Fragile Angels

by orphancount

Summary

Sonic, a bored 16 year old who believes life has too many restraints, is suddenly faced with the death of his brother. When a strange creature gives him a contract to become a god and revive him, he signs and copes with immortality. Sonadow, AU.
Death and Revival

He could feel it through his hands. His life fading away before he could even blink or before he
could reach out and tell him that everything would be okay, because he was his brother, his tried and
true friend that would last throughout the ages, throughout the many millennia’s and throughout each
star’s explosion and even throughout each black hole eating the universe with its long, shadowy
gullet that spanned and vacuumed across space and time.

His heart stopped beating. He was no longer breathing. And the only one who witnessed his death
was him, and only him, as these doctors didn’t felt like they should care for a young man without
health insurance, someone who didn’t had the money to help their lungs be taken away and replaced
with lungs that promised a better life, one without sickness and being taken back by the nails of Fate
and his weak nose and his weak bones and his weak chest.

His nose was webbed with mucous. His eyes were smeared with the crust of his tears that seemed to
dry out so quickly. His last breath, his last palpitations, Sonic felt them, and he wished he could give
his life to the one who meant so much to him, through the very wires of his fingers, through the very
wires of his heart. His brother, his sickly, his short and fragile angel, Wind, died on February 12th,
2012, and he couldn’t believe it, after all the doctors who said to him that they could give him new
lungs, he would be good as new, he would be a different brother, he would be as big as Sonic, he
would be able to run and breathe and smell the salty air the sea breathed out and the flowers speaking
with their pollen all around them in the glowing colorful lights and the rain-kissed land of Seattle, the
home he wanted his brother to enjoy as much as him. But the doctors wanted money. They always
wanted money, otherwise they wouldn’t be using their rubbery blue hands to save anyone in the
hospital, to carve out their bodies and find the right wires and the right machines that would make
them live again. His brother needed a breathing machine, an iron lung, and his parents couldn’t
afford it. As much as they loved Wind, their dear son, they couldn’t save him. And now, Wind was
dead. And Sonic was the only one who was here who heard his final beats, his final blinks, his final
sniffs and his final dreams.

He wanted to be a writer, he told Sonic. He had so many good stories to tell to the world. And Sonic
wanted to hear more of them, but God took him away. He took him away because he needed a
storyteller in Heaven. And Sonic thought he wasn’t going to get a much better storyteller than his
brother. He told stories full of life and gold and humor and wisdom, and now the only story he could
ever hold onto was The Raven Who Couldn’t Stay Away. And no matter how hard he could love
his brother and understand him, he couldn’t understand the story and its cryptic meanings inside the
black plastic covers. That was how good of a storyteller Wind was. No one could understand what
he truly meant.

The binder that kept his story tucked away was by his heart, his cold blue heart that stopped
breathing. Sonic stood up, tucked away a slit of a tear, and held the story to his gold heart, and he
wished he could let the people know of how much the world meant to him. And how much the
doctors failed to save a man, a successful man in his life and energy, who could’ve done something
to other people’s lives. No matter how much he wanted to live, how much his roots held onto the dirt
that made him sustain so much life for only a little while (the antibiotics), he was gone. He was swept
away by God’s hand.

A nurse came in, her heels clack, clack, clacking in Sonic’s eardrum. The bitch couldn’t save him.
The bitch with her gold jewelry and her heels that cost forty dollars and her nicotine lips as she
smoked the finest cigars, she couldn’t save him, money was the only important thing in this world, as
she needed another breast augmentation before she could go on with her life. So much for the lives
of others. So much for the red cross she proudly displayed on her head.

“He’s dead,” Sonic said, with no emotion in his voice. Not a tinge of heart. But the tears were escaping. They wanted to embrace his eyes.

“I’m sorry,” she said, with her voice full of acid. It sounded like acid to Sonic’s ears. Nothing could’ve saved him; nothing would’ve made it better. No matter how much her red lips kept opening and shutting and breathing as much air as his brother could ever breathe in his life, his fists shook and the tears kept flowing and his body shook and his heart shuddered and he wanted to show what he thought of the American health system, the white old men who thought no one needed health care because their decaying bodies were so taken care of that they decided to show how black they still were by denying the life and vitality of people’s organs who were still red and blue.

The doctor came in, and before he left the room, he swung his fist and struck him in the face, his eye swollen and blue. Then he ran as fast as he could, until the hospital couldn’t catch him.

The bastard pigs wouldn’t save his brother. No insurance meant no salvation.

He was never going to trust a single doctor again.

The sky was gray and downtrodden, lumpy and fringed with ice. The wind kept howling, much like his brother of the same name wanted to, and the sea charged against the pier, the long wooden poles separating the gray icy sea, slicing it up and it formed back together like lumps of clay.

He tried to distract himself, after his body hurt so much from running and fighting and crying. What if the sea was like clay? He imagined as so many monsters and so many myths and so many hearts and hands and legs would be formed by the sea, God telling of the world of what he could create, and now he had more creativity, more enthusiasm for his work, because his brother was with him.

His brother, the bipolar mad sickly short pens as hands friend he knew for only 16 years. 16 years and God said he wanted him.

No matter what, he couldn’t stop thinking about him.

He cradled his book in his hands. It had no cover, no face. It was never published, and was in fact never finished. His brother often had crushing lows where he couldn’t focus on his tales. His mania, however, fueled him, and he could write so many pages in such a short time. And all he would do was write, gulp a vast amount of coffee as large as the sea, and he would bubble out words and characters and their tongues to say of beautiful things and the world he would create would be like God’s. His brother was god of his universe, and he had a fiery mind and a fiery tongue that could give birth to so many beautiful things. And he wondered himself if God was mentally ill, and brilliant.

The weather was beginning to get crueler, bitter. The wind grew sharper, feeling like knives to Sonic’s cheeks, the sea began to moan and crash against the pillars, wanting it to feed it as if it was its mother. He could feel the wind turning to snow in what seemed to be such a short amount of time.

He let go of the sides of the pier, his hands unhooked, but his thoughts were still hooked to his brother. Death was a dealer that wanted everyone to think about the carcass that lied strewn on the white bed, covered in white sheets. He could still remember how his brother’s heart stopped beating. He could still remember how nice it felt when his fist crashed against the pig’s snout, like the sea against the pier. His fist was much like the tidal waves here, as his brother’s were made of flames. He could feel the ocean crying and throwing a tantrum underneath his feet, underneath the bridge and the pier, and he knew he wasn’t the only one crying. He wasn’t the only one hurting.

Seagulls turned in the tides of the clouds. He could see a few fighting over a discarded corn dog, children and parents leaving the beach in droves as the seagulls regained their territory. They laughed in their crackly cries and their wings became part of the sky and they ate their spoils, the leftover
chips and candy and hotdogs and fries. They were rulers of the sky and sea, scavengers of the golden loot that slept in the beach’s sand, and he imagined them as conquerors against the humans, the only things alive when the storm was loose and their stomachs hungered for the food that the humans never cared to eat and wished to waste. Their beaks could never be big enough for how big their stomachs were.

Ravens were much the same, he thought. Except they were quite intelligent birds, and he could even admit they had an air of mystery and beauty. His brother obsessed over them, and his favorite poem was “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe, as he was captured by the mystique of the birds. So much like the author of Jonathan Livingston Seagull, he wrote in a raven as the main character, one who seemed smarter and brighter than the humans who ruled the world, and he wondered on their imminent destruction, as the end of the world was coming, and the raven was the only one who knew, and the only one who knew how to survive. But humans never liked ravens. They considered them as bad luck. They weren’t as interested in their sleek black feathers and their nearly azure eyes much like his brother was. So the raven would caw and cry, as more humans began to die.

The seagulls looked at him, with their coal black eye, one of them swallowing a fry whole, and they flew away as he got closer. They wouldn’t deal with the hedgehog, who ruled the world alongside with the humans, even if they considered some of them as second class citizens.

He faced the gray, silver sea, and the gray, silver sea faced him.

It licked his shoes with its gray, silver tongue, and it spoke to him. It said come hither. Come hither and die like the god your brother was, oh your dear brother, art thou in heaven.

The sea ate his feet ravenously, and then it ate his knees, with its frozen teeth and its frozen blue tongue. It wanted to swallow him whole, as he traversed further into the sea’s gullet.

Die here, like your brother. Die here, and your family will never know.

The sea ate his body, and it was licking his head. It thought he was delicious and soon, Sonic plunged further into the freezing sea, the sea overjoyed to have a new meal.

He shivered. His heart shuddered again. He realized his body was as fragile as his godlike brother. The sea beat against him, crying, shouting, wailing, and he tasted the salty body, the salty tongue, and he gasped in the gray silver air and he was choking, much like his brother was before he died.

You can’t live without your brother, can you? You can’t deal with his death, can you? So you’d rather die than deal with it. Such a sad, tragic fate for someone who could be so useful to me. For someone who could be as godlike as your brother.

The plastic binder remained on the beachside. The seagulls pecked at it, thinking it was food, the birds not as smart as the creatures inside the book that his brother weaved. His brother who the sea was telling him was a god.

The sea told many truths but it also told many lies. It once said it would swallow the entire world, much like it was devouring Sonic, as he settled in the stomach of the beast, giving off his final breaths, his final palpitations. He shivered. His heart shuddered.

But it never could eat the world, as the land protected the humans, the creatures, the entire world from being licked off a plate. But the ocean owned 70% of the world. It was fair game to the gods of the sea and the gods of the land.

Why did he keep thinking of gods?
Why did he keep thinking that his brother was in the same league as things that didn’t exist?

It didn’t matter now, because in about five seconds, he was going to die.

5…

Something glowed. Something with a fairy like body, with an orb of light around its neck. It swam towards him. He could see a golden light flicker in the silver sea, as it echoed throughout the ocean, as it echoed towards him.

4…

He could feel the same clutches of death as his brother did. He could feel the same deal Death did with his brother, God. He could feel it crushing him, as he could feel whispers of voices ringing in his ear, as he gulped more of the sea’s stomach. The sea continued to eat, it continued to eat the leftover food the humans left, it even ate some of the seagulls, it was feeding on the world, it was gaining legs on its silvery scaly body and beginning to walk, the dragon it was, with the long slender neck and the blue gemmed eyes that stared at the earth’s soul, the tendrils of hair along its mouth, its silver teeth and silver tongue and silver insides sucking up all the sand.

3…

Why was he doing this anyways? It wasn’t like him to do this. But his heart felt empty. And so did the sea’s. It called to him so many times, so long ago, when his brother was little and half the size of him. It said it had a secret, and Sonic wanted to hear after so many years.

2…

A raven was perched on the sides of the pier, its violet eyes looking and gazing on the horizon. It ruffled itself, the feathers that shined like an onyx as the light refracted off them, it groveling and gasping for air much like Sonic in the sea of clouds, and it cawed and broke apart the ocean.

1…

And oxygen filled his lungs. The breath of life was given to him. But his mind couldn’t contain the fantasy this world now held anymore, as the sea snorted and choked on the sand it was eating, and as the glow of emerald light inside his stomach beckoned him to, as the one who held the light knew Sonic and it knew his brother, it puked out the lands, it puked out volcanic ash, it puked out both Sonic and the god and the raven cawed and ruffled its feathers and stared and watched with its eyes like azurite.

And Sonic’s vision was black, and it was for a while, as he laid across the beach with the seagulls all around him, some wet and trying to flap their wings to go back to the world of the sky, to go back to being hungry and back to their own country before they decided to invade the human’s land, but they were weighed down, as the sea blinked its mercury eyes, sighed as more sand dribbled from its fangs and lips, and it lied down across the ocean’s boundaries again, and it slept, hungry and without a meal.

The orb glowed, radiant and close to his heart, his heart that continued to beat, despite his near taste of death. The fairy thing smiled, its hands small and looking much like a newborn infant’s still pink with life, and it spoke to him, using its fingers, sewing together the broken wires in his heart.

I have a deal for you, my friend.
I can bring your brother back if you want me to. We just need to negotiate a deal. I can’t perform miracles just for free you know. You have to put something in to earn something, like giving the breath of life to someone who could’ve died so many years ago. But I think we can be good friends, you and I. We have something in common. We have the same needs, the same wants, and unlike you, I can grant them for you. You just need to do me a favor. And it’s a relatively tiny favor.

He couldn’t respond.

His mouth was thick with the gray sea’s saliva, his mind wouldn’t let him speak, threaded with black stitches.

And we have another thing in common. When we just faced death in the eye, we cannot speak. We need a moment to rest. I am as mortal as you, as frail as you. I am your friend, and I will grant you your ultimate wishes, if you just do something for me…

The black stitches remained on his soul, his mouth, his heart. He could hear the words plainly, but he could not speak, and he wasn’t sure if he wanted to speak. Because gods were sometimes tricksters, and he wasn’t sure if he could entirely trust them.

The danger is past over. The dragon is remaining in the seabed, sleeping. You must wake up now, and speak to me. I can bring everything you ever loved back to you. Not only your brother, but of your favorite shows long past, your favorite people who have died much like your brother, your favorite feelings, everything my friend! I am a god of happiness, a god of gift giving, and I will not trick you much like the raven god that is sitting on the pier right now, trying to get you out of the deal. It is just sitting there, watching, about ready to strike us, and I will have to tell you that the raven god is a cruel god, a god you should not trust. Since the Indian times they were tricksters, liars, and thieves…

He opened his eyes, first seeing the world since his strange suicide attempt that had gone awry, with the thing in the black oily feathers on the pier watching him still, but it was no longer a raven, but something with curled quills and a pale muzzle, much like him, a creature that was probably a hedgehog, but it only stared and watched, as this fairy continued to talk to him, seeing his mauve face and his body that was much like a chipmunk, with a tail of a rabbit and teeth that shone in the opalescent sun that shimmered and looked they would belong to a pit-bull.

He thought on the promise to bring his brother back, his brother that was once a god, but had died because of the humans, because his body was just as frail as his, and he thought on how the world needed another magician like him, creating magic in his books, creating magic in his heart as it thumped as he thought about him back in his hands again, but he knew he couldn’t go into the deal, eating it freely out of his hand. He needed to know what this god wanted, this god that looked so tiny, so small, compared to his brother, the smallest, most glass-like hedgehog he ever knew.

And finally, even if he was disorientated, disarrayed, he spoke, and he spoke clearly to the Fay monster, as he could remember his brother’s laughter, his joys and happiness still in his mind, and he thought he might’ve done anything to bring him back, no matter the cost the creature would tell him to do.

His brother. His light, his sun, his star. He wanted him back with him. So close to his heart, so close to his eyes that were swollen with tears, to his fists that were white and shook so much he thought they would fall from his arms, he wanted him back so he could be at peace. He wanted him back because he thought he couldn’t live without him in this boring, gray, icy life.

“What do you want me to do? I…really want Wind back. He was one of my…one of my greatest
moments when he was born. Me having a little brother to look after, especially one that was as great as him. He did get more attention than me, but I can understand why, because he was so sick all the time, and he wrote all these stories that I could never tell even if I was the smartest hog alive…”

The binder was near him, as the seagulls began to investigate it, pecking at it to have a little taste of plastic, to see if it was edible. Sonic drove them away, as he picked it up, and cradled it near his heart again, his brother’s tears and warmth near his. Thump. Thump. Thump.

“Your brother is the god of stories, the god of tales, the god of webs of truths and webs of words that intertwine to make that very same story I see in your arms, that is so close to your heart, and you may have loved your brother, Anansi, very much. And we loved him too, except the raven god, who cannot stand stories and truths, and even if he is sitting on the pier, watching us as we speak of our deal, he wants to bring the revival of your brother to an end. He wants to bring your life to an end, Sonic. Because with this deal, I will make you into a god like your brother, your brother who wished for me to give him the gift of storytelling. So it’s a small world after all, isn’t it Sonic? That your brother knew all about the gods and their little games, while you’re about to be sculpted into one too. I say you can be a very special god, one that can revive people and bring people to life with the touch of your hands, and…

“And the price?” asked Sonic. He didn’t entirely trust the creature, who even with his innocent looks, may have been trying to sucker him into something he didn’t want, a lemon life that he never asked for when he would make the deal. He knew he had to be careful. All contracts had lemons. And they weren’t exactly the kind he would taste in his mouth. They were bitter and sour, but he couldn’t eat them.

“I know these deals. There’s always at least something in these deals that make it backfire. Unless you can assure me that this deal is without loopholes, without any schemes to make me lose everything in the end like I always see them on television…”

And the Fay laughed, with his guillotine teeth that could stretch across and devour his entire face, laughing with so much gusto that Sonic thought his insides might burst from all the laughter he kept inside from so many generations, generations of men and women messing up while he was in the clouds, looking for yet another suitable client for his business. His business was a very tricky one, one that required careful hands, ones not too big or too small, one that required also of a mind not too big or not too small, and a strength that was very large and not small at all. His eyes that were very the same color of goldenrod flowers that he saw so much around this Seattle city were imbued with great vitality as he looked up at him, his wings that looked the same as an insect’s flapping so fast and so quick, as he held his contract aloft, along with a white pen with the tip in the shape and color of rubies. Such a high-quality pen for signing my name on a contract that seems to be so minor to this creature…or maybe it isn’t. This whole thing seems suspicious, but if he really does promise to bring my brother, who used to been a god, back to life, then I might have no other choice. I feel like I can’t live without his heartbeat, without his stories, without his eccentricity and his black and white emotions…

Thump. Thump. Thump. He clicked the rubied tip to see a point fashioned out of the finest gold, and he looked at the small, glowing type, to see if there were any loopholes. But all he could decipher was that he would have great power, he would gain a nearly omniscient sight, and he would hear the voices of the hopeful and the sad and depressed inside his head as he fought all the evil things in the world, on the cost of the one wish, the wish that his brother, Wind, Anansi, whatever they wanted to call him, that he would be brought back to life.

“Basically Sonic, my friend,” said the fairy creature, “you will become a god on the very wish to revive your brother. You will join us in the fight against the demons and all the dark lords and
creatures of the planet. You must become a good god, a strong god, and you shall fight alongside other gods with you, to make the planet pure and righteous, lest you will become a dead, never spoken of again in folklore, and you will be forgotten, forever. Even your brother, who you decided to fight for, won’t hear of you again if you fail the duties you will swear to uphold. Once you sign the contract, your brother will be alive, and he will continue spinning his web of stories for you and your family, much like the book you have in your arms, and you will become the Christian God, very much like me, granting miracles to people, listening to everyone’s prayers, making sure the world doesn’t fall into darkness, making sure everyone believes in you. Gods need people to believe in them, after all, Sonic. It’s how they function. And if you don’t sign the contract, you can go back to your miserable life, one without your brother, one without believing in all of these myths and going back to your pitiful suicide attempt because you can’t seem to live without your brother, and it’s either grant a miracle or don’t. So do you want your brother back, or not? I will only allow you ten minutes to come to your decision. I saw what you could do so long ago (as I have these omniscient powers myself my friend, and I both watched you and your brother with very careful, sympathetic and wondering eyes). Sonic my friend, and we need a god like you to protect us. Not like the raven god, not like the one who would rather watch us as we suffer, standing on the pier there, with its opalescent eyes.”

The raven god continued to watch, and stare. It stared at everything, it stared at both the fairy creature and Sonic, it stared at the sunset as it left its blood-scarred body from the silver skies, it stared at the seagulls, who were beginning to fly off into the distance, as the night called, and seagulls did not roam at night, so said the gods who Sonic thought about being. So said the raven god, and the Christian God that Sonic might become, before he would even have a voice to control all his creatures. His creatures without much of freewill.

“So what will it be, Sonic?”
Ten minutes seemed to pass without so much as a blink or a notice.

His brother. His life, his breath that he could feel on his muzzle before he died, was beckoning to him, and he could finish his story, the one about the raven who lived in this apocalyptic society, one where humans had no ears and no eyes. Blind and deaf and dumb. And he could guide them. He could make them have clay ears, clay eyes, and clay senses. He could become the great molder like his brother, to become a claymaker who could bring to life so many wonderful things that he knew would make life so much better, this gray, February life.

And he decided. He decided, as much as how blind, deaf and dumb he was too. He wasn’t much different than the humans in that regard.

He held the jeweled pen between his thumb and forefinger, clicking it every so often, the gold peeking in and out. He couldn’t decipher much else on the contract. Only that he would become a God, and fight for all of the deaf and blind and dumb humans who needed help on this planet. Much like the raven god, who decided to help them, but for some reason wasn’t a favorite with this fairy creature.

He wrote a big cursive S on the paper, until the raven god cawed, it flapped its great stormy weather feathers, and it soared off into the sky, towards the blood-hurdled sunset, and it plucked the pen from Sonic’s hand, as much blink and notice as the ten minutes that suddenly passed between them. And the raven god cawed again, and it flew off into the far reaches of the Seattle city, gone, with a precious pen that could’ve so much as made Sonic into a breather of life and a dealer of death.

The fairy creature took care not to curse when he almost had someone sign his life to work for his will, and he knew that he much hated the raven god, the god that he signed with so many years ago, the god that continues to rebel against him, the one that took his sun and stars away as he carefully
planned and pinned them in the sky, and he wished he could make him dead, strip him of all his godliness much like stripping the skin away from the prime cut meat that laid bloodied and thick with juices of what the body used to be in, but he could only laugh, with his teeth made of thorns, with his cotton-tuft tail protruding away from him, and he told them that he now had more time to think of it, as pens he made for the contract took a day to make, and he couldn’t make them so quickly as he had to mold them into shape much like a claymaker creating all the animals and all the people (who were blind, deaf, and dumb as he planned them to be) as they were imbued with all the things that made him into a god, imbued with ambrosia and mead, and he told them that now because of the raven god, the god that he so much hated when he gave him everything that he needed to make his life a torturous hell even though this fairy like creature had everything and anything that could make him happy. He had more time to think of bringing back to life his brother, Anansi, the creator of stories, the webber of fiction and reality, the constructor of lies and truths.

He wasn’t sure of how long the bitterness between both the raven god and this Fay creature began, but he assumed it was so long that every time they met there was a fly of spit and teeth and cursing as the raven tried to get him to sign as little as people as possible, as if he was…protecting them. Protecting them all of a fate that they couldn’t face. Not even if they were the strongest god of all. As if the raven itself knew of a world that was coming down to its very last threads, and only he knew, and not these blind deaf and dumb creatures like him.

He didn’t assume the raven god was necessarily a bad god. He must be good if he was his brother’s favorite animal. He seemed to know about him and the death of his brother somehow, as if the entire world was connected via web, much like his brother has done with his stories. Maybe he worked with him. Anansi and the raven god, working to fight off all the evil in the world...

He clutched his book even tighter. The satyr like god could only sigh, and tell him, “Come back near the shores tomorrow. I cannot do much else if the damned raven god takes my pen and flies away with it. It is the pen that makes people into gods, and unless you can get it back from the raven god (which will be a really tricky maneuver as the raven god has a limitless list of tricks) then we cannot bring your brother back to life. I realize that becoming a god means so much responsibility, and you Sonic, still cannot handle the burden of your brother’s death. But if either you find the pen or I make a new one (which will take a while, as it is fashioned out of mercury and rubies and gold and silver...oh did I say mercury? Hopefully you don’t get the poison in your brain. It is a very nettling toxin that will make you insane but enough about that), and we can come to a deal. Or you can just pretend this whole thing never happened. Never meeting us, never seeing the experience your eyes have cradled upon, never having almost limitless powers and never dying of either disease or age... unlike your brother. You will become a mightier god than that. Because I have more faith in you. Your brother fancied too much on the arts and was never much of a fighter...”

He frowned, as he looked at the binder. The fairy could only smile, as if he knew exactly what he was thinking in his mind. As if he was his little lamb about to fall for the wolf’s costume.

His life was boring. Except for the death of his brother, nothing happened for around 16 years. He was getting around to graduating high school, but he never found much of that a major accomplishment. It was expected of him. Then there was college. He didn’t much care for it either, and in fact, wasn’t exactly sure on what he would major in. He wanted to no longer be bounded and pinioned by society and the educational system and the fact that everyone around him wants him to have a job and a life and a wife and kids. What if he didn’t want to live like everyone else with their vanilla and white lives? What if he wanted chocolate? What if he wanted it to be black or any other color he chose? He wanted to be free. Much like his brother. Writing whenever he wanted, doing what he mostly enjoyed, being free from the restraints of high school and college since he was too sick sometimes to even attend classes...even if he was clutched by the throes of illness, he respected
his brother for living a carefree life, and if he was alive, and no longer sick, he wanted to live that life with him too.

To live a life of no boundaries. Nothing that told him “no”. Nothing that told him to stop. He loved his brother’s stories because they all were adventures in themselves. And he wanted to live a life of adventure. He wanted to feel the wind moving through his veins, he wanted to feel it gush past between his teeth and mouth and tongue and devour it like he was starved for so long…he wanted to be a free man, out of this social prison, and if he could find the pen that the raven god stole, then maybe…

Maybe he could give it all up, to live a life that was basically crime fighting. To do nearly anything he pleased. To no longer live the life of wretchedness without his brother, the brother that he held in his arms when he was an infant. The brother that he promised to love and take care of for as long as he could live. And he thought his brother’s life was cut too short, by Fate’s scissors.

He smiled, a small smile that seemed like a thin pencil line to the artist as he drew his caricatures. He still held onto his story, the little black plastic binder near his heart as he said, “I’ll be right back.” He could feel the story becoming one with him, nearly attached to his chest as if it was his second heart, as the sky turned violet, hues of blue and black and red. He could see the stars shining on him, the gods that beckoned him to join them in their constellations, to be with Taurus, to fight the galaxy eating dragons with Orion, to drink from the Big Dipper with much zest, to sip the stars and the black night sky with his parched lips that he knew that he had to be a god, there was no other option, it was written in black and white inside his brother’s stories, and he would bring him back, and they could live among the stars together. Because that was what brothers did.

The moon was blue, as blue as him, as it casted down on the black icy sea, the sea dragon’s one eye peeking as he ran across the pier, into the outskirts of the city.

He was going to set himself free.
The Golden Blood of Immortals

Chapter Notes

The song "Immortality" was produced by Pearl Jam. I do not own this song.

He could hear the wind moaning and groaning as he passed through the streets, his feet collecting mud as he stepped into the very many water puddles, the neon lights reflected in them, swiveling and becoming long yellow snakes that wished to devour his foot. He could still taste the sea’s salty breath as he walked on by, the sea dragon not giving him a moment’s break. He could still feel the dragon’s saliva in his mouth, as he spat out the salt, as he regretted to think of committing suicide on this special day, the day where he became a god, the day where he became free, free from the claws and shackles of society and the people around him that beckoned him to be like everyone else in the world, the deaf dumb and blind and useless to the world’s history.

If he became a god, he could change history. He could make all these people no longer blind deaf and dumb. He could make the world into a brighter, cheerier place, without the glums and dirt and fragility that Seattle had often, the city that created grunge and goldenrods and the sea piers. He thought he could change Seattle to a city he could love even more with his brother, his brother, who art thou was in heaven, as soon he would be with him, finishing the story he held in his arms, living with him back in his parent’s house watching TV and discussing how television today was vile and how with the touch of his brother he would make it all better. The touch of brilliance, the touch of civility and the touch of sanity, the touch of ice in an otherwise chaotic world that ran on too hot and full of breath and full of screams and bile. If the whole television world could take lithium to cure their ailing heads that made them think that money was more important than touching the lives like Anansi did with his spiderwebs of truths and tales, then maybe Sonic would actually watch television. Maybe he wouldn’t beg his mother to turn it off, when she wanted to watch what the housewives were doing with their daily drama, their daily wretchedness that made them full of money but no heart and no brain that made them make sense in a world that used to been full of sense.

And Sonic could make it have sense again. Make the rich suffer. Make the poor, goodhearted people rich in both money and heart. With the magic pen that the raven god now had in his beak, he could make everything better again with his touch of sanity, his lithium touch, the sprinkling of salt in a land dried of it. Everyone would have logical answers, no one would no longer be tempted by their emotions as strong as they could be, which meant no more murder, no more thievery, no more hurt words and hurt actions and hurt voices that would beckon to him as he would listen to their prayers, their small little whispers as they told him of every problem and of every thing their emotions pained them to do, to sin and to indulge and punish, he could stop all that as his hands and voice and eyes would become mighty, and he could shake the heavens and shake the entire city of Seattle, shake the entire world if he had to, and he could make the world a free, sane-ridden world where only anything made sense and where there was no money and no laws, because they didn’t need any. A world that utilitarians wished to make, but never could achieve their goal, until he signed his name in the contract.

He just needed to find that pen. He just needed to find that raven god, wherever he could possibly be hiding in the shadows.
People passed him by, without so much as a notice or care. He was used to being invisible in this world. He was used to being gray and fitting in the dull colors that no one’s vivid eyes could see as much as they could try to care to. Even with his family he never was paid much attention, it was always Wind, his brother who could barely lift a single arm as his nose was threaded with mucus and he couldn’t breathe, his lungs ridden of disease and decay. He never could stay in school often as he was so sick he often couldn’t pay attention in his classes, and he told all of his teachers that his ultimate wish was to be granted as much time as he would be allowed by God to write his novels, to publish them, to get his views and his vision out there in the world, to let them know of how much a storyteller with his hands and brain afire as he struggled to keep up with his thoughts on the ravens and the people who were so close to death and they didn’t know it, and he took so much care and pride in his novel that he thought by the end of it he would become a rich writer, one with health insurance, one who could’ve had the lung transplant operated on him if only he had a little bit more dough. But the pigs said no, as he only had a dollar and thirty cents gathered from selling his stories for five cents, his short five hundred word stories that he expected would grip the world as much as money and reality television did. But he only managed to sell a few copies (mostly to his relatives) and he never published his first novel, even if he was given all the time without school and chores to complete his works. That was how much time was constantly pulling against him. He was dead before he knew it, and he couldn’t believe it when it happened. He refused to believe it even, until he could feel his brother’s heart stop beating. His sickly heart. How it longed to beat a strong pulse like his brother’s, who doctors referred as “healthy as a clam” (if clams were even that healthy in the first place with their dirty, sickly tongues that was attached to their entire face).

It seemed like he wished he could trade lives with his brother. At least he had something going for him. His stories. While he simply had high school and college, with nothing to work for except maybe a girlfriend he never would truly love and a couple of kids who he never wanted to raise in the first place simply because the gods of the media told him to do so.

Those were the first gods he was going to defeat while he was one too he thought. Make television nearly nonexistent until he could fix it again. Make radio only static. Make music only mumblings and only sickened murmurs. Make the news only of things that everyone already knew. The mundane, the trivial. Make the media so boring that no one would care to listen to it anymore. That no one would listen to their folklore, and they would be as dead as his brother’s chances at getting another transplant.

He could smell the frying of meat as he passed a Dick’s Burgers as he walked across the near end of Neverwhere Street. The sky was gray, as gray as his thoughts, as gray as he was according to all the people who lived in this city, and he could see the few slits of ice falling down his cheek as it licked him and made it drip from him like a tear, like a barrage of frozen arrows as the snow turned into sleet, and it was frigid. It felt like petrified knives to his skin, and he wished now that he had a coat with him, as the street lights could not warm him up as loud and as bright as they were, as fiery as the reds were and as golden and warm as the yellows promised to be, and he could not see a single man or woman that bothered to ask him if they wanted him to hitch a ride with him in search of finding the raven god that took a celestial pen, the people as blind and as deaf and as dumb as they were to not have a face, to be black silhouettes against the concrete and against the steel and glass of their cars. They only smoked their cigarettes, listened to their rap music that was much louder than his voice could ever hope to be, and they laughed and talked away the night without so much of the hedgehog who wanted to become god, without the mention that this hedgehog who could become a god and wanted to become a god, nearly died today on February 12th, 2012, almost the same date as his brother. Which would’ve been as sad and as unfortunate as his unfinished novels were. As he stepped in more frozen puddles, his feet and heart and body shivering (his heart shuddering), the silhouettes of the lights became long strings of yellow, long glowing snakes that slithered from the puddle into the crevices of the concrete. LED lights are mostly red and yellow and green, and as
flashy as the radiant blue moon that peeked overhead, as it reminded him of the crow god’s eyes
when he stared at them when they were about to sign the deal, the milky eyes flashed a shimmering
green for as what seemed to be as small as milliseconds, and throughout the canvas of the red yellow
and green and blue he could see the glint of clear starlike white, pointed and bloodied and with a
flickering soft milky mincemeat that licked the air of the street, an alive tendril known as the snake
that crawled throughout the city gutters and the city pipes and alleyways, looking for someone as his
victim, someone to devour with his body like rubber that could crease and fold when eating things
bigger than itself, and the serpent hissed with its long white tongue and it bared its fangs and struck,
the hedgehog dropping his brother’s novel onto the wet slick ground and his face stinging as it sunk
its fangs into him, through his skin and blood.

He kicked and flailed and yelled, trying to get the snake off of him, off the side of his face as its
white tongue became pink as it licked off the blood that dripped from his cheeks, seeing what his
blood tasted like, to see if he would be a suitable meal as everyone’s blood tasted different to this
snake. Some blood tasted sweet, some blood tasted like rotten pig meat, some tasted like ambrosia,
like Sonic’s did.

The snake flung his head back, as Sonic touched the side of his face, warm and oozing with both his
life and the snake’s saliva. He hoped it wasn’t poisonous, and he hoped he wouldn’t die (or so he
thought at that moment and time), and he never asked what would a snake be doing in Seattle,
attacking him relentlessly when snakes were supposedly afraid of anything bigger than itself. As he
 glanced at it’s bobbing head and its purple eyes that were small slits from the thinnest knife, it was
decorated with yellow and blue and red feathers that shined like its own skin was made from gems
from the streetlights, and large wide wings that were as white like the stars in the night sky, and his
tongue, so pink from drinking his blood, he thought it looked almost like newborn baby peeking
from his mouth.

And he wondered why such a snake, if one existed outside of myths, was attacking him this night,
on February 12th, 2012, especially when such a creature would’ve been dead in folklore itself, the
only ones believing it existed were the Aztecs who died hundreds of years ago.

He met all kinds of strange things on this night. His brother dying, being eaten by a seadragon,
almost becoming a god himself, and being attacked by the ruler of the Aztecs and their gods,
Quetzalcoatl.

It hissed vehemently, its silver fangs glistened in the golden lights, as it lunged straight towards him, a
flash of colorful feathers and slits of teeth and slits of eyes, as it struck back with its fangs, sinking
into his arm, blood gashing through it. He stifled a scream, as if the battle must be kept secret to the
rest of the world, and he looked at the book that was lying alone on the city lights, still fashioned out
of black and plastic, the story of the raven and the apocalyptic world that his brother created. And he
wondered if this snake would let him finish the story before he died, before he would wrap him up
with his heavy, feathery body and choke him black and blue and devour his entire body, fur and
bones and blood and all. He wondered if that fairy would come and give him a new pen and he
could sign on and be able to fight back. These gods now had a vendetta against him, both the raven
god and Quetzalcoatl, and he wondered what happened that made them suddenly hate him. He used
to have such an ordinary life, with a not so ordinary brother, but he lived his life as restricted and as
boring as it could be before all these gods suddenly wanted him dead. It was too much excitement for
him to handle, too much of his blood being shed just to live.

And yet, he thought, he enjoyed it. He enjoyed being near death. Like the children playing with belts
and their soft pale hands as they constricted their neck just to get a little high, called the Choking
Game. He thought it was a little like that.

The blood that tasted of ambrosia was now Quetzal’s as he lapped it up with great luxury and
slithered around his body, as Sonic counted more of the seconds, the minutes he had before he would die, the second time he found himself facing death, and he thought he was just as sick as his brother, seeing the man with the great black cloak and his body made of bones carrying a giant scythe as much as he did.

But he realized he faced him everyday. His brother, the one whose lungs were always carried with the virus that counted down the very seconds he would be spending on this frail and mortal Earth.

He felt cold. He felt the sleet and the icy blue-blooded body of the serpent, and the last thought he would have in his head was that he wished he was back home, in a warm blanket, sleeping in his bed as he thought over who Anansi was and the message of his stories he made with silk and string.

I could be back home right now…

Reading those damn stories of his…

And forgetting the whole thing with that fairy ever happened…

And just living a life where I’m just as restrained as a cow on a ranch, waiting for my perfect moment to be dead along with the rest of these blind deaf and dumb folks…

I would just be as dead as they were, waiting for their boring lives to end…

He wanted to close his eyes and wish this all away, the boring tinge of his life that stained him, the hatred of the gods as they tried to slay him. He wanted it all gone, and he wondered why he had to exist to be cursed with both.

If only that damn pen would show up and sign me out of this shit…

There was a flare of white lights as they whistled in the air and he could hear a loud boom cracking in his ears as the snake suddenly let go of his bloodied body and hissed again, a hiss not of hate and hunger, but confusion. Sonic could immediately feel the weight of a hundred pounds no longer pressing against his chest, and he breathed in all the air he could, gasping full meals of oxygen that he was deprived from when the snake decided that he had to die today. He could feel more of the flares and explosions near him, sounding like a mischievous kid playing with fireworks and he was using them against the god. As he glanced up at the sky he could see the silhouette of a black bird blasting down the white streams of light, its blue eyes looking down on him, cautiously but yet curiously, and he felt an even stranger moment creep up on him, the moment that the gods were playing with him, as if they were too bored to deal with their prayers and sacrifices and they decided to play on some miserable blue hedgehog who they all thought was amusing in his own pathetic way.

If only he had the abilities of a god, otherwise he would show them all how “pathetic” he really was. No one needed to laugh at him, even after he sobbed about Wind. Even if he nearly succumbed to his suicide. He didn’t need the chuckles and hee-haws of men who were better than most of these humans in this world to prove he really was pathetic and weak. When he would become a god, he would be so strong that he could wipe out this snake that decided he was a suitable victim with one touch of his finger. One touch, and his heart would explode in a burst of black blood dripping on their chest. With one tap of his foot he could create an earthquake that would send all these gods back to the places they really belonged; to Hell, where all the black demonic creatures that seeped of bile and black blood thrived. He would all make them suffer for choosing him, out of all of the people in the world who probably needed to suffer from the wraths of the gods, to bully and stab and pick and eat, and he would make even the gods pray for him to not look at them with his green, angelic eyes and pierce them with lightning.
The crow flapped his wings that looked even blacker in the light, appearing as dark as ink, as dark as shadows, as the creature soon formed into something larger, one that looked a lot like him, with his quills that bled red and his eyes that were no longer blue but as red as the blood on Sonic’s arm and face, his fur as black as his the crow’s feathers, and he could see a tuft of white fur on his chest. A much more different hedgehog than him, both in demeanor and appearance. He wore a hood with a metallic crow’s head on top, with eyes made of sapphire and its beak and face made of tin and iron, rusty as if it lived on for so many years, even throughout the Middle Ages, with his wings that were chiseled with a touch of orange decay.

He looked at him briefly, hiding his face in the mask as his bloodied eyes turned to water, and he held his gun towards the snake who soon transformed into a green alligator, one without feathers and the touch of a god, actually looking about as young as 17 and looked as harmless as a snail near a saltshaker. The necklace he held aloft was decorated with feathers that looked from some extravagant bird from a far-off country with a snake’s fang in the middle, as piercing and as dangerous as it was when it pierced through Sonic’s skin.

After what seemed to be hours of petrifying silence, the crow god spoke, and his voice was low, growling and brimming with anger and hate. Like he assumed most black and red hedgehogs would sound like (the colors of hate and pain), especially ones that were raven gods.

“According to Chip’s contract, if you were stupid enough to sign it, it says that you can’t attack a mortal simply because you’re hungry, even if you haven’t eaten anything in days. If you want to have a meal, actually get a job and pay for food yourself. Don’t eat someone who did nothing to you, else Chip has the right to terminate you. And he probably wouldn’t even mind if I killed you, right now, standing in this very spot without so much as a warning or the sound of my feet moving through the granite. Are we on even terms? Are you going to leave this hedgehog alone? If not, I’ll blast your head open so fast you won’t even have time to remember how good his blood tasted.”

“Why do you care, Yetl?” he asked, wiping his mouth of blood. “I’m starving to death. No one wants to hire me, no one wants to even bother giving me a piece of their bread. They just all care about themselves, not even caring if I die on the streets today or tomorrow. So I needed to kill someone who didn’t matter, so I could get something in my stomach. No one is going to notice, right?”

“Maybe if you actually paid attention to people’s lives, of course someone is going to notice, because his brother just died today, and do you know who his brother was, idiot? He was a god too. Anansi. But of course you don’t pay attention, you just care about getting something to eat. You want something so bad that you actually was going to kill a mortal in cold blood? Gods can punish, but they cannot kill another mortal. You better make a deal with Chip that he won’t take away your powers, otherwise you won’t be a god much longer. No one will ever hear of a feathered snake named Quetzalcoatl ever again, and maybe that’s a good thing, as all the Aztecs were bloody savages who sacrificed their own to give to their gods. And you would kill your own to sacrifice him to you. How typical.”

He glanced at the hedgehog’s blood as it stained his fingers, thinking he should lick them like ketchup, but he didn’t want to anger the god further. Yetl was a god that was far stronger than him, one with a lot more folklore surrounding him. No one cared about the Aztecs these days. Neither did anyone with the Indians, but there were still people who tried to spread the culture for them to understand their race, but Aztecs were all killed off a long time ago. None of their blood ceased to remain. Therefore, it made him weaker. And he knew this was one battle he couldn’t win.

There was no point in battling a fight you couldn’t win, especially to a much stronger god like him. There were gods who always talked of how strong Yetl was, how much potential he had, how many demons he killed in the last month, as if he was a child of theirs, a golden child that would continue to shine above his peers, shine higher than any of the gods that were in the sky, shine bright and
pretty that it would blind his eyes, and when there was simply too much light, too much strength in someone, sometimes he had to run. Run deep in the city streets and continue to starve, starve until his stomach literally grew teeth and ate itself.

And he ran from them both, in his godlike form, licking himself clean of all the blood on his feathers. His blood tasted godlike too, he surmised. The king of king’s blood. He could taste everything about his personality in those few licks. That he was going to be a great god, one even more powerful than Yetl, and he thought he could laugh off the thought of having more gods stronger than him, but he couldn’t deny his tastes, as they often led him to answers, to food, to victory over his enemies. He could even lick the weakness of Sonic’s skin, what he could do to defeat him, but even he didn’t had that kind of power. He licked himself again to reassure himself that what he tasted was real, but…it was a strange, very sweet, very strong taste, like the taste of wine, that only a few gods had the power to stop him. Very few. And he knew that he wasn’t one of them.

“I should’ve killed him right away when I had the chance. Once he signs that contract we’re as good as goners. As gone as goons.”

The night was becoming blacker by the minutes, the seconds, much like his life was ticking if Chip found out what he did. And if his good friend found out too, who also might be responsible, the hungry miserable lot that they were. It was time to go back to drinking sewer water and scavenging for leftover McDonald’s and rotten fruit!

He flew back to their home, their miserable, rotting, stinking hole that they called a home, and he talked with his friend and they yelled and got angry and soon had a pissing contest of who was stronger until they both fell asleep.

—

“Tell me your name, blue hedgehog. And why should I give you back this pen when I know that being a god is only dirty work, something that you’ll only regret when you destroy the lives around you and you eventually destroy yourself?”

His arm was wrapped with a tourniquet of a thick black garbage bag, the only thing they could find at the time. As for his muzzle, the side of his face was still rustic with blood, as he continued to pick at all the holes, ushering in more blood, wishing he didn’t need to answer his questions and just collect the pen and be on his way. He just wanted to be a god because he was bored. That was it. He needed some color in all the black and white.

“Because I want to revive my brother.”

“Anansi? I remember him. He fought a few demons for a while, then he decided to not fight anymore and write all the time. He was a coward, but at the same time, he was very smart, because he knew he didn’t need to handle all this constant bullshit we deal with day in and day out. I’m still not giving it back to you, and I’m still going to steal all the pens Chip will give you, because you don’t need to become a god. It’s a bad job for you. You work 24 hours with no pay, only pain. That was what your brother did, and can’t you see what happened to him? Eventually all the folklore for him died out, and his disease soon overwhelmed him. The only reason Chip wants to bring him back because he sees you as a valuable customer, a valuable warrior, and he wants to sign on only the people he thinks are strong and capable, but…”

“But what? If I’m strong and capable, then what’s the big deal? Just give me back the damn pen!”

He leaped towards him, the jeweled spectacle he once thought he had in his hands, until the raven god disappeared in the shadows, melting away into the darkness, and Sonic crashed into the granite of the street, his muzzle bleeding profusely again. The raven god soon emerged in the light, glancing
at him with a look that one would give when scorning a child, one who was naive and didn’t know much better, so his parents had to teach him a lesson. He clucked his tongue and shook his head, as he thought of how much he wanted to be a god too when he first began, but the choice soon fell into regret. Too quickly. When he wanted to drink all the power he had in his hands, but it was too much for his throat that he nearly could choke on all of it, the folklore he carried, the many demons he defeated, the many other gods he had to kill just to preserve his life, and the lives of the others if some were exactly like Quetzal, eating others simply because he hungered so much for everyone else’s blood. When he knew that as long as the mortals refused to believe in them, they couldn’t mess with their lives. Only the ones who questioned and did believe in their tales and their stories. And not many of them ever believed in an Indian raven god he had to admit.

But the god he could become…so many of them did believe in him, and he found that he could be more powerful than himself. And while he was looking for his best interests and the life he had to live with his brother being the god that chose to not fight demons and only create stories, likely to die again by his own hand and his own illness, he also didn’t want anyone stronger than him. He feasted on the power he had. It was the only good thing he had in this life of being a god. And sometimes he craved more of it, he wanted to lap his tongue all over the delicious strength he gained, simply for fighting more demons and fighting more gods, that he couldn’t let anyone else have that. Not even this strange hedgehog who he could tell had a different reason altogether for fighting alongside him other than his brother dying. There was another reason, tucked inside him, and the blue hedgehog simply wouldn’t let it out to him. It still remained inside him with chains and belts.

Boredom.

It changed people when they were put up against not doing anything for a long time. Hours, days, months, years. That’s what Sonic faced with. Boredom for years. When you were bored, you often did things you wouldn’t ordinarily do. And Sonic wanted to sign a contract with a questionable god and have a questionable war against demons with questionable people he couldn’t ever trust to help him and questionable consequences for deciding to be full of all this great power and having all these abilities in your arsenal. It was very questionable indeed, but Sonic thought he would do it, because living his life full of boredom was questionable in of itself. If he was so bored that his entire body turned stiff, his hands and feet would become numb and he would question his existence on this world, maybe that was why he tried the suicide attempt earlier on February 12th, 2012. It was simply because he couldn’t stand being this damn bored with his damn life any longer, and his brother only made it entertaining with his stories and his constant illness.

How could you be so selfish?

Boredom is also selfishness, in a way. Sometimes you did things you ordinarily wouldn’t do with the people you loved, but if you felt constantly ill yourself with your parents paying too much attention to anyone else but you and never impressing anyone with anything he did but being “average” at everything and having only an average life except for your brother, well, it was time to make his life extraordinary. It was time for him to perform miracles and play with people’s lives. The average, bored, blind, deaf, and dumb people that he saw everyday, he would now listen to them, and he would make them know of someone who was worth paying attention to.

“And I said, what is your name, blue hedgehog?”

He looked up at the hedgehog with the tin crow mask again. He was wearing it over his face, looking much like a plague doctor in the Middle Ages. Sonic certainly had the disease he was trying to cure all along, but the plague doctor was simply making it worse, like he did with every single one of his other patients.

“Sonic. Sonic the hedgehog.”

“And you do realize that now I know your name, once you become a god, I can use that name to
stop your powers anytime. Once a god’s name is revealed, once their real name is spoken, they cannot do anything. So if I say ‘Sonic’, you cannot use your divine powers against me. You will be as useless as a broken needle, this broken needle, right here.”

He pulled it out, the needle that was rusty and no longer as silver and as slim as a tear drop of mercury any longer, with its point bitten off by something out there, or someone, and he wondered why he was even bothering showing him this useless object, that possibly had no significance to anything here, that had no significance on Sonic’s decision.

As he twirled the needle in his hands, the broken spindly top looking like metallic teeth that wanted to sink into him like the snake god, he knew that although he had so much of this power that might be gone from him one day, he knew he would become a god, no matter how much he would try to “discipline” him on the life of one. It just was going to be what it was going to be. But yet, when he looked into his stonecut jade eyes, he felt that he was chosen for it, as if his entire family was born from a line of gods. First his brother, and now him. And sometimes these things just seemed to pass into the family line. Their blood was rich, and full of greatness. And Sonic would become a god that would surpass them all. He felt that he could feel it as the needle was ready to bite into Sonic, chewing on his skin, chewing through his blood and veins.

As the needle made his muzzle stream more blood, long scarlet streaks that crawled through his chest, the mark of the gods and the mark of the magi, he said, “I will give you the pen, if you want to do me a great favor.” Sonic could feel the teeth tear through him, the fangs slicing through his muscle. “This needle…you see, I’m going to shove it in your wounds, and I want you to not get it treated for a while. Just make the needle stay there, inside your body, for all of these years to come when you’re a god (or maybe you won’t live long at all, but for some reason I feel like that isn’t going to happen), and then when you’re nearly dead, I want you to pull the needle out of your face, and I want you to take a long good look at it and tell me what you see. You got that? Trust me, you’re going to die one of these days being a god. I’m even going to die one of these days. New gods come in, they get powerful, and then they decide you aren’t worth shit and they decide they want you to be as dead as a cow on a ranch, slaughtered and soon on the stove as the fat man cooks you to make a burger out of your blood, and they’ll probably feast on it like that Quetzalcoatl was doing with you. Us gods are savages, but it is how we live, and you have to realize that we aren’t as divine as the people who live here. We are as blind, deaf, and dumb as them, but we have only our powers and our other senses to guide us. But in the end, we are as dead as them, except our graves are decorated with stars and the blankets of the galaxy. Take the needle in your flesh, and when it is about time to die, tell me all of what you see, what it pulls out, otherwise I will only say your name when you’re nearly dead from a god who wants to kill you for fame and power and you can’t even fight back, you will be as defenseless as a worm when we dig through the earth and find one and crush it with our bare hands, all the juices and blood seeping from its pink groveling body, dried up and flattened and no one will give a shit that it’s dead.”

And Sonic, as bored as he was, blind and deaf and dumb with it, he said yes as the needle was plunged inside him, his muzzle bleeding and decaying and ripped even more than what it was, except he thought that he would never die, because true gods were truly immortal, their stories forever and as tried and true as time itself, and as he thought on the pride he held in his body, the gold glowing thing that was as bright and delicious as ambrosia and mead, he felt a pinprick as he felt his bloodied and scabbied face, and he could only smirk as he felt the small jolt of pain, as if the entire process was a funny game to him, and the raven god handed him the pen, made with rubies and gold and silver and mercury (but don’t tell anyone that), and Sonic finally had the key to becoming a god. The key that would lead him to freedom and salvation. The key to no longer having a boring life, but one that would make him into a savage, one that would give him an injection of war and hate into his life, the needle dissolving into his skin, dissolving into his vessels, into his tissues and heart and soul.
He wasn’t sure what the raven god was trying to prove to him for the needle to become a part of him. But the raven was a mysterious creature, as his brother, Anansi, would tell him.

As he held the pen in his fingers, he saw the god had dissolved into the darkness just as smoothly as the needle, no longer seeing his bright golden outlines in the shadowy streets touched by the streetlights, but after the battle with the god and the meeting of another one, he considered his mission done, his goal accomplished. He just needed to meet the fairy Chip again and sign his life away to fight in all of these wars, these wars where he could possibly die in.

But dying was the only thing he could ever feel himself become alive in this world. As he felt with Quetzalcoatl. To see his blood running from his skin was a rush to him, his heart beating faster, his breath catching up, and meeting with the darkness. He could see all the gods in that darkness, he could see all the afterlifes and all the Hells and underworlds, and he thought he had a greater vision than anyone now. He was going to be a prophet of the world, a savior, no longer someone blind deaf and dumb. No longer restrained by the mortal skin, his eyes and heart and soul were of a higher power, and he needed to escape from no longer seeing and believing all these religions, all these gods that walked on the same earth as him. He would live a life just as good as his brother before he died, except he would march on the lines with the rest of them, not retreating to his room to his typewriter and creating webs upon webs of escape from the dysphoria they all experienced in their flesh.

And he heard a man singing a song before he left back to his home to treat his injuries, as he sat in the darkness, looking up at the ocean blue moon that he thought would’ve belonged to both the raven god’s eye and the seadragon’s as well.

He could still hear the words of it rattling through his body as he unwrapped the garbage bag from his arm, and treated it with peroxide and white cloth bandages…

Vacate is the word…
Vengeance has no place on me or her
Cannot find the comfort in this world…
Artificial tear…
Vessel stabbed
Next up, volunteers
Vulnerable, wisdom can’t adhere…

He felt so separated from his body. From his own blood flesh and bone. He felt that it belonged to someone else, to someone who wasn’t born yet, a new person developing inside his brain chest and heart. He didn’t want to drown in this new developing person. He wanted to drown in power, in the riches of being a god, not to die in his own skin. Not to decay away while his organs turned gray and white.

A truant finds home
And a wish to hold on…
But there’s a trapdoor in the sun…
Immortality…

Would there be a trick in signing to this creature called Chip? He had to fight, otherwise he would die. His body would collapse. But it was collapsing in itself already. Fighting made the blood run, made his brain fast and his heart and breath race across the galaxies. If he kept fighting, and survived, then there would be no need to worry about his body dying, succumbing to illness or age. He would live on for very many years, more years than his brother ever had in his life. More years his brother would live now once he was revived. He wasn’t sure if he would continue to write his stories, or if
he would fight with him. But he doubted as much. His brother never fought. Even with immortal eyes and soul his body was still weak. Still fatalized with his disease the doctors told him when they tested him at the age of 2, called Cystic Fibrosis.

As privileged as a whore
Victims in demand for public show
Swept out through the cracks beneath the door
Holier than thou, how?
Surrendered
Executed anyhow
Scrawl dissolved, cigar box on the floor

He laid on his bed, watching the lights from the cars go by, the thick white lights racing across the dark contours of his room to the world outside.
He listened to them go by…if he imagined enough, they sounded similar to the waves crashing on the beach, the beach where he nearly died. He could still taste the salty skin of the dragon, as it breathed in and out, its silver fingers prodding the sand…

A truant finds home…
And a wish to hold on to…
He saw the trapdoor in the sun…
Immortality…

He imagined himself on the beach again, watching the sunrise as 5 AM crawled across his alarm clock, the science fiction-like bright green digits flashing across the room, screaming for him to get up. He could only slap the snooze button as he lied on his stomach, with his head covered deep in his pillow, as he fell asleep as the rosy light was breathed out in his room.

