable reason her power remained in such flux was... Michelangelo.

Two weeks had passed since the bonding but it had not been consummated. Luna was not about to rush him after his ordeal, but she could not truly share her burden until he accepted her.

Splinter sighed. As a father, he could not bear to see her continue in such agony, yet he was as unwilling as she to pressure his son into something he for which he was not ready. Perhaps he could offer a partial solution; temporary relief from the overbearing energy.

The answer lay below them, singing in the depths of the ground and reverberating with the deceptive calm of his eldest, its creator. Luna could no longer touch the crystal structure beneath their home without instigating a destructive wave of feedback. Her aura pulsed with far too much strength. But he could.

He closed his eyes and stretched out with his thoughts, reaching toward the vast pool pulsating under them. The power welcomed him, greeting him as family and promising seductively to fulfill whatever wish he desired. When he requested, a small siphon connecting to Luna it acquiesced immediately, forming a link which drained off a small portion of her excess.

Having access to such a vast resource almost frightened him, tempting him in a most unhealthy way. He was old, feeling more so every day and this power could redeem him. Restore him to his prime so he could offer his children more than simply wisdom.

He shook off those thoughts as unworthy and turned his 'sight' back to his complex daughter. Already, some of her pain eased and she stared up at him with grateful, surprised eyes.

"I believe that will help for a time, my child," he murmured with a smile. "And will ensure the battery which powers our protections remains charged."

It wouldn't last forever. The node held a finite amount, the benefits would fade as it reached capacity, but perhaps it would be enough to carry them through this final hurdle. He patted her hand with affection. As for her other difficulty, conceivably the couple would be best served by some time alone.

"I will speak with Leonardo. In the meantime, I suggest some air. It is most confining underground for long periods of time, and I believe it will be a beautiful night out tonight."

"Out?"

Her eyes grew dreamy at the thought of being under the stars. Feeling the soothing presence of her mother and breathing in the open.

"Wouldn't that be tempting fate?"

"My child, you are no longer weak. The humans offer you no danger. And cowering in terror of what might be is not living. After dinner, take Michelangelo and go enjoy the night."
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