Today was the day.

The day his blood would be gold and silver, maybe with some mercury attached to it too.

He dreamed of sweet dreams, dreams he would never have if his blood was red.
The Signing of the Contract

The binder sat in the lonely corner of the city, the sleet covering the plastic case, the wet droplets crawling off, the pages still intact, white and wet and somewhat yellowed by the stains of coffee and tears. It was the story that Sonic forgot, the story that he never read while his brother suffered from his death, of his lungs gripped by the seizures of the gods that Sonic himself wanted to be like, even if the raven god named Yetl told him that he would die miserably like the rest of them. He would die miserable and cold, like his brother’s story, as the ink turned a smear of blue as the sleet and water and rain dyed it, and the pages were twisted and folded and shrunken, and then it drifted away into the golden brown stream of the sewers, to the Civilization of the Rats, and there the shrunken folded twisted rat people saw the story, and with their twisted folded shrunken little brown eyes they read it, even if the ink was blue and black and even if his brother’s last dying breath was released from those pages, saying, “Forgive me my brother, for keeping that secret from you, and now it really seems that you have…betrayed me. Like the rest of them.”

The Dark Wings of Death

By: Wind Alirick (Anansi the Spider God, the Spinner of Silk Tales)

This story is about my favorite animals. And one of my favorite animals seems to be the raven, in their black sleek mysterious petrifying beauty, as petrifying as the snot in my lungs. I’m close to death, and I may not be able to finish this story, and if so, heed these as my dying words unto the world, so I can warn all of you of the world hysterically screaming about its end, and there’s nothing that we sick little mortals can do. And I felt that end too many times, as even though I have revealed to you all that I am something special more than a hedgehog, I am as sick and blind and deaf and dumb as you, and I can only watch as the day’s last dawn, the golden orange October lights that besiege the city as we create our little bonfires and we are warmed by the fire’s glittering flaming tangerine and golden and rustic lights, and you probably never think of where fire comes from, or how we got in this world today, with our broken morals and our broken months and our broken holidays. If only you could sit and listen to my words, and the words of the others, of how we got here today, and how we will end here in the future, maybe tomorrow, and I can tell you how many hours you need to sleep before it happens. Sleep is a necessity my sick and nearly dead mortals, and it won’t be long until I have my eternal slumber, until I have a black bed with roses. The world will have one too, and so will the rest of you. It is inevitable I am afraid, but while you are gathered near the raging spirit of the fire forcing it to cook marshmallows and chocolate for you even though it doesn’t want to and it only wants to destroy and blind those who make it only a slave to the mortal beings, you are relaxed, and you are warmed, by the fire’s and October’s gentle caress, and I believe you want me to tell you a story, one where no one listened.

Alright then.

Please listen if you have kind, soft ears.

—

It was a dark, moon-rusted night, and the crow coughed a mourning caw, as it rustled its black feathers near the pier of the broken world, and it looked back, to see all the fires that burned softly that night, like little gems, like little Topazes, and he could see the thick black smoke as it gathered near the skies in thick, oily clogs and it can only see this world, the one where the mortals inhabited, was a sad and lonely place.

There were too many crows who hunted for worms because they were so saddened by the decaying
meat of the humans. He ate humans, he ate hamburgers left rotting in the trash that no mortal could stand to eat until their stomach was bulging, sagging, and cumbersome, and he ate blood too, fresh blood that pilfered through the streets so much that even if ravens didn’t have much of a sense of smell he could sniff with the small little holes in his beak throughout the streets, he could smell the metallic smell and he tasted it and he could taste their sorrows and their misfortunes, and the humans could only groan and sigh and cry, as they continued to play with rocks the little games they learned so long ago like backgammon. By themselves. No one bothered to play with each other. Socialization took too much work. So alone it was, to play with these little black and gray pebbles.

Groan. Sigh. Cry. He heard it everyday. It never got old. It never got tiring. Except to his reptilian holes as ears. The humans didn’t mind. They just spoke through their teeth and never their tongue to the other animals that roamed the streets.

There were more animals that ate the carcasses of the humans. The seagulls for example. They were much like crows in that regard, except they weren’t as smart. They didn’t understand how the world or humans worked. They just knew that what was left here was theirs to take. So they cut through their skin with their needle beaks and ate and swallowed. Gulp. Of the salty blood that gathered in their throat, staining the white and pink inside. They had white soft bodies and white soft insides, and of course the raven never cared much for them. They were boring, stupid creatures. They constantly fought and argued over what meat was theirs, when it didn’t seem to matter at all who got the last bite of a dying old man who never got to see his grandkids die before him.

And the raven could only sigh as much as them, as he flew off into the silver skies, white rimmed like God’s spectacles. He could see the rest of the world fallen into decay and chaos, as he saw men going out into war, with their armor plastered on like clothes on dolls and their guns and swords raised high and ready to be triggered or swung. And even men who didn’t wish to fight fell before the world, with its glasses that were worn and broken, the shards piercing the white meat of the eye. The white meat that the crow considered a delicacy in all the mortals, the blind deaf and dumb mortals, but often they wished to see before they fell and grovel and shrivel away, and he considered it a wish. If crows like him ever wanted to grant wishes to these people who never would do the same for him. “Stupid crow! Out of the sky before I fire my gun! If I pierce your feathers with a bullet it will make my day, so fly away, fly away into the sun that never shined for us ever since God turned away!” It was what he heard endlessly, and as much as he prized his wings and his animal-like sanity, some men did shoot him, but never struck him, unlike what happened to a few of the crows that flew close. Crows often came in murders, and he never considered a single one of them as his friends. They were only feasting buddies, to eat the maggot infested blood that seeped.

His wings were large black shadows across the sky, cutting through the silver like an obsidian knife, and as he perched himself upon a skull, a skull of a newborn infant’s that a mother was too weak to carry away in her arms, her soft warm pink arms, the raven stretched out his knife like wings and he reached out and cut across the sky, he cut across the night, the stars, the moon, and the sky bled green, the sky bled purple, the sky bled an October aurora out of its guts and innards, and he wished for the humans, even as dumb as they were, to see the beauty he could bring to the people, of the beauty they could realize as they walked and groaned and shuffled and played backgammon with little stones by themselves, as his stone cut wings stabbed through the moon and it bled a blue gem that sparkled, sapphire blood that seeped and spread into the streets, where the men didn’t care to notice, and they only groaned, sighed, and cried, and died as the crow roared a vociferous caw that screeched across the world, and he said to the others, “The End is coming, but do not fear my brothers, for the Heavens, the Nirvanas, the Purgatories are plentiful, if you cared to see what the world can give you, to care of the others that are suffering beside you, and to not thirst for power and vengeance, but I can only be sad and cry for my companions who are supposed to be smarter than the crows of today, as my right eye can see the past, and my left the future, but I see you only suffering in silence, as the world blazes to a cinder to a smoke to ashes, and I can only give you this
gift only once. So you must sleep for the days ahead of you, and think of my words. And pray to the
gods, whoever you worship, to keep your souls, if they’re as good and as pure as you believe them
to be.”

The men continued to moan softly, in sweet blackened agony, as their throats were torn, their eyes
were ripped from their sockets, and their bodies were roasted and their blood was drank. And the
crow couldn’t hold any hope, forevermore.

The rat men saw the plastic story as it sailed across the sewer waste, their little pink noses that were
torn and chewed by their brothers and their clawed blackened hands prying at it and trying to tear it
apart as they thought it was food, until they got the taste of paper that they realized there was
something in other civilizations above that there was something called a “book”, a thing with paper
and ink and words, and they soon held the wet pages in their paws and looked over the first chapter
and the rat men wished they could understand the words of the above, the words of those who held
onto their sanity to tell of stories created by blood and bruises and silk, but they realized that there
was someone who could in their world. Someone who still had a rat tail but understood the words of
humans very well as he used to walk among them many years ago, and they told their brothers to
preserve the pages the best they could and show it to the translator, as maybe they could benefit from
the words of the humans. Even if rat people lost their brains and had only their sense of smell to
guide them, they knew of an opportunity when they saw one, and the story that they held in their
paws, it could have a secret that was tucked inside, and rat men were also curious, and were also
cunning when they could finally think from their drug-injected and Alzheimer’s and cancer like
brains.

The Translator, of course, he knew everything there was to know about the humans, and they could
learn, learn as much as they could as much as their disease-ridden lives would allow.

And they ran and skit across the shitwater and the machines that clicked and purred in their little
civilization, and they were blinded by green and yellow lights, the lights of opportunity and sickness,
as they wished to show The Translator the story of the raven, that little did they know a god created
when he was disease-ridden too.

——

The sun glowed and smiled like a piece of treasure, its golden face that rose and kissed his eyelids as
he continued to sleep, imagining the sound of the roaring waves against his bed, softly rocking him
like a cradle while the old man sung the song about immortality, when his alarm suddenly screeched
and screamed and slapped him in the ears that it was 11 am, only a little short while before the
afternoon could claim the tide of time, and the cars drove on by to work and the edges of the world,
without so much as a recognition of someone who used to been so ordinary, who was suddenly
going to have the taste of mead in his lips. He knew already that he had no school due to the death of
his brother, and his parents were off in their own sad little rooms, either watching television or
drinking boxed wine like their throats were parched. There were other things to drink Sonic said, like
they had a case of Dr. Pepper in the fridge, but his mother so much preferred the box that was in
plain sight in the kitchen, always leaking more pink rosy Merlot. Some had to choose their fancy
poisons, while Sonic chose just plain whiskey at times, but he never seemed to drink it as much as
his mom. Either she drank, or she went off to get some more. Sometimes she tended to buy dinner as
she traveled to get her prize, usually some fried chicken or cheeseburgers from McDonald’s, enough
to quiet his mouth while she gulped it all the more down. His father would complain to her about it,
sometimes he would cook, but often he sat and watched CNN. He just preferred to watch the world
burn than watching his wife burn with wine. Sometimes they didn’t notice if Sonic took a day off
school for little to no reason, but mother was too inebriated, and father was too preoccupied with
Israel. So he often never got yelled at for the things they did. It was his brother they cared about
And now that he was gone, there was nothing more that they could care about now, other than Merlot and senators and bombings, other than dried up sharp black bones of chickens and recorded tapes of the attacks on September 11th, so Sonic felt alone, but he knew he was free now, and his parents couldn’t bat an eye about it. They already lost one adored brother, what would be the risk in losing one they barely noticed, as if he faded into the wallpaper, with his skin that reeked of paint and had the imprints of roses and stripes, that were dark green and white and navy blue?

His wallpaper, after all, still had the navy blues and the colorful airplanes for sixteen years. They never thought he would grow out of it. But his brother’s soon turned to one that looked much like the ocean he almost wanted to kill himself in, with the black jutted rocks where the sea constantly gnawed at.

His mother poured herself some more Merlot and asked where the hell he was going when he packed some snacks in his backpack. He said he wanted to camp with a friend. His mother asked him if he still thought she was a pretty wife. He said yes, and after he grabbed a baseball bat, one made of black metal that had the words “Lil’ Slugger” inscribed with white cursive paint, he put on a hoodie he remembered he bought with so much money on the Internet back when he thought fashion and looks were worth a damn in this world anymore, and he left from the white door that jingled of laughing bells and he said nothing more. And they never saw him again after that. The mother continued to drink, and his old man continued to be paranoid of the Arab men taking over the United States. They never realized he was gone, and no one, except the school and Child Protection Services, thought better of it.

I cannot stop the thought…
I’m running in the dark
Coming up a which way sign
All good truants must decide…
Oh, stripped and sold, mom
Auctioned forearm
And whiskers in the sink
Truants move on
Cannot stay long
Some die just to live…

12 pm when he got to the beach again, near the hospital where his brother whispered his last dying words. Once he was alive again he thought he would let him live in the shack that was near here, alone and with rotted wood as its skin, and he could buy him a laptop to write his stories. He didn’t know what the shack contained, maybe some old tools to keep the beach clean, but he could throw them out and leave room for a small desk and a place to keep his files in. They didn’t need to eat any more fried chicken and cheeseburgers, they could eat steak for breakfast and have lobster for dinner. His brother would be a millionaire who got rich off his stores, but always lived modestly in his little rusty shack by the gray sea, getting inspiration every time it turned white by the soft glowing hands of the moon.

He had the bat in case anyone wanted to cut him raw again, but he also had the pen of the gods to sign the contract, and he listened to the breaths of the sea dragon as the sky moaned and wanted to scatter a little rain, as he shivered (and his heart shuddered) under his gray hoodie, waiting for the fay to return, the chipmunk that promised him a life full of riches and power. A life that all the congressmen his dad watched always had, but never seemed to have a complete control of when their wives claimed they were gay or they cheated on them with a prostitute.
He could see the white waves drift to the shore. He could see the sun turn a glaring white as the rain continued to dribble on him, and his grip tightened on the bat, and he shook it a few times, and he watched the seagulls as they flapped their wide wings and tried to fly as fast as Jonathan Livingston Seagull, tried to reach understanding and acceptance and the concepts of the universe like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, and Sonic could hear the wind sighing to him, the sharp wisps like little cold blades, telling him that maybe the fay wouldn’t be here today, that he had other clients, and that maybe he should return home to his mom and dad who didn’t notice him gone, except when the Merlot was a little low on supply.

Waiting. He hated it. Sometimes he did listen to the wind. Sometimes he did listen to the ones who had the same namesake as his brother. But this time he didn’t want to. Not when there was a life of power and freedom to live in. He told the wind of the constant neglect he lived in, and it sighed and understood, and it wished for his brother to be back too, and it said maybe the little shack would be a nice place to live in, and maybe the beachkeeper wouldn’t mind, if he wasn’t so busy getting his ass drunk from Budweiser. At least it wasn’t wine.

1 pm. He still shook his baseball bat, while he listened to the cries of the seagulls and the roaring of the sea as it clawed and wretched away at the beach. The sea dragon was angry again, with its delicious meal perched too high on the beach, and it wanted to lick him again, devour him, engulf him into the silver body, but the rain and wind soon stopped, and the sun tore away at the sky and poked through the clouds like little needles that pierced the skin and it bled white lines of blood. Sonic was drenched, from the sky’s droolin, but he considered it devotion to the creature that would sign him on. He held the pen, the blood of the sky shining on the rubies and the gold of the pen’s needlepoint, and he clicked it back and forth, waiting. He still felt cold, as Seattle always was, especially in February. They said it would warm up soon, that the groundhog said spring would be here before they could even see their own shadows on the skin that bled much more than the sky’s, but he always considered that as media’s interpretation of the seasonal cycle, always wrong, always sensationalized for the kids. He never knew why people still considered it a tradition for the groundhog to determine winter, when he was always wrong, when he never saw his shadow because he was always too fucking cold to even move out of his cave. But he would have to make it his job to make people smarter. To make them into geniuses who never did wrong and who never spread lies and who never could see color or sexual preference. People were always people, and he would make the world realize that.

Rat-a-tat-tat of the bat. He thought he could see blackness on the piers again. The metal and tin of the raven god that Quetzalcoatl named Yetl. He seemed to listen to the waves and the breeze, as when you were a god all inanimate objects all had voices instead of simple names, and he could see his blood-ringed eyes as he stared into him, bored into him, as if he was close, only a few feet away, but he soon realized that Yetl was quick, and he was soon so close that their faces, their black noses met, and he knew that even with the thinking of the night and the slow arrival of morning, he still thought he would be a god, even if his life was already miserable and that he wished it simply for it to get worse, to constantly rain of blood and decay and sadness and forlornness.

And he thought he wanted to laugh. To laugh at how stupid…what was the kid’s real name again? Sonic? How stupid Sonic was, to choose a life like this. Even if you had power, even if you had riches, even if you had love by your side, the world would only turn darker, the world would only die faster, and poor Sonic, he didn’t realize that. He thought there was no cost in having everything. But only when you had everything you would soon lose only the things that mattered more than everything. His life, his love, his family…if he had much of one. It seemed that his parents didn’t care that he wasn’t in school at this time, at 1:45 pm, with a baseball bat that hung over his shoulder loosely like it was an attached body part the pigs in blue couldn’t cut, and a hoodie that made him appear as the usual Seattle hoodlum. Of course, no one could see him, seeing as how he was a god, but they would question Sonic even more than him, even if he was wearing the head of a raven
embroidered with tin and metal. He flapped his metallic wings, the ring-a-ting-ting being sounded off, the sheet alloyed metal that gave him the ability to glide towards him effortlessly, like a hawk careening towards its prey with hungry, sharp eyes. Of course it was a thing that defied logic, flying with metal and nothing more than that.

But he thought that the stupidity from the humans defied logic everyday. Of course the gods couldn’t try to guard people who were this stupid, would they? But Chip, the fay, seemed adamant about them all protecting the lives of humans, even if they seemed to be so useless, so easily broken apart like toilet paper. But of course, there were some gods who weren’t afraid to wipe their ass with human lives either.

His great wings kicked up some dust from the sand, scaring the seagulls off who seemed to surround Sonic, wondering what was in his bag and if there was anything edible to devour to fill their scavenger bellies. Of course, he knew it was because ravens were constant sworn enemies to the seagulls, as they stole a box from them that contained the sun the moon and stars, and they never forgave them since.

“So, despite what I warned you about, you’re still going to sign on to become a god? Despite that I told you that it is a life wracked with misery, it pays only in pain, and even if you seem to have all the power in the world, you’re going to die as horribly as the humans we protect? And that I can kill you once I say your name, any time I want? What is it to you, Sonic, that you want to become a god? To have all this responsibility thrust upon you, when you seem to never have any in your life, except the death of your brother. Are you blind? Are you deaf? Are you dumb? Why would you consider being like us? Why would you want to become as savage as Quetzalcoatl, who bathes in blood everyday and drinks and feeds on it despite us never being allowed to kill humans unless they directly involve themselves into our lives? And why would you want to be like the thunderbirds that shine and flash at night, that look like streaking stars that burn out and fizzle away like a flame on a candle at night, wondering their existence in this world, wondering if the next day they will die, because they’ve been looking forward to that day for so long? Or how about the Maiden of Death and War, who kills so many humans blinded by wrath? Or how about you, who is supposed to listen to the cries of help from humans all over the world, but you can’t solve all their problems, else they won’t learn, else you can’t interfere so much in the lives of man? The only people in this world who want to become a god are simply fools. I was a fool many years ago, and you have the appearance of a fool all over you. Tell me why you want to be a god now, else I might as well kill you right now, and just end your suffering, seeing as your parents are too wrapped up with their own worries and concerns?”

He grinned, the pearly white fangs, iridescent in the darkness of the clouds, and he spoke loudly, he spoke with the rumbling of the wrathful gods when they shook the Earth with their mighty hands, and he said, quite simply: “I want to bring my brother back. And I’m bored. I’m sick of my body. I want a new one. I want one that will suit me, with all the mightiness that Chip would allow once he turns me into a god. And why not? I think it would be fun. I haven’t had fun in sixteen years.”

“And what would you sacrifice for fun in this day and age? Your life? Your family? Your brother will return, but not in the same way you saw him. Chip was angry with him when he didn’t choose to battle the demons and only write stories. He’s going to take away his powers and leave him as a sickly hedgehog who has no other purpose in this world, other than to sadden you that he left so suddenly when finally his cystic fibrosis overwhelms him and stops his heart and lungs and turns them yellow and full of mold. Your brother will simply die again Sonic, he will die again and he will have no other purpose in the world because he will lose all talent, he will lose all the powers he used to have as a god, he is now a spider who can’t spin a thread or has fangs that reek of venom. He is a useless spider, one that is commonly smashed with newspapers anyways even if he meant no harm. Do you want him to go through that? Are you stupid? Are you selfish?”
The crow god could see the flicker of shadows before it occurred, his one eye that allowed him to see everything. He briskly gripped the bat before it could strike him, the bat nowhere near his head before he reacted swiftly, bending his knee and pelting his chest, the bat now freed from his tight white gloved hands, his once proud smiling self now gagging and struggling to get a full breath of the sea air as his lungs were hurting, and he gripped his body with his great taloned hands and hurled him across the sides of the beach with very little effort, the blue hedgehog continuing to cry and gag as saliva dripped from the sides of his mouth, as he lurched his body and wriggled like a little pink worm he felt like an infant again. As defenseless as one, acting like one, weak and tears flowing from his eyes and spittle flying from his mouth and speaking unintelligible babbling. His bat laid in the sand, as vulnerable as he was, as Yetl picked up the bat, his black shadow overcast on his curled up body, as he could see the bat so high in the sun, as if it was about to hit him itself for all the sins he committed in his life, that the sun was his god, and it was going to beat his brains for being bored, for not caring about his brother, for making so many stupid decisions that the great flaming and golden hands could only beat him senselessly to teach him a lesson. It was the only way to make the poor, naive, sniveling, weeping, 16 year old hedgehog who never had any fun and was bored out of his mind, to have some excitement, with the touch and screams of death.

“I’m going to say yes to both of those questions. Any last words before I crack your head wide open like an egg?”

His breathing was bubbled as he stared at the bat, hoisted so high in the sky, ready to split open the skies and ready to split him apart until there was so many of him, split apart like glass, split apart as it shatters on the sand, the pieces shining and ready to cut open anyone’s wounds who dared to step on him.

“Yeah, I have some final words.”

The bat still higher than the sun, ready to thunder down.

“Fuck you.” He coughed, believing he could see some bloody phlegm rush out of his throat and into the sand. He was just like his brother. He was just as weak as his brother. He was just as dead as his brother. Cause of death: Cystic Fibrosis. Cause of death: Crushed with a baseball bat while meeting with a questionable youth. Yetl looked no more than 17. He had pearly white fangs just like him and he looked like a fool too. But he was too blind to see that they were a lot alike. Maybe they were long-lost brothers. His father probably fucked around with a lot of women before he grew out to be a paranoid near schizophrenic levels man who taped all the worst world events that ever happened.

September 11th…

“Well, I’m going to be doing you a favor. I’m going to kill you and rid you of your boring life.”

The death of Princess Diana…

He looked at the shit he spewed. It certainly had blood in it. He could be sick too. Maybe somehow his brother spread the cystic fibrosis. It wasn’t contagious. But it was contagious through genetics.

The JFK assassination…

And he could see the bat slice through the air, and suddenly, in all those last few precious seconds, he could see everything slow down, like the whole world turning into molasses. But it certainly wouldn’t be sweet as molasses, even if he couldn’t stand putting that shit in his mouth.

Hiroshima…

He expected the blow to his head coming in this moment, ready to split, ready for his mind to bleed with black blood and his brain to be punctured with the shards of his skull.

Pearl Harbor…
The blow didn’t come, but he saw the golden, mercury-molded, rubied pen, and the fay smiled, and said, “Sign here.”

The Holocaust…

The birth of Hitler…

The creation of the universe…

And he signed the best he could with his weak hand, his signature a scrawl from a child. But it didn’t matter. The deed was done. The old Sonic, the bored, 16-year old, blind deaf and dumb Sonic, was dead.

And like Jesus, he rose from the dead, a new person, a god.

And at the contact of the bat next to his head, it shattered, like pieces of glass, to so many fragments, shiny and piercing and innocently looking up to the crow god, wondering what happened to them, wondering what made them no longer solid and hard and blunt, now sharp with still the ability to kill.

His face was just as blunt as the bat used to be, with nothing to show, no remorse or no anger that Sonic wasn’t killed. He knew only that if he survived (his one eye should’ve told him, but there are things his one eye couldn’t catch at all), then…the contract was signed. Sealed. And might as well have been a signature made with the very prick of his finger and the scrawling of blood. He couldn’t catch it, and it happened so quick before he could smash him to bits. Sonic was no longer a 16-year old boy with parents who didn’t care at all about him, who was going to die alone and nameless in the great big world that had absolutely no room for people like him. He was a god now. And as his one eye gazed upon him, glowing brightly with the vigor of flames, he could see that his future…he couldn’t believe the bits and pieces that came to him as all the scenes became part of a mosaic, colorful, especially with the vivid hues of red and blue, red like blood, blue like sorrow, and those colors were too bright, but the blood was dark, and the sorrow was even darker.

Even when he was about to hammer him down with the bat, making his body bloody and blue and black, he knew that it wasn’t in anger or zest or pride, it was simply that he wanted him here, alive in the world of the dead, not living a life of misery, living a life of pain and agony.

He looked at his body. The sun shimmered down his quills, appearing as azurite as the moon last night. He could feel that the pain in his chest was subsiding, and he was trying to pull himself up, the phlegm dripping away from his throat. His wounds from the night before were quickly healing, the scars and tears of his arm were fading away, his cells replicating swiftly, his shoulder no longer pinioned against his lacerations, the sting of moving his arms freely gone, in so little seconds, in so little time. The rewards of becoming a god were painless and came with the expectation of defeating so many demons, as the fay, Yetl knew, had so much hope for him. Unlike him, the fay hated him, and knew that he would try to murder him before he could sign the contract. But as much as the crow drowns in misery, tries to flap its wings into the sunset until the wax and feathers melt from the heat, the humans, the seagulls, the preparer of the documents, always won. And it wasn’t any time soon the crow would win again. Especially not in a world full of blind deaf and dumb people, much like this Sonic. Who now had the ears and tongue and eyes and fingers of gold, who knew most of what gods knew for just being born from the imaginations of humans. It was the birth of his image, the birth of a god that was widely known, that stretched upon the many lands with His mighty fingers, made of stone. He was Yahweh. Yahweh, the defender of the Earth against all that was evil, all that opposed him, with his voice that reeked of rain and thunderbolts and his eyes that were a wide-seeing, wide-believing mirror. As He stared, the humans and the other gods would stare back at him, and only see their reflection. Their true selves, their morals, their upbringing, what kind of
person it made them out to be inside, as either their organs were bright and full of vitality or were rotting and bleeding and would soon blacken upon the sun’s glaze.

And Yetl saw himself, with his black wings covering himself, his eyes full of tears, his body broken and stripped away, and he knew he was seeing himself as Yahweh truly saw him, and as Sonic saw all the information that seemed to prick up to him and stab him in the brain, he saw that Yetl was as much as a suffering caricature as the crow was always shown in so many works, that he was truly like a raven, as he gazed at the obsidian-sliced pieces of the bat that lied around them, and all he could say, with his voice choked and gagging, “And now you will forever know of my name, Sonic. My name is Yetl, nevermore. It is Shadow. I was given no first name, and no last name. Only a nickname. Just Shadow.”

Nevermore.
The very same poem his brother loved, back when he was alive.

And he didn’t see his body anywhere, full of oxygen and full of lungs that could breathe and a brain that could tell him to type all the stories he wanted.
And as his pupils dilated right in front of the black hedgehog, great jades the same color as Quetzalcoatl’s skin, he coughed up yet more bloody phlegm and felt that his lungs were sticky and braided with ail, but with so much of this god business suddenly happening to him, he could only think nothing of it and leave the thick spittle of blood lying on the sandy floor, darkening the white sand to a darkened wet pile, that soon dissolved away as the sun continued to shine with its golden rays, as he thought he could see a great golden eagle embedded with gems up in the sky watching them with great needle-like eyes.
The Rise of Night and Storm

It was raining again. The rain cut like small cold knives on his skin, on his cheek that was still healing, the red reddied bruises as the needle continued to prick inside him. He wished he could cover it, as he covered himself in his sweatshirt much like a shy and hurt tortoise, protecting himself from the cold wind that continued to stab him, with the sea that continued to lick a little at the bridge of the beach. It was a wet afternoon, a wet night, and he knew how much everyone seemed to say Seattle was nothing but a rainy city. A rainy, snowy, storming city that seemed to be the epitome of the swirling eye of God, his moods as he rages over the sea, over the city where most of His men sleep, and he wondered if Seattle was as debauched as Las Vegas or New York City, with God constantly watching, constantly crying, over the men who sinned so much, including him. Including Sonic, who was a god, who was just like God, who was now Yahweh, with his refracting mirrors and his wings that gleamed in the ample lights of the sun that continued to crawl towards them, his armor that was made with the whites of purity and the blues of sorrow, with the scales of the sea dragons and the teeth of men who have all sinned before him, the white fangs that become silver as the blood of all of his mortal enemies, the demons, continue to be shed on him. He now had a rod that was fashioned out of the same material as his armor, with the gems of sapphires, with an orb that seemed to contain so much power, the orb where all his powers lied. He wasn’t sure what he could exactly do with this rod, but he figured soon he would be able to find out, as Shadow was now with him, sniffing out the scent of demons, their skin always smelling like singed hairs and singed organs. It was their mission, Chip said, to find any demon eggs that were lain across the city, and to smash them before the demon could get out and wreck on the lives of humans, without knowing a little of what they were doing or what they were seeing with their blind deaf and dumb eyes.

Sonic wondered if the whole entire world could see him. A bright, shining, powerful god. His parents would be so proud, if they cared at all for him. They probably cared more for the white wines and Merlots, and the men with the gattling guns who were going to war to stop terrorists. They cared more about these somewhat trivial things than him, a god who could protect them, who could decide on their death like the drop of rain.

And he wondered if his brother was alive with them, if he couldn’t see them. He would be at his typewriter, or his laptop, coughing and hacking so much phlegm, writing more of his novel. And his parents would read what he wrote and smile at him with so much gleam and happiness that they would completely forget that Sonic was gone, that even his school, that even the government, wouldn’t notice. Sonic disappeared off the face of the Earth without a trace, and no one in the world barely noticed or care. He knew that being a god was the only thing he could be. His life was only amounted by average grades, bored parents, bored teachers, bored friends, and boring talents. He could belch the alphabet when he drank an entire can of Mountain Dew. He was a little good at football and soccer, but not enough to be accepted on the school’s teams. He could sing a little, but not enough to be accepted into choir. He only had little talents, little sparks of flame, but they weren’t enough to strike the match. They weren’t enough to burn down the whole world. So he could only become a god and burn the world in all of his power, while the humans barely cared or noticed about their own Earth. Humans only fretted about things when they lost them, they realized that they couldn’t last without them in their meaningless lives, but if the world was gone, they wouldn’t fret about that. They would go into another meaningless life as brain dead amoeba on another planet, and carry out their coffee drinking, traveling and cursing and sex fiendish ways, and even God wouldn’t bat an eye about it, except that He was lonely, and He was sad when he had no one to watch or help. That was why He created people and animals. Because God couldn’t imagine standing in this great big void like ourselves, as we kissed the night every day, with no friends or families to see us (or so this writer would assume, if she was caring more to the people outside of her world). He made us in our image, and like Him, we get lonely too, standing in this great big void of a world. And Sonic felt
that way. He felt everything was a void, and that he was only making a leap across it, but he wasn’t sure if he could make it. He wasn’t sure if he could land on the big black cliff that was crafted like a gem of onyx and live another voided life, or he would fall and be forgotten even among gods. And he soon learned with Shadow that gods knew of every life, of every second, of every minute, of every hour, wasted and consumed and birthed and no longer existing and dead and gone, they were like heartbeats as they learned of all the lives and time that passes and given into, and Sonic thought he would go crazy, learning of every baby being born under the stars and having their heart beat with them in time, or of a disaster striking a nation he had to learn the name of and of every life that was burned into ashes and disappearing under a cloud of smoldering smoke, and of every child cradled, of every dead body being buried into the earth and having his heart not beat along with theirs, and of every snake that hissed and swallowed, of every dog that barked, of every tap on the keyboard of computers, it was like he could hear the whole world pitter and patter and shout and whisper and cry and sing, and he thought it was so crazy to have ears that could hear everything, ears that had eyes inside them that could see everything, ears that had fingers that they could feel everything, and of having eyes and ears attuned to all of the world and to know everything and to know of every man who was telling a secret you were supposed to not know and of every man who shits and of every man cheating and of every man masturbating, it was all insanity to him, and he could only close his eyes as the rain continued to pour over him, as he sat and touched the scepter he was given when he became a god, and he could see Shadow in the distance, with his tin and rusted feathers and his raven eyes that had the same color of fires and garnets. He thought he was listening in on the thoughts of the demons that roamed the earth and he thought he could sense it whenever they would lay an egg somewhere in this sinful city, the one where God constantly cried and raged in, as the sea cried and raged with Him, as Sonic thought he would cry and rage in too, as he could hear of how many humans were pathetic and beautiful and holy and dark, and it seemed unfair to him, of how much life was in such vivacity, to just sign a contract, one that sealed his life, and his brother’s when he was a god, so long ago.

He coughed and could see more spittle in his hacks, and he wondered if he was becoming sick too. That gods could catch colds. That they could catch cystic fibrosis.

Maybe his brother was in a place he wouldn’t think of being in, but he didn’t think of that. He didn’t even think of it as his nose continued to stream and his lungs seemed to be wet like the rain. He only thought of asking Shadow questions, about the demons, of what they looked like, of why they wanted to ravage the world, of how to fight them. It was the only thing he could think of caring about at the moment. He was a god, and he had enough of worrying about every life that entered and left the world.

“And what are demons exactly, Shad?” Sonic asked. “What color are they? Why do they want to take this world from us? Is the Bible right about them all along? Why does Chip want them gone? Who is Chip exactly?”

He could hear him no matter how far apart they were, as even the raven god could hear everything in the world, even if no one seemed to believe in a trickster Indian god anymore.

“I don’t know who Chip is either. All I know is that he is a creature not of this Earth, and that he wants to help humans, even if it just seems like a burden to him. He says that he has a vision that is more capable than the humans, that he could see so much more in the world, including colors that humans could never see, of shapes we never have heard of, of things we can’t even imagine because our brains are not capable. He may look cute, but he is wise, and he can see of how many demons roam the lands, and he gave us that power too, because it is demons who give us our grief and our anger and our pain, it is demons who cause tragedies and deaths and all the horrid things some see everyday. Chip says the world needs a few demons, and some are in fact good for humans, but there are some that are unneeded and will only cause unnecessary pain and suffering, because demons
reproduce and don’t care of whether their young are useful to the world or not. They just want sex. They just want pleasure. And sometimes we have to rid of the world of some demon eggs that are laid in various places throughout the city, in our own zone, because if unattended to, many human lives could be at risk. And even if it seems like some lives are not as useful as the demons we let live, we can’t let them go from us when it is unnecessary. I know how crazy you seem to be with the heart inside you that knows everything about the humans and knows everything about the time and place, but Chip says the world needs to be in perfect order, that the world has to be functioning like clockwork, else the world will fall into chaos, and he will feel as if he has failed the humans. Chip is a timekeeper, and every second has to be of some use to this planet, and if not, he goes ballistic on us, even if we seem to waste only one second. All demons are different and have various sizes and shapes and faces, some menacing, some that look barely harmful until you get into their bad side when you try to kill it. And as for the Bible you were surely fed to when you were a child, we can say that they are correct about a few things and not about others, much like the entire book is itself. I’m sure you’ve eaten shellfish, right? In Leviticus you can go to hell if you do, but that’s only because of how society was. Maybe people got sick when they ate shellfish. Maybe it made them crazy. Maybe demons were born whenever someone ate shellfish and shit it out, who knows? The only thing I can tell you for sure is that now that you’re a god, the only one you can listen to is Chip, and you better please him, or it’ll just go downhill from there. And you wanted a better life, right? And you wanted a new skin, an exciting life, right? Then listen to me too, because even though Chip isn’t exactly fond of me, I know of a few things he doesn’t know, and he hates it. But whatever you do, don’t piss him off. Else you’re dead. And forever dead. Much like your brother was, until you wished for him to be brought back. And you said you were average, that not even your parents cared? Then no one is going to wish you back. Not even me, not even Quetzal when he’s hungry.”

It was a sad fact, but he knew it was true. Not a single man would mourn him. Everyone except his brother, but he would die before he could be a god again. He most likely didn’t want to become one, he would only write out his sorrows and escape the life he used to lead, the one with his mother drinking waterfalls made from Merlot and his father watching CNN for 18 hours a day, only taking breaks to eat, shit, and sleep.

The city began to become more alive as the sun shifted towards the Earth and sunk down, deeper into its primordial star-studded dip for the moon to awaken, to lift its crystal-sharded eyelids from his eyes. The moon was yet another object of both God’s, and the humans, affection, as it is often a symbol of beauty, a symbol of the reawakening of life, darker, sinister, full of thought, full of sin. And as the moon awakened, as it yawned and burst forth the stars and the city lights and the wolves and the raccoons, so did the people awaken, for the nightlife inside Seattle. They went to clubs, to have their minds brood of a spectrum of colors they never could think in in the morning as they thought about their art and why no one appreciated it when they went to the poetry readings and the late night art galleries, and the moon was only a wicker of wax, a single white flame glowing to Seattle, as more people grew hungry, more people grew vivid, more people grew full of lust and full of pride, and the night shone also with its red and yellow and green orbs of light that gathered around the streets, the lanterns to the melancholy of the city, and as more people surrounded the building they were perched on, Sonic grew lonelier, more miserable, as he could imagine the thousands of people that came towards them now, blind and deaf and dumb as they were, reaching out with them with their pale moon-fleshed arms, and Sonic thought the world wanted to see him choke, wanted to see him die of the sadness he gathered inside him ever since he grew to be 8 years old, the sadness of parents only caring about a brother who was so much better than you, of being nothing noteworthy, to be as insignificant as the single dust that flew with the wind, as it spoke to him and kissed him to heal him of the lonely days that were long gone past. But the humans, even if he became of the most powerful god of this Earth, they would never fully acknowledge him, only know of his miracles, to believe in him, but to never see his face, to have his existence be proved wrong by many antagonistic Darwin loving soporific brainfelt atheists as they only had to say a few words to prove their points to
the believers who seemed so stupid and unwise. But to Sonic, to not believe nowadays seemed to have no imagination, no hope, no wonder, and he, even with his sadness and negativity as he cried out in his wrenching heart about the miseries he withstood for what seemed to be so long, he believed that the moon had a great face, and that it was a creature of God’s design, to give light and luminance to the things we often do not see when everything is pitch black, as dark as the chasm to Hell.

But yet he wanted to talk to the people who probably believed in him, to give them hope, because he barely had any before he realized of his dream to help people, to be the guiding lantern in so many people’s smog-filled lives, to feel their heartbeats resonate with joy and their hands as they created rivers of what, rivers of words, rivers of numbers, rivers of sounds, but Shadow knew exactly what he was thinking as he heard these thoughts all the time with foolish gods, and he thought with the telepathy that only gods themselves could understand as their minds were attuned to everything, and he said as his hands shifted through the muck of his mind, the black sludge that Shadow thought was only hope gathering in his brain like moss to a rock in a algae-infested pond, I already told you, being a god is a lonely business. Because you can’t talk to any humans while we’re doing our job. We can’t make friends with them, socialize with them, we can’t do anything with them unless they send you a prayer you must answer, but even then, you have to be quiet about it. Gods shift like shadows, they have to be silent in all their movements, all their actions, because they can know a little about our stories, our mythology, but they can never know the real truth about us, because they would lose their mind. Trust me, I know. I can’t tell you anything about it, because you’re only a bored sap who only wanted this job because his parents apparently never cared about you. I know more than there is to know, and the Earth thinks that’s dangerous. We’re only the light as we hit the windowpane, the black bars separating the humans to know our true organs. The true organs and the true beating heart of the sun and light.

His heart. It beat faster. It drummed with the sounds of a thousand booms, a thousand beats, a thousand jolts of electricity, as if a thunderbird has risen in his heart, spread its great white frosty veined wings and continued to jolt his heart, bringing it to life with the shocks of its jagged fingertips, and it shuddered, and he could feel it moving upwards towards his throat as he saw the great big white flash in the metallic sky, as he could see the white fangs of God, the thunder and lightning beginning to awaken from the mouth of Rage and Envy. Thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump thump. It beat, faster, faster than he could possibly move with his shoes made of the greatest leather and the wings of Hermes, and his nostrils was filled with the smell of singe, the smell of fire and brimstone, as he could see the dark shapes of the demons from far off in the land decaying in the light, as they prepared their beastly bodies to have hateful and passionate and mournful sex, as he could hear their maniacal cackles along with the crackles of the steel sky, and he thought he could hear the sound of wings flapping, the feathers of electricity as they crackled and boomed and singed off the bird that was gliding in the sky, with his mercury filled eyes that were like the silvers of splashing water, with a scream that Shadow told him in his telepathy that could sear the flesh off your skin from their sheer power, their sheer explosions of their voices, and Shadow knew of the coordinates of where the demon egg would soon be laid, and of the god who was seeking him, because he was hungry for the chance to have more folklore in his system, to have more shimmer and gleam in his feathers as they shined and screamed at the eyes, and Shadow told him of this god, this god that was supposedly his rival, along with a hoodlum sister who he protected, and his brother who was also a thunderbird, but ran away to achieve some higher purpose in being a god. And what exactly was that higher purpose Shadow didn’t know. He hadn’t seen him in years since that night he fought the thunderbirds, the night where his life nearly went out like a flutter and flash and wisps of smoke like the breath against the candle.

He could only think to himself that there was some action now, some drama to all this lonely business, but he heeded Shadow’s words that being a god was a tricky and lonely business, and
maybe he wouldn’t grow to like this either. But it was still better than living an insignificant life were you where constantly in your younger brother’s shadow.

“I found out his real name was Storm. Of course, I’m willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and to not say his name so early, but he is a very cocky, very useless god among our ranks, but yet he’s still alive, collecting almost as much folklore as I am. He has a sister named Wave, who actually didn’t choose to become a god, but decided to follow her brothers and take care of them instead. Their brother who ran off from them was named Jet, and he was a thunderbird too, just as bad as Storm, more cocky even, more willing to risk the lives of the humans simply for their own gain. They don’t care as long as they keep living. They don’t care as long as they are still powerful gods among this earth, and yet despite all of this Chip considers them better gods than I am. Simply because I warn of newcomers of what there’s to come when they sign the contract. Luckily for us however, Storm is very stupid and gullible, and if we manage to not have his sister tell him any better (as his sister, although a hoodlum, seems to possess a near genius IQ when it came to common sense and street smarts). The demon is marked at the Waterfall Garden farther off here, and if we can get there quickly with our godlike abilities, I’m sure we can stop him before he feasts upon that egg. And besides, it’s time for you to enter your first battle, Sonic. And you will learn that even with all this power, all this strength inside of you, you can still taste pain. You can still taste defeat and utter disappointment.”

He revealed his metallic wings, spread as wide as the moon’s glowing hands as it reached across the horizon, leaving a blue tint in the black tapestry of the night, his wings the silver glint like the stars inside the night’s mouth, the silver teeth that lied adjunct inside its yellow green and red insides and the gray and yellow tongue that tasted of the people that walked beyond him, into the mistress of the night, into the lure of dreams and sex and sweat and ideas that were born under the white neon light that said, “Open, and welcome to the dark world of the Night, and we hope you can stay and not sleep until the dawn comes with her rosy fingers, and she begs you to stay up to the soft pink glow of the morning. Not so my friends, not so. We shall stay up all night, and stare at the stars as they watch us, until they stab us of all of our sins, and our blood lies awake in the darkness’ tongue, lapping it all up like a kitten drinking and mewling away at her milk. A harsh mistress we shall beg on and pray, the only mistress we ever listen to, as her face shines like pearls and her eyes the clear glassy sapphires that command us to fuck, steal, and kill. The only queen we shall listen to, instead of the rosy cheeked morning. Fuck her, and fuck the sun, we shall only listen and lie awake as the stars stab us again and again.”

He could see the sharp jabbing lightning ahead as Sonic flew with his newly birthed star studded wings that he learned stabbed the demons of the night, oh how sharp they were, how angular as they looked upon the people who fucked killed and stole, how shrunken and saddened their faces were as their blood spilled on the carpet of the god’s House, but they were only men who sinned, men who no longer were going to heaven, and so Sonic left them be as his wings stabbed at the men who cried and moaned and wished their sadness would be sucked away from their souls, their blue and black hearts as bruised as their bodies, their eyes as clear as their criminality, as they cried on what they used to be, and he could see the thunder bird’s wings shuttering and shuffling and flashing and sparkling like glitter with the flash of grenades, they boomed and laughed and exploded across the night, as the rain began to get much harder, God’s tears running across their bodies, as He cried about the men who sinned too, and He wished to use the thunder and lightning as handkerchiefs, but they were sharp and as fluid as the scars on Sonic’s cheek, as it bled again.

And he coughed yet more bloody phlegm, the little drops of blood dripping down from the sky. It was like the rain that was crying from the sky. And he hoped no one got his blood on their head, because he thought this disease he contracted would’ve spread to the human world like a fire in a toy factory. Millions would be dead, simply because of one drop from the sky. Everyone would get cystic fibrosis, the same disease that claimed his brother, wherever he was, alive and well
The Waterfall Garden sparkled in the moonlight and the lanterns the glowed with an amber ire at the entrance, Sonic watching as the people barely cared to notice them entering the park in the late hours of the night (but of course the humans could barely know what the gods look like or what they’re even doing, as said time and time again in this story, and in Sonic’s mind, that they were all deaf and dumb and blind and only listening to the Night’s chorus as they all lived the life of debauchery and sin and only followed the glow of the moon than the shadows of the gods as they watched and waited on their footsteps), Shadow opening the gates with his godly powers, the quiet of the night stifling and the frosty air chilling them as it continued to pour, as it continued to blaze with white flames in the sky, as it continued to crackle and boom. Sonic could smell the waterfall as they entered the park, the metallic smell of white water rushing from the crevices of the park, and other than the rain, the only sound that was audible was the roaring of the water, as it bared its white liquid fangs at them and as they got closer they got wet, but they knew that it would only melt away in the god’s light in a few minutes, as it continued to stream forth on its very many white and sharp and wet feet, rushing and running and stumbling over the rocks and into the pool below them, where they could see the black egg floating discreetly. The demons were having sex underwater, (possibly mermaid demons Shadow thought to himself) and the black egg that looked much like a flea’s was bobbing up and down, with the marks of Hell so clear in the moon’s light that Shadow knew this was the demon egg they were searching for, and he walked into the mouth of the waterfall to pick it up. He stared at the sky, seeing the metallic skin rumble and roar and nearly bleed in the white pus that the thunderbird could summon with its screams and cries, and he knew that soon, it was going to be a battle, as they couldn’t run anymore, and the thunderbird was coming, in so few seconds. He simply rolled the egg gently in his fingers, wanting to crush it underneath them, as he didn’t need the thunderbird to come here. He didn’t need anyone to come here. Just Sonic and himself, waiting for the god’s to go away under the moon, under the breath of the skies as it continued to cry and sniffle and moan as the rain continued to beat on their bodies and the thunderbird’s fire glowing discreetly, the boom crackle flash as he could see the egg wavering as his fingers tried to reduce it to rubble and dust, and Sonic could hear his heartbeat booming much like the thunder, he could hear it shuffling and shuddering and sighing under the wake of the thunderbirds.

Boom…thump thump thump…BOOM…thump thump thump…

The thunder was in rhythm with the heartbeats of the world, with everyone’s coffee-streamed hearts as they went to the cafes and talked about their ideas, and before Sonic could say anything about his heart, before he could warn Shadow about the rise of the eve of the thunderbird, he could hear the cinders of the sky and the flapping of wings above them, the wicked fiery laughter and the mercury-rimmed eyes as it scanned the horizon and saw both of the hedgehogs in the garden, just lollygagging and not doing the important works of gods, and it only wanted to laugh at how much time they were wasting, on how they tried to find the egg before he could, but nothing could outrun a thunderbird (as their wings could fly at the speed of light, much like lightning), and with the white flames of its beak crying out to the moon, ready to pull it towards the flames of Hell, it flapped and glided towards them, the white sparkle of its feathers visible in the light, the skinny and bone-like legs as they stretched and scratched the rocks with white thin lines that looked much like cocaine, the bird grinned with razor sharp flaming fangs and it said to them, with a voice that reeked of nails and screeches:

“Hi Yetl. Want me to pound you again so I can get my folklore and you can get yelled at by Chip again? Chip always liked me more than any other god out here, and he will always like me more than you. Why don’t you give up on trying to reach these demon eggs before me? You know that thunderbirds are faster than crows. They’ve always been faster than crows. I’ve always been faster
than you, and nothing is going to change that fact!”

“Oh shut up, idiot. I was here trying to get Yahweh his first folklore but since you came in here I’m
going to have to teach you a lesson again. I don’t care about Chip’s approval. I try to warn people
what they’re getting into before they become gods, but apparently Yahweh never listened to my
words. So he’s here with me, and you better take it easy on him, because he doesn’t know anything
about his powers. It’s time for you to teach him, before I fry you and make you into fried chicken.”

The thunderbird laughed, and Sonic could feel his skin being pulled back with long, slender fingers,
and he tried to keep them there, as he needed his skin. He needed to live. He needed to not show his
organs, how disgusting and black they were, to this world.

“You’re going to teach him about being a god? I never got to learn from a battle. I just tested them
out. But this god looks weak, and I’m sure I’ll make him dead before you can say anything about it.
I’ll teach you what it’s like to be a god little man, and I’ll have you know that the life is fun, not some
life of misery and pain like this idiot would tell you. Chip says he doesn’t know anything. He doesn’t
know a damn thing in his little black and red head of his.”

Sonic had heard enough. He wound up his fist and prepared to strike the thunderbird on its mouth
that gleamed of white sharp knives, but the bird disappeared like the shadows in the cloaks of night,
his knivving teeth still apparent in the darkness, its mercury eyes still visible in his vision, and he
laughed as he could feel his skin bleeding and cracking and wounding, and he said, “It’s going to
take more than that to defeat me! I’m faster than anyone in this world, Yahweh. I’m faster than Yetl
even, and I will show you that I’m the most powerful god around. Chip said that to me, and I will
prove it to all of you!”

The bird sprung forth lightning from its wing tips, streams and veins of white flames heading towards
them, as the bird disappeared in a waver of light, the mercury still plastered in their minds, the bone
chicken-like feet running across the world with his wings flapping and singeing the air. Sonic could
smell the burnt leaves as this thunderbird struck the trees in the garden, black, wrung like black coils
of ropes, decayed and burnt and dead.

Shadow reached into his belt, the light shining off his tinned armor, and he unloaded one of his guns
and aimed at the silver eyes, and Sonic could hear it clicking against the black walls of the night as
he fired two rounds into the sky, the sparkled streaming light exploded and vanishing and sucking up
all the material and oxygen like little black holes in the galaxies as he could hear a boom and an
explosion nearly louder than the thunderbird taking the skies apart, and he could see the silver eyes
as they flashed away from the decimated night air and the bird laughed and shrieked and glided
towards Shadow in light’s speed. His eyes flickering and his sharp white knives pointing towards
him and his wings crackling and singeing and booming and crickling and the bird’s bone legs
reached out towards Shadow’s eyes, like little ornate daggers made in the Indian times, and he
wished he could take them and stab Shadow’s eyes and make them even more blood red as he
scratched his head and made him bleed in thin little red lines, and he cursed and shouted and fired yet
another round into the bird. The bird shrieked again, as he could feel the star’s hot white flames into
his feathers and skin, but the lightning and thunder protected his beauty.

The bird glided awkwardly towards the waterfall (one of his wings in pain from the star’s burst), and
he could feel the sting of the gun’s fire, but he simply could make it disappear if he thought more on
his anger against the hedgehogs. He lit a lighter under the sky, the steel becoming white and
corroded as he summoned more electricity in the sky, ready to burn down the whole world, and
Sonic held his scepter as it glowed into the moon’s light, absorbing all the lanterns and all the light
from the bird’s wings. He could see the blue gem ready to shine the whole world in its great
aquamarine arms and he didn’t know what to do really, as he was only a novice god who was just
born unto the world who didn’t know a thing about his powers or his abilities or anything as the
night cried and the rain continued to drip and cut him and his fur was streaked with the gray water,
and he could see the thunderbird’s silver eyes as they rose in the night air and tried to attack the raven
again who continued to shoot off his rounds into the bird’s face, and he wished he knew what could
unlock the scepter’s power, to blast the bird from the sky, to protect Shadow as he knew he was
starting to…starting to…

The scepter continued to glow under the hot amber light, with the cool gem that was florescent and
seemed to mix in with the gold and the blue into a deep emerald green, and he thought on the
thoughts he has been thinking in a long time, the thoughts he couldn’t think with the high speed of
the day, the high speed of the life as a god, and he only closed his eyes and felt the rain pet him, felt
the rain stroke him and tell him that the world was a better place than what he thought, as he could
hear a voice echo into his streams inside his brain, and he thought it sounded familiar. He thought it
sounded like a distant family member. Someone familiar. Someone he had known all his life.

I didn’t want to be here in the first place. You just didn’t felt right with your body, with your organs.
And I didn’t felt right with my voice. Make the world cry about you as much as you want, but the
world will never change for you. The world will never change for you…or for me…

He flapped his wings and targeted the silver eyes in the air, the bird crackling and singeing and
laughing and smirking with his teeth like sharp white pallid needles, and he held onto the glowing
scepter as it contained some sort of unknown power inside it, and the world moved in blurs. The
black and red turned to smears, the white and silver were streams of metal in the air, and he held his
teeth with his tongue and he held his pupils with the white liquids of his eyes and he could see the
thunderbird about to bring down yet another streak from the sky, yet another white glowing artery
from God to burn down more of his life, to burn down more of his gods, and he put the scepter near
its earholes and he smiled with his rickety teeth and his rickety skin that his scars soon turned into a
smirk by the same slender fingers that wished to peel his skin back…

No longer will you fly the skies and burn down everything. No longer will you be the flames of the
moon, the flames of the sun, the flames of the stars. No longer will you treat my friend to your
vanity, to your lies, to your stupidity. It’s time for you to go back to your home, to your hoodlum
little dirty home where rats like you belonged. I don’t want to see your face again…I don’t want to
see your face again…I don’t want to see your face again…

His voice echoed through the fragments of space, through the fragments of the waterfall as it
streamed on their wings, as it made their fur wet and slick and the bird’s silver eyes poked and saw
that the scepter shot a light that shined like the water in a river, green and crystal and opulent as
Shadow could hear the scepter shot that screeched and cried across the skies, across the worlds,
across the purgatories and Hells of the world.

The thunderbird’s white flaming feathers were singed. There was only pink fleshy skin where it
remained, and the mercury-rimmed eyes were only small and blue with a pupil, and the bone-like
legs became booted feet as the bird fell into the waterfall, and the streams launched itself with its
white feet and made him drenched through all his feathers, and Sonic could only gaze at him as if he
was naked and translucent, that the bird Storm showed his real form, and he wasn’t happy with the
outcome of the battle. He could only cry with his knifed beak and know he was beaten by a newbie
as his scepter was strong and capable of bringing down a god in a single shot, and with what? What
could make the scepter have this power? He didn’t know, and he only lied in the water, in the clear
translucent, naked water, and he could only think of his defeat, and look at the hedgehog, the
newfound god that he knew he had to despise.

And what is your name, young one?
Storm. I called myself that. I called myself Storm.
Do you have any parents? Where are they? They must surely care about you.
They don’t. They left me here in the streets, and I survived because my sister cared more about me than anyone else I know. My brother however, I don’t know where he’s at. I never knew where he’s at. He’s a cold brother. A brother made of ice.

Why did he leave your sister?
They had arguments. They didn’t like each other much. He wanted to be more powerful than any god in the world. He wants to be in the stars just like the Greek gods. He wants to be remembered for all eternity. He wants to be remembered for everything he did to this world.

And what did he do to this world?
Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

He could see the blue hedgehog staring at him with his jade eyes in the water that was covering him to hide his embarrassment, shining in the light. The sun was beginning to rise up, the rosy-fingered dawn beginning to seek the humans that still had no sin, had no debauchery in their lives, and who lied awake to greet the morning.

Sonic rolled the demon egg in his hands before it suddenly cracked like an egg, and the red liquid seeped into his hands, into the gem he carried in his hands. His folklore, his first one, was replenished, and he was a little stronger, a little more ready to fight the other gods. And this was his first fight too, which he felt proud, as bristling and loud as thunderbird’s thunder and lightning.

The red blood of the demon soon disappeared, and he wound his hand to his fist, as he tightened them and stared at the bird who called himself Storm, the so-called thunderbird that would defeat the raven Yetl. His feathers and body was drenched as he removed himself from the new set of clothes he thought would protect him for a little while, he stared at the two hedgehogs with his small blue eyes and could only wish he won, as he knew his folklore was soon running out, and he couldn’t be going to Hell, not with the promise he made to his sister. Not with the promise he made to see his family who was probably nonexistent for all he knew.

“Yeah yeah, I lost! What else do you guys want? I didn’t know that Yahweh guy was so strong, but now you can leave me alone! I’m not going to bother any of you guys anymore until I can get more demon eggs, without seeing you Shadow. You’re always trouble. Chip told me that too. He says you’re always trouble and you always bring trouble with you. Just like the crows in Indian times. Just...just shut up!”

“We didn’t even say anything, Storm. You got yourself in this mess in the first place, and all I want you to do is leave this place before I change my mind and decide to destroy you and your folklore.
I’ve had enough of you and your sister trying to terrorize the other gods into giving you the demon eggs when you don’t deserve them. Let them deal with the demons themselves instead of bullying them. And maybe then you can become powerful without being a nuisance like the rest of these gods can be.”

He knew he should’ve said nothing more and flew away from these gods, but his first instinct was to taunt them, as he still believed he was the most powerful god of them all, but he only couldn’t find the demon eggs faster than the others to not engage in a battle with them, as he was only weak because he couldn’t find enough folklore. He was only weak because other people bullied him. Other people constantly told him how stupid he was, how thunderbirds were the weakest gods in Indian folklore. The only one who seemed to care about him was his sister, gods and goddesses bless her heart, wherever she was right now.

“Oh yeah? Well maybe I’ll find more of these demon eggs myself, and I’ll be able to destroy you, Shadow! I’ll make sure Chip is happy when you’re dead, because you know he never cared about you. He says I’m the most powerful god there is, and...”

With the flutter of black wings and the laughter of the wind, there was nothing. Nothing. Not even a hack or sputter from Sonic and not even Shadow telling him that he was an idiot and he was always
wrong. They left before he could tell them of how wrong they were, and he knew that Shadow never stayed long to listen to his speeches, but he always had the instinct to say them anyways. If only his instincts would stop. They made a fool out of him every time. Spiders always listened to their instincts to make a web, and it was a piece of art. But his instincts always got him into trouble. If a spider had shitty instincts, it would be eaten by birds like him all the time.

He could hear the seagulls beginning to awaken as they flew over the Seattle skyline, ready to find more meals to scavenge. He fed them sometimes, because he was close to them. His sister told him not to, that they didn’t need food and they were only nuisances, but he felt he could relate to them. They were a lot like him. Drifting around, trying to fit in with this life, trying to find as much food as he could before they would die. He felt bad for them. And he wished he wasn’t a god anymore but he could live among the seagulls, and find a new purpose in life, much like Jonathan Livingston seagull did. He never told anyone that. Not even his sister. He often looked in their black tunnels of their eyes and saw hope and vivacity that he thought he could never see in anyone else’s. But Sonic’s eyes…those green fires that continued to burn and that singed as much as his wings when they were imbued with electricity. There was something about them that made him wonder…if he…if he was more than an ordinary god. That something was going to happen between the two of them. He wasn’t sure, but he couldn’t stand Shadow being stronger than him, simply because he had someone who was so gifted at being a god, a born prodigy.

And he flew off, as the blue of night was opening up, as the lid of bright golden rosy-cheeked dawn began to open, and he could see the sun as it rose in the sky, saying hello to him. But he never said hello back. He only ignored it and waited for the mistress of the moon to rise again.
The Blue Hedgehog, Split in Two Halves

Morning awoke, the dawn broke in the sky, and Sonic continued to clasp himself as he choked and sputtered on the mucus that was clinging in his throat, in his nose. The illness seemed to get worse, it still continued to clasp him with great wicked black hands as he fought to breathe, fought to conceive of why he was sick with this cystic fibrosis, much like his brother who died of the same illness, who died of the same wicked monsters named Fate and Disease, who wanted Sonic to rot in the ground with him. Of course, as long as he kept battling demons he would still be able to live (although suffering from the wretched disease), but if he caused the same errors as his brother, he knew that that would be it. Even if his brother’s typewriter beckoned him to arise and write more elaborate stories about crows, even if it beckoned him to fall into the details of the worlds he described, of the creatures and characters he devised, and of the situations he planned, he was dead, to return to it, no more. His lungs were so filled with soot and thick yellow slime that he couldn’t breathe anymore. And this would happen to Sonic too if he never fought the other gods for their demon eggs, to replenish his folklore. But how he got it was the question. He remembered about asking Chip to raise his brother from the dead, to cure him of his illness, but he didn’t know where his brother was at. He knew he couldn’t return home, as he wished to remain missing, to not have his mother and father to realize of their sins in raising a child and to lock him in the house. He realized if such a thing had happen he would be able to get out with his godlike powers, but he didn’t believe in breaking the promises of caring parents, of his brother, if he was there at all.

But everything crumbled apart after his brother died. His mother drank more as if she was always dehydrated to decay, and his father continued to sit in the den, watching the news, paranoid of the world. They always acted like this to a certain degree, but it worsened when the news of the only son they cared about was gone, the only son that they praised, that they noticed that wasn’t hiding in the linoleum and the papered flowers in the walls, and their hearts blackened, rotted away, and now they only cared about the other worlds that lied awake for them, the world of having a delirium, the world of terrorist attacks and explosions and the rotting flesh of the men who wished to protect a country that lied to them about saving a land that was pitiful and nearly beyond repair, and Sonic himself thought that he was the same. Pitiful. Beyond repair. There was a pile of broken, dirty dishes last time he looked at the sink as he left his house. His mother said she was doing the dishes with bloody, cut and serrated fingers, and as she stumbled in the drunken morning with her case of Merlot by the fridge, Sonic didn’t even say goodbye. He thought it didn’t matter to either of them. It was Wind they cared about. It was Wind they talked to. Ever since he was alive, his mother and father only exchanged a few words, a quiet, solitary childhood except he exchanged stories with his brother, and even with his childish and stumbling-with-the-keys-with-his-small-pudgy-fingers finesse, they typed out a story on his father’s old typewriter (as his father used to be a reporter back in the 60s, a time where his father actually went outside of the house and was remembered as a intelligent, bright man with many friends). And Sonic wished he could remember what the story was about, as it was a fond memory of how much him and his brother bonded over that chilling afternoon in September, in the arctic sunlight as it glazed over their father’s desk, as the trees were turning fiery orange and his father was preparing to make a bonfire, the smells of burning leaves as it sapped all their dew and rain as they curled up and turned black as the fire devoured all the orange like an eater of colors, and he wished he could have those better times with his brother again. Even if he stole all the love from his parents, he realized that he stole the love out of him too, and even if there were times where they fought, times where they cursed and screamed and called each other obscenities, they were tight-knit, a woven thread of red.

And he carried out his illness. He carried out everything that made his brother dead. He coughed again, as the sunlight reached out to him with a golden palm, and he thought he could hear his brother’s voice echoing inside his head, wanting him to remember of the other times where they were
friends, not a carcass that looked frail and white, not a broken brother who no longer knew what was wrong and what was right.

Remember the time…Remember the time where we went to the beach, and we collected a lot of seashells? I liked some of them because they looked like opals when the light refracted them, their pink and green and purple coated hides, and I wondered if we could live like the hermit crabs that had shells like that, to have a house like that, to live on our own except with each other and just write stories all day, without anyone bothering us. All I ever wanted in life was to be a hermit Sonic, to write my stories all day and think about them without anyone bothering me, and even if no one reads them, I’d have lived out my dreams, my fantasies, my world as I want it to be, as I create all these characters and they all do my bidding, you know, like a god. I can live like a god in my own little home, my own little shell, without mom and dad telling me I have to go to soccer practice (you know how much they wanted to be like the all-American boy) or that I need to go to school learning things I already and don’t need to know. Sometimes my stories are all I need in this world. My characters only understand me, and maybe you do too, Sonic. Maybe I shouldn’t have become a god. Maybe I should’ve just got a meager job like everyone else and just lived out in an apartment away from them (but of course you can come visit any time you want Sonic), and just write in my typewriter, the same one dad used back when he was a man, not a slouched beast watching the news all day and wondering what these reporters have got more than him. I got support from my illness on the Internet from strangers who expressed their apologies on how fragile people can be, but the only one who truly wanted to listen to me was the typewriter, and you.

You’re listening, right Sonic?
Right Sonic?
Are you there?

With eyes full of tears he wished the world would never see, he slammed the payphone on the receiver and sobbed, on a day that rained like last night, blue and gray and white like Seattle usually was.

Please insert 25 cents if you wish to make a call, the phone droned on and on. Please insert 25 cents if you wish to make a call. Insert 25 cents. 25 cents. 25 cents…

His brother was in a hospital, as blue and gray and as white as Seattle. He was bone-thin and small and hooked up to so many wires and tubes, like a child’s doll hung up with strings, as the child didn’t want to play with it anymore and the spider soon made a web in the concaves of his shelf. He couldn’t imagine that such a thing could happen to him. Him and his brother, they were always the only friends they had in life. Sonic never bothered making friends with anyone as he deemed them boring and flat, his brother was always teased and picked on how small he was, how much of a “nerd” he was because his face was always hidden by a book. Always something by Dickens or Steinbeck or Thoreau. His brother was such a genius with words that he was considered a prodigy, as he read classics as early as age 9. And because he never fit in with the other children, he was always the target of bullies. But Sonic knew it was because they were jealous, because his teachers had him picked out for a soccer team as a goalie because they felt sorry for him, because they wanted to please his parents as they would say it was one of his dying wishes. Sonic was an outcast, never being liked much by the other kids, but he requested to his principal that he wanted his brother to remain in the same school as him no matter how smart he was (even if he missed a few assignments due to his illness), because he was his protector, his guardian from the bullies. Even if Sonic was never noticed by other kids like his parents, bullies feared him, because he considered himself stronger and fitter than them, and he could throw a good punch if he was angry. He made them cry and promise to never pick on poor Wind ever again, because he was his brother, and they would always remain friends who would stand by each other.
But he couldn’t protect his brother from a disease he had since he was a baby. He couldn’t protect him from having the wrong DNA, the wrong genes. He couldn’t protect him from being in a hospital about to die. And he felt helpless. He felt as helpless as this phone, that wished for him to insert 25 cents into its slot, the operator who told him over and over again there was not a single person who was called God and no he had to use prayer to talk to him, not a simple phonecall. Please insert 25 cents if you wish to make a call. Please insert another 25 cents if you wish to talk to one of God’s advisers.

So he inserted another 25 cents.

The voice on the other end sounded sweet and melodic, but yet it belonged to a man, as he said, I know someone you can talk to when your brother dies. You’ll have to be willing to make a deal with him. Because if you really wish to bring your brother back to life, it’s going to cost you a life of misery, a life of pain, a life of guilt and regret.

“And what’s that going to be?” he asked, his voice sullen and hollow. “I’d rather have my brother have a happy life than me living out my life without knowing what kind of a man he could’ve been if God gave him another chance at life.”

Well, here’s the kicker: you’re going to have to become God yourself. Have a life just like the big guy. And you know how much He suffers? Hoo wee, you should’ve seen Him when His son died. He was all tears and sweat. Of course, some say that God has multiple personalities and that His son was another form of Him, and in a way that’s true, because God suffered so much He split into three people, if you know what I mean.

“Wait…” Sonic held the phone away from his ear, his eyes trying to see through the man at the other side, what he looked like, and why he was telling him these things. If only voices you didn’t know contained the images of the person saying it.

“Who the hell are you? Why are you talking to me? You’re saying you can bring my brother back to life, but…”

But what exactly, my little man?

“But you’re…you’re…”

I know exactly of what you’re saying, and unfortunately, I think your time ran out. Got another 25 cents? This is a payphone after all. And turns out this is a tolled line. Unless you want to hear that woman’s sweet voice telling you of putting another 25 cents in, I’m afraid that I’m…

“I don’t got another 25 cents! Please tell me what you-…”

Goodbye.

Please insert another 25 cents if you wish to remain on the line.

He could hear the droning beeps, the droning wet sound of the cars as they drove on by, their wheels hitting puddles and gravels, their red lights swiveling and fading into the star-studded night, as the amber lights awoke, as he could see the buildings and the people flicker to light as if someone hit a switch on the world’s panels.

And he placed the receiver back on the phone, silent, wondering if the whole thing he experienced was actually tangible or just a dream, just a psychotic hallucination he made up from the trauma of his brother dying.

And it was raining again. The nights turned from blue gray and white to black gold and red. He
opened his umbrella and walked back to his parent’s apartment, looking to see if he could find the
lights from the Harborview Medical Center from the distance, seeing the one room his brother was in
was flicked off, as he was sent to the world of dreams, the world of forgetting.

And he told his parents the tears from his eyes were just the raindrops that gathered on his face.

He could see the cityscape before him in the golden mouth of the sun as it drew its tongue on
everything, the lights weren’t as bright as they used to be as the red green and yellow became only
shrunken silhouettes of color, as the sun outshined everything, as the people went back to bed, as
some were ready for work, ready for church, ready for chores and errands and not the temptations
that night brought. The sun was holy, and everyone now had to do holy things in front of the holy
sun, because the sun was God’s golden eye that he used to see everything that happened in the
streets, and as Sonic’s shadow grew long and lanky, his throat was still clogged and his nose was just
getting used to the warmth of the day, as he sneezed and hack and felt himself as frail and as swollen
as the streetlights, and he thought he could hear his brother’s voice again, as he stared out into the
horizon.

Sonic…
It’s…
Me…
It’s me, Wind…
I’m inside you…
You’re sick with my disease…
I gave you the illness, I gave you the reason why you’re coughing and hacking…
I’m killing you my brother…
I’m killing you…

He wished he could pull the voice straight from his head, to see who it was was speaking to him.
He heard the phenomena of schizophrenics hearing voices in their heads. And he thought he
could’ve been one of them. He’s been hearing this voice that sounded like his brother for all of this
time he’s been a god, and he wondered if the god business was going to make him insane. Make him
as sick as his brother, except it would all be in his brain, not his lungs. His genes cursed him too.
There was a schizophrenic in their family, and he was their father.

Sonic, never mind that. You’re not schizophrenic, I’m sure you’re not! It’s just me…inside your
body. I was revived, but I was put inside your body. I don’t know why, but I guess Chip has a thing
with me being alive in the world, especially that I didn’t obey his order of fighting those demons like
I was supposed to. And…I think you’re sick, Sonic. If Chip isn’t merciful, that…will kill you. And
I’m sorry about that.

His eyes grew smaller the more his brother spoke. It couldn’t be, could it? That his brother was stuck
inside him? That he was a hedgehog with two halves, one belonging to his brother? He couldn’t
possibly be, especially that his brother was still alive somewhere, in his parents’ apartment, writing
out his stories. He couldn’t be…

No Sonic, it’s true. I am inside you. We are two hedgehogs in one. Like God actually was three
people in one entity. Chip revived me, only to put me in your body. I’m pretty much the stuffing
inside a toy, to make you more alive-like, I guess. Which means you have my illness. This is why
you’re sick right now, Sonic. You have cystic fibrosis and it’s all my fault for giving that to you. I’m
the one who got the bad genes, not you!

“I already knew that, Wind,” he said softly. “But I’m wondering right now if I’m crazy. You know
how our father was. He used to be a respectable guy before, until he started to write reports on the
men who were coming to get him. He even once had plans to assassinate the president and the FBI put him in a high-security mental hospital, one for the criminally insane, remember that? And sometimes I think I’m going to end up like him. My mom even said when she was drunk I was going to end up like my father. It’s…”

No Sonic, that won’t happen. I won’t make it happen. We’re a team, right, like you said? That we’re going to defeat anyone who says otherwise? I will try to protect you like you tried to protect me, Sonic. Back when those bullies wouldn’t leave me be. When you shoved them away and showed them that you weren’t going to have them touch a finger on me. I…really wished we could go back to the way it was before, Sonic.

“What do you mean? You became a god before I knew of this mess and dad and mom were always acting weird when you got even sicker. I don’t want to go back to the times where you were going to die. Not now, not ever. I couldn’t imagine myself to be in my life without you, you made dad and mom’s rantings more tolerable…”

I’m not talking about that Sonic, he said with a whisper that Sonic’s mental ears could barely discern. I’m talking about the good times we had. You can’t be thinking of the times where I was really sick all the time! If all you will remember me by are those memories, then you won’t remember me fondly. I remember actually one night, Sonic…you were only two, but when mom laid me in the crib, and we were alone, you rocked it to get me to sleep. You sung me songs. You read those books by the hamper and I swear that was when I got the passion in reading and writing stories, Sonic. Because you read them with such excitement and emotion in your voice that even when I was a baby I thought of making stories in my head. And then when you were 4 you heard my stories, and then we used dad’s old typewriter to type them out, you using the keys while I just dictated them. And even if it wasn’t the best story, that was a moment where I knew we would help each other, always. But I knew I should’ve never became a god, Sonic. Because I didn’t know what I was getting into. I realized with all that writing, with that gift of madness both Chip and our father gave us…it pulled me away further from you.

“I know.”

He reflected on what his brother said, his eyes dulled of listening to the milky memories of “The Good Times”, back when their parents weren’t insane and his brother wasn’t as sick as he used to be. Though what came out of that memory he knew was the pure white and blue tiles from the hospital room in Harborview, where his brother struggled to breathe, surrounded only by the plastic arms of tubes, and even if he told his parents he wanted to be there with him, they advised him to only watch behind the glass, as Wind asked why God forsake him and why he was so ill as a child. And from then on, it was his brother constantly trying to keep himself above the surface, of diving deep into the sea-colored wallpaper of the hospital, and of being on dry land with him and their school life. And soon, his brother’s wallpaper was the same color as Harborview’s. He wasn’t sure what the purpose was, other than to remind himself that he was going to die soon, and that he only had a limited amount of days before he could finish his stories.

His brother spoke again, as he watched the reddened sky change to a pale pink, then to a turquoise blue, like the sky was just an infant, then it grew to what the sky was supposed to be.

I didn’t want to be like typical writers, Sonic. Like Hemingway and Bukowski and all those other guys who drink so much and fuck women and snort cocaine like the world was going to end tomorrow. I wanted to be a true to honest, pure to the soul guy who writes all he can and either warns or charms or delights or shocks people with the words he just birthed. Just a guy who wants to tell stories and hopefully people can learn something from them. I don’t want to be rich. I don’t want to live the big, fancy life. Just as long as I had books, and you, and my typewriter and laptop, that
was all I needed in the world. Sex, money, fame…those are all illusions the writers made up so more people could be storytellers, but only shitty storytellers could come of people who only wished to write who wanted all those things. Writing is about extracting from your heart with a scalpel, and letting your heart bleed as you wrench it out and show it to the world. That’s what I wanted to do with my heart before I died. I wanted to make my own death. Not succumb to this cystic fibrosis bullshit. I wanted to tell the world of my heart, my story, but I never finished the one I was really set on before I died, and that really blows. I hoped I could write it again, Sonic. You’re a god, right? Can you make a typewriter appear out of thin air?

Then he remembered his story. The black binder he carried that drifted down the city streets of Seattle, and he wasn’t sure of what his brother would think, that he forgot his life story, his bleedings, his carvings of the heart.

“Shit, I just remembered something, Wind. I was attacked by Quetzalcoatl two days ago, and when he attacked me, I forgot about your binder to the story you gave me. I know you’re going to be mad when you hear that, but…I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have been careless with your life’s work. I know that…”

That’s okay, Sonic.

His ears pricked open, his eyes became swollen and big as the sun glowed defiantly on his face, midst the clouds that were gathering near it, preparing for the rain parade.

“What do you mean ‘that’s okay’? That was…your life’s work, Wind! How can you be so…so…”

I can be a better writer with you around Sonic. We can just simply make a much better copy. We can make a copy that’s going to be very important, because it’s written by you. And I was always inspired by you, Sonic. You were the real reason I got into this mess. I guess this was the reason you got into it too, because you wanted me back. Maybe we can even make a new story Sonic, about you, about the battles you faced when you were a god, the world around you being so different when you can see everything and hear everything and have all that power. I don’t care if this story never reaches to the shelves, this can be our story, and it shall be. It will be our testament as brothers, one sick, and one a god. What do you think? Think you can lend the morning and afternoon to writing? You can just press the keys of course, while I tell you the story.

“I don’t know, Wind. If Shadow gets another reporting of a demon egg, I’m going to have to leave. After all, if I don’t get any of my folklore filled up, then I could die from your illness. So it’s important I see every demon egg that’s laid in the city, so I can stay alive. Remember what happened to you? That you basically wrote all day and all night and you didn’t faced any demons at all? How can you write your novel when you know that there are people who are suffering out there because of the demons that are running loose in the city? Did you ever consider that?”

No Sonic…there was more of a reason that I didn’t fight the demons like Chip asked me to. Not only did my novel compelled me to write more of it, especially when it was really getting good and the words pumping from my veins were made from gold, there’s something about…that furry guy that you ought to know. Chip isn’t the guy you really think he is. He is a timekeeper, but not a…not a…

“Not a what?”

Not a…

The word echoed into his mind repeatedly as Shadow landed near him on the building in a sudden display of black, metallic feathers, and he prepared to light his first Marlboro in the morning to fight against the chilly morning. He protected the flame with a palm as he lit it up with a small flickering orange flame, the silver smoke pilfering from his nose and mouth as he thought of all the bizarre things he was seeing today, which was Sonic talking to himself, talking to an invisible person who
was made of glass.

He looked in the mirrors that Sonic would display around his wings, and as he stared at himself, the bloodied hedgehog who was injured and torn and abused, he thought he could see someone else in the cigarette’s fog. Someone half Sonic’s size looked up to him, with green eyes that flickered like his lighter, telling him of secrets, of hushed memories, of times long past. Shadow assumed this was a child, but on closer inspection, he revealed that he was actually 14 years old, and his nose constantly ran thick rivers of yellow white mucus, and he seemed to always have a problem with breathing, as he tried to heave his chest to suck in all the air, especially from Shadow’s smoke.

“And who are you talking to, Sonic? Yourself? As if you’d be interested in anything you’d have to say about your life? You tell me it’s so boring that you wanted to be a god in the first place.”

He eyed the small hedgehog that looked up to him, once with brave, pointy eyes that would stab his skull, and then it seemed to want to hide behind Sonic, as his nose and lungs shriveled from the running, from the inhaling of the smoke.

Should I tell him that I hear a voice in my head that’s supposed to be my brother? And that we were going to discuss on who Chip really is? My brother wouldn’t lie to me about all those things, wouldn’t he? That there was more of a reason he chose to read and write his novel than fighting demons and keeping his life in balance, right?

No. He would never lie to me about anything.

Sonic’s face was solemn in the glare of the sunlight, as Shadow thought his eyes were hidden again, as he could see his lips, pale and his fangs showing a lustrous gleam as he boldly spoke to him, to keep the secret of the Little Hedgehog intact.

“Shadow, is there more to Chip than I know of? Is there something…wrong with him?”

He inhaled his cigarette, his chest expanding as he breathed in all the tobacco, all the sweet nicotine he needed to get through all this nonsense, especially from this Sonic that he didn’t want to become a god in the first place, and he breathed out, the great exhale of smoke drifting off to the city, mixing in with the smog of gasoline down below, as the cars shrilled their horns as they tried to get to their jobs before 8:00.

“He’s a little weird, and that’s it. All timekeepers are a little weird. Because they worry so much on the flow of time. If any minute or second didn’t get through in this river, they go ballistic, because they think all it takes is just that one second, just that one minute, and all that time blocks so much that the river overflows, and suddenly time runs too fast, or too slow, or seems to freeze altogether. He makes sure each human life has used up all the allotted time on this planet, each making a slight imprint on the world, before he either sends them to heaven, purgatory, or hell. In a way, Chip is God. Or as I like to think of it, God’s secretary who tries to keep the doors flowing. All timekeepers do that job for God.”

“But…I heard something. That he’s keeping an agenda here. That there’s more to him than we think. That despite his cute looks, he’s…”

He dropped the used up cigarette stick and smashed it with his foot, the ember ebbing away as he rubbed it against the concrete. “There’s nothing more to him than you need to know. Just do your job and don’t question anything, Sonic. You’re a god. You’re a worker in the beehive. If one thing goes wrong, the queen doesn’t get to feed, and she doesn’t give birth to more shriveling white maggot babies, and the whole hive can’t work anymore because none of the workers are doing their job and always questioning why bees have to do this. Sometimes if you just do something and don’t ask anything of it, you can get some honey out of it. And this hive will continue to pour sweet golden honey unless one of you has to…”
“But questioning was all I ever did, Shadow. Of why I was born into the fucked up family I was, why my brother seemed to be so sick, of why no one seemed to know me or even hear of my name, and if I’m not going to question the boss and his background, then…”

“Then you die. That’s all there is to it. You question, you don’t work, and you die. Sometimes life isn’t full of questions. It’s full of actions. Question everything, and do nothing, and you won’t get your answers. Can we agree on that?” Just the thought of him asking more of these questions was making him want another cigarette. The gods always complained of him chain smoking, wanting a cigarette after every five minute interval in the day, but he truly loved the calming effect cigarettes had after dealing with these idiot gods who knew nothing but yet wanted everything. It simply never ended.

“So if Chip told us to go jump off a bridge, would you do it? Would you not question anything, on why he wanted you to do that job, and suddenly you’re dead because you were stupid enough to listen to every word he said?”

“If we went and jumped off a bridge, we wouldn’t die. We would simply use our wings and land safely, whether we were thinking of it or not. Dipshit.” He wanted to reach for another Marlboro, but he tried to hold it off. Hold it off until another dangerous situation arrived, until another half hour reared its ugly head. “And who’s your little buddy you’ve been talking to? I can see him with both my godlike abilities and inside your mirrors. You’re talking to someone about our godlike life.”

“It was because he used to been a god, Shadow. And he’s stuck inside my body. He’s my brother, Wind.”

“Your brother, huh? The same one you wanted to revive? And now you have his illness, and if you don’t get any folklore in time, you will die a slow, miserable death like your brother did moments ago. Dumbass.” He flicked his lighter on, watching the blue lady inside the flame contort and sway to the wind. It was hypnotizing, watching flames dance.

“And this is exactly why I’m asking you if there’s something wrong with Chip, because he didn’t fill out my wish. He made a twist of it. Is it simply because he didn’t fight the demons like he was supposed to? Is that it? Or is it because Chip seems to have some kind of agenda against me and you?”

He opened the lid to his lighter, over and over, delicately with his thumb as he thought over his words. “Part of it. He always has an agenda against those who don’t listen to him. And that’s part of why he hates me. Because I tried to warn you of this whole business and I did a couple other things that he didn’t like in the past, and that’s why he tells all the gods of how much of a bad god I am and how good they were for being obedient. And I guess I’ll learn my lesson. That I should listen to a man and not question anything, because if you don’t, it only leads to misery, because this man is most likely in charge of your life.”

His ears straightened, poked through the air, as he could hear the sound of demons having sex. Heaving and grunting their heavy red bodies together, screaming and shouting and scratching and biting and kissing passionately and the demon man simply wants nothing more with the demon woman when he’s done, and they leave the egg lying in the streets, ready to kill so many people. Having a screaming, shriveling, white maggot baby that was crying and crying its little red shrunken head, ready to destroy the entire city, ready to destroy people’s lives, because his mom and dad abandoned him simply for the pleasure of sex and nothing more.

“Shit! Sonic, this is an end to your questioning, because I can hear a demon egg being laid at EPM, and if we don’t get there before that egg hatches then something…terrible will happen to the humans in there. And you know how Chip doesn’t like the unnecessary deaths of human lives. We have to hurry, and you better bring your little brother with you, so he knows exactly what fighting a demon will feel like, not the constant rattling of your brain as you try to find the next few words in a story no one will ever read. Maybe you can even help your brother out, teach him the abilities you used to
know when you were Anansi, Wind. Even if you seemed to have no abilities at all except your tongue could sew words.”

Sonic heard of the place called EPM. It was a music concert hall and museum about a bus drive from his apartment, with the building decorated with metal that shone in so many vivid colors of the spectrum, according to the show that was playing inside the glass heart-shaped building. He never has been in there, as it was simply too expensive for him to see anything worth viewing, but it was a popular spot, to veterans and tourists and newcomers alike, and the death toll that could arise from a demon awakening from its egg…it would be massive. And it would be something plastered on all over the media. That his father would watch with sleep-deprived glassy eyes, knowing that the world was full of terrorists, and they were striking here, and soon they would strike him. And soon, his CNN watching days would be over, as he was right all along, that the terrorists hated America, and they hated him, for simply knowing of their hate, and knowing that he hated America too, but yet he didn’t want to die.

And he knew he simply couldn’t let his father sink deeper into his paranoia, even if he cut all ties with him. Even if his brother was inside his body, it was what he would’ve wished. Sonic cared little for his family, but Wind loved them for everything they did to try to help him, before they both succumbed to their respective insanities. And he thought he would try to pay them back as much as he could, even if it was something small, even if it was just making sure their father wouldn’t dive deeper into his psychosis coated pool.

With another sputter and hack, and more spitting and coughing more yellow stringy mucus, he made his white, clear, effervescent wings rise, and the sun made it shine like the glass in the EPM building, glowing a violent violet as the clouds rolled on by in its skin, and he could hear the demon child crying, wanting its mother and father to come back, about ready to deal death with the palm of his ruddied and stone-like pointy fingers.

And they could still see the golden bird in the air, staring into their wings deeply with his emerald studded eyes.
The wind blew, cold and desolate, throughout the Seattle scape of the gray seas and the goldenrod flowers that were decaying away from the winter sleet, the cold touch of malevolent winter, returning from her slumber to reign her terror before spring arrived, the maiden with the green dress, the maiden who had the dress full of apricots and hair that fell like tree branches full of green leaves and eyes that were green jaded fires, the winter maiden returned and waved her hand of death all over the city, the ones shivering from the February snowfall were two lone gods in Denny Park, the trees still bare and stretching their skeletal arms towards the sky, wishing to pry it open of rain to drip across their bare and gray backs that were dry and boned, and the lone gods just sat and watched as the people ignored them, the gods that were no longer fearsome or even pitiful gods to them, as they were forgotten a long time ago, and they struggled through this hemisphere of the world, trying to get folklore, trying to get more people to believe in their magic. Xiuhcoatl, the emerald serpent of fire, with his tongue bestowed with jewels and eyes that sparkled in the gray sky’s light, he was roasting a squirrel they killed and skewered that they found in the park, innocently looking for a tree to climb, the great god that was his friend Quetzalcoatl killing it with his swiftness and might, and it was the only thing that they could eat at that moment, the great gods of the Aztecs, shed with skin and blood and flesh to have their followers just notice them, they were now only sharing a meager feast of a squirrel, and Xiuhcoatl, his other form a purple chameleon with golden eyes and a horn that was protruding so high, he sighed as he let the flames swallow and burn the squirrel’s dried up corpse, and he said, “You know the rules though, Vector. You can’t kill an innocent mortal, no matter how hungry or vain or greedy you are. If Chip found out what you did you might as well be no longer a god, but a homeless man that can’t even kill someone for food anymore, because you’d be in death row, because that’s called cannibalism and murder.”

“I know, but…but…” He tried to find an excuse, any that he could tell to his friend, Espio, that would make him a savage much like Shadow claimed the Aztecs were, but even in his feeble mind that was clouded out by all the hunger inside him, he knew it was wrong, he knew he shouldn’t have killed and ate an innocent hedgehog, although he was sure that alligators would kill and eat a hedgehog if they were back in the savage wild like Shadow thought he belonged in. And he trusted his animal instincts. They would taste a little prickly, but they were known to have a sweet, gamy taste he knew he would love. After all, some countries actually ate hedgehogs too, and even have said they were a delicacy.

Espio expected more of a response, but as usual, he got nothing. He could only sigh, and gaze at the snow that was beginning to blow overhead. Small little flakes were scattering in the air. They both shivered, being reptiles, the only source of heat they had was the burning trash can, but it wasn’t enough. It never was enough to them. They loved to soak as much heat from the sun as possible on a warm summer day, and they wished summer would return in as little as a few seconds, because they thought they could hardly survive the winter, with their food being cold, with their bodies constantly huddled for warmth in their cardboard boxes with only newspaper wrappings to warm their tired souls, and the fact that barely anyone wanted to be outside and they mostly hoarded the food themselves thinking they would go through a hibernation. Espio and Vector’s stomachs shrievled up like a peach pit (which they would eat if it was in their hands right now), and they thought the day was dreary, as if they knew on this particular day, they would die soon, without any family or friends to care for them. They knew it was their fate years ago, and they wished they would care, but they never did. It was a fact of life that was dead in their minds, dead for many years, no longer soliciting a reaction from them, used to the concept.

They would probably die before they got to see another warm summer day.
And yet they were used to that concept too.

The god of all gods, Chip, never gave mercy to those who were gods. If the gods lived in misery and hell, Chip would give no sympathy, and wouldn’t make things easier on them. If Vector and Espio died, he would simply look for the next person in line to be the next Quetzalcoatl, the next Xiuhcoatl, and never think of the gods who died who fought some demons, who gave their lives to this mission to make the world pure and white as the snow that was falling down in flurries, blinding both Vector and Espio, making them shudder, their bones rattling, and they continued to look for food after they nearly devoured whole their burnt squirrel, anything they could get in their wretched small stomachs that were now only as small as withered balloons at a child’s birthday party, forgotten and alone and dead to the child’s memory. And they knew they were the same, the unlucky pair that were chosen to die on this February night, as their hearts were just as shriveled, beating uneasily, beating slowly as it grew too restless, and were ready to give up making them live, and only wilt like a dehydrated flower, the heart becoming rotten, brown and wrinkled, the colors faded away and all the vividness and beauty sucked out of it, as the flower would gasp for one last stringent of water, but could find none, and only die in this pathetic and not so amiable way. And they haven’t given that much thought until now, when they searched the bins, scraping every last piece of trash for something to eat, but there wasn’t a single morsel other than the small bits of fries at the bottom of McDonald’s bag. But it wasn’t enough. It never was enough. And yet, they still didn’t care. Their lives were as meaningless as believing in a great big God in the sky who loved you, knowing that that they were only Aztec gods that no one knew and no one cared but God didn’t want anyone believing in any gods before him (even if he was called a loving god he was a very jealous and selfish god) and they would most likely reside in Hell, which they thought probably wasn’t so bad, as it was warm and they could have all the meat they wanted, out of the dead bodies of everyone who suffered before them, and they didn’t much cared at all how the person felt when they tore their flesh. They were just simply hungry, and they needed everything to think, to think about their lives, to think about their philosophies, to think about how dead they felt and how alive everyone else seemed to be.

Their skins felt as wrinkled. Shriveled folds that they could peel back and see shrunken muscles and shrunken blood. They’ve been eating trash for so many years that their body might as well be the same as their stomachs, their hearts. They knew what they were eating wasn’t healthy, but they also knew they haven’t got a damn choice in the matter. They weren’t like the rest of the free people, knowing what meals they could choose, having a good dinner at the end of the day. They never had enough to eat, and it never was any good. They wondered what it was like having good food, having those cold fries warm, having them drizzled with cheese and bacon and chili and ranch, and it literally made them drool, made them feel hungrier, but they could only sigh and look at another trash bin and find nothing. And their lives were still nothing to Chip. He didn’t care. He was the unloving god in the sky who wished to rain down more thunderbolts on your stupid crusty head filled with stupidity and hypocrisy.

In the next bin they found a cold half eaten pizza crust. And as they usually did with most of the food they found, both Vector and Espio fought over it.

“I found it first.”
“No you didn’t! I’m hungrier, so I get to eat it!”
“You could eat an entire horse and still be hungry. You never think of being grateful for the food you eat, don’t you? When was the last time you said grace? At your grandmother’s house five years ago?”
“Why do I need to say grace when I’m about to die from how much food I only get because of you!”

And before Vector could continue to batter him with insults, Espio punched him in the snout, him flinching, leaving him to eat his prize: a piece of bread that was possibly moldy or wet from the snow. And he thought it was better than the last thing he ate: a squirrel whose insides and tail and skin were so burnt it was like eating charcoal, completely black and dusty and crispy and stones and
“And why would you let your good friend suffer like that, Espio? Especially when you don’t want him to eat hedgehogs anymore? Damn you you ass!” He rubbed his snout, thinking of his stomach that crawled like a tiny insect, wishing to eat and eat and eat like a king that Espio seems to be, a feast fit for kings like him, full of all the moldy bread and cold french fries and rotten apples and burnt to black squirrels he wanted.

Espio simply said nothing, only wanting to fill up his crawling stomach with more food, as he searched the bin and simply found nothing worthy for him. Nothing that he considered edible, unless Vector himself wanted to try to eat it, as he usually chewed on the ends of plastic and smoked the small butts of cigarettes that were only a nub to ease him of the stress of their inevitable deaths. The plastic was his substitute bubblegum, to ease him of his hunger pains, to ease him of the fact that Espio didn’t at all cared about his suffering and would rather fulfill his needs before him. Some friend he thought he was. He wasn’t even sure why they even stuck together, much like paste. Even in death everyone would remember Vector and Espio seeming like the best of friends, even if all they thought was that they were a parody of a friendship, people who didn’t care for the other unless they needed something, willing to backstab each other for drugs and money or whatever else they would’ve loved to have in their possession. Gods who were part of the same culture had to stick together, even if it seemed that both Quetzalcoatl and Xiuhcoatl, although similar in name and appearance, had nothing to do with each other, but merely lived in the same part of the world, the same apartment, without saying a single word to each other or even realized that they existed.

Vector thought if he never met Espio, if he never even considered being a god in the first place and got kicked out of his own home by his conservative family who were sick of his pot smoking habits and him dropping out of high school and thought he could’ve been one of those evil, sinful Wiccans simply because he had a fondness for the other gods other than their own that they constantly told Vector to worship even if he thought he didn’t much care at all for the Christian religion (as he thought they were all hypocrites and liars, as he met God, and he was an asshole who didn’t much cared for your suffering and only wanted the gods to work until their bare backs were ripped and fleshed open for the flies to settle in.), then they wouldn’t be here, they wouldn’t be homeless in this awful city where it rained and snowed nearly everyday, where everyone ignored each other, where everyone seemed to forget about their histories and pasts and only focus on the future, the future future future, where they would make so much money if they tried this, would get a promotion if they did that, caring only about money, and not them, the homeless and the suffering and the flowers that continued to wilt and die underneath their feet struck with greed and envy. And he thought Espio was one of those people, as he let him suffer when they tried to get food, made him suffer when they would battle against the other gods. He thought he was only a pawn to king Espío’s chess set, and he never understood how the game would end, how he, the bishop, could end the game and put an end to his reign of greed and villainy, but yet even if he hated him, he stuck with him. Glue. Paste. Whatever people called it. They stuck like that. With the melting’s of horse hooves and horse bones.

He readjusted his muffler against the incoming cold, the snow that felt like icy knives, their breath visible in the air much like they were ancient dragons billowing smoke from their nostrils as they protected their rotten treasure, Vector nearly burning his hand smoking all he could from the short stick of a cigarette and took as much as a long drag he needed to comfort him. Espio simply said nothing again, as he thought on his life, his choices, his last few years that he had been with Vector, the alligator that his parents thought he was nothing but a “no-good, dirty, LSD-using and Satan-worshipping hippie”, realizing that his parents were similar to his in that regard, that they were both as conservative as they wanted America to be, making every single McDonald’s and restaurant in the city of Seattle tune into Fox News and hear all the slander against their presidents and the gays and any self-respecting person who was making a difference in the world and didn’t much at all care for all.
whatever Glenn Beck or anyone had to say about them. Vector told Espio many times that he considered himself as a “changer of the general public’s philosophies”, that he would one day get everyone to listen in on John Lennon’s words, they would all know peace was the only way against this life, that God simply wanted his so-called brethren to just live as peacefully as possible in this damned, cold world that had so many blind deaf and dumb people that never cared for anyone else but themselves, and he said that one day he would be able to change that, he would be able to change everything, as Vector sometimes believed that he was chosen to be a god from Chip, that he would be the new prophet, as the times were a changin’, they were forming and they were becoming as irrationally colored and shifting like kaleidoscopes, with its many different shapes and forms and diamond-encrusted skin that the people swore their society was like, perfect and clean and full of godliness, when he thought he would be the Aztec god who would change everything, make them become peaceful savages, to eat meat all they wanted, to no longer argue and fight and kill and murder and steal, but Espio thought that Vector was as hypocritical as his words, as he tried to kill a mortal just a day ago, and he could only listen to his small mumbling tirade about how these people needed to change, how these people needed to listen to new gods instead of old ones like God, and he simply turned in his newspaper covered self to try to sleep in their little abode, a cardboard box that was wet and smelled damp as the snow continued to pile up, and he shivered as Vector wrote down in his notes on what he needed to do to make his own little special revolution happen, his own little dose of insanity in the masses.

He thought the rotten meat he kept eating was getting to him. Eating so much gray and maggoty meat could also make your brain dead and gray and covered with a blanket of maggots.

Their parents once upon a time even considered taking them to psychologists, interventionists, therapists, to find out how crazy they were from their drug use, their Satan-worshipping and Democrat-loving ways that his parents wished to purify them of, wringing them dry of all of their insanity like washcloths twisted to let loose the ammonia, but nothing seemed to work, and they were freed to do whatever they wanted in the next city, the wonderful, rain-sodden piece of earth and sea known as Seattle, and their parents simply forgot they were here, or that they even gave birth to them. Espio once tried to call them to see if they could give him a couple dollars (just to buy food and maybe pot) but all he met on the other line was the droning beep of the answering machine, their messages full of his other requests, that they refused to erase simply because they never wanted to hear his voice again. And he would only hang up the phone and realize that he was here forever, as a homeless teenager, with nowhere to go and nowhere to live, nothing to eat and no one realizing that he was a living suffering being much like they. And he tried to give a moment’s care, but he couldn’t. He simply wished he was never born to parents much like the ones he was given to by the god that they thought was so loving, who cursed him with automatic bottom feeders like 60% of America really was. The fish that continued to eat the scum of the sea, making it clean for everyone else who wanted to swim in it. And like Vector’s rotten meat, all that scum made your brain into green scum that could only think in irrationalities, like a schizophrenic who belonged in a mental ward.

Vector found another stub of a cigarette as he finished his notes for the day (“Five notes! That’s a lot! Time to take a break!”), and smoked that too. The silver hands of the smoke rose throughout the arctic park, no one noticing them, no one giving a care that they were chosen to be sacrifices to Chip’s little game. Vector thought he could feel the signal that there was a demon egg somewhere close in the city, but he didn’t bother to tell Espio. He didn’t bother telling to himself that they needed to find something to give to their folklore to keep them alive, to keep their hearts beating in the tune of the war drums, but Vector knew he was nothing but a weak god who had weak ways of thinking, and he simply sat on an overturned bin, stomping on his short cigarette, wishing that the bin had a feast ready for kings like him, kings who knew the truth of the world, and not the bastard Espio who simply took everything away from him.
If he wanted to, he could take another cigarette, light it up, and set the box on fire and kill the god beside him, but he didn’t. He wasn’t sure why he didn’t.

As the snow continued to fall, Vector’s breath steaming from his mouth, he thought he could feel another signal inside him, that continued to glow and thrust and boom, that another god was coming in the Seattle streets near them, accompanied with another person, a regular person who knew a little of the gods’ lavishing and desolate lifestyle, with the diet of rotten meat and rotten food and cigarettes that were only small ends of their paper wick fingers. He sighed, as he looked beyond the winter landscape as the snow kept piling up, the cold icy stars gathering around them and making them wonder why they couldn’t return to their mother’s house, back when they weren’t so liberal against their conservative beliefs, and they would warm them up with a nice cup of hot cocoa and a roasting turkey in the oven like his mother used to give him, even if it wasn’t near Thanksgiving. He even wished he could catch a whiff of turkey again, but he could only catch a whiff of garbage and piss, as he assumed the next people in line waiting for them were homeless too, as they only lived on worms and old french fries and elephant ears like swallows and albatrosses did, while they slept in garbage and wanted to live only with the doctrines of garbage ("One man’s trash is another man’s treasure!") And “Get rid of all the sharp and nasty things, and garbage bags can be a nice place to sleep. Hotels? Pah! Who needs them!")

Wave was a teenage purple swallow, with her bell-bottom jeans and fur coat feeling so little against the cold. Storm, her brother, got her the fur coat, but couldn’t afford her any boots; any warm pants to wear for this weather, while Storm himself was wearing only a scarf, as he could never find anything that fitted him. Storm was about a teenage age as well, being the biggest out of the whole family, as their distant brother, who was off somewhere, trying to be the greatest god in the world, was even smaller than his sister, but Storm had the genes of their father, the great big bird that always ate and ate and ate and had such a big puffy white chest and those clear, hard-set blue iron eyes that always seemed to strike fear into anyone’s hearts. Storm, while he was big, thought he couldn’t stand the cold, as he was huddled over to his sister, which she kept saying to him to get further away from her so she wouldn’t trip, and he kept mumbling about something about his money, that he only needed some more cash before they could get a warm espresso, have a nice warm jacket for him, maybe some boots for his sister, and then they could live a happy life being homeless and only getting beggar’s money and some money from selling trinkets from the trash they found that no one knew was worth anything, but as Vector watched them, he could only think it was a sad, pathetic sight, to see this god depending so much on his sister, seeing them suffer as much as they, to hear that their brother has abandoned them for the pursuit of being the most heard of god around the city, and he stood still, staring, as the February cold wisped around him, the small flakes of snow sticking to his scarf, sticking to his fingers, sticking to his eyes and making him blink a few times, as Wave gazed at him with contempt, and said, “Are you the ones who made my poor brother suffer? All he wants is a little demon egg, and you just had to take it away from him, didn’t you? I’ll never forgive you! I’ll never forgive any of you gods who are selfish enough to take away my brother’s will to survive!")

Espio arose from his newspapers, his eyes tired with sleep. He was about to tell them a thing or two about what he thought about Storm, their ignorant, idiot brother who couldn’t even tell his lefts from his rights (he even questioned if Storm was a little retarded), until Vector stopped him with the motion of his hand, as he picked up another stub of a cigarette (“three stubs of a cigarette made a whole cigarette stick!”) and began to smoke that too, as Wave could only stare at them with hate, and he sighed, a tongue of smoke pilfering from him.

“Look lady, we know nothing about that. We haven’t got a demon egg in what seems to be ages. We’re not the culprits here. I suspect that it was those hedgehog fellas. You know, he’s blue, and another is black and red. The blue one…seems to have a kind of hidden power to him. Like he was born to be a god. His brother was a god too apparently, so maybe it runs in the family. Like yours.
Isn’t that Jet fella of yours pretty strong?”
“Once you’re in my presence you will never use my brother’s name around me ever again,” she remarked, frowning. “His name is forbidden here.”

She could only shake her head, noticing how God suddenly made the A/C rise up in his world. She clasped herself in her big furry brown coat, and said, “If what you say is true, then I guess it’s Shadow and whoever the new recruit is that I’ll have to give a piece of my mind to. I’ll find them, and I’ll have a talking to them, if anything, to tell them to leave Storm’s demon eggs alone! He fought for that egg nail and bone but yet they still took it from him! Don’t they know my brother is dying? He hasn’t had a single demon egg in a week! What am I going to do if both of my brothers are gone? I can’t become a god myself just to avenge their deaths, especially if the god lifestyle doesn’t appease me at all!”

“Welcome to the club, sister.” Vector exuded a breath of smoke before he stomped on the small stub of a cigarette, having his fill for now. Later he was going to need more. He hated this tobacco habit, but it was the best thing for them other than pot right now, and if he could just smoke the ends of cigarettes for free, then what was the problem? Except black ashed lungs and feeling shitty and gritty in mood simply because he can’t have a cig whenever he wanted when him and Espio had to go to no smoking parks or a restaurant that wouldn’t let them smoke (not like they would ever go into a restaurant anyways, having no money and smelling like shit and drably in appearance.) when he needed the nice hit of nicotine running in his bloodstream. The cigs kept him warm, at least for a short while, which was better than being like Storm, who only had a scarf and nothing else, the ends of his feet blue and chiffoned with ice.

“Well, unless you have anything more to say to us, then scram. We could sympathize with how much your brother is suffering, but we got bigger problems ourselves. We haven’t had a good meal in weeks and at least you have a fur coat on you, because we have nothing on us, and we’re coldblooded for criminy’s sake! Unless you know of a good place that can give us good meals for bums, then…”

“You have to tell me where those hedgehogs are at, Vector. You have to tell me.” She watched him meticulously, as she wished she could grab onto Vector and shake him like she did to so many other animals, but Vector had no fur, and absolutely no coat, but she held onto him, wanting where they last saw the god-born and the godless, the two hedgehogs that she knew were so different, that she couldn’t think of why they were both together, except to steal her brother’s precious demon eggs, to let these two creatures that she hated with all her black-tinged heart die out in the alleyways of Seattle, much like her brother would soon, much like she will soon too, without the aid of her brother protecting her, without the hunt for her other brother, who will forever be nameless, and telling him that all this god business was nothing but a tricky business, a deadly business, a sick business, and she needed to live like Storm and only collect demon eggs once in a while to feed his folklore, but nothing more and nothing less, but she knew he would hate the lifestyle of being homeless and sick and poor, having no elegant food and wine like he was probably feasting on, but Wave tried to live on after her mother died, after their father went to a far away place and never returned, the bird with the blue eyes that shined only as brightly as bromide, and to her sadness, only Vector replied that he hasn’t seen them since he tried to eat the blue one without the godless one who soon chased him away and threatened to tell Chip of his broken law, and he had no choice but to let him go, lest he would die just for the satisfaction of a meal that didn’t taste like maggots.

“Though I’m sure they’re out for more demon eggs, like they said they would find.” He didn’t tell them of the demon egg radar emanating inside of him. He wished to remain that a secret, lest the sister and brother would cause a scene and fly off and get themselves hurt against the god-born that was going to be so powerful. He tasted in his blood that he would not be defeated by anyone for a long time. At least, not yet.

Vector only knew that would lead to more troubles to him and his friend, and he watched as Wave’s
hands relaxed, her chest getting lower (as custom for birds to heave their chests when up against a threat or danger), and she let him go, expecting to see the small tears in her eyes as she said to her brother, almost without hope, “Come on Storm. They know nothing about the hedgehogs. We will get revenge on them. We will. And I will make sure your sister looks after you. Your sister will always look after you. And you will always look after me. We’re such a happy family, aren’t we Storm? Especially that our mother is dead. Especially that our father never returned. We’re a happy family, all up in that bare, naked pear tree.

Storm gazed at the tree, soiled with snow that rested on it like dormant little fuzzy creatures that were cold to the touch and always drifted to the world in small little packed balls, his voice faltered as he touched the pear tree with his own gray silver feathered fingers and said, “Wave, this will be ours? This will be our…pear tree? Our family tree? With our mama and papa and Jet…”

“Ssssh! Don’t say his name here! It will bring upon bad luck! And we don’t want that when you’re a god Storm, we certainly don’t want that.”

He stared at the pear tree, his body completely motionless, save for the shaking of the frost, and he repeated to himself, mumbling, “And we don’t want that. We don’t want that…”

And she smiled, as she went over to the snow, and with her pale purple hands modeled two little white birds out of snow, that looked as if they would spring to life and chirp and sing even if the air was as piercing as little pin-needles, one bigger than the other, with bored in eyes that gazed out to them, the birds resting furtively on their branches, in the snow winteriness, while the cold and bitterness continued to blow all over the Seattle streets.

And Wave and Storm left the two snow birds, clinging to each other throughout the shivers of ice, as they traveled to 5th Avenue North, headed to Memorial Field, hoping there was another demon egg there. But Vector thought he saw them galloping with such strident steps that they looked happy, as close as a family tree could be, the two lone birds waiting for their bunches of fruit from the pear tree. Like the Christmas song he heard every December. And he hated it. He didn’t even want to think of Christmas. He didn’t even want to think of happy families, of happy people, period. He despised anyone who could look upon the society of today and claim that it was a beautiful world out there. He hated them all.

And Vector hurriedly grabbed another short nub from the bin and smoked that too. He was getting nervous. He always was when he saw happy people. People who were much happier than they, the one sleeping in a cardboard box in winter, the one surviving on only short little sticks of cancer. And he sighed, the smoke blowing away from the smokestack, as he stomped on the cigarette and walked away, back to Espio, and he prepared himself to sleep with newspapers and a wet moldy box too.

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It was snowing, as it was caught in their quills and scarves, as they flew on their white flamed wings to the building that was known as EMP, the building that was strangely shaped like a heart, the golden rusted jewel that laid on the Seattle’s very chest and throne of the city, where he was sure many people would be going into it today, as it was the weekend. The perfect time to see things, to watch movies and to go out to see bands playing, to go out and sit on your very chair and…write.

The memory of his brother writing those stories came back to him. His brother was in his body, and he thought that was exactly he was thinking of, to get him to start writing for him, to get him to write depending on his words, the very song in his soul, to print out the letters, to play the typewriter like a
piano and perform a gorgeous song that would entrance millions, to play it like a baritone that would enhance so many people’s lives, play it like the trumpet, belting out the loudest sound, the scream of writing, the vociferous voice of words and letters and sounds and clacking out the keys like a jazz musician on the stage, belting out the haunting melodies and letting everyone listen to you, the sound of your screams and your whispers and your ramblings and the thoughts that kept running and running on its white hooves, the voice of your brother telling him to write, RIGHT NOW!

“Do I have to?”

He was in the cafe, surrounding by many black faces, black voices and black silhouettes, as they all sat in the inviting golden sphere and drank their coffee and cappuccinos and their lattes as black as their souls, as he imagined the hot filth traveling in their stomachs he imagined how hard it would be to lift his hands and start typing on the typewriter, the one that was missing a period, the one that he had to fill out with dashes and later make them into dots. And his brother would hate that. But oh well, you had to write, didn’t you? That was your promise as a god, to fill out the biggest stories, to fill out the biggest monsters the literary world has ever seen, to see the gods in his world flesh out, the ravens, with their black wings the very same cloak as the night and stars, their eyes shining like planets, their talons being the milky ways, as they all sat and watched him try to type out a single word, any word, to tell to his friends, to tell his parents who were now all alone in the world without their children, to tell to his old teachers who he never really missed, to the WHOLE ENTIRE WORLD WITH ITS CANVAS THE WHITE STARS AND THE CROWS STARING AT HIM WITH THEIR EYES LIKE THE COLORS OF NEPTUNE AND URANUS, STARING, STARING, STARING.

And his brother said to him, “It’s not hard! Elves won’t come in the middle of the night and finish this story for you when you’re sleeping! Just write!”

The ravens gazed at his fingers, that were still still, still white, still not fleshed with black ink and the machine to type out more of the ravens that wished to have their story, their make their world come alive and real and born, and all Sonic had to do was press one single key and start typing.

Just start, and everything else would come naturally.

The ravens squawked, before his finger could reach for one of the keys, before his brother could scold him even more, as Sonic saw that he was in the air, skidding in the great white and cerulean blue, his wings feeling so wide and so free and like the same canvas as the sky with its white little puffy faces, before Shadow told him to stop, because they could see the heart of Seattle, and they were here.

He thought if he stared at the heart of Seattle any longer, it would begin to beat, with the music and bands inside it ringing throughout the streets. The metals were reflecting the morning sky, with the sun glinting off its skin, the tangerine color and the cerulean mixing together, creating a heart that not only seeped of music, but of color, of brilliance and of bright vivid hues.

And also of demon eggs.

The surrounding world around the egg began to distort, reality wavering in their vision. They began to see men who had the heads of sheep, black ewes that bleated their songs before they went inside, hearing the men call them “sheeple” allowing them inside, to listen to their “sheeple” music. The sheeple were beginning to form tiny arms, hooves at the end, as Sonic saw that he was in the air, skidding in the great white and cerulean blue, his wings feeling so wide and so free and like the same canvas as the sky with its white little puffy faces, before Shadow told him to stop, because they could see the heart of Seattle, and they were here.
constantly floating side by side, like little plastic toys that never got to run and never got to be played with their children. And some sheeple were sad, and they bleated mournfully, on the death of their souls.

And as the sheeple’s eyes reflected back, he thought he could see his soul, the two hedgehogs that were inside the same body, one big and although scrawny, he was much bigger than the small, frail one, trying to breathe his last breaths on the world, the sky looking like a reddened bruised, tinged with violet blood, as the violet liquid continued to seep into the sky, as the sounds became louder, as the sheeple began to gather, as the concert began to play, for all the sheep men, for all the sheep women, for all the sheep children, all gathered up in their woolly coats and ready to hear them yell and bang some instruments...

Sonic was too busy paying attention to this brand new world he was in, rather than the demon egg, which began to crack, and the monster began to seep, the devil creature smiling with a big wide grin, a guitar hidden inside it in the embryo, its tail and horns growing and becoming blacker with the arrival of the February air.

“You idiot! You need to stop daydreaming! The demon is alive, and it’s going to kill all these people now, come on, get your head in this fight, work with me here!” Shadow called, his voice barely reaching his head.

Shadow launched itself against the infant demon, that grew like an inflatable toy, the child’s claws puffed and fleshed and sharpened, being blown to blades that were about as tall as their bodies, the fangs crawling from its mouth, the white bladed mountains wishing to make the others bleed and to let the child eat, the feet turning into hooves like the goat body of Satan. The child held onto his guitar with unshaken and ample knifed fingers hanging above them like silver sharp curtains, hearing all the sheeple bleat his name, hearing his simple commandments, to kill themselves, to kill all their emotions, all their memories, everything that made them themselves, because all the sheeple were all the same, with their simple voices and their simple minds and their simple bodies, as they stared at the stage that was changing colors as if they ingested so much LSD, the devil child playing a song that although it was evil and dark and sinister, it was melodious, and the sheeple listened, and so did Sonic, which he thought he couldn’t do anything, because his brother was waiting, hoping, hoping that he would die right on stage, along with the other sheeple, because his voice was no longer useful if his brother would never allow him to write a story. It was an unheard of voice, a voice that never traveled far from his mouth, and it was useless, and it begged to die, it begged to be free in the land of gods.

His brother wanted so much to be a god again, he thought. Not inside his body. Was this simply a trick from the devil child, to make his other soul inside him, perched like the moon inside a bird cage, wanted to be free from himself, to be granted freedom, to shine out in the world like moons were supposed to do, without him keeping him inside his heart, inside that dirty rotten bird cage that he could only feed him with a spoon full of soup that was watery and tasted like nothing, his soul not even being fed properly?

His soul wanted to scream inside him. There were so many things it wanted to express with its words and songs, but it couldn’t, as it was locked inside with barely any food and water, a prison as the moon continued to shine and continued to sleep and weep, but there was nothing it could do, it was locked inside, it was cold and dead and throbbing with cold. He wanted the soul to be alive, to be beating with warmth, but his brother told him it wasn’t, it wanted to tell the world of how much it was decaying with the rusty knife inside its mouth and throat, but it could only gargle. Only blood could pore out from its guthole.

The sheeple were throwing suicidal devices into the bucket. Knives. Razor blades. Guns with one
bullet shell inside them. A rope that was coiled to fit a head shaped like his. Pills filled with cyanide, the red and white capsules lying awake for him, waiting for him to take it, to have his stomach bleeding, to have his throat seeping of blood, to have the cyanide cutting up everything like curled blades, the eyes of the pills appealing to his brother, the dead soul inside.

You always wanted to die too, don’t you Sonic? Don’t you?

Dying wasn’t an option. Living was. Defeating this demon child was. He could tell that Shadow couldn’t do this by himself. And he rose in the air with sheened wings that were pale like the moonlight inside of him, and he raced to the child, who was singing a song that he couldn’t tell what language it was in. Maybe Russian. Maybe Portuguese. Maybe the language of devils. He could never tell, and the sheeple were taking the cyanide pills and the knives and the guns and the ropes one by one, dying, the blood being spilled to the gutter, where the rats ate it.

The rats at the end of the underworld he heard about in what seemed to be so long. What did they have to say about anything?

But none of that really mattered, Sonic thought. His wings glowed in the dark light, as Shadow dodged his claws, as he fired yet another galaxy bullet to his gut, but even the power of black holes and a galaxy being born wasn’t enough to kill the child. It was going to take so much more. It was going to take the power of God.

His staff glowed a pale blue, looking like rustic aquamarines as he waited until it was glowing and full of might and full of power that he knew defeated Storm, the thunderbird, and he fired a beam towards his back, the child laughing and guffawing that he knew these gods powers were useless, that he would make everyone in his entire dark black-lit world die off one by one by suicide, that he wanted it that way, because he was sick of sheeple, he was sick of animals, he was sick of humans most of all, especially ones who had the hearts of animals, the hearts of pigs.

And Sonic didn’t even have to look. He knew that the beam simply did nothing against him. He flew off into the outer field of the glowing heart, wondering when his next move would be, seeing the sheeple dying more and more, seeing their bodies moving like little plastic toys gyrating against their smooth white coated bodies, and then slowly bleating away, slowly whining and dying to a full stop. And the sheeple said they didn’t need his help. Because they wished to die. They wished to rot away. They wished to become lamb chops to the farmer; they wished to have their bones and stomachs hollowed out to make instruments to the mad men on the hill in the Arabian countries. They wished to have their hooves turned to glue. They wished to have their bones molt to Jell-O.

He was hearing so many of the wishes of the sheeple, that they wanted to die in this world, they wanted to be left behind, but Sonic knew he couldn’t do that. He was Yahweh. He had to protect. He had to defend.

His wings flapped higher and higher, until he could see the black hard rolls of the ram’s horns, the child continuing to play a song that was killing thousands by the minute. He wasn’t sure of any other powers he had, other than to listen to the world’s prayers, and his staff that was having no effect on the demon. He wasn’t sure where Shadow was, but he assumed he was formulating a plan.

His brother continued to whisper to him, in a voice that was the same as a shy child’s. You always wanted to die, don’t you Sonic? Don’t you? Don’t you? His mouth was a little black o that hungered for him, ready to lunge out and suck out the soul inside him that wasn’t suicidal, the hungry little boy wanting more and wanting to feast on the misery of his parents, and he aimed the staff directly at the demon’s child head, letting it glow a vibrant blue hue, then firing another beam, a circle of light emanating from it.
The beam hit the child, but seemed to have no visible effect, other than him growing annoyed. And he said in his voice that was full of tempers, full of fire, “Now you’re really starting to piss me off, you stupid lowly god!”

Gods were lowly. They didn’t belong in this human world. Demons did. How did that made sense? But nothing was making sense here. Nothing did.

Shadow leaped into the bucket of the suicidal machines and machetes, pulling out the pills of cyanide, the white and red capsules full of venom, as the child laughed and continued to play and belt out his song to the dying thousands, the dying sheeple in the heart of Seattle, as he said that the demons were the ones who truly belonged to the humans, it was the demons who could feast on this world and not give a damn whether God could say no or not. His claws stretched out upon the silver canvas, and he screeched like a bat, he sang of his sorrows and he sang of his battles, the one he was willing to win tooth claw and nail against the two lowly gods who were challenging him, the gods who would be nothing but worms in the dirt, Yahweh and Yehl, who didn’t deserve at all to be alive.

His teeth ran across his face, as he roared and wanted to crunch on the god’s bones, he wanted to eat them, he wanted them to beg for mercy from his father Satan, and he wanted more sheeple to worship him, like they should’ve at the beginning of time, when he was simply a snake who told Eve of how delicious that apple was at God’s fruit tree.

Shadow bounced the pills in his hand, as he soared above him, and said to the demon child, “We are gods, and we will always rid of you, you lowly demons. We will make you decay, we will make you melt like the black vomit you are, we will watch you as you cringe and cry like the little shriveling red-faced infants you are, as we will put you back in Hell’s hole. You don’t deserve to be here. Satan isn’t God. Chip is, and he will always rid you all back to the rot where you belonged.

And he dropped the cyanide pills into his mouth, the demon child recognizing his own suicide, the death of his organs that were as black and hollowed out as the stomachs of the sheeple being made into canteens, into instruments.

His mouth foamed of blood, as he cried, as the white tears flowed from his eyes and into his mouth to calm the hot flow of blood, but it continued to bleed, it continued to make him die and retch, as his dirge was over, as the sheeple were beginning to be free of their spell, as they no longer wanted to end their own lives, and Sonic’s moon soul was beginning to be quelled, but it still remained inside its cage, with barely any food and drink, and still it sang a mournful dirge. One song was beginning, and one was ending.

The demon bled in shades of rubies and violets, as it soon shriveled to a small infant, no longer a tall and proud monster, and then back to the black egg it was, before it soon vaporized to the small black shells of the egg’s crust, and Shadow knew that his folklore was earned, that he would be yet another living god among the others, and while some may argue that he didn’t need anymore, he was only proud to be stronger, that his heart was beating as fiercely as it did before with the flames rocketing inside the steel steam pipes of his industrial heart.

Sonic flew back down to the ground, hiding his staff, and he felt disappointed that he didn’t win this battle, but he was glad that Shadow had won all the same, that he had yet more days and weeks to live, the god with his black tin wings and his tin beak being as sturdy as they were before, even if they were showing their rustic age. He saw the carnage of the people who used to been sheeple, the people who thought suicide was the answer, as their organs were spewed by the cyanide, their knives were thrust into their hearts, the razor blades searing through their wrists like fire, and the nooses and guns that were strung around their heads like Christmas lights, allowing themselves to be either suffocated as they hang as a bright flashy direction or had their brains decorating the heart of Seattle. And he thought it was sad all the same.
That his brother was going to be like them. That his brother, the one he loved, was going to be like him.

“We just got reports of a mass suicide during a concert at the Experience Music Project building, at 324 5th Avenue North. The strange thing was, was that there were so many varied methods of suicide, as some died from overdose, some died from wrist cutting, and some died by hanging and shooting. The police are cleaning the area and ambulances are disarrayed, identifying the bodies. Police have said the victims range from being five to forty years old, and that this may have been a cult meeting, though we are not sure which band had dealings with a Satanic cult (I’m pretty sure they’re Satanic said the reporter, as he thought he could see blood printing that a demon was here, telling them all to die) so deep to have an outbreak of suicide. We will bring more news on this incident as it happens…”

“Turn it off, Sonic. We don’t need to hear anymore.”
And he turned the old ancient TV that was still in black and white off.

“Chip is going to be angry with us that so many people died, but I guess we just simply tried our best. That wasn’t an ordinary demon. It couldn’t be killed from our powers. I knew we should’ve got that earlier, but I know it’s simply your own damn fault Sonic, for standing there, staring into space, not killing the egg before it hatched.”
“And why are you blaming it on me? Remember that I have my brother inside me, who actually felt like dying from that demon, so I could barely do much. My brother controls me too you know. He wanted to write a novel and I told him no and before I knew it the egg hatched…” He sighed, as he let his legs dangle in what seemed to be the road below, not at all afraid of falling off the building. He faced death too many times now, and he thought he wasn’t afraid of it anymore.

“Even if we defeated that demon, we simply cannot allow any more of these eggs to hatch, Sonic! Do you hear me? Next time we find one, we’re going to kill it before it comes out. You better hope we don’t find another one for a while, because with your brother inside you, we won’t be able to kill another one as fast as say Storm, who doesn’t have any distractions other than his sister to worry about when he needs more folklore in his system. Those demons are very powerful, and we cannot let them defeat us, especially you, since you’re supposed to be so damn special, even if you have your brother distracting you all the damn time.”

He felt yet more phlegm coming in his throat. He hacked and coughed, as yet another bloody ball of spume erupted from him, wishing that at least his brother’s sickness would stop. That he didn’t want to die from the same illness that killed his brother, before he revived him.

“And if you don’t find any more folklore in as soon as a few weeks, you will die because of your brother. I am sure of it,” he said, nodding with a scowl.

He sniffled, as he gazed at the cars below him, seeming to be swallowed up in all the traffic, no longer recognized so boldly in the street, blending in with all the other taxis, all the other cars that had no huge purpose in the world, all the trucks and all the reds and whites and yellows and blues. He gazed also at his hand, as he let it touch the side of his cheeks, still roughened by Quetzalcoatl, still bleeding from the needle inside him.

And he wondered sometimes how much it would take for him to jump out of this world, into the streets, into the cars below him. To land on the roof of them, to have his body become crushed, to have his bones and blood become withered away as the car would be soon taken to the dump, as the
owner could barely think of driving it anymore. The blood rusting away in the bright yellow paint that used to be so bold, so shining, in the daylight.

He could imagine the typewriter in his hands again, ready to type out a single word in his loud voice, as the crows and ravens watched him with their mercurial eyes, as their wings were simply black oil, their wings full of liquid, as they would fly into the afternoon sky, it now velvet with a touch of red, the bleeding sun sleeping and trying to dry out his wounds.

He wished he could make it all go away. The suffering he was experiencing, deep inside him.

His brother was here. To make it all go away. But his brother had problems for himself to take care of. His illness. His fragile body. His bones made of porcelain and his face that shook like glass plates inside a cabinet every time he walked. His bones that were shaking inside his skinny skin. And he thought he wanted to cry seeing his brother this way, the brother who was sick, who was dying, and who was going to make the both of them suffer if he couldn’t do anything about them.

And he thought that he didn’t want to live. No. He wanted his brother to take his good, able body and run free with it. He would rather have his bony structure, his skeletal stomach, his eyes that seemed as if they were bursting from his skull, the quills that were barely on his head, the IV wires inside his nose, he wanted to take away everything and make it his own, while his brother got the good fortunate body, where he could write his stories with his good prickly fingers, and not his small stubs like cigarettes that barely had much tobacco and nicotine in them.

Shadow was smoking one of them right now. He was out of Marlboro's. He would have to make due with a used cigarette that tasted faintly of menthol.

He listened to the cars at the street, their lights flashing on in the darkness, the people, blind deaf and dumb as they were, ready to march out into the streets, ready to become alive like raccoons, like bats that have been hiding in their caves for far too long. They were ready to drink their alcohol, to find women to have sex with, to drive recklessly, to commit crimes, Seattle became much more alive at night, with sin, with evil, and they, only as gods that couldn’t interrupt the choices of humans, could do nothing about it.

And as he sat, watching and observing, he heard a faint voice in his head, sounding like a crying child. He thought it was his brother. But it wasn’t. It was the prayer of a mournful child.

“My name…My name is Miles Prower…I am very sad and lonely…” His voice was coming in like a radio full of static, his voice careening off to screeches and vivid images in his head. “I don’t have any friends…My mom and dad don’t much care for me…please, send me an angel. Send me a fairy godmother like I see in Cinderella, and make me good and whole again…I feel like my heart is dying…My heart needs to have a new place, a new whole inside my body…”

A prayer. Someone was actually relying on Sonic, to make a new beginning for him? He thought it was ridiculous that anyone wanted to rely on him for anything. But yet the child’s voice sounded as if it was stifled from tears, and it sounded like he could barely breathe out his words, his sadness choking him.

“Please give me an angel…someone who will look over me…take care of me…I swear if anyone can ever do this for me…I will love them, forever and ever…”

And with the sound of him choking and stating in his sorrowful voice “amen”, his brain received yet more vivid visions, of where the young boy lived, a couple of miles away from him, but Sonic could do it. Gods were amazingly light-footed.
But what about writing my novel? What about my deed as being inside a god’s body to write out my soul?

What about defeating the next demon egg? Or are you going to help me in doing that too? So you can actually live out more than a week because of your damn illness?

He winced, as he thought of this, that he would be betraying both promises, one from Wind, one from Shadow, but he swore that he would return, he swore that this would be a good cause in the end, and maybe Chip would reward him, for being a nice god, a god that can make a difference in someone’s life.

And he flew off in the amber sky, as Shadow continued to gasp out more smoke in the smog of Seattle with his menthol cigarettes, as the bleeding sun began to sink down, plunging the world into a river of stars that reflected his face as if he was gazing at the surface.
The Boy Who Became a Fallen Angel

His wings glimmered in the red outcast sun that was lying in the waste of the horizon, with the blood of its face traveling towards the edge of the sky into the knife edges of the sea. The blood was mixing in with the gray Seattle sea, the drips from the sword staining the tears of the sea dragon, as it cried over its lost meal that was now free and flying in the sky. The sky looked much like the red screaming face of a baby, as it sat wavering over him, believing that his wings would melt like the story of Icarus where he made his wings out of wax and feathers.

He kept hearing the sad melancholy voice of Miles Prower, the child that claimed that his mother and father didn’t care for him, that the other children teased him, that he constantly drew pictures of a lemon yellow sun over the bladed mountains, but it still wouldn’t shine brighter, it was still dark and faded, and the child wished he had a sun that would shine over him in his life, the child that constantly cried and constantly reached his arms towards God, but God forsake him, and never wanted to pick him up. He was never picked up into the sky, into the soft clouds with the stars that rested their points tucked into their sides, as he saw and kissed the moon, the one silky eye that constantly watched over everything, the eye of God, the eye that he wished would look upon him with love.

The benevolent hands. The benevolent face. Sonic realized it didn’t reach for Miles at all. The child continued to cry, with a voice that reminded him of his brother’s, back when he used to be a child, calling for him to help him, calling for a bigger brother to read a story for him into the night, the blue lonely cold gaze of the sky and the one bright white eye that watched everything but only granted him one wish that there could be a god to watch him, and nothing more. Sonic’s wings shined like silver, the sky bleeding from his sharp blades, the bright red pitiful mouth of the afternoon sun. He thought he could see the white teeth of the stars and the yellow tongues. And he flew, above the Seattle streets, to see the child, to make him happy, to make him warm, to make him protected and loved, like the brother he used to be, the brother that was inside him, sick, wasted inside, wanting to type more of his stories, but Sonic told him to shush, even if the constant pit and the constant running animation of his stories was inside his head. He yearned for a typewriter to scream out his words and his plots and his sagas, but Sonic told him the stories inside his soul, the words of his heart, had to wait.

Sonic’s godlike sense of direction had told me that the child lived on South Jackson Street, the busy highways of Seattle that even if there were so many people who walked by his home, Miles had always felt utterly alone inside his world, the gray sea and the gray sky the only friends he had, but even they weren’t so comforting to him. He wished he could see the blue pastel face of the sky again, but the rainy days had made it hard for him to breathe, always smelling the salty sea that he grew to hate, the sounds of his elementary school he despised, simply because the children had hated him because he was so different, so strange, with his two tails and his intellect and how the colors of his pictures never seemed to shine so much more for him, and he wished he could live inside his pictures, to get away from the gray skies and the gray sea and the sound of children laughing without him, into the world with the mountaintops as sharp as pointed needles, the snow always seeming to stop with sharp white teeth, and the sun that shined a glazed lemon yellow. The sky was gray there too, but on top of those mountains, he felt like a Buddhist monk, meditating on how he could end all
the world’s suffering, reaching his zen on top of the arctic tops, and he drew a small golden yellow figure with two tails, meditating, as he wished he could reach the ozone of the world and never be seen by anybody else except God and the birds that could reach the apex of the mountains, with the crows that waited on his body to drop dead any minute, that he knew he could simply “accidently” fall off the the brown and white needles and fall to his death, and his eternal suffering that zen couldn’t even wash away would end, but Miles heard of all the rumors that when you killed yourself, you would automatically be sent to Hell, that his God would forsake him, despite his suffering reaching as high as these mountaintops he drew with crayons, but he thought God was simply a cruel god, one that preyed on the children who wished that someone out there in that wide green and blue world that he remembered coloring with his crayons would love him. Even if there was one god who was flying away to meet his prayer, he thought his prayer was simply a hopeless one, that no one was going to love him, and he would be as lonely as the mountaintops, with only the snow hugging them, with only the gray skies adorned with ravens waiting for someone unlucky enough to fall off the peaks, and the lemon yellow sun with that golden eye that simply saw all the suffering in the world and sighed, as it transformed into a silver moon on a royal blue sky adorned with tinsel colored stars, and continued to watch the child cry into the night that he thought was benevolent, as his tears were suddenly wiped away by white bladed wings that didn’t care to cut into his face, and the god with the blue fur, the green eyes, the scar on his cheek and the hands that were still bruised underneath, he reached to the child’s home in as quick as a few minutes, and he covered him with the feathery blanket, with the cooing of his voice, with the comfort of his eyes, and he said, “I’m here now. Whether God is benevolent or not, I’m here. I’m here to make everything better.”

The house was covered with thick red carpets and thick red curtains and with thick red walls. There were no doors that weren’t broken, and the kitchen was as lemon yellow as the sun in the mountaintops, but even if it reminded Miles of such a soothing color, his parents were often in the kitchen, ignoring him and not even realizing that he existed. They simply thought of him as an afterthought, and he rarely saw them as he rarely if ever ventured out of his room except in the morning to go to school, and his mother would always leave a couple of dollars for his lunch money, and she would leave for work, and his father would sleep and never think of how his son felt. Rarely were any words exchanged between them all, and Miles often thought that they weren’t parents at all, but just lonesome spirits who haunted the house, who reminded him of their presence by the smoking of Newport’s and the laughter that rang throughout the halls that reminded him of the same laughter that he thought the insane held in their chests, and he could hear them doing their drugs, the snorting and the cutting and the crushing and the powdery white mess that remained on the kitchen counter that Miles thought could’ve been in his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches he made in the Saturday afternoons when his parents never thought of taking him out anywhere to eat or to even give him anything in their fridge that wasn’t strawberry jelly or a half jar of natural peanut butter that he hated, but sometimes even if the residue was on his sandwich, he ate it. Because it made him feel numb. It made him forget the pain that was inside him. Only painkillers could take it away. Only Roxy’s could do that.

Everything was red inside his home, as his parents often thought it was the color of royalty, the color of richness, the color of splendor and passion, but to Miles, it was the color of violence, the color of blood, as he often drew himself bleeding after many knives entered his small paper stomach on his drawings. The knives were only made of lead and crayons. They couldn’t hurt him in this world. Until he could have the razorblades that were used to cut up the Roxy’s in small thin little white lines, and he thought he could make small little thin red lines on his body, to give him his own little painkillers. The pain inside his mind, anyways. He wasn’t so sure about the physical pain he would harvest.
But he felt so comforted by his wings, by his voice, by how everything around him made all the threatening red turn to a bright shade of pink. He wondered if God really was benevolent to send him an angel to help him. He wondered if God never turned a blind eye towards him. Sonic knew all about younger children by just taking care of his brother a long time ago. He would rock his crib and read him all the stories that soon inspired him. He remembered he read to him Where the Wild Things Are possibly a hundred times, and his brother never grew tired of his voice telling the same story, the trees that soon grew in his room that soon grew around them, and his brother who was now inside him wished that he would let him type out his stories, but even he was quiet as Sonic lifted Miles and kept telling him that everything was okay now, because he would love him forever, and his parents would soon disappear at the snap of his fingers, because he could do anything he wanted, he could make his life a brighter shade of colors, he could make him reach his zen that he thought only existed in the mountaintops, he could make the sun, the golden eye of God, see him and realize that he would be happy, he would be loved, which was the only thing that Miles truly wanted in the end. For just someone to listen to him, to understand him, to hear his words and never mind them as the only thing important to the spirits that haunted the home was Roxies and their television and their Newport and their plastic face that was melting a little by each day that passed, but they didn’t think of their child that roamed the house like a spirit too, their Miles. But they didn’t even remember his name. They only called him by his true name, “The Boy”, and nothing else. But this guardian angel that was here with him, he would never call him “The Boy” or “It” or any other variation, but just simply Miles.

He didn’t know where his parents were at this time of night, at 11 PM, even if it was a school night. They were possibly out to get more Roxies. More pills and more alcohol. Sonic cradled him close to his body, and simply whispered sweet words to his ears. He never felt this safe before in his life, not even when he was born, possibly not even when he was in the womb. Even if he stayed up this late drawing all his emotions out, that he didn’t even plan to go to sleep until possibly 1 AM in the morning like he usually did, he soon passed out in Sonic’s warm arms, as he looked out in the waning stars, the waning moon that was one of God’s eyes, the silver one, and he simply sighed as he carefully and gently laid him on his bed, tucked him in, and heard his parents coming back from their drug expedition, as they shook their little baggies and he could hear them taking their prescription pill bottles and crushing the pills into snow, gathering it all with their silver bulldozer, then snorting it into their brain veins, and he wished that Miles never had to hear this ever again in his life. And soon they talked in slow slurred voices, while the wafting smell of cigarettes filled the kitchen, and they laughed like the insane and soon fell asleep on the same chairs they did their drugs in, while Sonic knew they would never see him because he was invisible. He knew that people like Miles’ parents never believed in any other god but their drugs, and he wondered if there was a god of painkillers and heroin and cocaine, but Chip would never appoint anyone as a god like that. But he knew they would never die because their folklore would constantly be replenished.

And he soon sat on the edge of Miles’ bed, and he soon fell asleep, as God’s golden eye soon shot up into the sky and made the stars invisible in the sky, and the sky became as bright and as bloody as Miles’ pictures, his suicidal dreams and wishes. And he thought the sky must’ve been suicidal to die every night and to let its spirit rest until it was revived the next day, with wombed blood.
Miles soon awoke to the electronic green lights and the siren sound of his alarm clock, as he knew even his parents didn’t give a shit, he had to go to school, simply because he felt obliged to it, simply because even if his parents were committing illegal act upon illegal act, he never wished to be truly alone in the world, without his spirits to slightly recognize him as “The Boy”, while the children constantly hated him for being who he was. But maybe the teachers cared. They called him by name. They gave him a good lunch even if it was considered unhealthy. They gave him knowledge. And that was more than this home could ever do for him.

He saw his guardian angel sleeping upright on his bed, with his wings at rest, with his arms folded, snoring. He thought that last night was only a dream. But it was truly real, as real as this guardian angel was, and he gently shook him, as he lifted one blue eyelid to open one jaded eye, and he smiled, and said, “Good morning Miles.”

“Is it really true that I’m not dreaming? Is it really true that God did answer my prayers and gave me a guardian angel to help me and love me? Be honest please. Because if you lie to me, you’re not an angel. Because angels don’t lie.”

Sonic gave a small chuckle, as he ruffled his hair to form more yellow soft splinters on his head. He didn’t even remember when the last time his father spirit had done that. It seemed to be so long ago since the spirit actually loved him, and not the drugs that made him function through his life. Without the Roxies, his father wouldn’t even live anymore. Even if he had his own child to raise, he would possibly commit suicide, just like Miles was wont to do.

And he thought he wouldn’t even care if his father was gone, but he wished that Sonic could replace him. Because Sonic seemed to be a father figure, someone who could take care of him, someone who would love him and nurture him. A real father from above.

“No, of course I’m not lying to you. I heard your prayer, because you see, I’m a god, and it’s my job to make as many people as I can reach happy, and your prayer interested me. Because you see, I used to have a brother, who was as teased as you, and even if he was close to death, no one seemed to respect him. No one seemed to realize that with very little time, he was going to die. He was going to be free from my grasp.”

He paused. Even if he wished to Chip that his brother was alive in flesh and veins and blood and heart and mind, he wasn’t. He was instead inside him, a small, weak heart that was closed in the door of his bigger, more healthier one. He inhabited his soul, his body, his warm home, and he was a spirit himself, like Miles’ parents. He still yearned for the typewriter, but he still had to wait. The typewriter was soon going to rust and fade away into dust, he thought.

But still he loved him. He still wanted to carry his light heart inside his. He still wanted to make him alive in any form he could. He touched his chest with the palm of his hand, continuing to speak.

“And when I heard your prayer…I wanted to protect you, Miles. I wanted to be a bigger brother to you, like how I was a bigger brother to Wind. Your parents clearly don’t seem to care about you but their drugs, and I remember I had a relative who abused that…Oxycontin. But you don’t have to worry about being ignored and hated anymore. I’m here. I’m here to be your friend, your protector, your ally, your god. Because I am a god, not a simple angel. I can make things happen for you. I can grant you any wish. I can shake the earth, I can make your parents suddenly die, I can make the whole world drown, I can give you the skills of Michelangelo in your art pieces. I am Yahweh, and I will make everything better for you. With the palms of my hands, you will see the sun, and the
moon, you will see the past, and the future, and I can make that future bright for you, I can make the past disappear.” He lifted his palms, the gloved hands that were still injured underneath, as Miles could see a big ball of flame burst from his fingertips, and an emerald green knife of ice emerge from his other palm, the great oxidizing sun and the cold blue torturous moonrise. Miles’ eyes were large, and glossy with surprise, and he thought that the real god of his world was truly a splendid being, to give him a god to help cure and soothe his pains and sorrows, the one little pill that was greater than the Roxy’s that would cure of everything. He imagined that his sorrow was also a big flaming pit inside him, a hell that his body made up, of his organs being little prickly devils, the ribs barricading all the prisoners, the heart being the igniter of these fires. The pitchforks sometimes poked through his skin, and made him rot and bleed, but he was willing to believe in Sonic’s truths. And lies.

Sonic couldn’t bring everything to him. Chip only allowed what he thought would help flow time like fluid through a tube, without any clots or bubbles in the way. The flow of time had to be perfect, perfect like the flow and color of blood that Miles grew to love, but Sonic said this anyways, because he wanted to tell the child that there would be no need for regrets or warranties. He was his own gift, no matter how flawed it truly was, no matter if his toy needed batteries, if the skin and fur was corrupted with the wrong paints and the wrong stitches and the wrong declaration of love every child made until they found a new toy, something better.

His palms closed. The small little sun and the small little moon were no more. And he closed his eyes. And he swallowed. Took a deep breath. Heart beating fully. The machines inside him all set in motion.

Sonic’s body felt raw, unpolished. Even if it was healthier than his brother’s, there was something wrong. It wasn’t fine-tuned. It belonged to someone who stole his original body. The body with a stature of his brother’s.

Thinking of it, it made him think of the Buddhist monks on top of those white fanged mountains. He knew of a little something that apparently they could concentrate on their suicidal thoughts so much they could make their heart stop beating. He wished he could slip his finger inside his body and squeeze his heart until it was shriveled.

The scar on his face. If only it was bigger. If only it was a large gaping hole. It would be a hole to another dimension, another universe, the needle in the galaxies. And he took another deep breath. And continued.

“And I can do anything, Miles. Tell me what to do and I’ll do it. Just to make you happy.” But Miles felt like there was nothing more he needed.
The next day was cold, frosty with the clouds of dawn, but the sun was free from the pinioning clouds, as it stretched its long spindly arms towards him, the warm fingers making him sweat as he entered the school building, with Sonic in tow, wrapping his hands around his, the other children unable to see him, as he was invisible, Miles’ own little spirit. His own little guardian. His own angel. He watched as the children surrounded him like walls, as they inspected him, tore through him, the child who was supposed to be so smart but yet no hope, and no normality. The children were much like a pack of wild animals he surmised, much like him, as they picked the weakest of them, their own little victim, and like lions, they would leap and scratch and claw at him with their words. But yet the children said nothing, as they continued to play their little games, as the recess lady continued to watch over them in their little kingdom, with the castle jungle gym where all the little girls claimed they were princesses and that a prince had to save them, the forest that children played in and pretended to slay dragons, and the lake where they caught salamanders, frogs, and fish, and fiddle with them for a few minutes before the teachers would see their discovery and tell them to return it, as it was disgusting, filthy, as dirty and as sick as him.

The lake with the glass green water, ready to be shattered by his own body, to throw himself into his own watery demise, his cold, liquid hell, and sleep with the fishes on the sea floor, sway with the seaweed, and watch as the children would gaze at him with interest and regret, wondering what possibly made Miles go this far, what made him so sick and desperate, what made him decide to kill himself, as after all, Miles had everything: drugs, food, education, and parents who barely recognized his own existence. His parents had long white spindly legs like the sun, as they walked among the kitchen, as they snorted their pain pills and as they called Miles “The Boy” and only give him enough to eat, plain boring food such as peanut butter and bland macaroni for every day for the rest of the year, but yet Miles couldn’t have any qualms about it, as after all, there were so many children that must’ve had it worse than him. Children who were raped. Who were actually abused. Who never got anything to eat at all everyday. Who didn’t even had the privilege to go to school to get an education and to have children maybe give a shit about them, even if they smelled rancid with the smells of death, with the smells of non-working bath water and shit and piss, as even their toilets wouldn’t work. There were children like that. And he thought even if he wasn’t like them, it didn’t matter, because his problems were his own, and they were enough to commit suicide, to give himself the happy ending he always wanted. Preparing to die was the hardest part, he thought to himself. But as he sat, staring at the emerald water, watching the fish skit across and eat the small gnats that gathered near the water’s surface, he thought that once you were fully prepared to die, the rest was easy. Dying was actually such a simple task. All he had to do was make the knives not paper, but made with silver teeth, and put them inside him, make him bleed, let the red river flow out to the world, make the world see how much he was truly suffering, how much he was truly dead inside. And the children didn’t know. The teachers didn’t know. His parents, the spirits that roamed across the waking world without a care or any knowledge of their son being there with them in the same world, they didn’t know either. And the funny thing was, that no one seemed to truly care for the poor fox. Oh woe was him. Oh woe to the poor little boy who wanted to jump into the water, to suffocate with the water’s hands, to be eaten away by the fishes and to let his soul drain away by the gentle wafting hairs of the seaweed.

They were the fine green needles that would seep into his skin, to let everything out, everything he ever wanted, and the entire school, his parents, they would all know what truly went on inside his fucked up little head.

The lemon yellow sun would no longer shine for him. It was simply a sharp, jaded, bladed black star.
that would suck up everything in his world, to make sure there was no happiness or joy left inside him. The students would make sure of that. And the Roxies that commanded his parents to be lowlifes and to live the life of spirits.

He lifted his arms in the air, pretending that they were wings. That he would gracefully land in his own private hell.

One foot in, one foot out. Shake it all about. And lift the other one. Fall to his death. And no more school. No more Roxies. No more lemon yellow sun drawings with the pin needle mountains. No more of pretending to be a Buddhist monk. Because he wouldn’t need to concentrate to stop his heart. The lack of oxygen was going to make his heart stop, the lack of love, the lack of recognition except that he was also referred to as “The Boy” by his fellow students. The Boy Who Became a Fallen Angel, and Drowned Before He Could Regain His Wings. And he was going to let the sky and sea swallow him, in 3…

“Miles…”
2…
“Are you okay? Miles? Listen to me!”
1…
“Hello Miles! Are you ready to do some math today? I’m sure you are! You’re one of the most bright, most intelligent boys I ever had the pleasure to have in my class.”

Ms. Ruth. His favorite teacher. The only teacher who seemed to care at all about him. Her bright, radiant smile and her kindness and wisdom always shined so bright for the little boy who had no hope. Even staring at her face gave him a small glimmer of what it was like to have hope. What it was like to have someone love you. Even if Sonic was sitting next to him, he forgot that he existed, as he was a spirit who could only watch him, give him advice and comfort, but couldn’t interfere at all with what the other humans were doing, as Chip had implanted those rules. Break them, and his godliness would soon die away. And Miles would too.

Sonic was able to reach inside his mind for that split second before Ms. Ruth called him and suggested for him to do some math. He was thinking of the “s” word that he soon learned to despise, ever since he decided to do it, ever since his brother had died that fateful day of February 12th, 2012, the day where he thought all of a sudden that it was going to be a good day for the rest of his days if he committed suicide. Miles was only a little boy, but yet he wished for death, he thrived for it in his veins, and he wanted nothing but his little star inside his chest to stop, he wanted nothing but for everyone to look upon him with pity, as the boy was never known in the world, and the only way people would notice him was if he was gone. But as he examined inside the thick wires inside his head, he soon learned that he had no feelings towards his parents, no love or hate, and that his parents felt the same way towards him. A relationship of indifference, where they simply thought of each other as everyday things they saw that had no impact on their lives whatsoever, that Miles didn’t care at all that the white powder would sometimes be all over the counter, that he didn’t care if he was alone in the home, and it was quiet and silent and all he could hear was the thrumming of his breath, as he would sit in the royal red room and clasp his knees, and appreciate how quiet the world was, because from the sound of his parents laughing with up-roaring mouths with bleeding noses and the Newports drifting from those same nostrils, and sometimes he honestly appreciated the silence,
and he wished that his parents were never around, simply because he savored it. He worshiped it.
Other than Yahweh who appeared to him so suddenly, silence was his god. Hearing his own breathing, his own heartbeats, they were the only things he wanted to hear anymore in the world, and as he finished the problems the teacher wrote on the marker board, he wished that the other students were gone, and that he would hear his own heart beat again, because how small it was, how timid it was, and how much it was bruised and sore.

He wasn’t sure why he wanted the taste of suicide. He wasn’t sure why he needed that very bitter medicine called Death. Dying just seemed suddenly peaceful. To rot in the ground. To wait for the worms to crawl through your body and make little tiny holes where their little heads would wriggle through. And like worms, Miles was simply split in two, because someone took that knife to his body, and watched him rejoin together as two separate entities, the Happy Boy named Miles, and the sad miserable, naughty boy named simply The Boy. And Miles and The Boy sometimes fought. Miles wanted to live, and The Boy wanted to die. And how he wanted to practice religion and to pray to God each night that he got a full meal everyday and that he was thankful for all the things in his life, while The Boy simply wished to be godless and forsaken. And as the school day droned on in the winter’s breath, the death and the scratching hands of the trees, as school was so close to finishing and Miles would be alone in his own home for the day, he simply waited for the children to stop their whispering comments about him, how his parents were probably crack addicts, how he was so poor he could barely afford his own lunch, how he smelled and how he spent his life in books and violent, grotesque drawings. And he sat in his desk, listening to the sound of his own breathing, his own heartbeat, as he listened to Sonic’s, and realized how strong it was, how flowing with life it was, and that he wished he could have a heart like his, not beat up and torn. Sonic simply stroked his hair, shushed him, and held him close, while his brother continued to want to type out his own stories, and even if his brother was as sacred, with the crows and ravens begging him to belt out the words to his tale that needed to be told, Sonic ignored him again, as he imagined himself facing the typewriter, and waiting for him to type out the keys, but they couldn’t as if they were made of lead and iron.

Another schoolday was laid to waste, and Miles returned home, wondering if he learned something, and he thought he didn’t. He watched as the lions ran from their jungle, and he wondered if there was anyone else they attacked, because he was lucky, and lions didn’t attack anyone if they had a full stomach, or if they were all alone.

Even if the schoolday seemed to be so short to Sonic, he learned many things about his patient, his client. He wished for black death. He felt hated and scorned simply for being alive. His parents knew he lived in the house, but refused to talk to him. And sometimes, the lions attacked him, and they would do anything to provoke him simply for their own amusement, such as steal his lunch money that was only about a dollar and fifty cents, tease him that his mother possibly sold her soul just to get crack, that she sold her body and let any man do with it what they pleased, and that his father simply stole money from hapless passerbys and beat them with baseball bats until they pleaded to take everything in their wallets and let him enjoy the crack entering through him, and that he would even sell his body too for crack, if anything had to come to that.

And Sonic learned the only time his parents ever cared about him was when he was a baby, when he
was first pink and bright for the world, only to be tainted by time. His parents soon grew tired of him, and turned their attention to drugs, their own new baby, their own new combination of their life, their sacrifices to the world. His father actually had a moderately successful business at a young age until his girlfriend, who was at the time 17, became pregnant, and they quit school, quit the business, and raised him for a while, until they possibly grew bored with him. They needed new thrills. They needed more strumming in their chests. And they forgot about poor little Miles. Woe was him. He got more privileges than any child, to stay up, to eat all the sweets he wanted, to watch all the TV and to play all the videogames he wanted, but he wanted none of that. They were useless dreams that children often had. The only dream he wished for was to truly be alive and free.

And as the winter’s pale blue snow oxidized in the golden eye of God, it soon grew cloudy and black and dirty and cold and sad. It soon snowed again, as the snowflakes were stuck to his window panel like the spray bottle that contained the fake powder (a perfect scene if it was around Christmas, which it came and went already) and he watched as the lakes soon froze again, that the trees branches that were clawed and like sharp nails were now covered with thick white fuzzy blankets, and the frozen landscape didn’t look so threatening and scary anymore. A perfect, cold scene for a child, to realize that sometimes, death was beautiful. But Miles didn’t care at all, and only drew his pictures, of the hot white sharp knives he so wished to put inside himself.

Sonic watched the snow. He watched as they piled on top of each other, until they grew into round large lumps that suddenly reminded him of pregnant women’s stomachs, with something inside, with the green and colorful baby of Spring, as their wombs would suddenly make the world burst into color, and birth the life and fullness again.

And as he drew his knives and guns and ropes and razor blades, he simply clicked his tongue, and uttered, “Poor Miles. A child like you shouldn’t have to go through this pain.”

“But I am and nothing can cure it. I am simply soaked to the bone of black misery. None of my teachers want to help. Neither do my parents, or any of the children that inhabit the school like the roaches they are. I simply want to die, to breathe no more, Sonic, and guardian angel or not, I wish that you will grant me that wish, because there is nothing more that I want and nothing more that I can say.”

“But you are breathing right now, and that’s a sure enough sign that you still want to live. Everyone wants to live Miles. Preparing to die isn’t easy, and it never was, because even if you’re so close to hell you wish you can go back to the world you were leaving, because I’m sure you’ll miss it here. I’m sure you’ll miss your drawings, and your…and your…”

And he simply couldn’t think of anything more to say.

Was there anything more to say about Miles? His life truly was miserable. And his only solution was death. But he knew there was a better solution, one where he would soon grow to love life and love everything about it, and he would appreciate nature and appreciate everything that God gave him, and he wished, oh so very much that he wished, that this child would be granted happiness again, the golden glowing soul that all the Buddhist monks had, but Miles possibly didn’t want to achieve religion and godliness, much like Sonic had. He simply wished to be loved and appreciated. And the only one who wanted to do that was Sonic, and no one else seemed to want to volunteer, to appreciate how skilled and smart and kind Miles was, but he sat in his royal red chair, stared at the
bloodied wall, and wanted to hear the silence become so loud that his ears were deaf and somehow, it would cause his eyes to burst from his skull from how numb he felt, and he would be blind too.

How they felt like needles to his eye sockets.
With white pearly sheath of his wing, Sonic covered the little fox with it, completely warm in the cold, frigid house with no heat, feeling the warmth emanating from him. He thought he could feel his love beating inside too, as his wings were his second and third hearts, with extra veins, the tree of life, the forest of love among the gods, and Miles felt comfortable. He felt like his troubles were melting away from his protector telling him there was more to life, that maybe suicide was ultimately a useless tactic just to survive the numbness, that even a thousand knives inserted deep beneath his skin wouldn’t drain out all the sorrow, but in fact, only add to it.

“Because even if they never met you, there will be people out there that will love you, Miles. There will be people who would do anything for you. And they are in the future. They will come to you. You just need to survive this. You just need to realize that living through this will ultimately make you stronger. As you experience this pain, your soul adapts to it, it becomes much stronger, it gets bigger, and soon…you will be loved. People will recognize you for who you are. There will be more people like me Miles, who would want to help you. Don’t you think your teachers want to help? Any kind children who know what it’s like to live this way? There are people who do want to help you Miles, you just gotta…you just gotta let them help you! Give me everything, give me everything I can to save you Miles, and I promise you we will get out this. We will become free and safe and happy. And as you can see, I used to be not happy. I wanted to kill myself too, because I thought I couldn’t live without my brother. But…I solved that. I can live without him. It’s making me stronger, because our souls and hearts can take a lot. Pain only makes them stronger when we live through it. When we live to tell our friends our story.”

He was lying, of course.
He brought his brother back to life. Simply by taking the easy way out.
He thought signing up to become a god who honestly didn’t know what to expect of the job was a much worse ordeal than suicide.
But his brother was surprisingly quiet. And his conscience was too.

“This is the start of a new beginning, Miles,” he said, as he wrapped him thickly with his silky wings, bringing him close to his body, as they both smiled and laughed and he ruffled his hair, hoping he never had to let go. Because from now on, he was his son, the son of a god, and he was going to make him happier, fuller, richer, vivid. He will shine in brighter colors than yellow. He will shine with gold.

“Will…will everything change, Yahweh? Will I start to be loved in school? Will the teachers finally understand me? Will my parents stop taking Roxies and begin to treat me like I actually was their child? Can you do all that for me?”

“Please.” He smiled, gazing into his blue eyes. “Just call me Sonic from now on.”

“Okay, Uncle Sonic.” And he hugged him tightly, nuzzling deep into his wings and fur, as they both lied on the bed, watching as the snow drifted from the silver clouds to the earth, creating a winter scene that Sonic thought he always saw in the small winter towns that his parents tried to collect several Christmases ago. With the little people running in circles, with the small yellow lights brightening down to their boring, sugar-dashed, artificial lives…but the lights soon stopped working and the animatronic people no longer moved, and it cost too much to get them fixed, so they gave up
on their dream to collect the entire snowglobe village.

He wished the entire world was exactly like a snowglobe. Where no one had anything to do. Where there were no wars, no evils, no sins and no sadness and no pain. Only nothing but snow falling in clumps on the small cities, while everyone walked around or sat still unaware that there was someone outside of that glass ball that there was someone out there that was controlling the weather, that was watching it snow, that they created this entire world in the first place, and they loved their innocent people so much that they would display them on their desk in winter, and show how their world was just as common as the world they lived in.

God was just as human as anyone else, he thought. After all, he created man in his own image.

And he wondered, even if he was a hedgehog, as he stared out at the milky snow and the silky skies, holding onto the child as he slept in his arms, that he was as human and as kind as God.

He hoped so, even with all his hypocrisy.
The fresh smell of Marlboros filled his nostrils as he ignited the flame, as he ignited the flaming moon into the night sky, the red amber glow of the stick flashing as he held it between his fingers, as he witnessed the fall of the day and into the night, as he witnessed that Sonic had left him to treat a child for his sadness, as he witnessed his boredom rising as there were still no demon eggs to be found, none that required the gods to fight for it with claws and with outstretched hands that were as sharp as razor blade nails that were silver and had long teeth that were as white as innocence that wanted to rain down upon the flesh with blood as red as evil, the teeth as long as mountains that he expected his cigarette to be the rising sun, the glowing rise of life and light as it would drain out all the darkness from the world like a hand squeezing out a sponge. But it was bloody orange, not the expected lemon yellow he always thought it would be.

He took one long drag, as his chest expanded, as the smoke pilfered through the alleyways, creating a silver-blue long stretch of twindling spirits that surrounded him. He smelled nothing but trash and rotting corpses in Seattle. He knew how many people died everyday, and sometimes it was in the piss-soaked garbage, as they thought that it was their only home, their only vice to tell the world who they were: homeless who had no name or no place, but the forgotten remnants of people’s houses, what they considered as worthless and hazardous, and they thought they were the same. Just worthless and hazardous pieces to be collected, to form a worthless and hazardous person. None of these people were worth anything, thought Shadow. So it was a good thing they were gone and dead. Less food to feed the hungry who had no money. Less water to drain out for those whose throats was parched. And less given to the ones who needed it. He wanted the world to be nothing but in excess for those who deserved it, those who have honestly worked hard to get what they wanted, and those who had the blood of gods in their body, the golden blood that determined everything, from success to romance to luck to friendships. If you had a little bit of the blood of the gods, you were a happy person, with everything in your life, and you could lead the life of these gods if you wanted to. You could decide that suddenly, when you had everything, you wanted suddenly to lose everything and become like Wave and Storm, who were homeless and who were feeding off bits of trash and cigarettes and little money to spend on a McDonald’s cheeseburger once in a while, but they would soon throw it up, as even their stomachs that were so accustomed to trash couldn’t handle everyone possibly spitting in their food because they were as pathetic as they were.

Sonic had a brother who, even if he would soon die, probably had everything. A loving brother. A loving mother and father. People who read his stories loved him, when he simply said to them to just give it a chance. But because he didn’t want to lead the life of ordinary gods, he soon died in his own pathetic mess of mucus and lungs that were filled to the rim of fluids that he literally drowned in his own wastes, and Shadow thought his brother should’ve never chose the life of a god if all he wanted to do was live a little longer just to write his stories, if he never planned on fighting or killing anyone just to be remembered in the minds of a few men, and he thought even if his brother chose a fruitless cause, he would rather have a life to be loved and soon dead in his own illness than to die from these ruthless and heathen-like gods.

He wished he never signed onto the job in the first place. He wished he could take everything back, and just live his life as a normal, ordinary hedgehog who was hated and scorned and who would soon die from someone who most likely took pity on him, instead of living the pathetic life of gods, to live in the shadows of everyone’s forgotten remnants, their trash and waste. Gods were as worthless and hazardous as people. And that was why people threw them away. And instead learned about atheism. To believe no god was in control of you. He wished he could believe that, until he met Chip.
He certainly wished he had the illness. Cystic fibrosis. It would’ve made him value life more than he did right now. If he had only a few months to live, everything would bloom in color for a little bit, until he would die in his own fluids, his own wastes. He would have it just so everything was a little prettier, a little more…colorful. Not the blue steel gray that surrounded him and the green yellow and red lights that controlled everyone with a car.

He watched as the buses and cars zoomed past him, as he continued to smoke as many cigarettes as he could to see how much it would matter to him if they were gone. Sometimes he didn’t truly value those things until they just disappeared from his grasp. And then he wanted to record those feelings he found in a notepad that still had scrawled writings from some lovesick teenager, filling up all the pages and blank spaces he didn’t fill up.

I am sad. I feel like he threw me away. I wished he would come back and love me. I wished he would come back and know that I'm really someone he should value. Like I value these cigarettes as one by one, they're disappearing from my life. Those long white paper fingers that can be burnt up and inhaled, they’re slowly fading in all the white, all the emptiness I’ve felt for many years, for many generations since I’ve been a god. I’ve seen Seattle since it used to be such a small and infant-like city, and now it’s huge, sprawling, and I refused to fly anywhere else, I refused to go anywhere else, because I had premonitions that someone was here, that someone would fill all the pieces to my life. All the jumbled little pieces that everyone else forgot about…and here I am, still waiting, still waiting for someone to fill all of those pieces, for someone to find me and make me home.

He tore up the sheet from the notepad, found a little crevice in the wall near him, and then he placed it inside, waiting for anyone to come by and read his notes. He doubt it though. He never saw anyone read anything of his. Not especially his thoughts.

But yet someone cared about this teenager’s thoughts. Such notes like: “Red, green, yellow. The same colors as traffic lights. You are the yellow, but I say go.” He never heard such melodramatic bullshit in his life. He wanted to tear up everything from the notepad and keep the blank pages, but he would only have about five pages, he wouldn’t have the blank spots to write in. He would rather keep the thoughts of someone else with him, no matter how trivial they seemed. Because thoughts were precious, thoughts were sacred, and he wanted to keep all the thoughts of the world with him, because the city was becoming empty of them. Everyone was soon becoming mindless, only living their day to day lives with no care to anyone else, without any thoughts for their loved ones, their thoughts for their strangers, or thoughts about what they were becoming. Everything was today. And nothing more for the past and future. They were forgotten remnants too.

He wished he was here with him. He wasn’t sure why exactly, but just to have someone else with him, who could stand to be with him…they were sacred too.

Why did he have to go and make some damn insignificant kid happy? Does he know that Chip doesn’t care for people like that? Does he know that if he did things of his own free will that he would soon get killed for doing this shit? Chip doesn’t care for the humans’ feelings. He just wants everything to flow smoothly, to make sure no time is caught between the webs, no drops of water, no drops of wine…

And he heard a loud clatter in the alleyways before him, a shout and some hollering, from someone who didn’t seem altogether sane, someone who was possibly drinking too much wine. Too many drops of blood red wine had went inside his throat, and his thoughts were muddled, bleeding with excess elegance.

Why do I always get myself caught up in this shit?

Come, as you are, as you were
As I want you to be
As a friend, as a friend, as an old enemy

The green hawk was drinking to his limit, in celebration of his great power, of his great fortune. He was a god who drank himself to death of demon eggs, who drank himself to death of red wine over and over again but could revive himself before he got to the brink of the cold reaches of Hell, who amassed so much money from his own secret scams and pyramid schemes that he truly was living the life he always wanted, the life of the Egyptians, the life of Horus, the great god of the sun and war. As the sun was sinking, he was too, deeper into the depths of inebriation, into the depths of euphoria, until he simply couldn’t drink anymore, and he would pass out in the alleyways, pissing himself, nearly dying until he would so much as easily pick himself back up, ready for another round of red wine, another round of steak and ribs from the restaurants, another round of cheating and killing people. The life he always wanted. He definitely had it. And the things he didn’t get, he was going to get, whether anyone had any say, or not.

His eyes were glazed, like crystal glass orbs with a smeared canvas inside. He thought he couldn’t even see his pupils as they dilated, the blood red wine swimming inside him, the blood of so many other gods, swimming inside. Swimming inside until they drowned and became a part of him.

The liquor ran inside his system for so long, that his brain was drowning, it was being rot in small bits and pieces, as he prepared to die, as he prepared to give up one last good fight before he would die and rise again, with his golden scabbard of his dagger, encrusted with emeralds and rubies, he could feel it burn with the fires of the Egyptian sun, and his hands were red hot with the singeing of hate, with his drowned out eyes looking to the creature that lurked in the alleyways, with his last cigarette being put out despite its small flares protesting, as his fingers constantly looked for something else to do, but now he began to forlorn the loss of them, like he expected so. But he couldn’t write in the notebook contained with the stupid hipster teenager’s writings. He knew who this god was, the god of war and of the Egyptian sun, and he knew that with him drunk and insane, he couldn’t ignore another fight.

It was coming. Coming to kill him. Coming to make him forlorn the loss of his neck, of his sanity.

Take your time, hurry up
The choice is yours, don’t be late
Take a rest, as a friend, as an old memory

Same old, same old Horus…With his stupid fucking games…

Memory…

He loaded his gun full of the bullets, with the crystalline stars and galaxies erupting from them, the little sparkles of glitter and the bursting colors of novas and supernovas combusting and new planets being formed and new gazes and new stares and new looks were being formed as the main god of gods named God said so, and he would look upon the universe and smile brightly and say how pretty they were. Shadow stopped staring at the mystery of the bullets and approached him slowly, as the hawk began to laugh and screech and stumble, with the bottle of red wine in his hand, the spill of the drink gathering on the concrete, looking like a paint of freshly coated blood. The blood of the ancients. The blood of so many gods gathered up in one bottle, aged to perfection, made to satisfy the tastes of the rich, wasted. And so many lives were shed and destroyed simply in excess.

Memory…

“So…whatcha doin’ Yehl? Whatcha doin’ ovur in this fin’ place here? Full o’ trash and gurbuge, full o’ cat piss and leftover food for y’all! Foods soaked in piss! Wonderful eatin’, wonderful smokin’,
wonderful livin’ life, unlike me…unlike me, who has everythin’ in the whole wide wurld, who’s the biggest gud in all of Seattle, and who has the big life and is still pretty lonely sometimes? Huh? Huh?” He paused, demanding an answer from him, as the wine slipped from his hand, creating a splash of red as someone’s brain was beaten to death mercilessly with a bat, a smashed olive, a smashed tomato, like what Shadow wanted to do to Sonic, what seemed to be so long ago, a fading memory.

Memory…

Shadow stood still, cautious, even his own shadow remaining quiet and poised, as he got closer, as the hawk’s shadow continued to lurch towards the raven, as his beak and insides were dripping blood. The red wine dripping and dropping and the blood of the gods gathering around him, all the gods that Horus had killed in the past.

The gods that he used for his wine were beginning to rise up, and choke Shadow’s throat, creating a nice, red, traced bloody line for all the spirits to rest in…

Come, dowsed in mud, soaked in bleach
As I want you to be
As a trend, as a friend, as an old memory

“Where my sister and bruther? Huh? Where are they? They left me. They left me culd and dead here, Yehl. They left me dyin’. They left me to fend for mi’self. And did they ever come back for me? Did they ever wanted to live the big life with ol’ me? No! They says, ‘Fuck Horus, fuck him and the horse he rode on, fuck him and fuck everythin’ he ever stood for!’ Now would you like it if they said that to you? If youse relatives said that to you, huh?”

He expected another answer. And Shadow was silent, as the shadows crept up closer with their gleaming razor blade nails, ready to aim for his throat, as his dagger with rubies and emeralds shined in the amber light, and he was watching as his shadow began to crawl into the corridors, the proud raven that was becoming small, as the horned hawk’s beak got longer, more piercing, like a sword…

Memory…

Shadow could see the golden glow of the knife. It was leaning towards him, closer and closer, the hawk with the piercing feathers and the piercing beak beginning to be more ambivalent, as his shadow surrounded him, as the raven began to crawl away into the piss-soaked darkness of the trash and dead homeless bodies, and Shadow could only sigh, his heart thundering in his chest, as he unsheathed his gun and bullets, and pointed them towards his chest, the black pearls of the gun shining a sleek silver in the amber light, as the sky dazzled with snowflakes that sparked through the air.

Memory…

He stomped on the cigarette, the bloody orange sun sinking down and down into the sky and into the center of the miserable Earth. He could’ve mourn the loss of his last cigarette, but there was no time to mourn for him, but there was plenty of time for his sister and brother to mourn, as their old best friend would be dead and lying in a pool of all the blood he kept and drank of all of the gods he killed.

He could still feel the razor blade fingers plunging in, the needles being pushed into his neck, the small threads of blood being puked from the little hole…

Memory…
“I don’t have any relatives. They all died, and I never cared for them, because they never cared for me. And would they care if I died, Horus? I think even if you care about your so-called brother and sister, they wouldn’t care at all if you died, especially if you drowned in your own shit.”

And I swear I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun

The gun flashed suddenly in Horus’ eyes, a black fuzzy figure that he knew would be threatening, that he could identify in all his drunken years as a gun. Many gods had flashed one before him, and he knew exactly what to do with them. He had a gun of his own, a gun that was stronger than most guns, as Shadow could see a golden glare, as the rubies and emeralds dissolved away like sand and acid, and became a cannon, Horus igniting the fire, igniting the bloody orange sun that would soon go inside Shadow, inside his neck that he thought the dead gods were getting into, untwirling the long red veins of blood from his body…

He wondered if Horus could hear the clicks, the little fire igniting the galaxies in his gun, the novas and supernovas beginning to explode in the gun’s little hole. He would be too drunk, too high to care. He knew he couldn’t be too high for too long. Soon he would be too low into the earth, into the depths of Hell, because he too much belonged there.

The raven that was sinking low into the corner was beginning to be pierced by the hawk, the long beak stabbing through, piercing, sinking, bleeding, hurting, flinching.

“No, we can’t say no to everthin’, Mr. Hedgehog. We simply gots to get rid of the waste, the pieces of shits…”

Memory…

Shadow saw the white light of the blade ignite, the small silver flare, and as he looked on, he thought he had an advantage, a way to kill the bird and make it as long and forgotten as the worthless and hazardous materials in the trash, the piss-soaked garbage. Those who lived by the sword, died by the gun. And he repeated it to himself, to keep himself calm over killing the bird that kept raving, screaming and screeching that everyone had to kill the pieces of shits, everyone had to die by his will, his fists, his power, as he was the god of gods, he was more powerful than God even, and if he said everyone had to die, then everyone had to die for his cause, for his blood-red wine that he loved to drink and spill.

He couldn’t make his heart beat faster. He had to put a big black gaping hole inside it for his hands to marvel how much of a bastard he was, with his gun whose shadow was growing, and he thought he could see the galaxies and the stars and the novas beginning to be born in the long gray steel wall, and he could see that while they were ready to fight, a million galaxies would be ignited, a million more would burn out, a million stars would have life and a million would die, all in his cause, all to kill the insane hawk whose mouth was dripping blood, the maw that contained the lives of so many gods dancing on his tongue.

He couldn’t make this lunatic have an advantage. He wanted him to die than for himself to die. He was the bigger piece of shit, in the end. Not him. Certainly not him.

Even if he thought he was sometimes.

Memory…

Those who lived by the sword, die by the gun. Those who lived by the sword, die by the gun. Those
who lived by the sword…

“You’re wrong, fuckface!”

His blade broke open, no longer a shining white light of a knife, and it sparkled a small fire underneath, a small cannon that was not endowed with rubies and sapphires and emeralds, but the skulls and long white fingers (that were razorbladed and sharp to stab through his enemies’ necks) one that fired a bullet as quickly as he could blink, with small glaring white blasts of the sun as its bullets, Horus’ symbol, Horus’ pride and joy, his life, his father. He saw this weapon before, but Horus rarely used it, wanting to slash the throats of his enemies instead as he liked to see them choke to death on their own blood. The blood he so wished to drink, to laugh and sing under his tongue, as his little godless heathen children celebrated the deaths of many gods, including Shadow, the one who was destined to die under the dagger that gleamed like the sun.

Horus screeched into the long black night, as the cannon fired towards the raven, a solid blazing ball that would crush and set fire to all of his bones and flesh. He leaped upwards in the air as it flew past him, holding his gun tightly in his clasp, his hands shaking erratically as the shots he fired, the galaxies being created, the black holes draining anything that was near them, was dodged by the golden hawk. Horus flapped his wings that were white and bright and nearly blinded Shadow just for glancing at them, and he screeched and cried, as the blade of the dagger lurched towards him like a long curved mountain that was moving to kill him as the gods hated him, shining so brightly against the streetlights. Even with the burning amber lights it glared and it singed his eyes.

Shadow roused his tin wings. The hawk was aiming towards him, that much he could tell, even without his blinded eyes. He jumped and could smell the black stench of death, the smell of rotting carcasses and Horus’ mouth killing more and more gods inside him, and he wished the smell would go away, even as it collected in the homes of everyone in Seattle, as everyone was killing a god somehow, someway, by praying to another, or no longer believing in them. Everyone killed a god in as little as a few seconds, and no one would care if they were gone. They would only be drank by the drunkard, the god that everyone hated but still existed, Horus, the god who gleamed like the sun, who hated the world, who hated his brother and sister for abandoning him, and Shadow could feel the pain for being abandoned by Sonic, but he hoped he could kill the bird with the stone. He wished. He wished. He wished.

Horus’ armor that was as bright as the fires of Venus continued to burn in his eyelids.

Memory…

He gripped onto a grenade, the weapons he barely used except in times like these, as they could kill and destroy another universe if he wished it (and Chip often warned him of how many people didn’t need to die under his reckless violence), and he released the pin, and dropped it below as he continued to fly above the alleyways, and he wished that Horus would be too drunk to notice, too high to care, too dead to notice he would be dead soon, the gods in his throat too alive, and wishing that he would soon be roasted like the little turkey he was.

“I’m not too drunk to feed myself with bloodlust, to kill little bastards like you and feed mys’lf with your fucking blood you pieces of shits!”

The golden bird rose in the air steadily, like a small white rising star in the sky, and he flew with the speed of his eyes, the speed of his heart, (as it shuddered, cold in its steel ribcage) as the alleyways and all its trash and food that would be considered good to the homeless and good to the people who couldn’t afford cigarettes was vaporized in a stream of violet gas and smoke that belonged to the dead spirits, the dead people who were almost in the same vein as the dead gods that was throbbing inside Horus’ throat and soul, as parts of the buildings’ bricks and steel were dissolved, the boards
and the skeletons of the weak and frail structures, revealing some bits and pieces of its insides. He knew if anyone died in the battle it would be his fault, but he knew that it all had to be worth it, to get this awful god dead and curled up and decaying like burnt pieces of cinder and ash, as the bird’s eyes gleamed and he jettisoned towards him, with the dagger blade towards his soft and tender neck (that seemed to bleed and shine with his long red threads, the thrumming of the heart that shuddered, that begged to die at this moment along with all the gods), the white gleaming sun of the blade, the shining rays that were sharp like daggers, that threatened to scab and stab his skin. The light that prickled his skin until it bled.

I don’t have a gun
And I swear I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun
No, I don’t have a gun…

And he felt pain, hot and steaming and pouring from his back, the bladed blood that was coming from him. His carcass was being cut up and ready to serve to the Thanksgiving turkey, and he yelled and cried and screamed, a cry that only crows could understand, a sharp painful caw as the dagger dove into his skin, the hot red flash of blood that was seeping from his back as he tore out his black fur. His cloak was stained with the blood of gods, the blood that was the same as red wine, as it continued to leak from Horus’ mouth as he grinned widely and his crazed eyes seemed to pop out in the white black maw of the night, the red cadmium blood of the rich and poor staining his teeth and the red tiredness and the drunkenness seeping from his eyes like Shadow’s precious life, as he laughed and smirked, “Not puttin’ up such a fights, huh Mr. Hedgehog? I’ll kill all youse bastards, I’ll kill all of youse and make sure none of you ever gruce my skies ag’in! I’ll make sure you’ll be as dead as your relatives you claims to not care abut, I’ll make sure youse as deads as thems! Youse be deads as thems, and I will cuts your fuckings thruts and make sure you sing a nice lil’ ‘Hail Mary’ befor’ you bleeds to deaths on your own fucking cut and smiley throats! You will have a second mouth! Ones at the ends of youse necks!”

Shadow was plunging from the sky, no longer pinned up like the bladed stars that cut his skin and made the gushing blood flow in deeper and deeper rivers, the air whistling harshly against his ears as it screamed out and cried the injured god, the god who had so much but was now dying against a god who wasn’t revered but hated by all of Seattle, the breath that reminded him of how much he failed constantly shriiled against him, the breath that made his fur prick up, as the gash grew bigger, as the mouth began to form on his neck, as the iron bladed nails continued to scratch and tear, scratch and tear. Horus held onto his head, pushing the golden blade nearer to his neck, slitting the small soft furry neck and making a small beaded line of blood like a ruby necklace, its own wicked cruel bloody smile made from his wine, from his greediness and his hatred of his family betraying him, from his vanity and his royalty and his drunkenness of power, as he sunk that golden blade deeper into his throat, as the pearl necklace got bigger, and more blood streamed from his neck as they fell to the alleyways that were eviscerated, destroyed and stripped to even more pathetic and basic forms.

Like they were now. They were pathetic gods, bleeding gods, dead gods. And no one would mourn them if they died, like the rats they were.

Shadow held onto his throat, as it continued to roar more blood down its bloody waterfall, feeling like he was choking, drowning on his own life, his own blood that was gifted with the power of gods and that many people over the years have fought for and have spilled their own for. He could feel his life fading fast, as Horus pressed the blade nearer, nearer, until Shadow was for sure that he was leaving this pathetic and sad and downtrodden Earth, and he knew he wouldn’t be as happy with his death as he would be glad that Horus was dead, decaying in his own piss and wine and lust for
power. The smile on his neck grew wider, the hapless grin of the insane and the poor, and he could barely speak, choked on his own words as Horus spoke to him slowly, watching his victim bleed as his golden dagger was now stained with the red wine that was held inside Shadow, and he made his own insane and poor smirk.

He put the dagger away, gold that was stained with rust, the rust of life.

“What is Yahweh’s name? What is his real name? I’m going to kill him too. Kill him dead. Kill him dead like I did to you.”

His eyes pricked open, as if they were covered with thorns, the slums of Seattle becoming his graveyard, the place where his funeral would be held with the white bladed and stitched stars, and no one would come to it. Not even Sonic. Sonic left him to die, simply because he wanted to take care of a child who was simply a nobody…A nobody who would serve nothing to no one. A nobody…a nobody…

He groaned, as the gushing blood continued to spill, mixing with his red wine, the blood of the gods that were reunited.

His mouth was slowly making a new friend, the hole in his throat that would soon grow teeth and a tongue too.

Memory…

“His name…His name is…His name is…” He gathered his breath, as all his life was being drained out of him, as he knew his heart was slowly beating his last beats, as his hands shook and his eyes were being drained out to the darkness.

“Sonic…His name is Sonic. Please, whatever you do…don’t kill him. Don’t kill him…please…”

Horus grinned as large as the wound on Shadow’s neck, with almost its own set of teeth and its own tongue, and he said, “I’ll make sure I’ll take good care of him. I’ll take good care of him as well as I took good care of you. See you in Hell, Shadow.”

“Likewise…” he croaked, as the blood he thought could be contained in his body was rushing out, beginning to be soaked out like a sponge, like the light in the world, as the bloody orange moon rose in the sky, as the ash white snow continued to gather him, comforting him with their cold, icy, malicious fingers.

His vision was dark, and all he could see was the piercing darkness. Horus left, as he could hear the final sound of his boots stepping on the gravel ground as he heard the blade that was no longer shining white but pitch black as the pit inside his mouth was sheathed back inside its own little hole, and he listened to the sounds of the cars passing by and honking, and he knew that he was going to die in as little as a few seconds, and this was his Indian burial ground, the last sounds he would hear before he would burn out and fade away, where no one gave a rat’s ass about him, not even Sonic. Not even Sonic, the only person who he thought cared about him. The only person he thought he was beginning to trust, couldn’t save him. He didn’t care enough to save him.

He took one last breath as the snow made his voice shrivel, as his vision was soon dark, as the snow and the steel blue buildings and everything that was destroyed and stripped down to their skeletons, taking away their organs, their blood, was beginning to fade and burn out. His eyes could no longer open. They were glued to be closed, as his heart was no longer shuddering, but beginning to cease its beating, beginning to die.

His ears still could hear the world outside as he faded to the black abyss of the skies, as he heard
footsteps, and a gentle song, cradling his sanity, and a reassurance that he would be okay. A god that took care of everything. Even rival gods. Even the gods that would be made into the blood red wine that Horus drank. And he sighed mournfully as the nice, gentle god swept him away. He could feel her hand dragging him away, to a better place, as she sang, as she sang that his wounds would soon be gone, as his second mouth would soon be closed.

“I’ll stitch up your neck. I’ll make all those wounds disappear. I’ll be kind to you, I’ll protect you, I’ll save you, and I’ll make you into as proud as a god as you used to be, before…Before you wanted to…”

But all he wanted to do was sleep, listening to the sounds of cars and people driving and walking by, and the gentle rhythm and hum of a little girl singing “Baa Baa Black Sheep”.

“Baa baa black sheep, do you have any wool? Yes sir yes sir, three bags full…”

Memory…

The night absorbed his body, and the white teeth of the stars continued to shine so brightly, like the sun he saw before he would die, the bloody orange eye that gazed at everything, the red wine spilling from his neck, the red wine being drank and drunk by the power-hungry Horus, as he hummed his own tune, as he remembered of the good days of his family before they would betray them “like the rats that they were”, so long ago…

And the raven rested in the shadows, and never spoke at all during the battle, and never even uttered how the god would never be in power like he once was, “Nevermore”.

He wished it spoke to him. But ravens sometimes never spoke when they were in danger, when their throats have been ripped by their wires and cords of their voice box. Their wings that were once wide and magnificent and as long and black as the night were clipped, and their beaks were no longer as sharp and menacing, and their cold blue eyes were torn, ripped from their seams. He was not a proud raven, a proud god, nevermore.
Benjamin Button and the Society of Rats

The rats, known as scummy creatures that bottom-fed through the world of humans, through their trash and filth and disease and greed and madness, they all lived in a world underneath the well of fire and death, Seattle, and in a little world of their own. A world they were perfectly happy with, where there was absolutely no media, no sudden death from insanity, no myths and no rumors, and they were primitive and simple, simply savages who feasted on the flesh of dead skin, on the blood that drained from Seattle, the broken gadgets and machinery that refused to work because their masters gave them no pity and valued nothing in them. The rats simply adopted these orphaned machines, fixed them, and made them their own. No matter how the machine ran, how their metallic organs functioned, what color of their digital light eyes were, they loved them all the same, and they let them into their family, into the rat abode.

Rats were cunning creatures. They knew how to fix human machinery, after living so close to it for so long, and they studied the humans under their careful, black holed eyes that looked as if another rat had chewed into their eye sockets. They picked up any scraps they could collect, as long as the humans no longer cared for it. The humans were gods among the earth, and they had everything, while the rats simply took what they thought was nothing and made it into something. They had no qualms about how little they could have. The rats simply made do with what they had, and made the best of it. The best they could do with their pink stubby fingers and toes that looked as if they belonged to a human fetus, which they also knew humans sometimes abandoned as well, and they had no morale at all for it. But looking at their hands, they realized they were a little of the same of the infant gods, and for that they were thankful, as they praised their gods often, and lived much like the Aztecs, by sacrificing the useless and the poor to the ones who could benefit from their meat and their hearts.

The rats feasted on dead flesh, the dead homeless, the rotten food, they ate it all. They made the streets clean, they made Seattle thrive with crime, they made it keep working like clockwork, they kept all the humans right on their toes and they made themselves work with their bare pink baby hands. They built this city for themselves, and they made it thrive with the righteousness of the power of the gods they worshiped, even if they ate the homeless and they ate any other rat who was no longer useful to the system. They thought if a rat could no longer function in society, they gave them to someone else. They injected them with lethal amounts of morphine they would take from the humans chemical labs that their brothers and sisters worked and suffered in, and they ate them, while they dined on chocolate chips to celebrate the passing of his body into their own. Rats didn’t believe in spiritual beginnings and ends and spiritual animals and spiritual humans and spiritual creations. They only believed in themselves, and their old traditions passed from rat civilization to rat civilization. They lived among humans for so long that they thought of them no more as pesky friends, a parasite that benefited both bodies.

The rats were sitting in the dark alleys of their precious metallic city, with their cups full of melted chocolate chips, singing and cajoling along as it was a holiday among the rats on this very special day, the holiday in which a great rat leader was born, named Leader Mattias, and he discovered the very simple science that was in every mind of the rats today: if you collected various wires from the humans and had a volunteer to run in the Wheel of Power, it conducted electricity, and the rats loved to celebrate things that made their city come to order. Their love for it was brindled with ecstasy and excitement, and their minds buzzed and swirled and snapped and crackled as as they used the drugs from the humans’ science labs to make their lives so much better, the meth and the cocaine and the pills that eased their little pithy sorrows and the pills that made them forget everything once they could swallow it down into their empty sacks of stomachs. Instantly when the pill came into effect, everything seemed to burst into color, as the blues blasted along with the greens, the reds bled along
with the yellows, everything more vivid and more vibrant than the usual steel blue and gray that
gathered in the city’s corridors and among their own long, lengthy shadows with blades as teeth.

But nothing was so simple for the rats. Their minds belonged to asylums once they smelled the nice,
distinct smell of rat gas, and rat poison, the fresh purple liquor that many rats mistake as their most
coveted drink besides melted chocolate chips, grape juice. Even if the rats were having a good time,
they still lived with the dread that they would die, as humans were sudden, and they were swift, like
thunder, like the thunderbirds that Indian lore worshiped like the rats worshiped their simple and idle
gods. And since the rats have evolved and grown smarter, more intelligent, rat traps were becoming
more clever, more carefully devised to kill them instantly. And in a very sudden second, as sudden as
a knife in the throat, they would be dead, and rats would eat their decaying organs. It was the only
way to survive in this rat-scummed city, but even they couldn’t survive long. Rats only lived an
average of two years. Once they have survived everything, they often got cancer. And nothing could
be done for them, except to devour everything of them except the tumor. Everything but the thing
that killed them would be gone.

Rats believed that once you died, you simply lived on in the machines, into the fine mechanical wires
and cogs of Seattle, and you will work endlessly, until something has made you malfunction and
flawed, and the humans would throw you away, and the rats would adopt their bodies into their city.
The rats lived on in the form of buzzes and clicks and whirrs and the red glaring eyes that stared at
them when the machines turned on, begging them to answer how they became this way. But the rats
outside of the God Realm only knew, and they knew that the gods they once lived with took them
away, and made them have a use again, until they needed an upgrade.

Many silver and white-coated rats sat around a table in a silver tinfoil building, celebrating their
holiday. They swung their cups and jars of melted chocolate chips, fully intoxicated in the aroma of
tiny bits of chicken being cooked on the kindling fire and the sewer water rushing past them, their
only little streams and waterfalls in their little city. One rat, with fur that was spotted with a light,
fleshy brown, drank until his stomach couldn’t take anymore of the hot chocolate, and he puked and
laughed and sang silly songs that were passed down from rat generation to rat generation, as his pink
bare hands shook and his tail swung all over, and his eyes were blurred and his mind slurred and he
seemed to be drowning in the cacophony of the party, of the chocolate making him drunk until he
could barely stand up, and he thought it was a good thing that he was drunk. Because if he was
drunk, he forgot about everything, because everything seemed to hurt him. And the rat’s name was
Benjamin Button.

Benjamin Button was raised by humans a long time ago, as so many seemed to laugh at his name,
but when he told him of his story, they often quickly revered him for his courage and his boldness,
and the name Benjamin Button was no longer a cutesy toy name that was often given from fussy rat
owners, but a badge of honor. But now it was no longer that. Now it was simply a reminder of why
he hurt, the thorn that constantly throbbed in his heart, the black webs that he could never tear away
from his eyes, and sometimes he cried about it, and sometimes he just drank. He had no one who
could care for him. No more humans. No womrats. He wasn’t interested in menrats either. He
wanted to be alone, suffering in the decay of his brain and the decay of his emotions for the rest of
his life, with no one to tend to him. The rats often liked to get him drunk despite his misery, as
without sugar alcohol, Benjamin Button was depressed, sometimes suicidal even, and they tried to
keep him as happy as possible. Drinking was his anti-depressant. His escape from the loneliness, the
bleeding of his prickly thorned heart, the scars that resided in his body for a year. And it was almost
another year for him. Here comes cancer. Here it comes to make him dead and gone, and everyone
could feast on his high sugar alcohol levels. So much for his bravery, his valor, his pride. It would be
gone in as soon as a year. And he knew there was simply no saving it.

Benjamin Button had many scars on his hands and wrists, his front fangs were chipped, and his fur
was dingy, as the scars seemed to show through his white wine fur that no longer sparkled but were almost a dull gray, as dull as some people thought he was when he was sober. He banged his jug against the table, his laughter was loud, booming, cacophonous, and his tongue constantly twisted every which way between words, and his words felt like they didn’t belong to a rat, but to a damaged snake.

“Hey, would you cure to play another round of cards? Another another another? Come on! I’m dyin’ over here!” He puked several minutes ago, but he was still drinking. He didn’t care at all if he would drink until he passed out, or cold and dead. He would’ve preferred the latter.

The rats continued to play cards, and the aces and spades and hearts flew towards them with bullet speed, and Benjamin simply listened to the sound of the stream behind the home, wishing that one day, he would have the time to jump into the emerald blown glass water, and make himself turn purple and blue as he would drown himself and be chopped to pieces by the filter at the end of the river. Be combined with all the shit and the piss and simply turn into clean water for the gods to drink. He couldn’t think of anything more peaceful knowing his body would be drunk by the gods.

His hands with scars caused by blades, sharp white fangs of the human gods, he wished they would’ve killed him.

The memories couldn’t hurt him now, being this drunk, being this stupid. Being stupid was bliss, all the wisemen said. And they were right. When he was stupid, he couldn’t remember a damn thing. He couldn’t remember his first memory of being born into the human home, with the human girl playing with him ever since he grew into his legs and he could walk on his own, when she bottle fed him and let her dig into the pockets of her sweatshirt and look into her ears and expect many more chocolate chips and treats to be hidden there. The human girl was very kind to him, and loved him, and that was what killed him. That she loved him so much, that when what seemed to be her myalgia flared up and she couldn’t take care of him anymore, he was sold to another owner, an owner who seemed kind when he was speaking to her about all his knowledge of rats, how long he has been taking care of them, how he loved them so, but when he was taken into his home, he soon learned that it wasn’t so. That the owner wasn’t a kind man who knew all sorts of things about rats and was going to make poor old Benjamin Button live a happy life like he did with the girl, but he was going to torture him, he was going to do experiments on him that were comparable to the experiments done on Jews during the Holocaust, and he often neglected to feed him sometimes, just to see how long it would take him to pass out from the lack of food.

It was then that this owner enforced something inside Benjamin that this rat society soon knew to obey, the laws of their society, the laws that must be followed by every rat to make the city as efficient as possible, to make sure every rat and every machine would function just as fine as the clocks all around them, ticking, ticking, ticking, the seconds passing by quickly, the minutes soon following, the hours soon following, the days, the years, and Benjamin would’ve felt even worse about himself if it wasn’t followed in the society, for even if he was a rat he knew what kind of a scum of an animal it was, and that if the humans wanted to keep their societies and cities running like clockwork, they could destroy every single one of them, and their cities and lives would be so much better without the black rat shitting and pissing and chewing on everything, while tittering and chittering all around their old disgusting homes.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick. The clicking of the clock in the man’s room. It was dark, the man’s face, hairy and his eyebrows protruding to the rat’s eye, his glasses sparkling as he could barely see his blue eyes that always seemed to stare into his animal-like soul, while the light that shined like the sun in his basement waned and swung over him, a pendulum to the ticking of the clock, moving in a rhythm that was making the rat with the dirty, shit-caked fur nervous. He watched as the man with the eyes he couldn’t see take another rat, squirming and worming, trying to escape his cruel grasp.
He thought he could hear a slight cackle as he shoved them inside a glass case, the rat’s pink infant hands constantly touching and slamming and scratching at the glass box, wishing to be free. But he could hear in its tiny, nearly squawking like voice that was lined with terror and fear, that it wanted out, it wanted to get away from this man, that it wanted to live a life of peace, a life of harmony back in the rat city, and it was asking him to let it out, out of his small, insanity-ridden cage.

He wished the same for himself too. He wished the same for everyone. But he knew he could never escape this man. His grasp was too strong. His power was beyond gods. He was Satan, as Benjamin believed that the devil could have more power than God, and he was more frightening than God, and at times, he could do whatever he wanted, and staring at this man’s cold face he thought he was staring at the devil with the wire-rimmed glasses that contained the cold blue eyes that belonged to a cold, blue man who wore all red.

He wished the rat to be free, but he knew this had to be a trap somehow. The man wouldn’t let him go so easily, without a few scars and bleeds.

The man’s finger touched a small, red lever, that looked so dark without the light swinging above them, and his small rat-like heart palpitated as he stared at it, wondering what would Satan do if he touched this lever, if he let the rat go.

Nothing was ever going to be that easy. There was always a price in everything. And he could sense it in his whiskers. He could sense it in his baby hands.

His breath followed the rhythm of his heart. He slowly reached for it. He couldn’t let the rat stay inside there, and die, trapped in his own shit and piss, trapped before he could have one last joy. His nose sniffed it, thinking there had to be something wrong in the lever he could sense, but there was nothing he could take in his nose and whiskers that told him this was a trap, but he knew it in his soul that Satan wouldn’t let them go away so easily. He knew there was something wrong here, and that one of them was going to die.

The man ushered him to pull it. His voice, even when he tried to be sweet, it sounded condescending and loud and he could sniff that he had KFC before he wanted to do this little experiment in his breath. The smell of mashed potatoes and fried chicken skin no longer a welcoming scent to him, but one that would remind him of this awful incident, as he smirked his yellow, piss-stained teeth once he let the rat go, once he freed him of his glass cage.

I know there’s something wrong here. I know this rat isn’t going to live much longer. I know this man is an awful man, a terrible man, and he’s going to make me do something to him, my friend I only knew for five seconds, my friend who is going to die.

The man cackled again, and the smell of the mashed potatoes and gravy overwhelmed him, and while it usually made him hungry, it made him think how disgusting the food really was, to eat meat sauce from another dead animal, to eat potatoes crushed and looking like yellow piss-stained clouds, like the man’s teeth. He wanted to throw up. He wanted to run away, but he knew there was no escape. The man held something deftly in his hand, and the smell was overpowering. Not of mashed potatoes and gravy, but something sweet now, something delicious, and he couldn’t escape from the man, because he barely ate in so long. He was left in his cage for such a long time without any food, without any companionship, and he needed something in his stomach, he needed a friend inside him, right now.

And that was what happened.

The chocolate chips in his hand, so sweet, so arousing in his mouth, it triggered something in his brain, one of Satan’s old tricks, that he needed to kill his five second friend now, and eat his flesh, eat
him and kill him and fill himself up with his heart and organs. The rat didn’t deserve to live. He needed to live. He needed to survive this man, and he was willing to do everything to get away from him, to be free from him, and if he had to play his little games, he had to, because he imagined himself one day getting out of this hell, and if he followed Satan’s rules to a tee, he would get out, he would be free, he would be damned and alive.

And so his five second friend was dead in five seconds. Everything was gone from him except his bones. He even ate his eyes, his baby hands that he knew all rats had, and he cried and sobbed over his body while the man wrote notes on his little notepad, while he continued to shovel more of his heart inside him, tears streaming his face, blood streaming from his face, and he wished he could be taken away from here, as the man soon picked him up, put him in his cage, and he was surrounded by darkness yet again, and for many days, he did not eat and he had no one to talk to, except his growing insanity, his growing pain and his growing torment.

On that day, he didn’t believe in god. Only the humans. They were gods of the rats. They controlled them, they killed them, they ate them even if they needed to, they did everything to them, and thus, rats were only bottom-feeders and savages, while humans controlled all the animals in the world, but the rat truly was the lowliest, the most disgusting, the most hideous, and he couldn’t deal with those facts anymore, and he wished God would take pity on him, if he existed, if he even cared for rats.

All the rats inside his basement were tortured for weeks, until one day, the man was captured by police. He murdered 50 people, and he was also charged with animal cruelty. He even soon found out from the police officer’s discussion between each other that he even fed the rats with the remains of the women he killed combined with dog food, and he threw up and wished the police would take them away to heaven, to a land where they could forget their sins and torture and live in a land where everyone was peaceful and nice and knew your name, not in a land where they were treated like this, by a psychopathic man who simply took his rage and frustration and his fantasies on women and them, the rats that the police truly never cared about, as they thought they were unfit for being adopted. They were violent and killed any other rat with them as soon as they saw them, and they began euthanizing them, because they thought it was the right thing to do. To take them away from their own personal hell to a real one.

Benjamin Button was an intelligent rat, probably the most intelligent out of the entire lot the man had with him, as in a flurry of panic inside his insanity-ridden brain, he escaped while the rest of the rats were killed out of pity, and Benjamin wished now that he could’ve stayed there, under the Needle of Mercy that were in the humans’ hands, because now he couldn’t stand himself. He wished the man had killed him. He wished everything had killed him. The wounds he was given inside his skull and his soul continue to bleed from within, and the only thing to shut it out was death. Sweet, merciful death.

And sugar alcohol from the thing that killed his five second friend in five seconds.

As they sat around the table now as he thought and as the memories sunk into his feet like water, he didn’t sing. He simply wished the memories wouldn’t intoxicate him anymore. He wished they would disappear, that he could take all the memories and make them float away in the wind. He wished no one would no longer call him a brave rat. He wished his pity ran out. He wished everything ran out, including his life, which he knew the tumors would rest in soon, that he would soon die from all the bodies and all the sins he committed to these gods, and his body would be eaten too, and he prayed everyday for it, even if he truly didn’t believe in the actual god the gods worshiped.

He scratched the table quietly, until from the sounds of a rat shouting outside, his friends looked out of the door to see what the commotion was about, and it was a rat with white sparkling fur like...
freshly fallen snow, holding a black, plastic binder that had all the pages secured in a plastic wrap, and he yelled, saying, “I found something from the gods! The gods are truly blessing us on this wonderful day, hurrah hurrah! It is not food, for I have tasted it, and it tastes disgusting! Something that just dropped from their heavens, something that we can truly learn from the gods, it’s here, all in this little black book, it is here that we can learn, and the gods have decided to bless us! Hurrah!”

“Too bad we don’t know what any of the text in that book means, you doofus! It’s all in this human language called ‘Engulish.’ And none of us know that. Look at the little hooks and the little weird shapes all these letters make. Are you kidding me that we can read this? We only know of one guy who could read this for us, and that’s Thaddeus, the Knower of All Humans’ Tongues. He studies every single human language and I’m sure he can translate this Englulish. So don’t get your panties in a bunch, it'll be a while before you can learn more about the gods. They’re tricky, those gods.”

And Benjamin simply wished they would leave the black binder alone and let it be chopped to pieces by the filter. He never cared anymore for the humans, especially that they hurt him for what seemed to be so long ago, and the book looked so ugly, so unappealing with its plain black cover and all the pages being smooth and shiny. He wished he could tell the rats that they should let things be, but the alcohol was deftly in their system, and they looked all over town for Thaddeus, to translate the ugly book, to know more about the hooks and holes of the letters, to learn that the gods had always truly hated them, and there was no more hope for them.

But everyone else said Benjamin was always negative. That he was depressed. That he always ruined everyone’s fun.

But it wasn’t fun to deal with that suffering many years ago.

He took a swig of the chocolate chip drink, and he followed them to Thaddeus’ house, where his house was adorned with so many artifacts of the humans that were thrown away, such as Bibles that he translated over the years, Indian and Buddhist texts, even Buddha statues and Christ sculptures that were beginning to instill fear in him as he hung stiffly with the blood running all over his face and body, with the crown of thorns on his head, and Benjamin wished they could go back to drinking and drowning their sorrows. He didn’t care for what the humans wrote. It could be anything. It could even be what the humans had called “pornography” and “fanfiction”, which he knew that whatever this binder was, it was ultimately useless to their little rat society, as the rats didn’t know whether to take the texts of the humans seriously except Thaddeus, who believed in so many idle gods that many rats said he would be killed by a human someday. And he said to them, “So it goes,” which was a line from what he called a “Kurt Vonnegut book”. And no one understood Thaddeus, because everything he said was cryptic and educated.

“We think the book was written in this language by the humans called…uh…’Englalick.’ Humans are so weird over their names. But we were wondering if you could translate this, if it would be useful to us, if the humans have blessed us with something truly great.”

Thaddeus simply furrowed his brows as he looked at the binder, stating that the language was called “English” (and you better learn it you foolish mongrels) and it was a common human tongue, and that the book was called The Dark Wings of Death (scary!) and it was made by someone named “Wind Alirick (also known as Anansi, whoever he is)”, and he said that he didn’t truly know how long it would take him to translate it, but as was the case of his Bibles and Buddha texts, it probably wouldn’t take too long, as it was only about 100 or so pages. The rats closely huddled their heads to the Translator, wishing to read the text, wishing to know of what the gods have been saying in their stories and if they could learn anything about them, but Thaddeus said that there were too many illiterate rats like them that it was possibly impossible for any rat to tell stories, because their brains couldn’t take them but his.
“Ah shut up Thaddeus! You can only understand them because everyone at those labs injected you with something that made you smarter! Meanwhile some of us were only injected with diseases and stuff that made us act weird. I mean, look at Benjamin, he’s been through a fuckin’ awful ordeal. We’re not as goddamn lucky as you.”

“Of course not,” he hissed, his words slithering like a snake. “And I don’t think of myself as anyone higher. Of course, Benjamin could understand English if he wanted to, but he’s too busy mulling over his traumas. I understand he went through a lot of things, but he doesn’t need to think about them everyday. He doesn’t need to wonder if he’s going to constantly die because that man is going to torture him. He’s gone. That’s that. He doesn’t need to be scared anymore. I wonder if he’s ever going to get over it.”

He heard his evil slimy words, his mollified eyes staring at him, becoming as long as piercing needles. “What did you say about me? You don’t understand what the hell I’ve been through. You wouldn’t be saying the same shit if you were there. You wouldn’t be saying I’m this weak goddamn rat…”

“I wasn’t. I was just simply saying that you need to get over this…”

His anger rose after every word, and it soon reached a peak, a red sharp pointing needle that stabbed and clawed through his brain, making him irrationally think that Thaddeus needed to be dead, more dead than him. “I’ll kill you you son of a bitch!”

His claws reached out for his heart, for his flesh. His teeth that was chipped seemed to be so sharp as he bit down on the brown shit-colored rat, and he screeched and constantly screamed, “Get this scoundrel off of me! Get him off! Get him off!”

His friends surrounded him, keeping the drunken rat that was kicking and flailing his legs and raking the air with his claws away from Thaddeus, and he simply huffed as he stared at his bleeding wounds, his broken glasses that he made himself with wires that the humans discarded, his furniture doused with blood as they tumbled and chewed and scratched and ripped. “I hope you’ll be paying for my new pair of glasses you savage! And look at my furniture! I hope you can clean that up!”

“Fuck you! I ain’t paying for shit! What do you think I am, loaded with money? I can’t help you! I can’t even help myself…myself…myself…”

And he broke into sobs as his friends carried him away, as Thaddeus echoed that it would take him two weeks to fully translate the book, and his friends stared at the dirty blood-ridden rat with scorn and disdain, as Benjamin simply wanted to run away and escape from the situation, but he coughed and pretended he was sick and dying and his rationalization was destroyed with the cancer that was growing inside of him, but even if his friends were slightly drunk, they weren’t falling for it. They knew his rationalization was destroyed since his traumas had settled in.

“What the hell’s your problem, Benjamin? It’s been a year since that incident with that man happened. We don’t care anymore. How about you sob about it back home and never talk to us again? We had enough. Supply yourself with your own chocolate chip drink and get the hell out.”

While he tried to show that he never cared about their friendship to them, he did. He cared too much. He thought of himself now truly alone, without anyone to comfort him, not even his chocolate chips, not even his grape juice and wine. Benjamin also had no money, and his home was slowly being taken away, and he would soon be devoured by the hungry rats. There was nothing more waiting for him at this life. Everything was gone. Everything was wasted. The man known as Satan took it, like he took away all those rats’ lives, like he took away his sanity. And his friends left, leaving him only to comfort himself with the darkness, with the pity of the demons that rested in the blackness of being.

He decided he was leaving the rat city. He would live among the gods, to kill him to maim him to
torture him. He no longer cared for what his friends and what Thaddeus and what anyone else who even looked at him would think about him as soon as he would leave, and he reached for the soft golden angelic light at the opening of the Seattle city above him, and he wished he could reach it. He wished he could be taken away from this awful city and into the city of the gods and demons, and he could live in pain and truth and horror, and he could no longer live in blissful ignorance, in harmony.

But he sighed. It wasn’t going to happen today. He couldn’t reach the sewer duct’s opening as he tried to hold his baby hands up high. He wanted to be free, but the gods won’t let him be free. They wished for him to suffer. God wanted him to suffer. The gods of gods no longer cared for the scum, the bottom-feeder he was. And he thought that this would only be the day where he would be a coward and live in his disgusting, small home that was no longer a home, and cry himself to sleep, and hope the next day would be as less painful as it was now.

Slowly, the alcohol would drain from him. He would become sober. He would go through a terrible withdrawal. He would go mad, insane, he could kill someone, he could scream, he could be taken to an institution for mentally unbalanced rats and eaten away by killing them with gas and serving up his body like a nice little celebratory feast.

He would just die like his five second friend did, in five seconds.

And he simply covered his baby infant hands into his head, and he cried away the night. The night oozed out of his tears. And the day came, as the tears glowed like the sun and made everything, including his pain, bleed away.

He wished when he died he wouldn’t live on in the machines. He actually wished he would live on in the sun that was shining so nicely in the sky. He wished he would be as remembered and as revered as a god, and he wished there was something he could do to make that happen.
The Martyr Who Believes in Suicide

The sun opened its gaping mouth, the red tongue so ambivalent in their view, giving birth to the world before them. They have rested well under the blankets of snow, the little white hands of Death that brushed the home, the drug addicts that claimed the entire kitchen for their feed, the Oxy once again being dashed in all the counters and the tables, once again becoming little crystal granules of relaxation inside Miles’ food. His little moment of joy, his little moment of forgetting his past, his present, and his future. When the drug reached inside his brain, he forgot everything. He would forget even why he existed on this planet, the planet that seemed to be so bare and so hollow and swollen when he arrived, when his parents were so loving and welcoming, when he thought he would receive so much attention, so much of his future was unfolded in the lips of the white lilies their hands formed, so much promise to be had, so much was to be told in his mother’s cinnabar lips, the lips that told her she was pretty and she was a good mother, the lips that gave her so much success, so much sex, so much love for her child, the red blood dotting her nostrils, when she would sniff and snort the drug of her choice, the pills. She really wanted Miles to be happy. To be a good child. To be a smart child. The child that tried the hardest. The child that was always good enough, to satisfy his mom and dad, wherever they were in the world.

Never at his soccer games which he soon was banned from playing after getting bad grades.

They always were at home; smoking what his teachers told him was sometimes called “weed”, and crushing the pill. They always did this in their little circle. Holding hands. Laughing. Smoking Pall Malls after that. Her red fingernails that looked as bright as the center of the sun as it was when it was unfolding before him in his home, clicking against the walls, scratching at his daddy, screaming, panicking, that the police were coming to take poor Miles away.

Don’t worry, her husband said. Take a little Xanax.

Pop. There goes another pill. They didn’t have to crush it.

And she was relieved, even if her husband’s hand was drooled with blood.

The Xanax she got a prescription for when Miles experienced an anxiety attack upon the first day of school, causing him to skip school for the next three days, wrapped in his blanket like a coiled snake, wondering how fucked up he was, how different he was from the other students. Panic attack on the first day of school. Like that could happen to any excited child. They wanted to go to school. To learn. To play with other students. To become a great person, a better person. But he wanted to stay at home, to never learn anything, to always draw of his pictures of his daddy’s claw hand, wrapped with red ribbons, wrapped with the life of the insanity, the Oxycontin taking over them. No longer caring for poor Miles. The fox that never lived. The boy who became a fallen angel. The boy who became Satan.
Yes, he described himself as the devil the white men talk about. The one with horns, red skin, pale red eyes, the little hooves as feet, the little spindly tail. He was the one. He rejected God at birth. He knew a god so loving would never give him this family. He knew the devil would only accept him in his bare red arms, veined and bulging. He misbehaved when he went back to school. On the first day of recess, some children made fun of his raggedy clothes, how they smelled like nicotine, how black and sullen they were for parents who claimed to be so caring and loving. He told them they were privileged and they never understood what he had to deal with, day after day. But they only said, “Shut up, you two-tailed freak.”

The two tails came from the Oxycontin his mother used while he was inside her.

He was lucky he didn’t come with anything serious. Cerebral palsy. Autism. Retardation. Yes, he was thankful. Very.

But yes, the insult. He grew angry. As large as a lion’s mouth when it roared. His teeth became fangs. His tongue became rolling hills; the throat became the black hole that could suck everything in.

Coiled like a snake in his room, with the blankets over him. He looked at his drawings. The one with daddy’s wound. How red he made the blood. He even painted it with watercolors. His eyes were the searing flames of passion, as he drew and drew, and kids told him he was good at it. His teachers said he could draw so many things most kids his age couldn’t. He could be a cartoonist. And that was all they complimented on him. Everything else, it was always how poor he looked, how much he looked a crack addict’s child. But he was. A little bit.

His cheeks flared from the heat. The house was warm that summer. Tepid waters tried to keep him cool. His mother didn’t have a very big fridge. They couldn’t pay for the A/C. He was sick, full of fever!

The scorching red hot flames, how they made everything black they touched! Even his hands couldn’t ravel the flames inside him. They unleashed in his drawings, the sweat pouring down his face, the eyes swelling with gladness as he sketched all of these personal emotional sentiments for himself to see and only him, maybe his parents if they were lucky. But he didn’t care at all. Make them look! Make them see how the fires have scorned and burned him to ashes! The hotness of the room, the warm wallpaper, look what it done to him, to make him a lunatic, to not go to school on the first day, to be full of cynicism and depression, the black snake inside his mind, his teeth glimmering through the fires of his soul, the sharp bladed hands as they crushed pencil after pencil, crayon after crayon, his insanity had to be unleashed, his hatred, his sadness, it must be poured out! The teakettle was brimming too much with heat, it had to SCREAM.

SCREAM.

That was what the lion did.

He screamed till his face was as red as that night of the first day of school.

He poked his fingers in the eye of his caricature. The light poured from them. He thought he was a god sometimes. He thought everything the light had, it was his. His kingdom. His ruling. He could command everyone to leave him alone. He could command all the soldiers in his army to shoot whoever said he was wrong. He could command the queen to eat maggots, because the queen was his mother, the crowned matriarch, the rosy-cheeked and red fingernailed and cinnabar lips Lakshmi. How lucky she was to have her feast of maggots, to eat their plump white bodies. Because it would forever be more than the king would ever eat.
The maggots that absolved her pain. Made it go away. To the heavens, to the eternal raging fires of Hell.

His father was the slave. He made the king into a slave, always doing the chores that he never got any benefit out of. Always pummeled to the ground when he wouldn’t clean the entire kitchen with a toothbrush. Beaten like the African slaves that seemed like a fading memory in America, forced to eat dog food when he was a bad boy, filled with the remains of rats he bought and killed just for fun, always smiling with spectral teeth when Miles knew he was doing something wrong, until the king was forced to kiss the floor, to taste the linoleum and dirt, forced to eat the cockroaches that climbed the cupboards. At least they had nutrition. More than anything they would ever eat.

“You need to try harder!”

“You try harder for mommy, please?”

He hated that fucking face she made. 

The cinnabar lips from Zanzibar, the ashy face, the little streams of blood from her nose, it was always the same. How she wanted him to try harder to behave.

Her little rings hurt too. The ones on her fingers. Their marriage ring hurt the hardest.

The one inscribed “I Love My Son, Miles” hurt the worst.

She wanted to punch her face more than the rings could. But he was so weak, so defenseless! These little seven year old hands could only do so much!

They could only draw. Nothing else. Not even provide comfort. As he wished.

The king would sit in his throne of shit, his crown of thorns, and he would think, what should I do with the slave? Make him eat the garbage and get sick? Make him clean the toilets with his tongue? Make him small and be drowned with his pain as he was when he was that small, beat him to submission, beat him to the little boy he always was?

No.

He had better plans.

The lion opened his mouth, rose up like the sun, and…

Make them all pay. Make them all get their death wish.

He crushed the Oxycontin pills. He crushed them into piles of dog shit. He told them that there was nowhere else the queen and her little slave could get the pills at, except in this lovely little pile of excrement, so proudly displayed on their thrones and beds, hissing with flies, ready to eat, with wretched, goblin teeth they had.

They would eat and snort that dog shit, to get their high, to get their little buzz to make sure they never remembered their past, present, and future, only to be told by Your Royal Highness that it never was there at all.

The pills were simply sugar.

Oh, how her fucking face would crimple like a piece of sad paper with his stupid inane little wreckages. The mountains turned into little dog turds that were black and jettisoned with jagged crayon lines. The color of her cinnabar lips have turned babyshit brown. And the king was satisfied with his little game, and now he thought, it was time to pull the end from its sheets.

The mountains he would draw. How dark they were, how jagged, how they lunged towards the
viewer with its wretched fangs that was always brought down in his family! The lemon yellow sun that would shine for him, that would give him hope as he climbed these morbid mountains, how they gave him the false sense that everything will be alright, that everything will be okay, because Miles was the king, the king of shit and the king with the thorny crown, he will be able to conquer anything, as his parents raised him to be this immortal being, this god among gods (his father and his mother, the Lakshmi and the vengeful Christ), how he wished he could bring down the sky and make it crash among the mortals, make them pay for what happened on this recess, the recess of his inner insanity inside the black holes in his eyes that shed light to all those who saw him. Miles, the Mountain King! Oh praise be to glory of the Mountain King, hallelujah! May he shed wisdom on our blind, deaf, and dumb souls! May he bring the end to what is simply the beginning!

And the Mountain King wished for his mommy and daddy to die. The Queen and the Slave no longer needed to live. They were useless to the king. No more use. They were the short stub of a pencil, while his arm had to rub off the graphite marks, the unused lead he could’ve used for his works. Too bad, so sad. And he must let them go.

He opened his lion teeth, the mountainous teeth, the sea inside his mouth, and he bit on her nipple. The recess lady screamed in anguish, said that Miles had done it again and that he was a very bad and naughty child, and they would report this to his parents. Let them, he thought as he smiled widely. Let them and see how my power, my influence, has grown upon you. And I will use you and throw you away too, like the Queen and the Slave, like the Princess and the Raven.

And he said to his mighty people, HANG THE WITCH! HANG THE SLAVE! LET THEM SUFFER FOR THEIR CRIMES; THEIR LITTLE WAVERING SENSE OF INNOCENCE THAT WAS LEFT SHALL BE MAIMED! The Queen cried heinously, while the Slave simply called his Master the Piece of Shit he was all along. But the King laughed. He had no time for this foolishness. It was time for the Queen and the Slave to die, for they truly were the Pieces of Dogshit.

And in that flash of lightning that he drew as bleeding and as coarse as a broken slitted vein, his mother, his father, the Queen, the Slave, they were hung to dry like wet clothes, their backs shown to the world, as the ropes coiled around their necks, and their faces purple and hung with shame.

Like deer jerky hung to dry. It was delicious.

And it was time for him to be hung too. To be christened as a martyr. To be fully realized as the suffering artist, the artist who lost his soul, a long time ago, by the unhappy childhood, the parents who didn’t care, the angel who could only help so much.

He held the rope in his hand with great care, hoping that Sonic would get the message of how much he truly wanted to die.

“No.”
That was all he said, and those words seem to have taken such a strong effect on Miles’ soul. Like the heavy chains were released, that someone cared. He could see Sonic’s wings glowing, his heart illuminating his red bloody room, and he simply held him close, as he whispered that he was a good person, a nice child who honestly didn’t want do any harm, why would he want to kill himself?
“To seal my legacy,” he said.
“Your legacy of what? You haven’t built much of a legacy, Miles! Those pictures you draw, of course they’re very good and very…expressive, but…”
“I haven’t lived long to realize my legacy is what you’re saying. But I know that I will love long with you, Sonic. Just a little while ago, a nice little fairy just appeared by my door, while my parents were out playing with the razorblades and the drugs. Chip came here. And he offered me a deal. And he told me about your wish too. You were so desperate to save your brother, that you wanted to kill
yourself by drowning in the sea, while the sea goddess was alive and wanted to swallow the world whole. Is that right?"

His brother, the weak little frail child that was stuck inside his soul like a little sliver of crawling rain drops on the roof of a house, he was awake, and he asked Sonic what he meant by a wish. As he stared into the red womb room beyond him, Sonic’s eyes became weak, shallow, and his nose began to dribble and his breath was shortened, as chronic, gasps of breath began to emerge from inside his rib cage which seemed so fragile to him now, holding two souls inside, the little cat’s eye marbles that children simply forgot to play with in this world.

“Sonic, I realized I was dead and then revived but…I didn’t realize that you…wanted to sacrifice your life to save mine. And I can feel within your brain wires that you wanted to kill yourself when I died! How could you, my brother? I wanted you to spread my words, my pages, my story, unto the world when I was gone, and you decide to off yourself instead! How can my bigger brother, the one I looked up to, the one I trusted…”

Miles’ eyes shrunk back to the floor of his room, the red royal carpet that his parents could afford what seemed to be so long ago, before he was born. “So…you really do believe in suicide. You really do believe that it can make you into a martyr. Your brother’s death seemed to make you so depressed that suicide was the only option. The only way out. And you’re supposed to be my angel. Angels are supposed to be perfect, Sonic. They aren’t supposed to be…so flawed.”

He couldn’t get enough breath in his lungs to revitalize his brain. He knew that the truth of what happened in his past would affect Miles deeply, as he needed to show him a perfect example. Angels were all but nothing but perfect examples. Nothing but shining little artifacts for humans to gaze and marvel at. Statues for the museum. And he soiled his perfection by attempting suicide what seemed to be so long ago.

Soiled angels. Their wings were not of clear bleached white, but of mud, of maggots and of rust and grime. And Miles knew it. He possibly knew it all along. How ruined he was, how deplorable he was, with his selfishness, how he thought of himself as flawed as well, how his flesh seemed to rot and spoil away and he couldn’t save any for Miles to eat, as Jesus Christ would’ve done. His flesh was everyone’s flesh, everyone who wanted it.

He held his body, shivered of the frigidness inside, his breath visible like frost on a windowpane. The fact that a child used to look up to himself so much, and now thought of him as a flawed useless being, a mortal…

Miles began to think that maybe, just maybe, he was useless to the King of Shit too.

Sonic simply said as all these thoughts were absorbed inside his brain, “But I still don’t want you to throw your life away. You’re much too young to be doing that. At least wait until you’re like, 40?”

He smiled. “I will do what I please, Sonic. My life is not of precious use to anyone. My parents thought so, but they ended up wrong in the end. And that’s enough evidence that I’m just as much as a sacrifice to the gods, to have my wish granted to become a god, only to have a true, definite way that I will die. By defeating many other gods, by being remembered in the souls of people who worship me. Yes, I wanted to be remembered by people. But I told Chip that I didn’t have to become a god to be remembered. If a seven year old boy commits suicide because of neglectful, abusive parents, then that’s enough of a sensationalist news story don’t you think? That I will be remembered by thousands of people? That I will be remembered in songs that artists decide to dedicate to, the paintings and drawings they will do, my art being in museums by default, a statistic, a number, that I was one of the ones who committed suicide at a young age? Of course. I will be remembered. No matter what Sonic. I will be…a martyr to everyone. I will be someone worth remembering, for my
suffering, for my downfall. Everyone will remember me. Everyone. And I will make sure of it.”

Sonic’s eyes wavered as the little boy finished his speech.

He wanted to believe that this little boy will be alright, that he will be loved by many, that his parents would regret not raising him to be the proud shining boy he will be in a few years, a few months even. He wanted to show him that love does happen in these stories, and it was true. He wanted to show him that angels were real, and not made of plastic and chiseled stone, but they were invisible to the naked eye, not many people could see them.

Except to those who did believe.

“But would you rather be remembered for your drawings? Would you rather be remembered as someone who touched people’s lives? You can get better at drawing. You can have people appreciate your art. You can enjoy drawing and painting much more than you do now. To have your work come to life. If you died, you won’t know what you could really learn in this world. You could become a great artist, someone that people will remember for many years, like Leonardo, like Van Gogh. People remember things that touched them for a long time. They really do. And if you could survive a few years, think of how many people’s lives you could make a difference in. Just think of how many you could touch in your lifetime. Life is all about making other people’s lives better. That’s why we live. To help. To make something out of ourselves. That’s a lot of people’s reasons for living. But yours…yours is just to die. Do you see how pointless that is? Just to kill yourself? There’s no reason for that. Now come on, just wipe yourself off all this dirt and muck and live the best damn life you can. You are here for a reason; I can assure you of that. So come on, live! Live life like you always wanted to! Run, and keep running until your feet really feel like they can’t take anymore. Until they shatter like glass. I want to run like that one day. To run until my feet collapse and I break down and I see how truly life is. I attempted suicide, I may have almost died twice becoming a god, you may feel like I already died, but I see life is beautiful, and if you can’t see that right now, then you need to.”

There was silence in the little womb room. Tails continued to look down on the royal red carpet, seeing the tessellations that the many shapes created with their little edges. The edges that were created by an artist, someone who believed in living their life until they could create something that would be remembered by so many people, something that Sonic claimed could “touch people’s lives”. But as he stared at the carpet, he thought it was barely worth remembering, that it reminded him of being in this lonely house that was built with shit, the house that his parents wished they could build with love, but only with scorn and hate and drugs.

He wished he could make something that people will remember how terrible his parents were for a lifetime, and he thought it could only be with suicide. And the suicide, the hanging, of the Queen and the Slave.

“But I want to be remembered for my works too, Sonic!” his brother clamored inside his rib cage, making them shake like glass chandeliers. “I wanted to finish my novel; you know how important that is to me! If we’re going to die because you’re not fighting any more gods and getting any more demon eggs, then you might as well give me all the time you can to making my novel. You know I have to write it. You know how my hands are shaking and dying to type at the typewriter his parents have, you know? I want to fully live and have people know my name, even if I just publish one novel. Can you do that for me big brother? Do we have a deal?”

Sonic smiled. He wanted to make a difference in other people than Miles. He wanted to make a difference to both his brothers.

“Of course. And you know, I think this particular novel of yours, we’re going to make it into a
bestseller. A bestseller with artwork that people will remember will stay in their minds as they read it. Isn’t that right, Tails?”

Tails. A name given by someone who claimed to be his big brother. Someone who loved him. Someone who wished for him...to live.

And he realized that he, too, could touch Sonic’s life. This angel who decided to give him a second chance.

And with these illustrations he could give to this novel they were preparing to write...if the novel ever became a bestseller, he would be remembered. Remembered for how emotional, how much he could touch other people with all the pictures he painstakingly made with his small, fragile little hands. He could do it. He could touch people’s hearts with his hands. He could make their hearts grow bigger like he was a planter, a gardener, who knew how to grow these hearts as if they were ripened strawberries.

Tails, the new boy who was just given birth to in this womb room, with the design on his floor that the artist created to be remembered, he will remember it, because it was the first thing he saw when he was reincarnated, when Sonic, the fragile angel who was as fragile as himself, his other brother, gave birth to his new purpose. To be remembered as the great artist, the artist as emotional and as loved as Van Gogh, as Rembrandt, as so many artists whose deaths were recorded in history books, who painted their works with love and passion. He could be one of them. He could become a god in people’s lives by just simply drawing and painting.

He didn’t need to become an actual one. He just needed to live. Breathe. Age. He could become the tender ripe age of 90 before he could die. He could live for many generations. He could become a painter whose life was always marked by the works he did, what style he decided to use, he could become loved in the art community, yes, that was all he truly wanted. To be loved. Not in newspapers. Not in numbers. He could become loved in images. In people’s eyes.

Sonic found the typewriter, aging like fine wine inside the neglectful parents’ attic, the cobwebs and dust shaken off. And his brother, with the mind of a writer whose words were also aging like fine, black and red wine that was now lying in the streets as Sonic’s elder, Shadow, whose throat was ripped and torn like a velveteen doll, he typed and wrote more of the raven, whose wings were as black as the gutted throat, as the hole inside the second mouth, as it was stitched by the lady rabbit, whose hair and ears were the same color as creamy sateen.

And Tails thought to himself, before the pages were to be flipped over by the reader, that this page, this moment of happiness, will truly last forever, or it was a simple mania, that the writer made him have, until at last, a few pages later, his back will be arched with sorrow and misery, and like the red wine on the Seattle streets, his blood will be spilled.

The Queen and the Slave still had to be hanged along with his body, he thought. Along with the Mountain King.
The snow had awakened yet again, falling deftly in the air, the frost on the windowpanes of the restaurants they so wished to come inside to collecting like crystal dust, looking like the angel dust they once had to get away from their troubles. The sparkled light seared through their eyes, as the snow turned into piles to rolling hills into mountains, Vector sleeping in his soggy cardboard box he called a home, the chills gathering inside his body. How they moved with their clammy feet! He shivered, he shuddered, he wished to be away from this awful winter and into a warm restaurant, a warm home, a warm mother and father! But they had scorned him, hated him! Satanic Wiccan! The fires kept burning in their homes, the incense he called “golden amber”, and he wanted the home to burn down, as the trees had burned down their clothes, becoming naked in the stark, cold morning, their arms reaching towards the sky, praying to God for forgiveness. He could smell the scent of the wet leaves underneath him, rotting into the ground, the clothes they had sacrificed for sanctity. He shuddered (heart shuddering), as the cold wind began to envelop him, the morning sun rising out of the hill and it had stuck out its thorny red tongue…

Espio was awake, brewing a cup of instant coffee by a flaming pit inside a trash can. He stole the instant coffee from the store and managed to get out of the prison deal safely. He wondered why he didn’t steal so often, as no mortals could deal with a god who was hungry, but he thought it was a violation of his code of ethics. The code of ethics he had broken too long ago.

He had yet another squirrel roasting on the kindling fire. Yet more burnt organs, more burnt tail and burnt meat for them to eat. It seemed so small, so meager, for their big, shriveled stomachs. Their stomachs that were pruned skin.

Vector had awoke as the snow continued to roar over the cityscape of the heathen city, and he swallowed the burnt squirrel whole. They both fought over the only meal they would get for a long time, Espio claiming he was starving more. “But I’m a big guy,” Vector had said. “I need enough food for me to grow. You’re always going to be a scrawny lizard, aren’t you?”

It was too cold to argue. The snow billowed around them, collecting many crystal piles of glass around them, the colors reflecting off their translucent skin. Vector had found half of a cigarette, and began to smoke, his pack a day habit he had always kept for many years. The promise had to be kept. Otherwise he would’ve went insane and killed Espio. And then off himself with a gun. He thought it was the true ending to all the world’s problems.

Men were awful creatures. They always damaged the world further into its decay. And he believed he wasn’t any better. A god, fighting with other gods, and he was suffering, starving, dying, and the ashes of the cigarette was never enough to feed him. To please him. The snow was much like his cigarette ashes, and he imagined God up there, smoking and smoking, as he coughed and hacked and spit out some phlegm, as he had been smoking for years. When God got angry, he wanted more cigarettes, and Jesus took the last pack. He thought his analogy was humorous, but he knew no one would care to listen, not even Espio as he sipped the last of his coffee and thought over their plans to keep surviving, and he fought to keep alive. The snow got colder with every inch of their icy fingers, the winter cascading more of its breath on them, the chills running through their veins, their bodies feeling sick and anhydrous.

Vector coughed out his cigarette. He imagined he was becoming sick with lung cancer. And he thought that was good. Because he would soon no longer be homeless. He would be in his true home, in the dirt underneath their feet, letting the homeless worms feed on his body. He’s got to feed ‘em. They shit out more dirt for the world, make it a better place. The worms had to eat. They had to split in two to eat more than they could handle.
He thought of himself as a worm, and he split in two to make Espio. And now they were eating the waste of the world, the dead people and the dead things. Worms had to make the world a better place for the humans to live in. And he knew the rumored rat society underneath Seattle was much that way. He wondered if he could live there someday. Live among the useless and broken creatures.

Espio and Vector lived only as useless and broken creatures. They both flunked out of high school, with no plans to get a GED. They never planned on going to college. They simply lived on liberal media and liberal gods, with their minds growing weaker and faint the more they smoked the roll of weed. Their breath stank of it, their words drolled as they spoke, and soon, they were abandoned by their parents, never given another chance to try again at their life. They were homeless teenagers, dead and praise-less. No one cared that they were young, that they were still imbued with life. They were simply starving savages, whom only wanted to eat other mortals to dissolve their grovelling stomachs. Vector only hoped he could have it like in the olden days, of smoking the sweet leaf, of not having a care in the world, because their parents were going to take care of them. Even if he disagreed with his parents’ views, he yearned he could be back with them, especially during the holidays. However, he called him, hoping to get a taste of turkey melting in his mouth, and they hung up on them, on Christmas day. Left them lying in the cold dirt, as the snow gathered around their skinny, desolate bodies, on Christmas day.

They wondered about that bird lady who once saw them, who longed for revenge on both of the hedgehogs, her rage and pyre fire anger high, her knives so sharp to slay them, her brother, still completely dumbfounded and clueless as to what she will do. They were so happy when they left. Happy. Something Vector never knew. He once had a hint of happiness when he was about 6. But nothing more. He only had a brief taste of it. For the rest of his life, he was scorned by his mother, his father, and was often told he was never a good child. He didn’t fulfill the needs of the American dream. The dream that was garnished by FOX News and McDonald’s fries, as he searched in the trash and ate one, lukewarm. He was lucky it was even slightly warm in his mouth. It often tasted stale, eating cardboard in his fangled mouth. But cardboard or no, he had to eat it, like the lowly worm he was.

His fingers were blue, a pale blue, eaten by frostbite, as he listed of the various ways he wanted to die. Get in a car wreck. That was fun. Or jump off a bridge. He feared pissing off the drivers who had to go to work, who didn’t care at all he wanted to jump. Eat cyanide. It was better than nothing at all in his stomach. Get a rope, tie a noose, watch his breath get loose. He made his own nursery rhyme to sing about his death. Children will love it. A crocodile had one snaggled tooth, he decided he wanted to have his neck choked in a noose. Crocodile, crocodile, have you not learned the truth? That the Man will only cut you loose.

He used to play in a band, he used to write songs, play the piano, play the guitar, along with Espio. They were only semi-finalists in Battle of the Bands, and their dream was lost in delusions that they would come back together, they didn’t care at all about their futures but the futures of the band. Life had come together to segregate them. The only band members who were left were them, Vector and Espio, and they were nothing without the rest of them, without that simple magic pilfering throughout their fingertips.

There was a woman who used to sing for the band. The lead singer. She sung about false idol practices and doctrines, and false idol gods the human beings worshipped. Her name was Myra, and he loved her.

She slipped in his reptilian grasp. He was now a worm, without a lover to mate and produce more of his own.

Or he could produce more worms by cutting himself in half.

Myra dumped him the same summer he flunked out of high school. She told him that he was a
hypocrite, a liar, a loser, as he had no idealizations about ever getting a real career and helping himself in the world. He only wanted to play music, to keep the dream going. And he sold his guitar for pot money that Christmas eve, and he soon was completely broke as he and Espio drowned out all the plants, their sweet leaves, and he sat as idly as his idle gods, hoping one day, he could be with Myra, knowing she would never want him now. His teeth yellow and looking like orange rust, his eyes decayed inside his skull, his will and passion deflowered. He was dead inside, and he knew Myra was never going to trust him, a homeless crocodile who ate from the same trash that carried in its wired cage dirty diapers and cigarette ash, as he waited for the words to come in the snow, the ice worms that would eat his face with frost.

He shuddered, shuddered, wondering if Espio, or anyone, would save him. Especially Chip, that bastard he knew had eviler intentions, intentions that were derelict from being the sovereign ruler of Earth, the guardian of those who needed guarding. Children who didn’t know any better. Myra had a child. He saw in her Facebook account a year ago. She had it and raised it with a woman named Daphne. So she was a lesbian. And he believed that was possibly the biggest slap in the face he could get.

He wallowed his eyes, and cried, howl to the sun that was covered with freckles of snow, his fingers torn by frost, his teeth rusted corroded steel, his body crumbling apart with the force of the almighty God, his hands and fists made with the crust of the stars.

“Vector, what the hell’s the matter with you? You’re not dying, now come on and let’s find a Demon Egg. There’s one not too far away from this park. Aren’t we lucky?”

Vector continued to breathe with gasps, as the wind had covered him with a shawl of ice, feeling his bones rusted and old, turning to icicles. His organs was even beginning to freeze under a sheet. His blood turned cold, into a frozen pond that was royal with the sea of life.

“Come on, hurry before we find another god who takes it away from us! We need to eat. We need this more than anything, Vector.”

His senses were broken, shattered ice in his skull, as he rose from his decrepit crunch of his back in the snow, and he had turned into Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec god who had a society full of savages, full of men who ate hearts and had the organs of other men for their collective art pieces and furniture. And Espio had turned into Xiuhcoatl, a serpent with a turpentine body, with eyes made of shard glass and his skin of malachite and fluorite, and they swam in the freezing February air, the snow collecting on their skin, their mineral bodies chiseling, as the sun moved further into the Earth, the day collecting on their eyes.

They saw the demon egg perched in the street of 7th Avenue, the egg rested between two silver-barked trees that glittered in the absconding sun. They saw a purple cat resting by it. Her eyes were full of remorse, sadness, as the gods had got closer to her sanctum.

She turned those eyes to black granite, as she heard their footsteps becoming louder in the blue-soaked morning, her hands shuddering, shuddering, and they could see the hint of fangs, sharp moons that had wished to cut through them.

The cat had gazed at them with loathing, hatred, the gods were devouring her every chance of becoming more alive, no longer doll-like in her sanctity, her righteous influence tried, it colored a pure snow white, her innocence as sparkling as the snow.

The crocodile could see her mind, her mourning making her desire to be the new Timekeeper. It was her agenda, to become the god that many would pray to in their leather bound Bibles, hearing her screams, her cries, her decrees of injustice committed against her soul! Her purple fur, how it shined in the hateful sun, seeing the purple blazes, the hints of flames sapping the cold air of snow, and her eyes glowed like a blacklight, the germs of all Vector’s hacking and Espio’s eating of dead animals becoming evident. She could see their sins. Their flaws. And they felt naked against her.

Their skin was only just so deep, her claws reaching in, prickling them, slowly of small, even holes, seeping their contentment with their sad lives…
They could sense the cat, named Morrigan, wanted to become the new Timekeeper, to regain all the pieces to her scattered heart, the heart that continued to beat inside a flower, somewhere in Seattle, that was as colorless as her innocence…

The cat’s eyes, as black as coal, was cast on them, her fingers of lead, her hair of black thick strangling wires that was whipped upon their throats. She was Morrigan, the Celtic god of death and battles and war, and her eyes had seeped of death, her heart never beat, her grip was as strong as cast iron, her scream pierced through the day, through the shadows of the world, and they clamored to find their right places before the light of the world. She was no longer a purple cat that protested royalty to this disgusting society, she was an old, wretched maiden who wanted revenge, revenge of her last dead love, who rotted in the ground, who was eaten and torn apart by worms, she had blown both the Aztec gods away as she ignited pestilence on the land, her deaths becoming louder as many humans had grown old and cold and died. Vector’s teeth was falling into his hands, the orange shit-colored fangs loose (tie the noose), and Espio had heard the cry of her sadness, her forlornness at this wonderful, brave creature who had protected her, parented her, guided her, yet he couldn’t get her to say who it was that was murdered in cold blood, as she gripped on the demon egg, crushing it into many dissected black pieces. She had asked them of the murderer’s name, the name that she had to seek.

“Horus.”
They coughed, their lungs collapsing before them, as the winter continued to lap their oxygen and warmth in luxury, and they said, “Who?”

“She’s Horus.” Her eyes flared, the black fire rising from her skull, the grip grasping Vector’s scales and his shoddy body, as the withering woman disappeared from her face, and she became the cat again, the cat who had too many lives to spare to anyone. Nine was simply too much for her. So was two.

“Where is Horus?”
They knew of Horus, the Egyptian sun god. The green, drunken and idiotic bird had done many awful things, he had drank the splendor of the defeat of many gods, the murder of their sacred golden blood. Vector didn’t know of where he went, his sun-skin disappearing in the shadows, an eclipse. His wings were not built of sun, but shadows. He thought Horus was supposed to be a good, righteous, cheerful god, but he was instead selfish, greedy, and a liar and a thief. The god had taken many bottles from the wine racks, trying to feed himself with nothing but liquor, his eyes swelling up of red wine and whiskey, the alleyways always smelling of his piss as if he was a dog marking his territory. He believed differently about Horus. The good god was a very flawed, very dark, very evil god, and he wanted him dead, and he hoped that this goddess could take her shadowed knife and cut across his golden one, then to his neck, letting all the red wine and whiskey and bloody mary’s bleed from there, his folklore completely gone.

He didn’t know. And he wished he knew, as the woman continued to breathe fire on his neck, the icy cold grasp as cold as the winter that was howling around them.

“I need to know where Horus is. And his damnable sister and brother. I don’t know where they could be, but once I see them, I’m going to murder them as they rightly deserve to be. They have caused nothing but sin in this world. Despair. Betrayal and hate. They don’t deserve to live, to grace this Earth I will rebuild with my prowess of the minutes, seconds, and hours. Days, years, millennia. Make everything go by smoothly, they said. Make sure none of the time is trapped up in there, in that little vial. Chip is such an awful timekeeper. He doesn’t need to be the master of us. I know what I’m doing. I can do anything. My hands are mighty. I am ice and fire. I am decay and life. I am a mistress and a slave, a queen, a saint. I will take care of the world. I will take care of God. I will take care of my god.”

Her tongue spoke and hissed like fire. Her gaze was cold, entrapped in golden ice. The winter’s deathly touch was nothing to her. She wasn’t fazed. She had no life inside her, the goddess of death. The goddess of battles and wars. She lived on injury and bloodcuts and the fallings of her loyal
friends. Except one. When he died, her heart had died with him.

She had let go of Vector’s colorful body, hissing, hissing, his tongue poking through the frozen air. Xiuhcoatl had simply lied, waiting for her next movement, knowing this goddess was too powerful for them. With just one prick of her fingers, a stitched scar had bled through. Her beauty was her vengeance, her plea to remain as immortal as a god truly could be.

She knew time was running out. Horus had tried to kill another god, and she could see his seams ripped through, yet another stuffed animal for her to fix, her friend, Aceso, the sewing needles of Fate that had stitched across the stars and had pattern the universe with only nothing but thread and a sewing needle. God had sewn the world according to His own image, and he had small, deft hands to create the right threads, the right patterns, and He knew what to do for His little universe, with His pin cushion strawberry that lied on His desk, adorned with quills like a hedgehog.

“Horus will die. I will make sure he dies on this awful, filth-ridden planet. I will kill Chip too. I will make me and Aceso the Women of Fate. Our thread is invisible, but seen at a certain angle, it shines in colors like an opal. We are simply spiders. Spiders like Anansi, when he had webbed for you his song of lies.”

Her eyes had turned amygdala, gold and rustic, and her breath was spoken from her when she had left the two reptiles alone in the street, as the people passed by uncaring and unwilling to hear their dramas, and she slipped between the row of cars that gathered near the street lights, the green, yellow, and red shining in her eyes, the life of the street sparking from her feet, from her hands adorned with flames. She watched the sun sinking down further, the lotus flower that she collected somewhere, beginning to close its pale petals, the heart beating slower, with the pace of the sun’s feet.

Chilled to his dehydrated body, his shards of forgotten bones, of this creature, this woman who had collected the encroaching flames on her royal black dress, the princess of another dimension, he sat as he watched the cars go by, the blind deaf and dumb people going on with their lives, their feet seeming so small in this world, this world garnered by gods.

“Another demon egg, slipping from our grasps, just like that. She was powerful. More powerful than us.”

Vector coughed up phlegm in his throat and spat it to the ground, as he saw the men and women of the working world trying to get their paycheck for the day, their reasons for living, and he snorted, thinking it wasn’t much of a surprise.

“Of course we lost, because everyone else is stronger than us, Espio. We’re jokes. We can’t beat any god for any demon egg at all. We couldn’t even beat Anansi, and he didn’t even fight any gods. He just wrote. All he wanted to do was write.”

Vector had read his short stories. They touched him, and he didn’t mind at all about him being a recluse and choosing instead to spend time with his typewriter, because he was a damned good writer, and if he didn’t die off so quickly, he would’ve had a future. As a lot of unpublished writers, those who chose to not let their voice be heard by greedy publishers.

“I didn’t much care for them, Vector,” he said, reading his mind as he thought again over his stories, the ones he gave them for only a quarter.

“They were too decadent. Too sweet. Mind candy that sickens the soul. We need to go back to the park and suffer like we used to. We may never find another demon egg. And that may be it. I would rather die than be starving all the time.”

Their only path was starvation, to have their folklore completely gone. Vector couldn’t win against anything, and he believed that Quetzalcoatl was a very weak god, but he was mighty in his myths, just not many had believed in the Aztec gods anymore. They were useless prophets of the new beginning of a savage future. Tearing people’s hearts for sacrifice. He was sure they used their skin of the dead for furniture too. Or was it a psychotic man who had done that? Aztecs were psychotic
too. There wasn’t much difference between the two.

Death was something they weren’t afraid of anymore. They knew it was probable since they were born. Their parents had always told them they were going to die, without achieving anything of worth in the world. And that was it. That was their destiny. To be useless. To leave their mark on the Timekeeper’s chart that they had done nothing but scared a little blue hedgehog to the point that he had become a very mighty god.

They trekked back to Denny’s Park, the snow falling gently, soothingly, to the city of Seattle, dressing the trees in a white silk dress, the maidens of the world lying asleep for the forgotten gods, as they rolled up in their newspaper blankets, closed their eyes, and had a cold, desolate sleep.

They had heard the sounds of boots passing by the park, little imprints of bloody marks drawn on the snow. His dagger was gold, his influence superflous and grand. People all over the world had loved him, and he didn’t know why.
Yet another bottle of wine had been drunk, and it had been his second bottle, and his eyes were still thirsty, flush-eyed, and his lushness desired more, more blood for his waning mind to drink. More liquid to satiate his hunger, more food for thought to quench him. His eyes, dry, bloodshot, he waited around to catch another ride to find another god he could murder for their money. He had money (but not nearly enough, he thought). He had power. He was looking for a fun time, cutting people’s throats into searing holes, the blackness that he always enjoyed in seeing, in people’s lives and in his. The golden blade, he wondered if he ever wanted to cut his own throat too. He could feel no pain, no trepidation, except that he would be free of this god business, this rusty and ugly alcoholism, his eyes never seeing, but shut. He saw the sun sinking further in the sky, and he imagined it as his own eyes, the gold and silver ones, shutting the world into darkness, having the blind deaf and dumb people never traveling in this miserable world again.

He got on the bus. He sighed. He gave the bus man some change. Then he sat in his own chair, alone, lonely, a god who was never loved by the intelligent people, the bright people, and he knew everyone in the bus was smart, was as brilliant as the stars in the sky. They all ignored him, the lonely buzzard that continued to feast on the flesh of the dead.

He felt the dryness of his throat, how he needed yet more wine to feed himself, the holy water he needed to drink to gain salvation.

Horus was supposed to be a happy god. A bright god. But he never earned happiness. He read all about him in the Egyptian mythology books. Horus was a respectable god, a great god, and his sanity was tattered, as soiled as his blade that was never gold, but felt that it was nothing but gold paint that was chipping off the edges, with every person he had killed. The bus rolled on, the night rolled on. He was salubrious, the drool coming out of his mouth, the blood he feasted on dripping from his maw. The regular, ordinary citizens of Seattle couldn’t see he was a god, a god who decided who could kill the other gods. It was always him. Cutting the necks like ham and turkey. Another Thanksgiving feast for the poor and worthless.

He had dreams, dreams of what it was like to be with his sister and brother. They were a happy family, a wonderful family, their father was proud, and their mother was warm, and Storm used to be not so stupid, but normal just like them. But he never felt loved by them. Their eyes never gazed at him with respect. It was why he was here. He cried often, thinking of it.

He had a pack of cards. He scanned through them, trying to find the ace. Aces were a diamond in the rough in his card packs, always rare, always very valuable. He only, if ever, saw two. They never shined brilliantly in the light. They were pyrite, if anything. Coal. Black.

Seattle’s blue-grays blended in his vision, the moody city beginning to sleet again on the bus windows. He saw the droplets of red, yellow, and green mercury, sliding across the windshield wipers, to the insides of the vehicle…

They looked like stars.

He wished he had another drink that looked like the stars. That would knock him out that he saw stars.

He rarely saw the stars in the night sky. He rarely looked up. He rarely appreciated life. Alcohol had solved everything for him. He didn’t need to experience happiness. Or sorrow. He just needed to feel numb. Feel no pain. Drink until his body no longer tingled, until no more life was imbued with him, the alcohol was his food, his comfort, he had it instead of cake and ice cream for his birthday. Once he was 21 he had a chocolate cherry shot, and he considered it his birthday wish, 21 candles and all, engulfed in his throat.

Spitting fire! He often did that! He cursed, he screamed, he flew! Many things were destroyed. He had destroyed desks, telephones, plates, cups, hats, dresses, toys, vehicles, bottles, bric-bracs, knick-knacks, paddywhacks, bones, animals that liked bones, porcelain, ebony, ivory, piano strings, guitar keys, wicked wishes, wicked desires, family members, especially his brother and sister, his dad, his
mom, his eyes, his soul, his fires, his wicked ices, his pain pills, his liver, his stomach, his heart. He took a couple tablets of Vicodin to help with the pain he experienced from being a lush drunk. His throat had scorched from the vomits he had splashed out. His legs were in pain. His arms were weak and tired. Gods can experience pain, he had told future god-wishers. If you want to be a god, you better wish to take some morphine with you, because it’s a lot of pain, but morphine can’t erase away the wretched moldings it can take of your heart. His was a hook, as it scratched underneath his pale skin, the alcohol weakening him, more and more and more…

He watched as the night cascaded into darkness. He left, as he walked beyond East Alder Street, which one of the gods had told him was where the prodigy god, Yahweh, had lived in, before he decided to protect people, to defend them from their own done-in fates. Suicide was a pathetic endeavor, yet he wished for it himself. But his hands were too shaky, too cowardly to commit the sin of murdering oneself.

He saw a light, a crevice of the daily life of Yahweh’s father and mother, inside the house. The mother had clutched a wine glass on her hand, as if it was her daily cigarette, as her husband sat in the armchair, typing in a computer. He could see the husband was agitated, surly, his speech slurred, the wife not much more, drinking merlot until she blacked out cold on the couch, her head affixed between the cushions. The husband was rambling, pulling out his hair, a bald spot planted on his head on his silver, ashy hair, and the desk was a crumbled mess, of papers, of newspaper reports of government attacks and the riots in other countries, of terrorist attacks and men dying in the war so many countries away. He had cut out all of those events and plastered them to the wall, with red threaded lines needled with push pins, and he ate a turkey sandwich on the computer, the mayonnaise and bits of bread stuck between the keys.

Crazy family, he thought. My family just disappeared from me. Momma died of cancer. It was a tumor in her head. Father went to a sanitarium and never contacted his family again. He thought he had been committed, and didn’t want to return after he possibly heard news that his wife was dead. He was in the mood for a vodka today. He went into the nearest liquor store, bought a large bottle, and drank right in front of Yahweh’s parents, as his father soon passed out in front of the computer screen, in the middle of writing an email to someone, possibly about his latest rantings and delusions. He drank, and drank, and drank, and he passed out, just like Yahweh’s mother, on their lawn…

His mother, with such large breasts, her eyes shining so brightly against their sodium kitchen lights, her smile, radiating in their doling eyes that she would take care of them, and so would their father, the large-chested albatross, his wings so wide that they reached the city of Seattle by just stretching them, on their warm, sun-drenched town in Oklahoma. Their mother and father, so proud, so innocent in their beliefs, they had taught them about the word of God, and His Truths, and His Yearning for his loved children to grow. They had learned everything they needed to know in their cattle ranch that only had a few cows, a few horses, and their father, he made money as a preacher, though he had told them he needed medicine for his chest pain. And their mother, oh their mother, she was beginning to grow sickly and her feet couldn’t reach the floor anymore, always on the bed, watching the ceiling resonate with colors. Her brain, it wasn’t right, and they weren’t sure if she had to go to the doctor. His father feared the worst, but she still had a smile on her face, always making pies for them, always belting out the milk and cookies after Bible class.

Wave was a very smart young bird, a very smart swallow, who always studied dutifully under her father’s word. And Storm, he once was so smart, so handsome, almost as smart as his own sister! But Jet was always the least favorite. He smoked cigarettes at 14, had a drink now and then, often skipped his father’s classes to smoke a little weed. Kids did it all the time. He expected his father to not be so shocked.

He guessed he couldn’t complain too much about his family. They never abused him. Never said an ill word towards him. But his father never seemed to love him. He often was disappointed in him, whenever he found the bottles of Smirnoff in his room, littered like shed crystal shells from insects
that lived in his walls. He wondered what he did wrong to have his son be drinking, loitering, abusing drugs, and he prayed to God often, a god he never believed in, but he could never tell his father that. He often left the Bible unread on his desk, his father hoping he could pick up on the so-called good words of the lord, but Jet had despised the book, the book that had caused blood, murder, hypocrisy, lies, and thieving. He had died when he read the book, and became a new bird, one who never believed in any sacrilegious life, or any life at all that held power over their lives. He just believed in himself, and that he was his own god of his own world, and he made decisions. Some were good, most were bad.

He drank his Smirnoff that he soon replaced with wine, and he thought he had to move to the big city, where people could understand him. He wasn’t an addict, honest, especially with the alcohol flowing inside him. His eyes often cried of it, drips of apple-flavored Smirnoff flowing down his cheeks. He soon forfeited his mother’s cookies and pies and other good home-cooked meals and drank alcohol and coffee, along with a small sandwich now and then. He lived on the drink, and the drink had lived on him, his body depending on it to feel calm, rational, outspoken. His tongue often wished for it, and it got what it wanted, like a babe in need of warm breast milk.

Wave never had any plans for what she wanted to be, but liked where she lived, and was hoping to at least go to college, to find what she could do to make her father proud. Storm wanted to be an engineer, his erector sets always piled on their floors, the Lego sets full of meticulous designs. He loved toys that required a lot of thinking. He thought Lincoln logs were too simple, and Tinkers to be too artificial.

Everyone was proud of their family, so happy, so soaring in the air like albatrosses and hawks and swallows they were, except Jet was falling deeper into Hell, drinking his many bottles of Smirnoff, vodka, whiskey, and soon, wine.

To get the wine, he often stole a couple of bills from his father. His father, complaining of the constant chest pain he ushered in his body, he claimed the stress coming from Jet was beginning to be too much. He did his preaching sessions at the church less and less, his epiphanies of the good word of the lord beginning to die down, a candle wittering away. Their mother, oh their mother, she cared about his health more than hers, as the headaches increased, as she was driven to depression where she locked the doors and shut the blinds, wishing her eyes were never graced by light coming from the heavens of the god she so loved. She wished she was dead sometimes, but she remained in her room, in the bed, rarely coming out anymore. She had told their father to be committed in a sanitarium where he could get rest for his chest. She didn’t think of what will happen when her children were alone with her, telling her children to “just microwave something, my ol’ bones are too tired to cook you guys somethin’ to eat. Too tired…too tired…”

Their situation was getting worse. Their father flew to a state of the art hospital, and Jet had counted the years he had last seen him. Seven years ago, he disappeared, never telling his children at all about where he was, how his health condition was, and the police never told them that he was dead. He was still alive, possibly committed in that sanitarium, his church that once had his devoted believers, now empty, abandoned, never a soul walking there anymore but the spirits of those who died who once believed and loved their father, and their father may as well have been a walking spirit, his feet dissolving in the air, never reaching the gray carpeted floors that looked like lint and wolf hair.

Wave had researched their mother’s condition, and she had told her that she needed to go to the doctor, as she could’ve had a brain tumor. She cried, raising her palms in the air, saying that Jesus will heal her, and she didn’t need any chemotherapy, no pills that could drive the tumor away. She saw the spirits that her husband had once saved, surrounding her, giving her blessings, spectral roses, and she said she could see the future in all her children’s lives, that Jet, her proud, smiling boy Jet, will soon learn the word of God and become a god himself.

They had assumed their mother was long gone, rambling about a new universe being born under the plight of her husband’s disappearance. She had written rambling letters to Seattle, telling him to come back to their humble home, but she never got a returning response, and her hands were so cramped, so tired from the letters she kept sending to her holy husband, and she had cried her affixed tears, as the spirits had comforted her, gave her more apparition roses, but she banged the table with her large,
pudgy fists and had wished to die. Her children had locked her in her room, giving her only microwaved food and water. She was tired of burning her tongue on crusty hardened brownies from TV dinners.

Jet had listened to the wailings of his mother, yet could not see himself crying.

He felt his mother had died a long time ago, when she was planted the tumor in her brain, the one that his father’s so-called god had decided she needed to have, even if she was so small, so frail, so precious, and he knew they were next, as the groceries their father had spent for a month was beginning to run out, and he could no longer steal bills off his old man. There was the trust fund, the credit cards that Wave had discovered on his desk, but she knew that wouldn’t last forever either.

As the sun began to drift away from the Oklahoma ranch, as winter soon flourished into being, fall’s red orange and yellow leaves beginning to turn gray and layered with snow, their mother had died, her mouth waiting to kiss the lips of God, her eyes closed, a beautiful epiphany relaxing her in her final moments. She had died without pain, but the children couldn’t decide what to do with the body, but rather let it rot in the winter frost, her body as curled up, as dried as the leaves, as the snow had surrounded her, the spirits of God covering her with a blanket of love and trust.

Wave could no longer go to college. She felt unsafe telling people of what happened to them. She didn’t want to hear the news that their father had died in the Seattle sanitarium, and they now had to live as foster children. Orphans. She didn’t want to be separated from her brothers, as some foster systems were wont to do. She couldn’t imagine herself away from Storm, even Jet, believing she could solve his drinking problem, his constant wasting of their father’s trust fund on weed and morphine. Wave had believed she could save him, as God had saved her, and she had spent the lonely days in the house with no heat with Storm, who was too obsessed with his savant abilities in machines and engineering to notice anyone. Wave dabbled in machines as well, but could never understand them as well as Storm, as he disassembled watches to see their inner organs and their heartbeats, then built them up again, performing surgery so he could see what had made a machine alive and breathe. He thought machines were alive, were creatures as conscious as humans, and he didn’t consider them blind deaf and dumb. He considered them lost, autistic, devices that wanted to be a part of the human world, but were only used for their one lone wondrous ability.

He had sympathized with them. He felt the machines had sympathized with him over the loss of his parents, the cold nights he spent with only Wave, and never his bigger brother, Jet, who was too busy dabbling with drugs and alcohol.

Jet soon had enough of living in such a religious state, one that frowned upon his lifestyle of booze and high-chasing, that he had left his brother and sister, took a bus that would travel all the way to Seattle, and used the rest of their father’s trust money. He thought he could also try to find their father, to find out why he had left them and never spoke to them in so long, but as he thought it over, their father was probably committed under some sort of mental disorder and was never let out, and was too ashamed to tell his children. He imagined the death of his wife soon made him fall into a deep, psychotic depression. Their father never was diagnosed with anything, but he thought he had obsessive tendencies, worried a lot, often spent some nights coming back working depressed and hollowed out. His hands were always on his face, sobbing quietly as his God continued to make the world turn, his feathers about to become blades and saw off the side of his face. He imagined that. He imagined a lot of things in his magical, hallucinatory thinking.

Wave and Storm had lived alone in the house, soon realizing the money was gone. There were only very few microwavable dinners left. Wave had got a job at a movie rental store near the middle of nowhere, and the money wasn’t enough to keep them away from the realities of the hopelessness they felt, as the sun was extinguished in the cold silver clouds of winter. They didn’t know where Jet went either. She soon used her cell phone to track Jet’s, and it told her he was in Seattle, in 3rd Avenue. She was sure that he was drinking his wine, smoking his hashish, and abandoning his role of the forgotten brother, the brother that Storm had always wanted, and as he vivisected yet another
machine, he had asked Wave if they could travel to Seattle, just to find him.

“I have a job to go to tomorrow, Storm. I can’t just abandon my duties. If Jet wants to go to some snobby city and smoke and drink and inject drugs he can go do whatever he wants. I’m not responsible for him anymore. He’s only responsible for himself.”

Storm shook his head, slowly, the feathers on his head ruffling, his wings becoming wide, nearly reaching the end of the globe. He was just like his father. Oh, how much he was like his father, before the storm that had taken away his intelligence and his passion, his life.

“We have to find him. He’s family. You don’t want to be like dad. He abandoned us, never contacted us, never contacted our mother. I don’t want that to happen to us. I want us to be a tight family, as tight as the screws in this machine. You’re going to have to quit your job, for emergency reasons. We’re going to live in Seattle. Sell the horse and cattle, we don’t need them. Sell them and we’d have enough to get there by bus or plane. Whichever you prefer.”

“And why? He’s an ass, Storm! He never was a part of our family! He never joined us with our father, he never appreciated our mother, he never…he never…”

She wished she could cry. Her feathers were rolled up in her fists, and she hid her face, like her mother had done before she died. The bastard of the family, the false machine part, the false idol in the family, he had to be found, and they had to become together again, an amoeba finding its split piece.

They pretended their mother and father had been sleeping in their ranch. They wore long, black boots, in mourning of the home that once was their abode, their warm colored canvas, and they sold the horses and cattle that were only there because Wave couldn’t imagine losing the last remnants of the home she loved, the Promise Land that God had told Moses about. She looked in the skeletal remains of her mother, buried underneath the rime and permafrost of the earth, and she wanted to knock on the surface, telling her mother that they would now live in a city of sin, the city that her father had been trapped inside. She heard of her father’s symptoms that could’ve had him committed, his anxiety and OCD, and she wanted to see him too, to find that her loved father wasn’t dead, but trying to get better for them. Her wings couldn’t reach Seattle. She didn’t had her father’s genes.

Storm and Wave held hands as they paid the same amount of money it took Jet to take him to that city of sin, and she held her little pocket Bible, praying with her one feather, her one eye that closed as the moon rose up.

As soon as they arrived in Seattle, they lived in a hotel, using her cell phone that had told her he was all over town, trying to score hashish, booze, and morphine. The needles of morphine had littered the town, inside the phone booths, near the bushes that were parted like her so-loved Moses had done to the sea, and the winter had blew and chilled them, her eyes nearly frozen in their sockets. She once believed in her father’s hallucinations, and she believed in hers. She heard Jet’s shrill voice everywhere she went, but he soon disappeared, after the winter’s wind dip into the atmosphere, and she shuddered, her heart continuing to miss the big bro she wanted to have a together family again, and she developed a cough, a cold with phlegm in her throat, and Storm would place his hand on her shoulder and tell her to come back inside the hotel, where he ordered a warm pea soup. She sighed, her phone’s power dying as much as her hope, and she walked with him, leaving the phone behind. Her charger was broken (broken in the pain of losing her loved home), and she was losing money to replace anything they had.

She couldn’t find a job. They found her Oklahoma dialect not “sophisticated enough” to work in restaurants, her education considered trivial, her desire to go to college meaningless. They were on their last night that they could stay in the hotel, and they would soon be homeless, out in the streets. Storm might’ve had a form of Asperger’s. It was the only reason he didn’t try to find a job. He found socializing with people other than his own family boring, he found the jobs too stressful to perform, he was very much like his father, worrying about the projects he had to complete for his machines, the projects that Wave had thought were pointless, menial, and not at all important to the situation at hand. She had told him to stop playing with his toys and try to help her earn money so they can get away from the cold.
“They’re not toys, Wave. They’re machines. And they’re wonderful.”

“They’re toys! Why aren’t you helping me? If you care about your own fucking brother so damn much why don’t you get off your ass and help me? We were living somewhat comfortably in Oklahoma Storm, then all of a sudden you just had to fucking wish your big brother Jet was with us, even though all Jet ever was was a fucking lush, and it’s all he ever will be! We don’t need people like that in our lives, Storm! We need someone like our father, who’s in a fucking mental hospital or something, never contacting us after six fucking years! We could see him, but he didn’t even give us the name of that damn place! Face it Storm, just face it, our mother is dead, our father is gone, we have absolutely nowhere to go, and we’re going to be homeless!”

Tears poured from her eyes. She hid her face again, like mommy had done. Like daddy had done. The momma and papa she will never see again.

Storm couldn’t process her emotions. He thought she was laughing, a maniacal kind of laughter. He had never seen his own sister sad, except with her tentative crushes and break ups in high school. He sat, motionless, emotionless, and Wave threw their family heirloom they had kept with them to remind themselves of their loving family, the crystal stork that was shattered from its head and neck, and she sobbed, and wished their father could save him. But he couldn’t. He was trapped in a hospital, never to come out again.

The next day, the hotel kicked them out. They had to survive on the streets. Storm often tried tricks to launder money off people, but this rarely worked out. Wave wanted to eat trash, be cold without her shredded coat and boots she slashed in her insanity, and find the drunken idiot who made them come to Seattle in the first place. She still could not sense Jet anywhere. She had been through all over the city, through the spring, through the summer, through the fall, through yet another cold, desperate winter, and Jet, the lush who wanted to drink all of the world’s wine, was never found. She only wanted to find him, so she could kill him.

She would twist the pocket knife she had in his stomach, slash the organs that were black and shutting down, twist his body, twist his life, twist his sense of believing in gods and being a godless heathen, and she would have her brother as dead as her mother, as dead as her father.

Wave did not have the power to see gods. Her vision wasn’t impaired, but gods were visible only to those who believed in them. And Wave did not believe in the Egyptian god Horus, who flew around the city, killing other gods, burning them in the cinders of the sun he was supposed to represent, the white fires reaching out and licking and consuming everything that had defied him, all the people in his family who never believed in him. Chip had come to him, his own little maroon and fey god, and he had looked up to him, and had wished his wish, and he sat and wait, watched as the leaves turned brown, curled and dry, and they fell off the trees as all the moisture in the world had left them, for yet another dry and frozen winter, the ponds beginning to crack with ice, the sun becoming distant, the clouds gray, slushed, as the streets in Seattle were scattered with snow, the white coats walking on four legs, and freezing the boots that she wore since their home had died away at the drink of the glass green bottle, and sometimes she wanted a candle to adorn in her hands, to remember of the mother and father who suddenly disappeared who loved her and her brother very much, and the snow accumulated, their own little snow globe surrounded with the small bits of flakes.

The winds struck like daggers. She wondered if she would be able to survive it, the snow storm that was said to spread towards all of Washington and the surrounding states, if she hadn’t cut her coats like slabs of black, nearly plastic meat, cushioned with feathers.

The frost, it piled up. Her cough had got worse. Her bones had become ice pricks, she imagined her body having its very own lobotomy in her heart…

The god had flew over the city, gazing at the misery of his sister, his brother, the ones who were so smart. The storm roared, it gasped and cried and slashed its claws against them! Wave’s ribs, they were the small arches of her building that protected the heart, and as the snow had spread its discord, she had fallen against a railing of the bridge, holding on, her one arm seeming to be rubber, the bones dislocated, her ribs cracked and broken, the building falling apart, and it hurt, how it hurt! She cried as Storm was lost in the snowstorm, the intelligence of the once somewhat Aspergian albatross was
lopopotomized, by a crash of icicles against his eye, as he lied against a building, the wind howling, growling, the bruise being born like a black fetus...

She was losing consciousness. She gripped onto the railing as the storm had subsided, quieted, the snow only the sprinkling of a Christmas that she wished she had forgotten. She fell asleep, listening to the whistle of the wind, the sun bleeding against the sky like a golden rose...

Wave had surmised her thoughts as she had awakened, the sun orange, the afternoon falling into night. She felt as if she died that few hours ago. Her arm, it was shattered as the wind had taken her away, against things with solid bodies, hardened steel, while Storm was a new albatross, with his wings still so wide, but his brain was bludgeoned, as the bruise appeared, something burning to get out of his skin.

She felt sore. Her body was sickened with the flu, sleeping in the steely cold. She couldn’t move her one arm. It had hurt too much to cough, to move around. She wished she could lay here and die, but she still had to find her brother. And kill him, for what he had done to their lives. And if her father was still alive, maybe kill him too. For abandoning him in this awful city, never giving any sort of clue to where he was getting treatment at. He may never have been in Seattle at all. He could’ve been in another country, with a dumb bitch as his wife, leaving their mother because he knew she was so sick, cursed with a cancerous tumor.

And Storm said, “I’m tired, Wave. Let’s go home.”

She wanted to cry again, but the tears were inside a steel box, frozen.

“We can’t go home, Storm! We have no money you fucking idiot! And it’s not like we can walk all the way back to Oklahoma! You know how much those bus trips cost?”

The once stoic and emotionless Storm, he once could stand Wave’s abuse, but as the mark appeared more purple, rounder, nearly black like the tar on the side of the roads, he cried, just as much as Wave had used to, and asked, “Do you really think I’m…dumb, Wave? Do you really think I’m stupid? Storm won’t do that no more, no he won’t do that no more!”

She wasn’t sure what happened to Storm that day, his intelligence melting away like the spring to snow. She wasn’t sure how he had found her, why he now had the mentality of a five year old child. The interest in engineering, his little intelligent toys, had vanished, and he played with cars they found in trash or stolen from Toys for Tots bins, Hot Wheels, sometimes dolls. He was never sure how he could keep Barbie’s hair well-managed, her head always a mat of ratty hair.

But she could smell the air, the melting of the sun in the oxygen, the smell of blood, and wine, and whiskey breath. She could smell that someone had wished for these terrible things to happen to them, and if she could, she could tighten a fist with her right arm, that was now in pieces, and the kill that sun and make it turn into a chromium red...there was a god responsible for their suffering. And it wasn’t their own. Their own God wouldn’t make them become incapacitated, the bruise becoming blue as the sun had roared and fanned its flaming wings, Storm thinking nothing of the pain he experienced during those two months, the headaches that resulted from him missing about a few pieces of his brain.

They droned on. Storm often whine and cried and wanted more food, Wave telling him to “cram it”, irritated from the loss of her arm. She was smart, but she had no medical knowledge, not even knowledge on what had caused Storm’s retardation, and she left her arm dangling from her body, the bones melting and molding into a puddle, the icicle pricks becoming nothing more, no longer protecting her little glass heart.

The old them had died, as the home they lived in, as their mother and father, had died away, blown in the winter air. The ashes of their former lives couldn’t be recovered, they had become what they feared the most, what their father had warned them about since they were little: lonely. Sad. Miserable. And God decided to not save them, the one they knew so little about.
Storm became a god. He could tell because he said he wanted Wave to feel better. He could tell because Chip had told him about the new god, the thunderbird, the one with only the intelligence of a five year old child. He promised to kill other gods because he wanted Wave happy. He wanted Jet happy too. But he knew if he went back to his family, he would be forgotten again. His father still had his influence over the affable bunch. Storm was now mentally retarded. Wave had her arm and chest recasted and rebuilt after Storm’s wish, but she tried to tell Storm that she could tell this was what Jet was, a god who was ruthless, selfish, violent, and she knew the only reason she looked for him, and Yahweh and Yehl, was only to kill them with her own mortal hands. Choke their cut necks until the blood spurted out like a fountain. He didn’t mind the death of the two most powerful gods right now, but he…oh, he wouldn’t mind if his sister killed him, could he admit that? His sister, he wished he could forgive her, but the scorn, the scolding, the coldness he received all of his days when his mother was alive and his father wasn’t committed, it was what made him drink in the first place! And to drink, as much as he did, was to die.

He watched the silence consume the house. Yahweh’s mother soon rose, her head beating against her as much as he could imagine it did when Storm had received his lobotomy, and his father still asleep, his face half masticating a turkey sandwich on the keyboard, the cheese and mayonnaise oozing from his mouth. He was going to choke. And he was sure Yahweh didn’t care.

He looked into a room, the dark blue paint as bright as the Caribbean ocean, the eggshell color shining brightly as the typewriter had sat in its little corner of the desk, typing out words, an invisible pianist. Words to a story. The keys had clicked and clacked, the piano playing some haunting melody that matched the story on the page, Jet’s story, the story the page had told him he wanted everyone to pity him, but he was a bastard, a heartless bastard.

He went inside, the godlike invisibility never being picked up by the parents’ of the ignorant and selfish blue hedgehog. Ghosts couldn’t possibly exist, Anansi was dead! Forgotten! Gone! He wasn’t alive, still typing out his mediocre stories (Read one, wanted his five cents back)! The god of his webbed tales, his crystalline lies, the spider was still spitting out silk, telling a story of a very selfish and drunk bird, who was hated by his family in secret, who had drank and drunk into oblivion, and he was leading himself to a nowhere world, a world built by Satan, the demon he believed in. He would be never seen again from his family, especially his father who was dead to him seven years ago, but carried no official death certificate.

**THIS BIRD WAS VERY SELFISH, VERY SELFISH INDEED. HE HAD WISHED PAIN ON HIS BROTHER AND SISTER. HE HAD WISHED FOR THEM TO BE MISERABLE. THEY WERE SAD AND LONELY. HIS SISTER NOW WANTS TO KILL HIM. AND SOMEONE ELSE WANTS TO KILL YOU, JET FLINT FEATHERCREST**

TELL ME JET, TELL ME...DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

He had stared at the typewriter, expecting further clacks of the alphabet, but the room was rolled and wrapped in silence, as he had told this ghost that had lived on in this piano-typewriter, that no, he never believed in a god. Only himself.

**DO YOU BELIEVE IN EVIL? DO YOU BELIEVE PEOPLE CAN COMMIT HEINOUS ACTS AND GET AWAY WITH IT? DO YOU BELIEVE IN SATAN? DO YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELF?**

“Yes, I said that already! I believe that evil does exist, because it makes the world go round. Do I believe in that red-skinned goat man? No! The Bible is a stupid story invented by stupid Arabian people just to get suckers to spend money on made-up holidays and to talk to an imaginary friend. That’s all it is.”

**THEN I’LL SEE YOU IN HELL, JET.**

Was it true that there truly was a heaven and hell that threatened to consume the people in this city? Were his parents, his brother and sister, was the whole state of Oklahoma completely ripe with the belief of something that was true? The thought had made him panic. His heart had pumped electricity
throughout his veins. His fists clenched. He breathed shallowly, in and out. He had heaved the typewriter above his mighty, golden arms and tried to smash it on the floor, destroy it with his golden gun, his golden dagger, but he could hear the sounds of melancholy, the sounds of misery, the disdain and hate coming from the typewriter, the keys clacking crazily, the words shuddering off the page, forming a black chasm, a black miasma that dripped like acid inside Yahweh’s home, the death of his drunken mother evident, the death of his schizophrenic father, soon swallowed inside the black hole of the universe.

Jet had seen a pair of sulky, slit dark green eyes gaze at him before he died, before a long string of purple crystals had twisted his organs, slashing them and making them turn black, and Jet became nothing but a black piece of cloth, a piece of the stars, the universe, and Jet was forgotten in memory. Satan had killed him, the fallen angel who had lost his wings, and they turned into rock-hard crystal. His wine spilled on the floor, the blood running all across the city of Seattle, telling the world of The End…
Hemingway's Advice

The stories were rolled out, like a long, silken scroll, like a long cigarillo waiting to be smoked by undying mouths that constantly ached for the death for their lungs and their tar-filled brain. Sonic had typed the pages with his speedy, agile, godlike fingers, and Miles had drawn out all the monsters, all the apparitions the raven sees on his flight across Seattle, where the world was as dead and as lonely as him. Sonic never seemed to enjoy drinking coffee as much as he did now, as the little fox used his parents old coffee machine, the grittiness of the coffee beans satisfying his teeth, his ghastly tongue, how rocky it tasted to his throat, how it filled his soul with energy! The coffee had soothed him on this seemingly warm night, the sun turning over its rose petals, the hands careening towards Miles’ body, patting him, and he could smell the scent of winter in his nose, as it seemed to ebb away like the waves in Seattle, the dragon crying for food to be brought out to it. The typing seemed to come so quick, with his brother’s quick thoughts and Tails’s smooth quick strokes of his hands on his watercolors. The beasts had looked amiable in their horror, with their raking claws, their bug-eyed faces and their worn bodies, full of cracks and seepages of blood. Had Sonic known that he would be a writing genius, with his cigarette staunch in the air, swishing around like a blue wavy hand of stench, his teeth flashing so brightly against the lamplight. The god never tired of the typewriter, as he listened to his brother’s tale, and his brother’s heart was glad, the sun was yellow, not black as it had been inside his life, and they had laughed, enjoyed each other’s company, had taught the others that suicide was never an option. Especially for young Sonic, who once tried to kill himself in the sea dragon’s womb, and Miles, who thought about hanging himself, after the Slave and the Queen had been stabbed to the wall like pig hocks. The fingers were on fire, as he typed out all his brother’s holy words, his sacrosanct tellings of the raven, the one who had always flew off to find shelter from the rain of men’s woes and their organs and limbs raining from the sky, God’s punishment to the humans for being so sinful, so blind, so deaf, so dumb, and so colorless in the world’s vivid paintings. They brought the colors of the world down, with their white skin, their black skin, they were all sick in their terribly wretched ways, and as the words melted into the page, as Sonic continued to type, he began to feel a certain sickness in his brother, his cystic fibrosis beginning to overtake him, and his mind, his weak, gray mind that once was full of colors from his bipolar, his thoughts had turned gray, black, pitiless, full of din and misery and misfortune and catalysicism.

The words had bled from his thoughts. They had turned so black, so rotten, so vile, with the negativity they had contained. They had bled off his fingers. They were his own creations, his own sheddings of blood, the pen and the typewriter the drainers of his blood, but the black blood that had always taken those in depression in the Middle Ages, it couldn’t be opened, not the opening of his hellish and holish thumb, to make it spurt, make it bleed with more ink that he needed to dot the end of his sentences, to add a dash after a pause or a separation, and two dots, a dot and a dash, a straight dash, a pointed tail that was struck by lightning, a curled tail that always asked questions, and so many marks, so many lives he spilled from the gods he killed back in his past! The cynicism, the pain, the sorrow that he often felt as the rain had bled open God’s eyes, his tears falling to the ground, as the first rain of February had happened after a cold, bitter winter, the first calling of Spring. The first calling of God giving birth to Spring from His womb to live yet another few months, before it had to be torn away in the blood and rancor of the leaves that had murdered His long green ladies, that had told many to dance, that had told many to kill themselves, to die and be diseased with the rest of the leaves that once were silent murderers, as the winter had come with her white cold dress and had sheeted the rest of the world in hate and death. The black moments had no longer lived, breathed its last breath, but now, the trees were becoming alive, and beginning to bloom at their very fingertips.

But yet he, his brother, art thou in heaven, wanted to die again and be again in heaven. Or in Hell. Where he believed he truly belonged.
The typewriter had become his piano, as he touched upon its ivory keys, and played yet another sad song for those other gods he killed, ones who couldn’t understand how wonderful the arts were. Painting, drawing, writing, singing, they were the only things that kept people alive. If the arts merely had never existed, humanity would’ve committed suicide and became extinct, long ago. Because everyone, as the Mad Hatter had said, was truly, truly mad. But some of the best people, like his brother, were geniuses.

He remembered the wine glasses his mother had drunk once in a while, in celebration that her son had written yet another 1,000 words, or yet another completed short story. He had drunk some of those wine glasses while he took his medicine. Both his cystic fibrosis medication, and his mood stabilizer. He experienced mania more often, so he was prescribed Trileptal to ease his bipolar.

Wind had sworn, the more he drank his wine and taken the Trileptal, the madder he became! The more his words had come to life, the more his worlds seemed real! So he kept taking the meds. They were his own little ignitions to creativity, the spark that started a raging fire, the flames that soon burnt out a story. And all had seemed so brilliant in the eyes of God, and he kept worsening his health, his mental health, more and more and more...

Wind couldn’t tell his brother the main reason he lost the battle to cystic fibrosis was because his Trileptal had made it worse. It gave him so much vivacity in his work, so much passion, so much color. He drank even three tall glasses of his mother’s wine, more of his father’s sherry, and he soon was intoxicated by his own words, his own languor of his spirit. He never told his doctor, his family, anyone that he was making himself his own tonic of self-destruction. Because deeply, like Miles, he wanted to die too, to become a martyr.

He prayed that he had a bottle of wine with him, the Trileptal that made him so mad and so alive, as everything else, illness notwithstanding, had made him sick to the bone of life. Mania fueled him. The depression had given him new songs to write about. And he was experiencing a depressive symptom, that his life had grown black, the red curtains in Miles’ room had grown thicker and were curled like pubic hairs, and as he told Sonic to stop typing, he cried, and told his brother that he wished he was a god again, so he could live without his illness, when in reality, he embraced his illness, and wished it would make him die even quicker. Sonic loved his little brother. Loved him more than anything. Don’t cry don’t cry, he said. All the pain will wash away.

“No…It won’t be okay. It never will be okay. I have a secret to tell you brother. A secret that will rattle your skull and shake your brain. Your own little mental earthquake. I have so many secrets to tell you. I have so many lies, so many mistruths, to tell you as well. You are dying, and you will be alive again. I am dying, more than I ever have before. I am dying, and you can’t do anything about it this time brother. I am dying, and I am dying.”

Veinous, heinous creature, he lashed out! Disgusting creature that had risen from the sun, that had seen the death of each day, had seen the new placenta fire in the sky, had seen God watch over his blind people, his blind prophets, and you, with your candlestick, with your blue smoke that had dissipated over the rocky moon, do you realize how much madness, how much sorrow, lies in the bipolar disease?

Sonic knew very little about bipolar. He only knew that Wind once took a medication for it. He died before it could take full effect.

“It didn’t work,” he said. “It never worked. It just gave more fire to roast my words in. To make them burn and sear off the page, off the reader’s eyes. The Trileptal gave me godlike abilities, don’t you see, do all of you see?”

“I can draw with passion again!” Miles cried.
Sonic couldn’t pay attention to him. His brother became a snarling, decrepit beast, and he watched as his slit eye turned over the pages, and his sorrow, his doubt, he ripped them, tore them, and had said they were nothing, that the words didn’t burn, they didn’t fight and sneer, they didn’t cry and laugh and play games, they were words that were bleached, albicant, white, as white as the white man’s skin, and he turned over the next page and ordered Sonic to write.

“Sonic, look at how these monsters come to life!” Miles said.
“But your words were really good brother, you don’t need to rewrite all of this…”
“I have to! Write, and follow my voice! Don’t make one mistake! This is important!”

He sobbed as he wrote (he was believing it was from someone else, and not him…someone who was taking over his body, possessing him…), and again, his brother raked the page out of the typewriter and threw it in the wastebasket, as he cried, cried, that he was nothing but a low life, a terrible writer, and that nothing could ever absolve him.

“I will always be a failure. I never wrote anything good. All those short stories I gave to my grandparents? They threw them away. They didn’t like them at all. The stories I gave to mom? She threw them away, and father did too, and you…”
“That’s not true! Mom kept all your stories! She celebrated you more than she did with me! She only threw me four birthday parties, and she always celebrated when you wrote 5,000 words. After my fourth birthday, she forgot about me. She only cared about you. If it’s anyone that should be crying about how they’re useless, it should be me!”
“You threw away that copy of the story, big bro! You never visited me when I was sick, except when I was about to die. And now suddenly you’re mournful. You tell me you don’t like hospitals. You tell me you can’t stand doctors. You tell me you love me, you love my stories, that we’re a team, but God, you sicken me, big bro. Killing yourself. Becoming a god. Did you think that would solve your problems? I became a god, and I died and I was soon forgotten in history until you revived me. Anansi made stories that no one can remember, because his web was weak, his web was full of lies and slander. And you tell me I can become a great writer. Many of us don’t become a great writer by just writing. We write a million stories, a million short stories, a million novels, a million novellas, a million pages, a million words, we can only become godlike by writing as much as a million words, and I only wrote short stories. I never wrote anything good in my entire life. I’m no Harper Lee. I can’t just write one book and become famous and decide to never write for the rest of my life. I envy you, because you don’t need to be a writer to validate yourself. You’re an ignorant fool. You’re an ignorant fool like girls, as Daisy had said in The Great Gatsby. A fool. You decide to validate yourself by becoming an inch of a god, by becoming a little godlike. Well, I am someone you know Sonic, someone you should know well enough, and I envy you and I pity you, because you’re using all of your life to be nothing but a big joke and you’re trying to waste it. Jokes are good. They keep society alive. Without blind, deaf, and dumb people, how do we know if the brilliant are brilliant, the creative are creative, how do we get dumbasses to do simple menial jobs that no one else wants to do? Because they can’t do anything else of worship. And you my big brother, my friend, my devout believer, this is time we said goodbye. This is time you try to do your godlike duties by yourself without me. Depression is a long, voracious snake that will devour you and digest all your bones along with your body. It will kill you. It’s killing me from the inside. Inside me that snake is eating my heart. Eating it whole. And my lungs. And my brain. Depression, Sonic. Depression. All great writers had suffered from a mental illness. Did you know that? Plath suffered from bipolar. Hemingway was bipolar. Vonnegut was schizophrenic. Fitzgerald and Bukowski were alcoholics. Anne Sexton could’ve possibly had schizoaffective, you never know with that crazy bitch. I am one of them, Sonic. I am the god among writers. I am mentally unfit, I am physically unfit, and you and your family are nothing but fools. It is time to extinguish my flame. It is time to distinguish the hacks from the hocks, the gods from the dogs, the golds from the bronze.”

Silence. He expected yet another finale to the speech. Wind was not acting himself. He was a fool, a
bigger fool than himself, and he couldn’t make a string of sense from him, as the threads of his mouth
continued to be not sewn, the wires placating, surrounding him.

“I’m getting rid of myself, Sonic. Suicide is the only answer to becoming godlike in people’s lives
when you’re nothing but a piece of shit like ourselves. Miles, do you have a gun? Can I drown? Can
I electrocute? Can I overmedicate? Can I navigate to jump off a cliff? You’ve got some scalpels, give
me those scalpels.”
“I don’t want to die anymore!” Miles shouted.

He took the scalpels.

“Plunge these into me,” he said.
Sonic’s hands shook. He held the scalpel in the air, like a stake to a crucifix, and he told him that he
couldn’t kill him, he couldn’t kill himself.

“You don’t believe me, do you,” he said.
“No, I believe in you perfectly well.” He laid the scalpel down, as if it was a tender heart to take care
of, a little baby heart that his brother had always had since he was little, but the scalpel had claws, it
had to kill him, it had to thirst for blood.

His cheek tingled. He could feel the threads of the universe beginning to unravel.

“Kill me Sonic. Just kill me. Kill me or I will kill you.”

Miles had stopped painting with his watercolors and had stopped drawing with his grade school
pencils, and he watched as the monster had risen from his seat, as the scalpel held was lifted in the
air, the cross that would oxidize him in holy fire.

“Kill me Sonic. I have to die. You know that.”

“I…” His throat closed in. The hand continued to shake. The depression that once feasted on Wind’s
body had began to devour him as well. And he couldn’t move. He was immobilized by the snake’s
thick wrap of its scaly body.

“Kill me,” he said. He fell to the floor, his hands covering his eyes, blind, deaf, dumb, and he saw as
the morning was born, pursed through the sky’s gaping hole, and he couldn’t think of a more deadly
time to die. At the time a new day is born and still juiced with placenta.

“Kill me.”

His father had said the same thing to him a long time ago. His father was committed in a psych ward
for only a month, and he came back to haunt their lives. He wished his father was really dead, even if
the memories of him were warm, like baked bread.

“Kill me.”

His mother forgot about him. Once he was five he was forgotten. His mother always gave Wind a
nice hearty breakfast and she gave Sonic a bowl of cereal that had been on top of the fridge for
months, even a year. Wind had no job except writing. Wind didn’t even went to school on account
of his health. Sonic went to school, and always got Ds and Fs because his mother had wronged him.
Had always hated him.

“Kill me.”

His father chose Wind as his favorite too. Wind was always a weak child, and he felt sorry for him.
He criticized Sonic often. In his later years he soon forego the alphabet for gibberish and symbols and paranoid theories. His father was nothing but an ape, because mental illness ran in the family.

“Kill me.”

Bipolar.

“Kill me.”

Schizophrenia.

“Kill me.”

He wondered if he had some of that worm of illness too.
The scalpel had scrapped some of the blood of the top of his hand. It was his new pen. He was writing a delicate letter to him in scrawled handwriting.

His letters had oozed ink.

“You’re making me bleed as a writer. Is that it? Are you going to follow Hemingway’s advice and make me bleed? I’d rather die than bleed. I’d rather die than make any more shitty stories!”

“Writing is your passion, brother,” he said, as a novel began to be carved from his wrists, as a novella began to form from his eyes, as an epic was written from his crotch, as the Bible had been written from his forehead.

The words bled, bled, bled, and bled out, a sea of black.

“Miles…”

Miles looked at him, as the ink continued to spill from his lacerated wounds, as he saw the sorrow, the pain, the torture of suicide, of being a miserable martyr.

“Give me help. If you don’t dress my wounds, I’m going to die in your room, with so many words spilled.”

Miles waddled through the black sea, as he looked in the bathroom for gauze, bandages, and he tried to remember how to make a tourniquet. Such a small fox couldn’t save someone from such fierce bleeding, could he? He would rather have him die as he tried rather than not help him at all.

The ink stained his legs.

He took the gauze and wrapped it around, around his body, like a white cloth snake that only wanted to heal the wounds of the pitied and the star-mourning.

The Queen and the Slave never checked on him. They never appeared as the ink flowed to the basement. Many words had surrounded them, but yet they were too blind to see.

Sonic was mummified, his smaragdine eyes able to see the sun as it gave birth to birds, to the dew in the grass, to the leaves in the trees, and he soaked up the sunlight, as much as he could, as the words were left out to dry by the typewriter’s ink, like finished acrylic and watercolor paintings.

He never wished to be more alive than this moment, right now, just gazing at that sun and seeing God’s face smiling at him.
The Thousand-Year-Old Child

The voice had ushered him towards the light, the sun that was being born in the sky, a baby chick in God’s hand. His neck felt sore, feeling the row of stitches inside it, but as small fingers had reached in and clutched the teeth and mouth of the new hole, she told Yehl that everything will be alright, and that he was always loved in the sight of God.

“There truly is no loving God,” the hole had spoken. “But there’s a mad one, as tall and as mercurial as a hat like the Mad Hatter.”

His own voice was lost, disintegrated in the heat of the Seattle spring, as the pink flowers had bloomed in the trees, as the mania had risen in every insane man and woman and child, as the winds were soft and warm and the sea had smelled faintly of goldenrods as they drifted in the breeze. He was coming. He would soon be rebirthed. The new Jesus Christ.

“There truly was no Jesus,” the hole spoke. “No white Jesus, no albicant Jesus. Jesus was black. As black as ebony keys.”

The stitches weren’t enough to silence the voice in the hole. He continued to speak the lies of the Earth, as Shadow had thrust inside its mouth, but it only bit in disdain.

The small rabbit girl, her dress of bleach white, her flowers that were as pink as fetuses, she had all the information of the gods in a database, given to her by a god she dearly loved, but he had suddenly disappeared, had died as the night had died away to the new rebirth of the sun.

“I know your name is Shadow, is it not?” she had asked.

His fingers were stained with blood. The wings had scratched through all her folklore collections, how wide and big and tall they were, and he had sat down as she prepared a steaming tea kettle of Earl Grey tea, laced with yellow flowers that glowed along with the goldenrods outside of the Seattle street.

“My real name is Cream, but Mr. Shadow, I am the goddess of healing, named Aceso. I know of every god in this world, but I truly do not want to fight. I only collect demon eggs that I can find without a scream or a nail in my heart. All the gods can come here to get their wounds restitched and bandaged, and I will not say a word to what their goals are or why they became a god. I know why you became a god Shadow, and it is most unfortunate what happened to you.”

Shadow could reply bitterly to her efforts to be friends with all the gods, but she truly was harmless. She had no offensive powers, only powers that healed and dressed the injuries in elaborate silk skins and stitches that contained a magical power to make them talk, to tell their owner of what they truly desired in this world. Shadow only desired lies, and the voice in the hole had told him the truth to every lie that was replicated.

“Jesus was born in September. Christmas is a big sham, created by stupid and misinformed Romans,” it had said again.

He had to trust her. If she knew about every god that became a god then she possibly knew things about Chip, about Sonic’s newfound power, and about his purpose. He felt that he was only a small, wriggling worm that would soon die out in the dawn of the new Earth, and Cream had known all these things, because of a god who once loved her innocent heart.

They sat in silence, even the hole had not spoken for a while. The tea was becoming cold, it had
been so long since Shadow had his favorite tea, a tea that Cream knew he would like. As he gazed at her cupboards he found that she had every tea imaginable to give to whoever had come to her humble homeless abode, even pennyroyal tea to those with upset stomachs and who desired an abortive that would never work and instead take your own life along with the child’s.

“Shadow, are you thinking about why you’re here? And about Chip, right?”

The flower had soon closed its tiny fist inside the tea. He felt it had been several days and several nights since he had stayed at Cream’s home. It could’ve been. He never could figure out how the days of gods ever worked.

“I became a god because I wanted to find out about my mother and father. And about my past life in that…other dimension. I feel like something is missing. Like my father had some relative I didn’t know about take care of me, but…something told me he was very sick, and he hated me for no reason except my father was successful but yet struggled to keep his land cause the government never liked him. Us. Us, I mean.”

That was all he could say. He didn’t want to delve into much more, but Cream possibly knew there were more reasons than that.

“I know,” she said. “In that past life, I know. It seemed like it never happened, but it did in another time that Chip snipped away from us with his surgical scissors. Your uncle was a bad man. He locked you in the closet for hours at a time. You soon had the ability to speak to shadows. And you were soon dubbed the name Shadow, Mr. Shadow.”

The shadows had told secrets to him. Secrets of the world. And there was a creature named Chip who could make his life better, could make him run away from this evil man who had adopted him after his parents died of unknown causes.

“What about Chip?” His eyes had looked down in his drink again, as flies and spiders had made a nest of it. The tea had given them life but would soon take it away, as they both can’t swim.

“Is he truly a good creature, trying to keep the humans, and time, in line, or does he have other intentions? Is he truly a wolf in sheep’s clothing?”

Her eyes closed, as the sun had closed behind her sheets, the home that was only nothing but a few blankets that contained the same things as an ordinary kitchen, the stove, the electricity she had made with her godlike abilities, and the cabinets that had hung on the sheets of afghan and blue. He wanted to know how this home even functioned like this, but with gods, anything was believable.

“Chip truly wants to keep time in place. But he also is the yang side of the coin. He is both good and evil. He represents both the good and bad sides of gods. He both wants to keep the humans on this planet, using up their time wisely, but he is also the killer of humans, the damnation of humans, both God and Satan.”

The hole had spoken up again. “He truly is not God. But Satan.”

She nodded, as if the news didn’t affect her at all. “Is that so?”

“Nothing truly shocks you anymore, is that true?”

She was soon sewing a large stuffed animal, with its marbled eyes, lying flat like a bear rug, and she had planned it to give it to a god who had a baby, a god far away from Seattle.

“I’ve just seen many things, Shadow. And I have learned there is truly nothing I can do about them. Gods are born and gods die, including Chip once everyone discovers that he is truly Satan. There is one god that I don’t believe can die and that is the one, true, universal God, but that God is brilliant and full of diseases. God doesn’t answer prayers very often because He is ill himself. He doesn’t answer the prayers to those with depression because He doesn’t understand their plight as much as He doesn’t understands His. Worlds are born. Worlds die. So do galaxies and stars. But nothing will
truly die away. The universe is so big and vast, that there is always life out there, blooming and evolving and birthing and dying. God doesn’t want to give up on His beautiful universe. He made it with His own blood-stained Hands. The pen, the brush, the stroke, the words, they are just as strong as God’s touch. They create different worlds inside our heads. We are all gods, and we truly aren’t immortal like we would think we are, except for the stories the blind deaf and dumb tell. They carry on, for years and years and years...Stories never truly die if the god passes them down with ink and paper. And that’s how we gods are still alive. Some of us, anyways.”

The hole inside of him had said nothing. He believed it as the universal truth, that they all were truly gods. Every line of thread that had crashed against her bosom, and receded back into the plush, she looked out to the grimy sea of Seattle, and she could feel the flowers beginning to rise, the blossoms born, the new babes, the mammals coming out of their holes. It truly was a birthday for God.

“Then what does Satan look like? Do you know? Does he have horns, a forked tail, a forked tongue, and parchment eyes? Does he have nails and sulfate teeth and a horned body? Who is Satan, and what does he have to do with our world?”

The plush continued to be birthed by her hands. She was her own god on the child’s creature. “He looks like you. He looks like a different shade of the spectrum from everyone. Satan is only us. We also all have a little bit of a demon inside of us, and Satan is us. He is you,” she said.

He paused. Was Satan him, with green streaks in his black fur, with slit eyes and with no mouth? Because the mouth had moved into his neck, his soul?

“We all need gods. We all need devils. They tell us the difference between right and wrong. They make sure we are aware of rules and regulations and give us some imagination, something to truly believe in. There are some that don’t believe in both, but how unfortunate they are for not having imagination, to believe in such a fantastic world as this one. Science has answers, but it doesn’t give many people hope. It is often nothing but a reminder that the world will be lost forever. But with gods and devils, we know time will continue indefinitely, and it will never truly die. That even when we die, we will still have an eternity of time. We will spend our lives forever in heaven or hell. Whichever one we believed in, and whichever one our choices had brought us. To believe you will rot in the ground forever with no images and without another world, it makes some people scared to die, when we all need to have affirmation that our souls will be okay, if we truly believe in our gods and causes and devils. Some want to be immortal. But even when we all have some godliness inside us, even God Himself dies, when people don’t believe in Him anymore, when people move on to other beliefs, and that is why we gods die. I know if I don’t conquer any more eggs, I will die, but I believe I have done good things with my time, and I will spend an eternity with the gods I believe in. Including Anansi.”

“Is...” He paused. “Is Anansi...did he all play us like fools and forced Sonic to revive him, and now he truly is God?”

“Capitalize your Hs, Shadow. Of course He is God. But this God is sick, and needed to die. Sonic had to revive Him, because he loved Him, but he doesn’t believe in a heaven or hell or angels or demons. He believes He must kill this world and bring upon a new one, Shadow. He messed up. A new god will have to take over. And that is both you and Sonic. He loves His brother as well, but He cannot be forced inside his body. He must die once, and be reborn. You must kill him Shadow. That is what you must do.”

He remembered the note he wrote from the lovesick teenager’s scrawls. He felt so alone all his life that he trusted Sonic to take care of his own wounds, the ones that had torn and suffocated his heart. He believed in him as much as this God. He was cruel, but only he denied those feelings. He only wanted what was safe for Sonic, and he thought dying was better than becoming a god, becoming a being that only worries and only sees the end of time and the birth of time. It was such a godawful
experience, seeing everything alive and dead, that he had to kill him himself, but it was too late. And
now Sonic had to become God. He had to witness the sounds of all the people, deal with the blind
defeat and dumb, and hold babies like jewels and kill them with the blooming of his palms. He didn’t
want to live forever. Neither did Sonic. He tried to kill himself before he became a god. He couldn’t
kill himself now, else there would be no God to have in this miserable world. Even the atheists and
non-believers and agnostics needed direction. He needed to control their lives in some way, so
everything can go perfectly in the world, in the saving of people and the damnation of those who
didn’t believe in angels.

“Why do I have to kill him?”
“Because you were the only friend he had, Shadow. So was his brother. Although no one teased him
in school he felt alone. Without his brother he wasn’t anything. Cain and Abel weren’t anything
without each other once Cain had raised the stake and killed his brother; Cain was only labeled as a
murderer that couldn’t taste the holy latrine of heaven, however. And Sonic felt it was his fault that
He died, because he rarely visited Him. He rarely helped Him with his illness. He felt it was his duty
to revive Him, so he could become something again. But Sonic could only become a lowlife
hedgehog to the old God. Many had pined for the same dream, but only one can have it. Even
Sonic’s father wanted to be God, but he is much too sick to become one. Schizophrenia and bipolar
are illnesses that can affect a god’s decision, and Anansi popping his medicine that only made him
seem more imaginative and creative…his decisions are too riddled with decay now. He only wants to
die, and Sonic has to be reborn. Reborn into a hedgehog without sin, like Jesus Christ.”

The plush was finished. It had stood in the light of the broken sun, looking innocent, unharmed by
society’s views. Unharmed that Earth had to start all over again.

“That means you will die too. You’re fine with that, right?”
She nodded her head.

“Yes, I am. Anything to make the world reborn, to be better than last time. Sometimes we need to
start over from scratch to make something good, a new beginning. And this also applies to people.
But I see myself as only a speckled god in the million of other ones that are making a difference. I
only heal. And I only spread knowledge.”

“And you’re quite smart for being a six-year-old girl.” Too damn smart.

She said nothing, and finished her tea, and finished the xanthic flower by eating it daintily. Without
another word, she had used her godlike abilities to tell Shadow that she was done speaking the truth
to him, and his hole inside his neck would tell him the rest.

“Cream is actually a hundred years old. She just has the stature of a six-year-old girl. She has been
around this world for a long time.”

"If you want to replenish your folklore for a reason you can’t explain, there is an egg at Lakeview
Cemetery. The one where Bruce Lee is buried. If you make it there just in time you will meet a
purple cat named Blaze. She also wants this demon egg, and you have the decision to fight her or
not. Blaze has other issues to deal with than you. This is the very last demon egg you will find on
this world. All the gods in this earth, except you and Sonic, will die, and if you want to give her
some satisfaction to getting a demon egg, or satisfaction of killing her, she is in your hands. And so is
Sonic’s.”

The sewing needle he had stabbed Sonic’s bruised and bloody cheek with. It was broken, but it had
so much power. He realized it came from Aceso’s home, and something, something had made him
give that needle to Sonic. And it wasn’t him. It wasn’t Chip’s orders, but the orders of the Voice in
his head. It was the Voice of Anansi, the true God.
Aceso had disappeared in the darkness, in the murkiness of a homeless home built by a six-year-old child who was truly a hundred, maybe a thousand years old, and he could hear the soft kindling of tea kettles as she made more tea, tea to help her soul withstand the death of the planet and the death of the old God.

He flew off, to Lakeview Cemetery. The sky had grown cloudy, more like a supposed February day, and he could see the charcoal shadings that meant the end of the world was near, and the gods were slowly dying away from the planet. The spring then was doused with rain. And they rejoiced, on God’s birthday. On God’s deathday.
Killing Gods With Disease

Benjamin held the gauntlet of chocolate in his hands as his mouth had drooled of nothing but obscenities and pain, and he was drunk, because rats like him were useless, and would soon be eaten alive by the other rats.

One chug of chocolate. One chug of grape juice. One chug of milk and peach juice and eating a chocolate bar and a piece of gourmet cheese (that was only Kraft singles). He had binged, only because he had nothing else in his life to love, to die for, (food was the only thing he truly loved in life until it was out of his mouth and into his stomach) and the machine gods, the rat king that had gazed upon him with shit-covered eyes, had hated him.

He rolled up a grape leaf and smoked it. One foot on the desk, gazing out into the lonely world upon his cardboard home. He saw the shit chafe the walls of the sewers. Such a nice day to be a rat today. Soon their tails would all become one and they would be stuck until they died.

Flies have rested upon his chocolate head. He wondered if he was going to die soon.

He swigged the juice and the grape leaf cigar, and he saw as the other rats have talked about the book. Tumbletim knew everything, he thought. He read such great classics from the humans and translated them in their language. The Catcher in the Rye, the Bible, Little Women, fairytales from the Grimm brothers. Many stories were crafted by the gods above the sewers, the humans, and he didn’t thank them, though he knew he once was loved by one, and destroyed by one. Humans were all spectrums of good and evil. Rats were only evil. They only cared about themselves, and Benjamin only cared about finding that love from his owner again.

The cigar burnt out and had sparked his hand in a stinging flame, and stomped it out. Could’ve made the entire rat city burst in flames. Good. Let it burn, he thought. Another swig of grape juice. More chocolate and cheese. It was time to go out to the wonderful, sun-sparkled world of Seattle, the city he hadn’t set foot in a year, which seemed to him be 20 years since he saw his owner.

Her name. He couldn’t think of what it was anymore. But her face. Her shining, angelic face with a mouth poised to eat her food like a beartrap.

Ah his owner, where was he? She was beautiful, with brown hair, glasses, and braces, until she soon had a muscle disease that she couldn’t take care of her ratties anymore. But she loved every one of them. She loved Benjamin Button the most.

The other rats were named Gatsby, Beowulf, Holden, and Tyler Durden. He wasn’t sure why one of them had two names like him, but her owner said he had to, as the other she wanted to name him had no name, though she believed it could’ve been Jack.

She fed them a nice ratty meal everyday, and he had other rats to play with. And they all were kind and courteous, not rotten scumbags like himself! She often carried him around in a pouch and they went to stores, gatherings, even in a restaurant with her parents who were disgusted, but said nothing to stop her love with Benjamin. He had a nice life, a very nice life, while it lasted.

It was gone. It was a withering flame. He only was tortured by a man who claimed to love him, but he had forced him to kill another rat when he was only so young, his instincts so innocent.

He wondered the name of the man, but he never got any clues, other than his glasses, and his dollar bills that lined the walls.
Benjamin thought he had a picture of his old owner, oh how pretty she was, so glassy and china-faced, so beautiful! He had stolen it out of her albums a long time ago and had kept it with him, ever since it had been smeared with shit and the rare and human and rat-laced rat food in the cages of the man who hated him, but always he kept it, even if it reminded him of how much his life had hurt him.

He only lived a year in this life, and he was sure he couldn’t live much longer. The cancer was beginning to boil, bubble in his body, soon to sear and burn the rest of his body. And it would soon take him over, a parasite that had claimed all his organs, his brain, his lungs and heart. He didn’t know the woman’s name, but the face, the bright, steel-covered smile, he remembered it all too well.

And he wanted to return to her, to return to a life of luxury and a life of peace. The disease she had, it couldn’t affect her too much, could it? She could have one rat. She could take care of her beloved Benjamin Button. The rat that was named after her favorite story, a curious case indeed he said, as he had stopped lugging around his many sugary drinks, his chocolate that had made his brain swim, and he wanted to escape, to go to the metropolis of the humans, the city of Seattle, where many angels and devils had lied, where the goldenrods had bled through like the sun, where the sea had washed away the sins of the blind deaf and dumb.

The water, even the sewers here, was holy. He would soon collect his reclamation. He would soon be reborn as the rat king of rat kings, the savior Benjamin Button, the rat who knew so much more about the rat condition, the human loving condition, the god loving condition, and how literature from the humans had meant nothing to them and could only be applied to their brains, not their hearts.

Tumbletim, what was his purpose here? To recite the stories of the insane, like that story he just picked up from the sewers? Many writers were mentally ill. Many of them had drunk alcohol till they couldn’t take it anymore, like him. Many had no other occupation but writing, and killing off characters in their head, and killing worlds and making new ones. They were godlike, but they were the same as him: rats. Filthy, disgusting, cannibal rats.

He rationalized that gods were all rats. They all were conniving and thieving and disgusting and pitiful. They all had done terrible things. They all desired terrible things. They all wished for terrible things to happen upon their worshipers. They were dark, hollow, not at all holy, dragon-like, flesh-like, snake-like, woman-like and angelic. They all were rats, and he was just as holy as them. He held up the jug of chocolate up in the dismal air as he could hear the rain beating against the ground above them as if the drops were knives and axes, and he could imagine the world was beginning to be born into spring, as the creatures had arrived from their holes, as the snow had melted away into heaven, as the flowers had blossomed, as the trees began to have soft nails on their fingertips. The dawn had grown darker, into the daylight of the afternoon, and he had climbed the shitty hole of the sewers and had begun to see the golden light of Seattle, the silver buildings and the bronzed sun that lied in wake for him. The cars had sped by, the people kept walking. They never noticed that a rat was here, a rat that would live with his old owner again, who would soon tell her about the wretched man who had kept him, the man who had proclaimed himself to be the god of women, the richest and smartest man in the world as he stacked his dollar bills across from each other, until the walls were no longer red and bare.

The man may have had schizophrenia. The man may had a very diseased disorder. His brain no longer worked right. His morality was never the same when his illness had taken him over, his own form of cancer, his own spoonful of mercury he had sipped up when he was a child.

“I am coming I am coming I am coming,” he had said. “I am coming I am coming I am coming. My owner, my love of my life, the stars still seek for you, the man could never make me blind. His
fingers had never shoved my eyes away. I can still see from these shit and piss-covered holes. The moon seeks you. The sun seeks you. God seeks you. I am coming for you. The gods of the world cannot stop me, because I am a rat who is never sick of the truth, the truth that those who are ill, those who believe they can be godlike, are rats. Lower than filth. And I, my precious darling, am praising a god such as you. No other human is my god. Just you.”

Tumbletim had finished translating the story. It was only about 80,000 words long, the story of the raven, the story of the end of the world. There was something different about this story. His fingers had traced each word, and he had felt an inch of mead and golden blood inside them. The writer had shed his life in this story. He had shed his dissonance and his harmony inside it. He had sung the tunes of the story, had wrapped the strings around a knob on this story, he had fine-tuned the wires inside this book to keep on playing it in his typewriter. This was a story from a god. A god who could sing the tune of despair and the end of the world. And he could sniff a piece of sharded arsenic in the rain that was supposed to bring forth the life on the trees, the life of the flowers and of the people’s minds. A god was telling him that the end of the world was soon, and all the rats had to navigate out of the sewers and praise their gods, before the world had died away like a smothered flame.

Tumbletim had seen the fading brown body of Benjamin disappear in the darkness, and he knew that there was no more ignorant Benjamin. No more rats who truly were rats. It was time to appear in the surface of the human world, the broken glass in the water above, and he had made an announcement to all of his rat friends and fiends, that a god had announced the world was coming to an end, and it was time for the rats to stop living in the sewers and evolve into gods as much as they could. His voice had carried a tinge of disdain, as while humans had always written the stories he enjoyed, he truly hated them otherwise. They had no personalities, unlike the people in the literary world. Holden, Howard J. Campbell, the aliens that always said “so it goes” after a death, and Mr. Trout, such fine literary characters he could understand, unlike the gods upstairs, the gods who had always drank wine and had killed the rats because they were “vermin”.

He could feel the shot of mercury affect him after all these years. The dose of medicine that turned him as brilliant and wise as he was now. Very little rats had such a lucky opportunity as his.

“It’s time to go up,” he had told them.  
“It’s time to meet the gods. It’s time to shake hands with them. It’s time to be a part of them. It’s time to tell them that we are intelligent and noble creatures too, and we are willing to be a part of their world for a short while.”

His brain misfired a neuron. He continued.

“It’s time to spread our vile illness to them. To have them die like us. To have them resort to cannibalism like we always had. Humans are not so far apart from rats. They only have a bigger brain. They only have a sense of elegance and a sense of what’s right and wrong. And, like the rest of the animals in the world, unless it is taught to us, we have no morality. We just do what we please.”

The depression had began to curl in his brain, rotting all the life that once made him intelligent. He had become brain-numb and brain-dead. The rats had stared at his claws for so long, as he gripped his head, and had leaned back and cried.

“As the humans are our witness, it’s time to bring them down, and bring them...death. I’m sure the rat king will tell us the same, but if not, I don’t care! I don’t care, I just want to die! I just want to rot in the ground and stare at the stars from the dirt forever! The stars are bladed glass, and I want to be cut upon them, my face is horrible, see my face? It is lined up with scratches!”
The rats were always used to insanity, but never from Tumbletim. He was always calm, peaceful, and had told the rat world of the great stories that lay beyond the shit water and the stars from yellow and green and red lights from the traffic. But he was low. He was down. He could never get out of it, except with time, as the dead rats had continued to stitch up the hours and minutes, as the alarms had shrieked a droning siren, telling every rat to go beyond the shit-covered world and to one that was covered in steel and chrome.

“Tell the humans that we are not vermin, as we let them die slowly on our pestilential breath.”

The rats did not understand why they became the mortals that had killed so many of their gods, with their plague.

But they did, and they became slayers of those they used to hold so high in their esteem. The human race had wilted like bloody violets in the wake of an ushering and calamitous storm that would split the Earth in two.

—

“Come, Blazie, it’s time to eat our daily meal, and to let us pray to God.”

She hardly moved away from Gravity’s Rainbow. She wanted to keep reading, even when her father had torn the bread in two, had given one to his daughter that he regretted seeing her birthed by his wife, the fair maiden of the sea, as her hair billowed around her neck and she drank mead and Guinness, while the father always had a liquid dinner of Pabst and Budweiser. The cheap beers always rang supreme to him, as he chugged it all down, the Pabst traveling to his stomach as he closed his mouth and let the drink dissolve slowly with a numbed happiness. A happiness that he didn’t have to feel like he had to take care of Blaze, lil’ Blazie, as he stuffed his lips with a cigarette and slowly chewed over their black bread.

I don’t understand why you’re that way…

Sometimes I would rather have you dead…

Her gentle hands had picked up the bread, and she tore a small piece and gently lifted it to her mouth. It was good bread despite their poverty. Possibly the best she ever had. It reminded her of her mother’s bread, the kind she made that always melted in her mouth with butter that was so creamy, straight from the shepherds in Ireland themselves…

She often let Blaze had a small sip of Guinness, even if she was only such a small babe. She twirled around in her mother’s pink dress, had sat underneath it while she swigged her drinks, and she felt warm and safe. She was surrounded by a veil of rosy pink, and she imagined it like the dawn, with ovulating stars that would soon be drained into the daylight.

“It can go both ways, sweetie,” he said, as if he read her mind.

She clasped her hands around her knees and sat underneath her mother, so protected by her
godliness, so safe from her father…

He once broke a bottle of Budweiser and aimed the sharded nozzle right up against my mother’s throat…

I felt like she would always protect me, away from this monster. Whenever they fought, I went under her dress. And she understood. She knew why I was scared.

His fingers twinged whenever he played with his cards, his own form of fighting against the painful drolling hours in the streets. He smoked his cigarettes until they nearly burnt his fingers and mouth. He asked Blaze if she wanted to play Black Jack, and she said no.

“And why not?”

His voice sounded indignant, offended that his daughter wouldn’t spend any quality time with him.

He slapped his hand on a beetle and he crunched its head off with his silver, iron teeth. Masticated the insect slowly, biting into its brain, the shell crackly crackly against his tongue.

“I just don’t want to play, dad.”
The only time she had ever called him dad.
And it was the last time.
“'You would rather read your dumbass books than play a game with your ol’ papa?”

Her father was once again throwing a fit. She was used to it, but she wasn’t in the mood. She hoped he would tire himself out with his ramblings and his drinking and his wandering off to dumpsters for food, but her father could hurt her, damage her, and she had no one to protect her. Not even her mother and her Protective Dress. She watched as her father had stood up, carried the can of Pabst, and threw it against her face, the taste and smell of the beer in her tongue and nostrils, as some of it spilled on her pages.

Her stomach churned whenever she smelled the Pabst. It was a heinous smell. The rooms where her father had always drunk and smoked in never washed away, even with the sea of Seattle. She felt like vomiting every time she could smell the scent of two-week-old diabetic piss.

When have you ever loved me?

When have you given me the affection and love I craved, just like my mother had given me?

The dress, the dress. It wasn’t there. It couldn’t be her cotton shield against her father. The man had begun to rage and his mouth foamed of beer, his fists were made of stone and he crashed them against the buildings, he had told her that he never loved her, and in fact wished she was dead. Oh Blazie. Oh little Blazie. If only we could be friends.
I never loved you.

I never...

I never loved...

Her heart had grown cold inside her chest. It never was ignited with passion. She only loved her mother, and since she died, she never loved again. Her father only had passion for beer and food that was crawling with maggots and black mold and insects. He found an ant and popped one in his mouth. He claimed they were like Mentos.

I wished the raw chicken really had killed you...

But knowing you, you’re not a cat. But a wolf. A wolf that eats what it can to survive, and you’re eating insects and dirty diapers. You’re no longer the father I once knew, or really, I never knew you as a father. You are a sick, depraved man.

She wished her thoughts could travel to his mind. To not say anything to him. Her mouth had carried so many boulders from her words that they were too heavy to lift, and she would rather not say anything, be passive-aggressive towards him.

Those with passive-aggressive tendencies wished they could read their minds, knowing they were angry, and they had to do something to alleviate their madness. Nothing was ever done. Passive-aggressiveness never worked out the way she thought it always would.

I am angry.

I am angry with you.

What did you do to her?

What did you do to my mom? I know Yehl isn’t the only one who had done something to her…
Her father, after vomiting his lunch of beetles and ants and diapers in the alleyways, he went back to his cards, mumbling to himself, trying to urge Blaze to play cards with him again. Again, she refused, and he drank more of the diabetic piss and asked her what was wrong with her.

“You never want to do anything with your pappy. It’s always your books. It’s always eating good food and not the stuff you want to survive on. Beetles have proteins in them you know, and ants chockfull of irons, and…and…”
“Diapers are only waste. You get nothing but shit in your mouth when you eat that, father.”

The only and last time she called him father.

Why are you so sick?

You claim there’s something wrong with me when I know there’s something deeply wrong with you.

You keep eating mold and disgusting, wretched things. You keep drinking nothing but beer. You ramble to yourself about how I’m such a bad child, that I will never achieve your high standards.

I’m glad I’m not what you want me to be.

Because I only wished for you to be dead.

“And praise the almighty Lord for giving us this feast today!”
A can of beans with mold formed on the outer rims of the silver tab. Blaze threw her meal away. Her father ate it scrumptiously.

You’re a wolf all right, I know it. You don’t even look like a cat. I wonder if my mother picked men at random, sort of as a test for me to overcome.

Her father had stolen more exotic alcohols for him to drink. Coronas and Heineken's. He moved up from the Pabst and Budweiser’s to elaborate drinks, until he would soon be drinking wine. The drink that all corrupt drinkers drank, the red wine that flowed with the blood of their murdered citizens and the blood of the children they soon killed in their wives’ bellies with their broken wine bottles, still dripping with madness and mania.

He drinks, so much…
He doesn’t realize it’s going to kill him one day…

He drained one bottle of Corona. Another one emerged from his six-pack. He cracked open the bottle and downed it.

Drinking kills so many people…I hope you realize that you’ll just become another statistic.

So many people like you die of alcohol poisoning, or alcohol-related accidents. Or drinking and driving. There’s a big one.

Two. He finished another one, wiped his mouth of the frothy ejaculate that came from the bottle. Ripped open another one with his elbow. He swallowed it whole, an alcoholic snake.

I’m going to die of suicide. I know that for sure. I’ll die before you take me with you.

The razor blade she held in her pocket, that she lightly touched with her pale fingers, she knew she had it for this purpose, and that she would be the one to take her life, and not her father. Not with his alcoholism making him so sluggish, like a happy snake digesting a full meal in its body.

Maybe I should kill you, right now. No one is going to care. No one important knows who you are. This death will be unreported. You will still be a statistic. A statistic that doesn’t have its body fed to the Media Machine, as they drain you of their blood and turn it into words and sensationalist bullshit.

Words made from the bleeding of a person. Like Hemingway had done, what seemed to be long ago.

I could make you bleed, right now, and kill you and I could live my own life, my own fucking life where I get to be by myself with my books. I would rather die with my stomach full of books than beer and rats and shit and bugs.

He swallowed his sixth beer. Inebriated, his head soared, and he could feel the many rats crawling inside him, the bugs and shit too, as he walked over to the streets, asking a cop where a good place they could get to eat on a budget.

“And what kind of budget, sir?”
“A budget where...you know...you have no money at all. I’m poor as shit!”

He croaked a laugh, the officer seeing his blackened teeth, as the maggots and worms bled from his gums.
The cop wrote down the address to the nearest soup kitchen. Blaze’s father crumbled it up, threw it away, and took her away from the church where she could smell the frying of chicken and the mashing of mashed potatoes, where delicious food had awaited her, and she knew it was out of her reach, her hands so distant from food that tasted as nearly as good as a beautiful passage in a book.

Her father coughed and hacked as he sipped away at his last Corona, feeling the fingers of a rat poking and prodding his esophagus. She believed during this moment she even saw the man sneeze out a rat, and soon other rats followed out of his mouth, coughing and hacking as many different colors, brown and white and black and black eyes and red eyes of albinos, some even blue, and her father sat on a bench as he gargled all these rats inside him, and had tried to swallow them back inside his body.

He fed them another beetle, as he crushed it and chewed it as if he was a mother bird for many babies who could barely swallow their own food.

Blaze never believed in strange occurrences. She never believed in the mythic, the sage, the strange life outside of the world that her mother had always told her about, but maybe her words on how everything was possible seemed to ring in her brain, as she saw her father split his head open on the concrete, and blood never fell from his brain, but rats, possibly millions of rats; they swarmed the streets, they all feasted on the sweet succored garbage of Seattle, and soon lived in the bottom of the sewers, believing that the humans above them were gods, and they were nothing but savages.

Blaze researched a little on rats. They also believed that machines were gods, dead souls of other rats, they also believed clocks were sacred, they also believed time was a valuable instrument to their lives, as rats could only live for about two years. They believed the stars were light bulbs out there in the universe, and they believed that the other planets were only other homes from humans where they lived in elaborate Victorian houses, where the smell of tea always wafted from the door, where they had servants even wiping their asses, and their cars could drive to anywhere they wanted, even a galaxy millions and billions of miles away. And she surmised that rats were stupid, and poisonous. Because they carried the blood and the life work of her father. He developed many rats inside his body, over time, devouring all the rotten food he ate, becoming the wolf that was only a sack that carried the rodents away from realizing the truth, the one the shadows hid from their black-stained hands.

She stood up, her back misaligned from sleeping in the garbage piles in the streets. When he was alive, she gave him a place to stay. A warm bed, warm food to always eat whenever she wanted, warm hands stroking her soft face, warm kisses on top of her head, telling her that everything would be alright and this god war would soon end as the sun crowed along with the raven...

She saw the shadows move away from her, walking, talking, telling someone she knew (and hated and despised) that the war was soon ending, and new ones would begin in many years. Her eyes, the same color as the beer her father had drunk, had run from the shadows, and to the streets beyond the city.

She saw rats scuttle and crawl underneath her feet. She was reminded of her father. They could’ve been the very same rats that lived underneath Seattle. She thought if all the rats were actually people her father had disappointed over the years, including her mother. Pick out a rat, any rat, and hope it was her. The maiden that lived in Ireland and had told many stories of the heroes and gods and battles that seeped blood for the Earth, and the black eyes that killed all the golden beer color from
her eyes and had given the shadows their life.

You’re gone now.

I’m glad.

But yet you still seem to be there.

Mocking me.

Using all these events to test me.

The rats were what you truly were.

If I took all of them, I would make your body with the rats, I could restitch your head with the rats’ fur, I could make your teeth with the rats’ teeth, I could make your eyes with the blue-eyed rats’ eyes.

You were just a big rat.

I blame Yehl for killing my mother.

But I think you were also part of the reason she died too.

Why she picked you as the father and never left you to raise me herself is a question I could never solve.

I could never mourn you, because I hated you.

I could never celebrate your death, because I don’t want to become you.
An empty bottle of red wine lied next to her feet. She always hated the smell of red wine, because it reminded her of another person she hated. Hated more than her father. Hated more than Yehl.

She opened the bottle, opened her bloody dehydrated mouth, and had sucked all the wine from the bottle, had sucked it dry as if she was a hungry baby in need of nourishment, a hungry babe who hadn’t eaten in days. She licked it clean of every last lick of red wine, then the bottle was smashed on the streets, killing a rat, the blood collecting on the streets as the blind deaf and dumb began to fall apart. She imagined them as dominoes, one falling after the other, into a curved, delicate line. She had drank all the power she could get from the god she hated, the god that was no more, and she felt his influence over her, his hatred and his greed, as tears soon rolled down her cheeks, the memories of her innocence so clear to her suddenly, when she slept after her mother had told her stories, and the hiding in her dress whenever her father was upset.

She wished she could be underneath her, until the world burned down in flames, having her tell her no harm would come to her.

Why didn’t you leave him?

None of this would’ve happened if you stayed with me. You would’ve never died from your cancer. You would never be abused by him. You would’ve kept protecting me, under your celestial dress. Under your motherliness, your godliness that I soon tasted from the same honey and mead you drank…

Tears stung her eyes. She stopped near a restaurant that smelled faintly of clam chowder and she puked all the memories she had with her father, her eyes shut, her mouth expelling so much hatred and fear that she felt her ribs become swollen and bruised. She vomited all the hatred inside her, until a rat came out, a rat that was as big as her head, black, with blue eyes, with a tail of shit and other small, struggling and feeble rats, following him.

The rat, covered with puke, ran away from her sight, the hatred that she dissolved in her stomach as she swallowed it whole like a voracious snake, and soon formed into a rat king.

Like father, like daughter.

She wiped her mouth, and vowed to never drink red wine, or any other wines, again.

The crows settled in the trees above her, looking at her with crystal blue eyes. One carried a red thread of a vein from a dead man in the city. He dropped it, and it settled in the earth, becoming a blood blossom.
The Death of Two Slothful Gods

He rolled a cigarette, a short stub briefly in his hands before smoking all the tobacco inside it, and letting it die in the ashtray. His hands quaked. His breath was cancerous, smelling of cheap liquor and nicotine. Espio had watched the spring spring to life, as he could feel the snowfall no longer descending upon them, but rain, cold, sharp as knives rain.

He tried to count every raindrop, even if he knew it was impossible, and could count up to 1,267 before he gave up. He had a lot of time to waste, before he knew he was hungry again, and had to go looking in bins to eat cold fries and rotten fruit.

Vector stabbed another cigarette in the ashtray. He took another one. Six short stubs in a row. He was chain-smoking.

Espio thought Vector wouldn’t have lived much longer, with how much he smoked. He had smoked almost every cigarette in the park. But Vector had claimed that “almost” was only an encouraging number. Smoke all he wanted, and if he could somehow filch some weed from stoned teenagers, then it was much more important than food, and a cause for celebration.

Though the weed had made them more hungry than usual. And it almost made him want to steal. He tried to steal a pack of Cheetos from the store, only to be caught and almost thrown in jail. Sure, jail seemed to be not so bad, as they gave you food and a bed that was slightly warm (but it was still a bed nonetheless) but Vector had hated routine, and feared the numbers on a scheduled piece of paper, and had also feared being separated from Espio. He was a friend he couldn’t detach from, like an amoeba cell, like a parasite away from its host. He wanted to remain one cell, for as long as he could.

Espio was the only one who tried to understand him. The only one who seemed to have a brain among these dimwits who believed in false gods and false rules made by the government. He considered himself up among the rest of the humans, because he believed he was the only one who had true sense, and he once looked up to his father, who was the “true hippie” in the years he grew up. He had been through protests, and the government tear-gassing them to prevent their cries of peace from being heard. His father died of a heart attack a few years ago, and he was left with his old crone of a mother, who was too Conservative, too much like the perfect housewives of the ‘50s. She had dusted every section of the house trying to keep it clean and perfect to her guests, including the vase that had contained his father’s ashes. He wanted to keep it, before his mother had cleaned that up too, the dust that had lined the wall in remembrance of him.

His father, and Espio, were the only men he respected. Espio’s father was a very wise old man before he died as well, always giving out nuggets of wisdom for his boy when he lived in the basement that had smelled of mold and weed, and he had told him that he was about to get nowhere in life, doing what he loved best.

“Society puts regulations on us, and for good reason son, because rules has always kept humanity in line. We can thank the Bible that our society is not out killing each other and raping all our wives, and I don’t listen to that FOX News stuff either Espio, but listen to me: you need to go back to college. I’ll even take out my retirement fund for you to go back. I’m begging you, stop hanging around with Vector, this lowlife, and go back to studying world history, becoming a historian, a military expert, like you wished to be. Remember when you used to be interested in botany? Your bonsai trees? I want you to get back to that too. Please son, stop…”

But he had ignored his pleas. He simply didn’t want to go back to school, because the truth was, he hated college. Espio had got his GED before his father died, but he had no plans to do anything with it. He just wanted to give his father some happiness before he died. He said he was going to a good college, like he wanted him to.

Now he was homeless.

Vector had dropped out, and never went to school again. He thought high school was the same as a high security prison. Except they claimed they were teaching you about life and the world. Vector at
least had a knack in debate teams, and he liked pottery. He mostly made ashtrays. If he had taken education seriously, he would’ve looked into blown glass art. Just to make bongs. He had smoked his last cigarette. He had smoked every cigarette in this ashtray. He wished he had his own pack of long white slender cigarettes, but alas, no money, for he was nothing but a penniless old fool who wished to remain a fool, and nothing but.
Espio thought about bonsai trees again. He wondered if he could steal one from a botany shop and take care of it. It surely would’ve made this homelessness issue a bit easier to deal with.
The rain had continued to pile on the world. Low areas were soon flooded with brown shit water from the Earth. It was a hard, drenching rain, one that Espio had believed would drown the world for 40 days and nights, but he had only read the first few chapters of the Bible before giving up. His mother had forced it on him. And he hated her for that.
The birds had walked along the edge of the Emerald City, seeing the sun ring a warm light around the flooded water. The smell of death was imminent in her nostrils, and she had refused to follow it, refused to acknowledge the dead corpses around her. The men had sat gargling in the water from the sky from the heavens above, the children had played with some dead rats, with rat kings encrusted with shit and disease, and the mothers had tried to feed their babes with their last remnant of milk in their tits, and they had cried, because there was no more milk in the store, no more formula. All the milk for the babes had drowned out in Seattle’s hole. The city was dying, slowly, slowly, and Wave believed it couldn’t die any faster. Neither did America kept choking from its sobs, as the rain had come harder, as the distant rumbling sounded like mewling from kittens, mewlings from lion cubs that had hardly begun to learn to roar.
The storm was becoming quiet. The rain had fallen silently as death as she watched the leaves coat themselves with white wet blankets. Her eyes could only focus on the leaves in the parks. Lakeview Park was becoming a lake, with a view. As the namesake.
Spring had come, but only when death had arrived. Life had chosen a terrible time to be Christ. Storm was the silver lining in the black wave of clouds, following Wave around and showing her the light in the darkness. Even if Storm was nothing but a retard like the Kennedy’s lobotomized child, and even if Wave had never cared for the god life, Vector thought he could still respect them. Storm was willing to die for Wave. And Wave for him. Meanwhile Jet never cared about anyone but himself and his drinks. He could sniff his blood in the air somewhere, that maybe something awful had happened to him. Good riddance, he said. He was nothing but bad trash, and no one was going to miss him.
Not even his father, who was away in a Seattle mental institution. Not even his mother, who was rotting in the Earth in their ranch home, without so much as a burial service. Police were still trying to find her body. They never knew she could be right under their noses.
Espio had felt the chill of a wet cardboard box again. Maybe he would go to jail, just to have a roof over his head. But his code of ethics only told him to steal, and never be caught. Because you were still a good person in the hands of the Aztec people until you were caught. Then you sacrificed a human heart to be forgiven. And then they blessed you, for shedding the noble flesh for their own.
Their hearts had felt heavy at the eave of the storm. They could sense something was amiss. There was a demon egg in Lakeview Cemetery, but they have made no efforts to find it. They had decided to sit it out, and rot like unheard gods did. Yehl and Morrigan were possibly trying to find those damn wretched things, trying to raise their folklore, when he could sense the apocalypse was coming upon them. There was no point in raising anything, when they knew the entire world was going to be brought down from every standing it once had. Buildings would collapse, especially the tall, empirical ones in Seattle. The ocean would no longer sing tales of salty Navy’s and the dragons that once had lived inside of them. It would instead be both the creator of the life and the ender of life. It would suffocate all of man-kind with its gray icy hands, with its claws that will shed blood and tears on the ground.
And they were both okay with that. They had found an old deck of cards from the trash, and Vector had coaxed Espio from his cardboard home, playing an old game of Phase 10.
“A game that lasts forever, and will not end until forever is over,” Vector said.
The air had felt warm, for once. Their bodies had felt warm, their insides had felt warm, for once.
They would rather have the other gods fight and squabble over the demon egg themselves. They no
longer wanted to get involved.
It was about the end of time for them. And they felt they had enough time living on the Earth, as it is.
Yet another burnt out cigarette had fallen to the pavement.
“Vector, where are you going?”
The day was dark, stark, bleak and lark! Hark! Hear the cry of his girlfriend, as after each rolling
orgasm she is never satisfied, and she instead lies on the bed, gazing at the shadows they had made,
the cigarette smoke staining the air.
“Where are you going?”
He didn’t know.
He wanted to go to Espio’s home. He wanted to do a couple joints there, smoke a few doobies,
whilst listening to the new A Perfect Circle album, talking about desperation and pithiness, the
mournful cries of the nightingale so loud in the early morning bleed.
“Shouldn’t you be with me?” she asked. “You don’t need to go and analyze music all over again.
You’re a soldier in these shitty times. I want you to stay. Your music can wait.”
He once was a hardworking soldier. A brave soldier, against the conservatives and Republicans. The
politicians only wanted more war, killing their children for a buck or two.
Her blue eyes had leered at him suspiciously. Her lips pouted, and she had told him to get out of her
life, forever, if all he cared about was his one true passion: music.
Never had he gotten laid any more than that one night stand. With a girl he barely remembered her
name to this day.
“Your music sucks ass anyway. I hope you get booed onstage.”
He listened to many CDs without a single break. He had listened to Dan Deacon, Sufjan Stevens,
TOOL, Black Sabbath, Modest Mouse, The Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan…he wondered what
they all had that he didn’t. They never had a trite, generic sound. Espio had tried to fine-tune the
guitars as if they were magical wands, transporting them to a different world. But the pot only
seemed to make them sound good. They were bad. Terrible. Yet he had put so much time into his
band. Espio had made sure the sound sounded just about right. They made sure their message was
clear, but it never was. Their writing was mediocre, like the rest of their personality, their music, and
their reason to even make music in the first place.
The cigarette she smoked never left him. The stenched air was as blue as her eyes. And she had lied
across from him, sleeping in the same bed, and he believed he could see Masonic stone angels crying
above him, the gods that never approved of their love-making, their bond to cease all loneliness.
Vector was never truly lonely, when he had Espio. But they never were lovers. They were simply
ugly pieces to a desecrated picture. They once had stood so high. Espio going to college one day,
Vector making a band that had invested so long in trying to make a highly original sound. He
thought he could play a song they once played, a song from a band he worshiped as if they, too,
were Aztec gods.

Tidal waves don’t beg forgiveness
Crashed and on their way
Father, he enjoyed collisions
Others walked away
A snowflake falls in May…

He could still catch hints of snow from the infant spring air. The winter had never wanted to fade out
like the fire he had for that band. He wanted to bring a new start, a fresh new start, as the world is
paved away for a new one, and he could start life all over again, appreciating the time they both had
with their fathers, doing their work like they were supposed to, finding the answer to the sound of
their band.
The shadow people, their black sulky faces, they began to walk to the red-hot fruit of the sun, the lemon yellow sun that had waited vicariously on the side of Seattle. The shadows had begun to walk home, to their mother’s womb, ready to crawl back inside as the land would soon be torn asunder by the waves, the great sea dragon that had lied awake on the piers, its claws so white, so pristine, ready to devour the entire landscape of Seattle. There was no other world but the world of Seattle at that moment. Everyone had reported of the strange happenings in Seattle, as the world was soon brought to a close by the god who was so ill, so struck by madness, that he had demanded the world to die along with him, the waves no longer licking the shores, but staying silent, still, firm, and freezing in place as the cold rain had breathed in the air, continuing to make it winter even throughout the spring, summer weather.

And the doors are open now
As the bells are ringing out
Cause the Man of the Hour
Is taking his final bow
As the curtain comes down
I feel that this is just goodbye for now…

They could hear a click in the air, the sound of a gun being loaded. They never heeded it. They only listened to the breaths of the snowflakes, the breaths of the sea as it soon crawled to the piers, and began to flood the beach area with a gray crash as the men and women, the blind deaf and dumb people, ran away from the rats. The rats had spread their disease and filth to the Emerald City. Wave and Storm had walked across the bridge that protected them from the blood of Seattle, and they truly had believed that they weren’t in Kansas anymore. But they wished they were back together again, with her mother and father who were both as dead as the worms that had made a delightful snack of their rotting intestines, and her brother, whose lifeless and gray and white body had floated to the surface of the pond, along with Vector and Espio’s…

—

He watched the sun bow down from the sky, its golden hat rolling off its shoulder.
I knew you couldn’t do it…
He wondered if this was what dying felt like. An euphoric feeling climbing to every tissue of his body.
I knew you couldn’t do it, Vector…
Espio lied motionless away from him, cradled by the gray sea. He shut his eyes eternally. He was dead.
You killed out there…You killed the audience’s ears…
She remembered that blue-eyed, blue-lipped bitch again, as she laughed over his failure, the battle of the bands where his band was ultimately the loser.
I’m watching the audience as they crowd around me, with glaring faces, with mouths so round ready to suck me in, with knives and fists poised to kill me…
Maybe this was what it was like to be a musician.
Having the crowd around him, congratulating him on his biggest failure, as Espio had watched him gaze out in the peerless void, waiting for the crowd to immerse him, love him, feed him and give him the attention he craved.
Stupid bastard. Stupid boy.
She was so sexy when she taunted him. And he hated her for that even more.
The host tried to usher them away, but Vector wanted to stay. He wanted to stay in that void, forever, with everyone loving him, worshiping him, the great god that made music everyone hated, the god that was supposed to be feared.
It’s time for you to go back in the back, guy. You had your moment of glory. It’s time for the next band to sing, and probably not as bad this time.
He punched him in the face, an explosion of blood erupting from his nose.
Vector, this is pointless! Let’s go home and smoke some weed! Vector! Vector, damn it, come back Vector!
He ran.
He ran as far away as he could.
Yes, he ran.
He ran that way.
He imagined the world crumbling apart as he ran, the god of wonder, the fearless god crushing the world underneath its claws. He could hear sirens blaring out in his ears. The red and blue lights surrounded him. Police surrounded him. He was loved again, by blue gods of law.
Nothing is fair, nothing is true! Smell the dogshit! That’s you!
The police nearly busted open his head on the car’s dashboard. He imagined suing them if he ever had a concussion. But yet, he knew this would be his first time in jail. The first time he would be called a rebellious child. Be on the wild side like Van Halen had enticed him about. Do those dirty deeds in jail done dirt cheap. Have prison sex with a male prostitute (so precious). See the sabbath, bloody sabbath! Come to his last remnants of sanity and take him away to a place with white walls, pillowed, and smelling of iodine and Lysol.
Have you ever been institutionalized before, Vector?
He felt the hospital gown so thickly against his skin. It imprisoned him in his own body. He was a prisoner now. A prisoner of his own mind.
The rest of the patients have to wear their baby blue uniforms. You’re not exempt from this rule, Vector. You have to wear them just like everyone else.
He saw the rest of the patients, doing puzzles and looking at pictures of their families. He saw one that had a family of birds perched on his table, one green, one purple, one gray. He had cold blue eyes, and he remained gazing into their still, sepia eyes. He wondered when he would get out of this jail. He had no insurance, so they surely couldn’t keep him here for the rest of his life.
He saw a hedgehog wear a thick, brown overcoat, rambling to himself as he watched the news of the world discuss how many Arabians were going to take over the country with their bodies that were flaming and explosive.
Vector, you need to do an activity.
You need to participate, Vector.
If you don’t participate, you can be stuck in here even longer.
 Didn’t matter anyways, he said. He was sure he was institutionalized by the state.
Your mother is paying for you to be here, Vector. She cares about you so much. Do you want her to suffer monetarily because of your delusion that you were a god?
He never cared about his mother. She was just an ignorant crone. He lit up a cigarette, before the staff had warned Vector that his lighters had to be confiscated, else he would be sent to the Seclusion Room.
And what are you going to do if I burned this whole fucking place down? Is anyone going to stop me from doing that? You, silver sparrow, are you going to burn this place down with me? Blue hedgehog, are you going to make the A-rabs blow up this place?
The hedgehog in the overcoat slammed the palms of his hands on the table, and began to scream, unholy, unjust, the man is committing arson, and he should be sent to Guantanamo Bay! For God’s sake, do something! I don’t want to die, I don’t want to be killed while I have to talk to Nocturnus about my theories that McDonald’s is poisoning our youth!
He puffed, huffed, snuffed his cigarette, as the staff restrained him, the cig still firmly locked in his jaws. He might as well go to the Seclusion Room with style, with a cigarette he could barely waste (they were too expensive for his budget).
Espio visited as the crocodile remained in his white, folded overcoat, and he asked why he was restrained. He heard stories on how the staff barely restrained anyone nowadays in this type of institution, but he soon grew to like being immobile, barely being able to scratch his nose or head or balls. He finished his cigarette and burnt a hole in the padded walls.
“When are you ever going to get out of here and return to the band? It’s ridiculous you’re wasting time in here. You’re not crazy. You’re not even the least bit insane. Just get a psychiatric evaluation and get out of here.”

Vector hated the routine and structure. The place wasn’t much different from a jail, as his jacket and scrubs were making him feel he was nothing more but a lowlife criminal, something his mother told him that he never would be as long as she lived in her old crony life. The clock made him go somewhere, every hour, for group, for therapy, for activities, for breakfast lunch and dinner that were never good enough on his tongue.

He watched as the blue hedgehog in the distance, his overcoat stained with urine and food particles, watching CNN, never allowing the other patients to watch what they wanted, and the he continued to ramble under his breath, shouting that the government is planning to make another September 11th out of its burning hands. The silver sparrow sat, shook, ate, and thought about what happened to his kids. He wasn’t sure why he was here. He seemed perfectly healthy, although he always remained in one place, except when he had to shit and piss. His blue eyes reminded him of the bitterness of winter, and his feathers shone a sleek bladed white whenever he was under the hospital’s frozen lights. Many of the other patients, with their drinking problems and their autism that caused them to shout and throw temper tantrums, and obsessive-compulsive’s that always used too much toilet paper and washed their hands until they chafed, he knew he didn’t belong here, but yet something was urging him to stay.

The routine was awful, but he liked how quiet the hospital could be at times. And the medication they brought him made him euphoric, so glad that he was alive, as he sat at the couch watching buildings being burned, happy that life was so wonderful, as CNN talked about Osama Bin Laden and how he was still at large and still a criminal willing to burn America down. Yes, burn it down, as he smiled and ignited his cigarette with the flames, make him the happiest man alive! America needed to be dead, brought down to its knees, until they could rebuild it, until the Indians could come back and smoke their peace pipes on the land and spread their old legends. The Aztecs lived below them, sacrificing hearts and bloody organs for their gods. He believed they were worshiping him, the great snake in the sky, and he chewed on his cigarette, as Espio left, unsure of where their friendship, and their band, still stood. Would another album be made from this experience? Would the sound pull a Nine Inch Nails? A Pink Floyd as Sid Barrett became committed for his mental illness? The schizophrenic singer that cut his mother up to little pieces and was soon institutionalized for the rest of his life?

Shine on you, crazy diamond, he said, as he told the bitch of what happened to him.

“He’s not going to be stuck in there for the rest of his life, right?”

The cigarette smoke turned an ashy blue. He wondered how she was able to do that every time she smoked.

He shook his head. “We might as well prepare for that possibility. I’ve talked with the staff and he could be in there for as long as a few years. He’s delusional and they said he has got violent with them. Possible delusional and disruption disorder. They don’t think they need to put the schizophrenic card on him but it could be possible as well.”

“He’s not schizophrenic, dumbass!” She stomped her high heels on the linoleum, making a harsh clicking as Espio’s parents woke due to the noise, his father stumbling down the stairs to see if that shitty band was making a commotion about what kind of song they should play next.

“I ain’t leavin’ without him, I hope you realize that. He left me, but I ain’t gonna leave him. We need him for the band. He’s basically the mastermind, and you signed me up to this shithole in the first place. A female lead singer cause Vector is so awful at singing? How many bands do that that aren’t gothic or like Trent Reznor or some bullshit like that?”

Espio hated being talked down to with this girl, her black skirt always barely covering her ass as she spoke, but he thought the girl was perfect for the “punk image” of their band. Tattoos covering her hips and her shoulders, dice and flames and snakes and symbols with words that often said “Give me freedom or give me death” or lyrics to a Sex Pistols song.

“You better pay me real fuckin’ well or you might as well consider this band done for.”
Her hair barely touched her neck. Dyed a violent pink. And Vector fucked her before he became institutionalized. Imagine that.

Did he truly love her, or did he just wanted her for sex? The girl could’ve been angry at him using her, yet she still wanted him. She still craved him even when she said she no longer wanted him in her life. She still wanted to crush him and devour him whole, as she had done with her past boyfriends. She ate their rawhides and chewed on them like a dog. Crushed them like Oxy pills and snorted them to be inside her, to worship her, to flow in her bloodstream and to love her as they entered in and out of her again, the vulva always welcoming them.

They rehearsed. And they were even worse without Vector. Espio wanted him to come home, but he remained in the institution, talking with the sparrow, seeing his wife and kids, repeatedly.

“What are you in here for?” he asked. But always the bird shifted in his seat and avoided the question.

“We’re…not supposed to tell you what we’re in here for. Or our problems. We can pretend we have a physical illness you know. I said I was…I was…”

Small streaks of tears in his winter eyes soon fell. Like snow.

“I’m sick. Very sick. With a cancer. I don’t know what type, but they’re supposed to let me know. Probably lung for all those cigarettes I smoked.”

Vector’s cigarettes were confiscated, as they said they would do. He could no longer smoke whenever he wanted, until the staff thought it was convenient. And so was the sparrow’s, as he seemed to smoke a pack of Pall Mall’s every day.

“You don’t have cancer,” Vector said. “Otherwise you’ll be in an actual hospital, getting chemo and shit. You’re not physically sick. You’re mentally. You stay in the same spot all day, even when we go to group. You stare at that picture. You do arts and crafts once in a while, but nothing that requires any strenuous activity. We played Marco Polo at their pool a while ago. It was fun, you should’ve joined.”

He twiddled his feathers, gazing at the floor, seeing how much dirt had collected over the years, of all the patients pissing and shitting like they were infants again. He thought he could get sick if he stayed here any longer. But he had no other choice. He was doomed to die here.

“I’m afraid of… I’m afraid of…”

“Of what? Don’t stutter, just tell me what you’re…”

“Of germs!”

His voice, always slightly above a mere whisper, was now louder than the blue hedgehog’s screamings that the food they were serving here was poisoned with snake venom. A boom that cracked above his mouth, a bell that rang all around the hospital to tell them that it was time for church, or it was 12:00.

“I left my wife, my three kids, because I suddenly became afraid of diseases. My wife had a brain tumor and could never afford to get it out. My kids were going to get sick too. I couldn’t stand to see them die. I know Jet was going to die of alcoholism, and Wave was going to get a brain tumor too, and Storm…Storm, well…Storm was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. And something told me he was going to die alone and get murdered by people who didn’t…appreciate him. My kids were going to die, and I knew I was becoming sick. I can’t move from this chair that I repeatedly Lysol and disinfect, and those crafts I disinfect too, but yet I’m afraid to die from those acrylic and oil paints…They’re poisonous, Vector. I’m going to die here, but I’d rather just stay here and accept it, my friend. I can’t see my kids anymore. They know how ill I was becoming. They said, ‘Daddy, why are you so depressed now?’ and I said I wasn’t sure why. I just liked to sleep in my bed and have the blinds shut out the sun. The sun is lemon yellow. And the moon is as white as paste. Just…I used to be such a big, strong man Vector, and now I’ve grown so small. My kids can’t stand seeing me this way, I know. Especially Wave. Wave is such a tough little girl. She was going to college, did you know? And Storm wanted to go to MIT, and I knew he could do it. But Jet…Jet just wanted to party and drink. This family was so torn. I left, and I don’t know what happened with my wife, but I think she’s dead. They said she was missing.”

A strange, but yet unique family, Vector thought. But none of this was his fault. He could imagine
him as a strong family bird, taking care of all of them. His wife possibly stayed at home and was on disability. The kids seemed smart, but he could get no information for what they were doing now. I met them later on, Vector thought, as he was drained out of the Ganges River of Seattle. I met them and though I wanted to love them I couldn’t, because Storm was a god, and Jet was a god, and Wave tried to take care of her family, as if she was the replacement for her dad. He never did got out of that hospital when I left. He stayed there, in that same chair, watching us as we did our activities, never joining in. He never took his medication.

Vector remained there for several months. He thought it was a quiet alternative to the chaotic life he once lived. He did like smoking weed, smoking his cigarettes playing any kind of music whenever he wanted, but he told Espio he wanted a respite from the kind of life he once led. Espio told him he couldn’t handle his supposed girlfriend anymore, but he said, “Fuck her. Just tell her to get out of the band. I never liked her anyways.”

“I never fuckin’ liked you either, punk ass bitch!”

He could hear the staff dashing to her tattooed shoulders and ankles as she threw a chair across the room, had tried to claw his face with her skulled fingernails, and she believed the only way Vector would ever get better was to kill him, because if he was dead, they would have no more problems to worry about, and the band would break up.

He could see her ass as the staff carried her away to the lobby. She dressed extra provocative, just for him. He thought she really wanted to swallow him whole, like a pill that was supposed to alleviate the fact that her daddy molested her and her mother was a prostitute.

The crone came in and asked why he had such a disgusting taste in girlfriends, but pretended to agree with his second bitch, as she tried to tell him that Roger died years ago and he shouldn’t bother living like him.

Roger was the only man he respected all those years ago, even when he burned to the dust his mother swept away. Roger is gone now, Vector. You shouldn’t try to live like him. He’s gone. He isn’t coming back. He’s gone.

He watched as the bird sat in the same seat for all those months, meanwhile the overcoat hedgehog was discharged, Against Medical Advice. He was supposed to stay for many years, but he contacted a lawyer to adjust his sentence to only three months. He wondered what happened to him, years later. He was sure he had just as good as a chance to get committed again.

He slept many of his days and weeks away. Every day flowed through the hospital like a dream, the cold of the A/C never waking him up to reality as he gazed at all these broken, fragile people, and as much as he liked to, he knew he couldn’t fix them. He lied in his bed and stared at the stains of toothpaste and bubble gum on the walls, pretending they were constellations, stars, and he could hear several people in the Disturbed Ward above them scream then dwindle down to a mere whisper as they were ushered to sleep, hearing the lullabies played for children ringing throughout the halls.

He was a black sheep, as he listened to how much wool the child had to give to his dames. It was a new fad therapy. Making the disturbed people remember their childhoods and how peaceful it could’ve been with the motherly nurses, with the harmless toys, with the stuffed animals that had only innocent, vacant stares. He would’ve hated to be up there. Because cigarettes weren’t allowed on Disturbed. And the only song he considered a lullaby worth listening to was Come Sail Away by Styx.

He heard the staff talk about a new patient. One that was related to the Arab-hating asshole. Their voices were barely above a whisper as they signed his paperwork, that he was also here cause the police thought he might wanted to commit suicide. Also had a brother with cystic fibrosis and bipolar, yes. Also had a mother who had a bit of a drinking problem, yes. Father is schizophrenic, yes. The whole family was fucked up. He was sure if the sparrow lived in a family like that, he would’ve got committed earlier, and he would’ve nailed himself to the wall with a catheter up his piss hole like one patient that drooled and never left the white and green wall.
He watched the hedgehog come in. He was blue, just like his father. He wore his piss-smelling overcoat, trying to regain all good memories of his father, back when he was a respectable reporter, back in the ‘60s. He could barely see his face, and could barely discern it as he suddenly remembered this awful memory. The memory he zapped away all those years ago. He’s on suicide watch right now.

Take his shoestrings, his hoodie, we might even confiscate that overcoat. Maybe he could kill himself on it. It’s the only good remnant of his father he has. We can’t take that away. He cares about his little brother a lot. He’s very sick. I heard he only had a few months to live. Too poor to afford a lung transplant… He’s only here because he’s here by the police. Can’t have someone kill themselves just because they’re too poor to afford therapy… Let him go to sleep, let him forget that he’s here for a little bit…

The event moved like molasses, a fluid dream. He watched as the 14-year-old (barely old enough to be locked away for years) covered himself in his blanket of stars and fell asleep, warmed by their nova’s and their flames. The sun in his room was dimmed down. Lights out. He would get to know more about him tomorrow morning.

He read several passages of a Rolling Stone magazine that Espio brought for him to pass the time, before he shut his eyes, no longer looking at the roaches that crawled on his desk, clicking and hollering as if they were patients in this hellhole too.

He felt he was sleeping all these months he had been committed since the faithful day he believed he was a god. He still believed he was, as he signed a contract many months ago, before they ever went to the Battle of the Bands competition. His folklore was dwindling, but Chip said he would give him some extra folklore if he ever signed on a friend. He knew Espio was next in line to get the delusion.

Do you still believe you’re a god, Vector? Fuck you. Do you really still believe you’re a god? I’m as godlike as the Bible, as the Qur’an, as the Satanic Bible, as the Oracle, as anything that anyone worshiped. I’m even as godlike as your Sigmund Freud you worship so goddamn much. Sigmund Freud isn’t a god, Vector.

He is to you. I’m sure he signed a contract with Chip too! And who’s Chip? Your fucking mother, now get me out of these restraints!

He watched the ceiling sometimes when the other patients were playing their card games and their puzzles. It was the only fun game he could think of without interacting with anybody. Most of the patients were too mentally ailed to play with him. They often mumbled and pissed themselves and sat in only one area, much like the sparrow, much like the old man who stood crucified, standing against a wall as if he was the New Christ.

Chip had told him about Him. But he wasn’t sure what he was talking about. He only read the Bible once, when he was a wee one, his father would say. Don’t like reading the Bible? Well, it’s nothing but garbage, I think. But you should think too. Why is a belief so worth dying for? Why is a belief so worth killing another man over? A belief isn’t a tangible object. It’s just something you made up with your brain. Beliefs still kill people today, but yet they still advance society. Beliefs are powerful weapons, Vector. And if you believe you can do anything, it can be true, for how much faith you put into it. Faith the size of a mustard seed. He heard of that one.

He put as much faith in himself than he did for Jesus Christ when he was very small.
His father told him that Jesus was truly black, and he was actually rebellious. Like him. Jesus and the Sex Pistols changed everything. With one fist we can punch The Man in the face. With a thousand fists, we can break boulders. With a million fists, we can move mountains.

But you can’t, dad! Humans are weak!

Not if you have faith, and belief that you will always know what’s best for yourself. The sunlight hit his face as he was carried by the staff, his legs loosely dangling as the other patients watched him, as if he was a burning scarecrow.

The staff screamed as loud as the patient that got in the other day, the son to the schizophrenic hedgehog. They claimed he was trying to find ways to slash his wrists. The plastic spoons and forks they gave them to eat with were a good contender to cut up their body. Red, bleeding streaks marked his arms as the staff put him out of the brown overcoat and into the white straitjacket, telling him he needed to be in Seclusion and to take a healthy dose of Thorazine to ease the pain of being depressed and to realize his small, beloved brother was dying in front of him.

They called him Sonic. He tried to hold on to the overcoat as the staff stuffed his hands and legs in the sleeveless jacket, like a ripe turkey for Thanksgiving. He could see tears almost as large streaks as the ones on his arms, and he wailed that he truly wanted to die.

He cussed and violently tore open a nurse’s arm while they tried to mute him with the headgear, blood dripping down like veins, as he said that he was dead inside, as dead as his brother was going to be in a few weeks.

Sonic, your brother… there’s nothing we can do about him!

Fuck off! You don’t understand what it’s like… you don’t understand that I was always playing second to him, that my parents are going to ignore me, and the only person I ever fucking respected is going to be dead! I’m dead inside! My body is rotting, there’s a million roaches and locusts inside me, just take me to your goddamn Seclusion Room and let me fucking die there!

He was tired. The sunlight appeared blurry as he just woke up minutes ago, and he looked up to the blue hedgehog and told him that he felt the same way.

“My father died years ago. He was the only man I loved. And a friend of mine doesn’t understand why I’m here. Talk to me sometime.”

He passed an invisible business card to him, as the staff threw away both the patients in separate Seclusion Rooms, the chicken-wire-patterned windows constantly banging with their fists, as the two patients tried to communicate via Morse Code, telling their stories about their fathers and their neglect and their delusions.

Knock knock knock knock. I always believed I was dead.
Knock knock knock knock knock knock. I always believed I was a god.
Knock knock. My brother could be a god.
Knock knock knock knock. Maybe he is for all I know.

The nurse soothed her arm with a tight green tourniquet, while the rest of the patients except for the sparrow had moved to a group, sitting in their little chairs, talking about their problems. About their wives and kids and how tired they all were. Their depression, their anxiety, feeling as if they needed a loaded gun to their temple right now.

Knock knock.
Who’s there?
Suicide.
Suicide who?
I will seriously make damn sure I’ll commit suicide in this fucking hospital if I find out I’m committed here.

Laugh.

Vector was told he could leave the hospital at any time, and he planned to, in a couple weeks. Vector had behaved himself for the longest time yet he still wants to stay here?

Isn’t his mother going to be disappointed in him?

He watched as the staff discussed in mere whispers again that Sonic possibly needed some medication, something that wouldn’t make him think of suicide anymore, and like Vector was carried
as if he was the Holy Christ waiting to be crucified, Sonic wore the leather mask and the restraints and was taken up to the Disturbed Ward. What Vector affectionately called “the Baby Ward for Violent Fucked-Up People”.

Sonic was in the ward for three days, locked up in a vast Seclusion Room to make sure he couldn’t harm himself. Vector heard the Disturbed Ward was entirely made of rubber and pillows. You couldn’t hurt anyone with anything, and he even believed they capped Sonic’s teeth with rubber. Most of the day you were secluded from everyone, taking heavy amounts of medication like Seroquel and Ativan. It used to be much different in older days, where they would lobotomize their brains, and give them some shock treatment unless they asked for it, but now it was treating the patients with soft lullabies as if they were children again, and playing with only plastic toys that felt hollow inside so you couldn’t hurt anyone.

The institution was very strange, he thought. They thought the Disturbed patients could only be treated by reverting back to their childhoods.

Sonic came back, heavily medicated, but still groaning about how he couldn’t stand to see his brother die. He was under the toxic wave of the pills he swallowed, his mind fogged up with carbon monoxide. He truly didn’t want to die anymore, but only under the guise of the lithium. Vector had sat next to him as they talked and listened in group, and Sonic fell asleep, feeling his heartbeat rapidly crashing against the rocky shore of his head, angry, raging that his brother was a victim of the crime of dying when he was only so young, when his life had so much spark and genius. The next few days, Sonic refused the medication, and began crashing against the tiles and walls again, the thunderous storm, the sea that wanted to swallow the hospital in his despair and hate, as his wicked hands had torn through the nurses’ uniforms and his teeth had gnashed their breasts, sucking them a little before they took him back to Seclusion (that childish therapy must be affecting him, Vector thought).

Are you going to die here?
No. I’m going to leave. I’m going to leave and never come back.
Get a lawyer like your dad did. Just get the hell out of here. I’m thinking of leaving too. I had enough of this place.
They’re going to take me back to Disturbed.
That place seems crazy as hell. Why do you let yourself keep going back there?
You don’t understand.
Of course I don’t. But I don’t understand why you keep going there.
Because I’m already dead anyways.
No you’re not! You can actually get out of here if you calm your ass down and prove you don’t need to be here!
Why are you still here then?
Huh?
Why are you still here then?
I don’t know why, really. I really don’t.
The nurse said you could leave, but you’re still here!
He didn’t want to go back to his life of being a bum playing shitty music for people who didn’t care. He had to admit that.
He still wished he could listen to TOOL while everyone else listened to their shitty ambient garbage. As much as he could relate to the Undertow album, he nearly haven’t left the hospital in a year, because he knew he was afraid. He was afraid of staring into his own shadow, afraid of failure. He could just be like a sitting pigeon just like the sparrow, and never move. The more he stayed here, the more he was becoming him, as fear was infectious in the institution, and even Sonic was beginning to display signs of it. He was afraid of his brother dying. He was afraid of being abandoned by his family. Of being alive and realizing he was this alive person with so many possibilities but he never took any of them because he believed his brother would be the successful one for most of his life. He could feel Sonic’s fist tightening as he tried to open the door to the Seclusion Room, trying to get out, but so heavily medicated with Thorazine, his mouth overflowing with drool as he tried to tell
him, that he wanted to be a god too.
Vector tried to erase all memories of the desperate hedgehog in his mind. He wanted to forget about
his situation with his brother, with his family, everything about him, as he packed everything he kept
after being institutionalized for a year, and he finally had to come home with his crone mother, and
with Espio, and explain he learned nothing at all from his experience, because they shocked him, and
he forgot everything.
Zap. Forgot about the sparrow.
Zap. Forgot about Sonic’s father.
Zap. Forgot about Sonic too.
He was administered shock therapy, by his own request. And he soon lost all memories of the
hospital, except for the baby blue scrubs that he kept in his mother’s house for a year until he was
kicked out of her home, and she threw all his clothes away.
So are you back to playing music in the band?
He thought about it.
Let’s just fucking smoke some weed and listen to Pantera. I’ve listened to rivers and Buddhist shit for
so long that I forgot what real music sounded like.

He drifted further into the galaxies, into the black rivers in space, as he saw the cut up moon lying
like a broken crystal, along with the body of his devout friend Espio, and the bird that was a son to
the sparrow that caused him to have a nervous breakdown, Jet.
Vector closed his eyes, and imagined that none of this was happening, and it all was a dream, just
like he had when he was in the hospital for a year.
And he disappeared.
His face covered with thick, iodine bandages, he could see the words pile up in his flesh, as the ink spread throughout his body, the blood of Anansi, spilled in the hands of himself.

He looked at the window blinds in Miles’ room. He saw the sun beginning to descend down on the Earth, how lemon, how yellow it was, beginning to spiral its rays to the sad lonely kids such as Miles, remaining in his inked room, drawing pictures of angels dying. They had flown from the Earth, only to be sunk into Hell.

Just one step at a time…
And closer to destiny…

The sound of Miles’ mother crooning came from the bathroom across from him. Of course she would never look. Of course she couldn’t see angels. She never believed in them.
Her fingers were long, coarse, dirty, as she brushed her thick, coarse, dirty hair along with them. Her lips were as red as blood. Eyes a soft shade of cornflower blue. She had sung to her husband who could hear her in the basement, as he dealt out Oxys. She was about to do a line of cocaine.

I knew at a glance…
There would always be a chance for me…

The only thing he had that wasn’t bleeding were his eyes, and even that alone was debatable.
The sun edged closer, to Miles’ little house, as he talked about the death of angels.
The needle shook inside his flesh. He wasn’t sure what it meant, and ignored it.

Anansi had awoken. He could hear his shallow breathing inside his skull. The god had tried to kill himself and Sonic, and he knew it wouldn’t be the end. Both him and Sonic had more tears, more blood to shed for his stories.

“Did you know that raven story is a true story, Sonic?”
Silence. He gazed at the silver clouds that had marched directly to the sun, blocking their leader, their master. The sun had died away in the call, the parade of the silver clouds. The black sky that had emerged in the wake of a terrible omen.

“What do you mean it’s a true story?” he asked.
“Well, it will be. Yehl is a raven. He will look upon the destruction of the world. He can only save you right now. He can only save the other gods. You just have me to keep you company. Me and my stories.”

He replied with nothing.
The situation was so bizarre he needed no comment.
The blood had sank through the skin of the bandages, unto the floor of his mother. She probably mistook it as period blood.

With someone I could live for…
Nowhere I would rather be…

“Why do you want to destroy the world, Wind?”
The sun had blinded his eyes. Yet he continued to stare. Angels had crystal, prism eyes. They could stare all they wanted and not fear going blind, but instead, create a spectrum of the rainbow for everyone to see. Inspiration for Pink Floyd’s signature image.

“Because I am God, Sonic. And everything God says, He can do. Through God, anything is possible. I can save the world, and destroy it too. And I want to start over. I can’t rule over this world anymore. Chip is getting tired of being my slave. You must help me. You’re the only one I know of that can fit the job.”
He could hear the flapping of wings. His powers led him to believe it was Yehl, but he had doubts. Yehl was too busy getting demon eggs. He was too busy trying to please Chip even he hated him. Yehl was too busy wanting to live forever, because Uncle took his parent’s life away with a blender and with white paint.

He didn’t need to know that, but he did.

“It’s just a regular old raven Sonic, one of my favorite birds. They’re much smarter than humans, more aware. Did you know that? I created them, of course. And I’m making one a god. Shadow was always my favorite trooper. But I knew he wanted me dead. He said I was better off suffering from my cystic fibrosis. Better off letting him be in charge of everything. But there was you, brother. I never knew you loved me that much.”

Is your love strong enough?
Like a rock in the sea…

“That’s why Shadow tried to kill you. I could tell he found a friend in you, as you were similar in some ways, but he didn’t want you reviving me, all the while Chip was glad you were thinking of bringing me back. So he went away and signed that contract, which that special pen meant as soon as I was done, you were God. And I can’t go on anymore brother. I am sick. Much too sick. I am too proud to enter a psychiatric hospital. I want to only write, and nothing more, and be a god of my own world. But gods do die, Sonic. Soon, people forget about them. They are washed away in the tide, their skeleton drifting in the ocean of time forever. They just die very slowly, over the course of many years, even generations. Gods like Odin and Quetzalcoatl and Fudo and Xiuhcoatl and Horus…they’re dying, Sonic. Soon no one will ever remember them. It’s the worst fear of anyone, really. And many gods experience it everyday, once they’re dead in legends or they’re dead in mediocrity, so many writers and poets and artists, Sonic. Think of their suffering everyday. To be remembered on this small planet. A planet that is so much smaller than so many other planets in the universe. You can’t tell how many there are. But I can, but the answer would make your head explode.”

The sun had lied broiled in the black sky, the white ominous sphere that had turned the clouds and stars into blazing magnesium flames.

Am I asking too much?
Is your love strong enough?

“Will Shadow remember me? Will he be with me when I die?”
His brother coughed, hacked, and wheezed. Sonic could feel the harsh undulations in his chest, as he tried to gasp for air like a surfaced fish.

“You care about him, don’t you Sonic? Even when he tried to kill you?”
He couldn’t explain it. He disappeared out of his grasp quickly, and he felt he had a chance in cooling the beast out of him. Shadow was only an unfortunate creature he could heal, and the more he knew him as Anansi had given him his godlike omnipresence, he had learned that Shadow had a terrible uncle who had hurt him, a life that had hurt him, and becoming a god was the only answer to absolve that wretchedness inside of him. He had turned to God, Anansi, to heal his inner blackness, his vile soul, and He said yes, as long as you do these things for Me.

“Priests have always told him the wrong answer,” he said. “They said to open up his heart to Me, when I simply wanted to take it and eat it. And I did. And Shadow soon became a raven, my favorite creation, and he was a tinkering toy soldier in my army, fighting the demon eggs that Satan had made. Only to get people to respect gods, and to make the world go round…”
He spit out some phlegm, and Sonic could feel the cold air rushing from the windows, the snowflakes that fell in what looked like May. February had passed and went, and winter still had its clutches on spring.
The goldenrods have decayed under the snow, and the trash, the once great beds that had been slept
by gods like Horus and Storm, had soon been washed away by the flood. Two little birdies had encountered tragedy, all over again.

“Will Shadow die? Will the other gods die too?”

He paused momentarily. He had caught the white burning sun in his fingertips, and had rolled it in the palms of Sonic’s hands.

“Someone will die tonight. It might be Shadow. It might be these gods. It might be you. But I can tell you many mortals will die, my brother. Including Miles. Including his neglectful parents. You could never save him, Sonic. He was destined to die. I already had attributed a song to him. You can’t change what I already set in time’s stone.”

“You…you can’t make all these people die…”

The lemon yellow sun had now become a black hole sun.

The neglectful mother had wondered why the world was suddenly black, until she pressed the switch to the bathroom. At least the homes and flashlights still had light. Her husband wondered around in the darkness, thinking a power outage had occurred, as he flipped on the flashlight and continued to smoke his pot in the dark.

Just one beat of your heart…
And stranger than fantasy…

His heart was a hole. That was all it amounted to. Gods were cruel. Gods were vain. And he demanded his brother to bring back the sun, to bring back the god’s precious lives, to bring back Shadow’s sanity, but God had said no, and His gold and silver eyes and the needle that thrummed inside his cheek, He said no, don’t touch my powers, and leave yourself be, for the Christening.

I knew from the start…
It had to be the place for me…

The Emerald City was no longer an emerald, but an onyx, an obsidian, as black as the moon’s veil upon her ghostly face.

Someone that I would die for…
There’s no way I could ever leave…

Shadow had seen the purple cat praying to a glowing white lotus flower in the cemetery, carrying a demon egg with her, unhatched. The two little birdies were nearing both the raven and the cat, upon the moonlit graves, and they could tell they would die for their Daddy, for their Mommy. For their brother, whom they barely knew, and whom they barely knew was dead, his body eaten by rats, as they swallowed his eyes entirely…

The two reptiles had drifted to the shroud of moon, waiting for God to kiss upon their sad faces. Satan had seen them, and told them they truly were Satanists, and he would take them down to the bowels of Hell. They were sucked into the ocean, into the seafloor. And so was Jet.

The Thousand Year Old Child knitted a sweater for the approaching cold, one made from the flames of the sun. She had saved the very last remaining flames before Anansi had taken it away from the sky, including the blades of stars, and the piece of silver eye from God. God didn’t know. It was her own little secret, as she had worn as she toured through the night, with her shoes made from the wings of Hermes.
She had turned every streetlight on, and every light in every shop on, and every light in every school, office, factory, she had made them all turn on, including all their functions, and she had told God that despite His warnings of The End, despite the warnings of the raven tearing the blood vessels of the New Christ, and the sun that had dissolved deep in the sky, a big black hole replacing the table’s light blue cloth, The Show Must Go On.

She had danced as the stars had cloaked her, she had seen the passerby’s faces as the other gods from Seattle had surrounded her, hearing their eulogies playing in the belt of the tongue of Miles’ mother.

Is your love strong enough?
Like a rock in the sea…
Am I asking too much?
Is your love strong enough?

Gods had never ran on love, but only beliefs.
Gods had never ran on good deeds, but the deaths of those they killed in their names.
Gods had never ran on folklore, but time. Time had always sealed them away in the dust. No matter how well-known they were, they would eventually die, as the end of the planet is arising, and the gods that once inhabited people’s minds are as dead as the people who once worshiped them.

History was nothing but stories that would all be forgotten by the men and women who listened to them, as the planet dies further, every second, every day, every lingering year.

The inkblood that Sonic had produced, while he had lied in a puddle of his and his brother’s own life, their own words and their own made-up stories, the stories they have heard in the past, their own influences and their own family blood, had produced a thick dark red wine that had looked black in the light of Miles’ mother as she asked Miles what was going on, and a loaf of bread that was entirely as black as the wide pupils in Sonic’s eyes, the gaping hole that was beginning to lacerate in his cheek, and his brother, with his smirk that he could feel inside the deep sinews of his brain, He had said, “Eat and drink that bread and wine. Eat and drink of it as much as you can to regain your energy, your wounds being sealed up. It’s time to go. Enjoy the moments you have on this Earth while it lasts.”

“Angels are dying mom,” Miles said. “All the angels are falling from heaven like dead birds and letting Satan’s worms eat them. They’re dying. They’re dying…”
“I’m sure they’re not.” She had styled her hair the way she liked it, her own little Janet Jackson look, and she had left her son alone, with his own little toys, and she had run to her husband, who was continuing to smoke the remaining joints, continuing to snort all the crushed Oxies and the little lines of coke.

“Give me some you little fucking shit! I don’t care if the end of the world is coming, we’re going to go out and score some more junk cause you used it all up!”
“First, keep singing that song.”
“Jesus, what song, Roger?”
“That ‘Is Your Love Strong Enough’ song. You got a lovely voice. I want to hear the rest of that before we go. Sing it, or I won’t lend you money to get junk.”
“Why?”
Her fangs glared in the streetlights. Miles’ father gazed at her, solemn. He wasn’t intimidated by her threats. Not anymore.
“Fine…”

The bread kept multiplying, Sonic’s health returning, as the blood in the blood red wine had regained the lost blood that had faded and stained away in Miles’ home. Sonic could walk again, as his one hand that didn’t have scars on his wrists had handed the piece of black bread to Miles as he had cried over his monstrous drawings, and he had pat his back, saying his “there theres”, and Miles, having not eaten anything so good in so long, had devoured the bread and wine voraciously, enjoying every last bite.
“Eat up Miles,” he said, as he opened his dark closet door in his warm red room, to find a coiled rattlesnake of a noose inside, the rain beginning to pile on the world, the rain collecting in the bird bath known as the Emerald City, and he had loosened it, tearing it down, to the floor where it was meant to be, unloved and hissing as ever with its fiery breath.

Is your love strong enough?
Just one beat of your heart…
Is your love strong enough?

The two little birdies, on their quest to find their lost Daddy, after their Mommy had died, finding their lost brother and convincing him that the Path to Selfishness was not the path they had chosen to take, had found a loaf of black bread and a glass of blood red wine.

“Wave…I’ve never seen bread that’s so…black! Why is it black Wave? Why? Why is it black?”

She examined it thoroughly, seeing the contents looked as if it was ordinary bread, but with a few implanted seeds. Possibly poppy seeds. The seeds of the Jews.

“I don’t know Storm, but I’ve seen bread like this, but we really can’t be too careful. It could be a trap from those trickster gods, like Yehl, or Quetzalcoatl. You never know.”

“But Wave…” He had sat on his two knees, his wings clasped together. Wave knew whenever Storm had assumed the position, he would practically do anything for her, even just to eat the loaf of bread.

“But please Wave…I’m hungry! We’re all hungry! Can we have some? Please?”

“But it could be poisoned!”

“I don’t care!” He puffed and ruffled his feathers, his blue eyes glowing. Just like Daddy had done, Wave thought. If only he could see how his son had grown somewhat like him.

“I would rather die with something in my tummy than nothing at all! Give me some, sis! Give me some!”

She looked at the bread again. It smelled enticing. Straight from the oven. And she had a black bread like this before, and had thoroughly enjoyed it. It reminded her back when their Daddy would take them to nice restaurants, like he used to. Their lovely Daddy. Oh precious Daddy. If only the world wasn’t ending…

The end of the world was coming, so they might as well take the chance and have a nice meal like a family for once, and she had cut the loaf of bread, and passed the wine to Storm, and they sat and chatted and had talked about what they were going to do when they got home with Daddy. With Jet. Like a real family again.

“We’re going to go back and get bunnies in our ranch, Wave! Bunnies are so soft and so cuddly…I would like bunnies when we come back Wave, I would really like bunnies.”

She smiled. She had suffered no ill effects of the bread and wine, and they were having a nice moment together, like they used to. Storm was brain damaged, but he still was her brother, and they still had to stay as a family, even if Jet had considered himself estranged from his “smartass” sister and his “weirdo” brother. She wished he was here, but Storm was the only one she truly liked from her siblings. Storm had tried to comfort her, even if he was eccentric and obsessed with his gadgets and tinker toys. Jet had always remained in his room, in the comforting darkness of the closed window blinds and his wine coolers and Smirnoff.

“Storm…”

“Yeah?” He had stuffed a loaf in his mouth, masticating it slowly as Wave had looked at the pale moon, and had wondered when the moon, too, will fizzle out.

“I love you. And I always had loved you, Storm. I don’t care if you’re a god. You’re still my brother. You were…closer to me than I was with Mom. I don’t know if we’ll ever find our Dad, but…”

Storm was silent, chewing his bread slowly. The rain doused their heads and bodies, as the children up above continued to shower the world in their pails and watering cans, as mercilessly as the demons from the Earth could muster.

“Why is it raining so hard, Wave?”
“Spring is coming. That’s why. ‘April showers bring May flowers’, remember Storm? But…I really don’t think our father could be here. He could be…”

He looked as sad as an orphan child in the end of the world with no Mommy and Daddy to love him, as he shivered, bunching up to his sister, like birds on a branch in spring. Their chests expanded, gathering up the warm air in the cold weather, and Wave had decided to not tell him, his hand holding hers.

“Is Daddy fine, Wave? Is Daddy fine?”

Psychiatric hospital or no psychiatric hospital, their father would always be around, carrying the word that Wave had done her best to protect her brothers, and that’s all she could say to God once she saw Him. She had done her best. One was going to Hell, and one was going to Heaven with her. And she would’ve preferred it that way. Jet couldn’t be saved, she thought. Jet had to choose to save himself. And he never did.

“Yes. Yes, he’s fine. We’ll find him. Even if it takes years. Even if we’re really old we will look for him. Daddy would’ve never abandoned us for no reason, Storm. I’m sure he had a very good reason to why he left us with Mom. Dad isn’t dumb.”

Storm had kept the photo of all of the birds together, in their ranch home, with their Momma bird cooking up a buffet of a dinner, their father, holding baby Wave while Storm had stood under his father’s wing, and Jet was actually standing near his mother, smiling.

Maybe he had never forgave her for doing what they had done to their mother. Maybe he never felt like he truly belonged. Maybe he was jealous of his siblings. She could think up all kinds of possibilities to why her brother had schism away from them, but she remembered when he was once a bright, smiling hawk, always looking up to Dad, until the religious wave had hit the family.

Religion had brought both people together and people apart.

She thought for once, the gods had brought them all together. For one single, defining moment. Damnation, retribution, they had come and had judged them, and Jet had strayed far from the flock, his eyes always glazed, his beak always dripping blood, his knife that had turned into a gun. The gun that once held the power of a thousand suns had been crushed inside Sonic’s home, by a father who had believed such weapons were advanced technologies that had wanted to put insane men like him in a concentration camp. Sonic’s father, the news reporter that had once been so respected, with a wife that had once been a shining example of a mother as she carried both Sonic and Wind in her bosoms, had taken his own life, along with the mother that choked on Merlot. They were piled neatly, their bodies side by side, as the stars had ignited like the lights in the streets of Seattle, Van Gogh’s urban version of A Starry Night, soaking up all the color of the blood, turning to a deep depressive black. The color of hopelessness.

And even they could find a moment such as this to be a family again. The black haze wasn’t too strong for them to not entirely see. The silver lining still welcomed them. And the bread had multiplied, to Blaze walking through the lonely alleys of the city, carrying the white lotus flower to brighten her way.

Is your love strong enough?

Just one beat…

“We’ll go home, Storm. We’ll go home. And

Just one beat…

She wanted to go home too.

With Fudo, the god of fire. With Silver. He had protected her since she was such a young, fleeting girl. Silver was her father. Her mother and father suddenly left her alone in the world, and she was left alone in the Emerald City, the little girl knowing very little on how to defend herself. Her home had always been the Seattle’s Best Coffee coffeeshop where Silver had let her sleep near it, had always got a cup of hot chocolate for her to place her soft lips on. As she grew, she drank coffee, and
had found out that it didn’t have the best coffee in Seattle. They had ventured and weaved through other coffee shops, ordering meals of muffins and brownies and soups, whilst drinking mochas and cappuccinos and black coffee that had its steam drifting in the wind, her face reflecting the puddle of caffeine that had awaited her.

“Blaze?”

She turned his attention to him, as he smiled softly. The light had made his features more prominent, his shiny albicanfur, his hands that had glowed fire. She very rarely used her powers, but she believed she could only use them when it was an emergency. The other gods had wanted her sweet meats, her demon eggs, and she had collected them like Easter eggs, as they lied strewn throughout the red and green and yellow city.

“What do you hope to accomplish when you’re a god? I know you just became one, but…being a god is such a big responsibility, Blaze. You can very well die doing this. You can become a shell of yourself. This job changes people. And I would say to continue on your former life, but you probably had no choice, being homeless and schoolless and foodless and parentless. So many lesses. She couldn’t take up a job in this city. They all wanted teenagers fresh from high school, people who had experience. She didn’t want to end up in a center for homeless teens. She felt she didn’t deserve the same privilege of being helped that they had. She was only a nameless soul, who was born without a name, and who would die without a name. People only called her Blaze because of the jacket she wore for so long. The flames that she hoped would cover her from head to toe, so no one could touch her.

She had lived off trash and water from drinking fountains that tasted rusty and metallic for so long that this cup of black coffee and this cheese and broccoli soup was the finest meal she had for a long time, even if the bowl was so small, barely the size of her hand. But it was fresh. It tasted like mead. She had appreciated it all the same.

“I know Silver, but I had no choice in the matter. I couldn’t go anywhere to get help. I had learned to defend myself from junkies and rapists a long time ago. I had always carried a pocket knife with me to hurt those who had tried to hurt me. It is still fresh with the blood of a trenchcoated man. He thought I was a demon from Hell. And I might as well become something else than a demon. I became a god, and I can truly defend myself from the people who don’t believe in me.”

Is your love strong enough?

Just one beat of your heart…

“I don’t want you getting into trouble. That’s just all I want. You’re too…good for me to lose.”

His brownie was served to him, with chocolate sauce sprayed over the plate in an elaborate zigzag. He had sliced it with his fork, contemplating the right choice of his words before he put the fine piece in his mouth.

Still with the brownie and sauce in his mouth, he had said, “I can’t leave you here. Something bad is going to happen very soon and I don’t want you to die.”

“What do you mean?”

The spoon rested in the soup, culling over the cheese, sticking its head like an ostrich who never wanted to learn the truth.

He had rolled the brownie in his tongue, contemplating. The end of the world would be coming. Yet he wanted to lessen the blow.

“God is going to take care of things,” he said. “And when He’s going to take care of things, very soon He’s going to take care of all of us. We will be above. We will no longer be in this city. And I would rather be in a city I can truly appreciate before that happens. I used to been a god of New York before I had to leave and come here. And for some reason…I don’t know why, but something is telling me that I have to go back. I have a brother that lives there. Maybe we can visit him. He’s trying to be a stockbroker, you know, a successful person. Meanwhile I’m nothing but a lowly god. A god that barely anyone can remember these days.”

She thought people could barely remember Morrigan too. A Celtic god that people had never cared
for except heavy metal bands that were themselves Celtic.
She wondered if she could be good friends with Yehl someday. Morrigan was synonymous with ravens. But he seemed to always want to work alone.
“I would love to go to New York, Silver. I’ve never been there before. But something tells me it must be a wonderful place if so many people live there. Maybe they even have better coffeeshops than this one.”
He laughed, a laugh that Blaze had grown to love while they’ve been good friends.
“I’ll take care of the bill. Once we’re outside we’ll run in the rain. Seattle is the place that has so much rain, but in magical moments like this, the rain seems…nice.”
The movies never lied. Kissing in the rain was always a passionate and charged moment, but she could only kiss him on the cheek, as he carried the umbrella above her, looking at the cars that had waited at the stoplights to get to their destination, the birds that had sat on the branches of the pear trees and the bees that had dusted their legs with goldenrod powder. April showers brought May flowers. Especially in Seattle. It had rained many times a week, many times a month, many times a year.
They never went to New York. Silver had died shortly after that incident. And she had mourned his death by remembering that memory where they had promised to run away together, to live with his brother as the end of the world had opened its wide gaping mouth, and had sucked them all in.
The rain had reminded her the day they had kissed. It had even smelled the scent of the raspberry chapstick Silver had given her. And it had made her cry even more.
The dark red wine and the black bread had sat away from her in the corner, hungrily expecting her, the cat also hungrily expecting something in her stomach.
She had looked at the loaves, the wine that seemed clear and not at all fetid with blood and poison and knockout drugs with her black eyes, and she had laid the lotus flower in the center of the alley, glowing and unveiling each petal, as she had begun her feast of bread and wine, and she had lingered the taste inside her as much as the cheese and broccoli soup from years ago. It had been a while since Blaze had ate anything that was good for her soul.
The moon had reminded her of Silver, as it faded away faster, the flames of the night flickering.
They were the many candles that had honored the deaths of so many gods. Fudo was one of them, the god who had practically raised her. The god that was so willing to give her something to eat, something to drink, even give her a warm place to sleep in hotels when he could afford it. Since he had died, nothing had been for the better. She was back to sleeping in the cold, eating from garbage, and running dehydrated except when it rained. But the rain had still reminded her of bittersweet memories when he was still alive.
He had kissed her head and had called her his own little angel. He truly believed she was special.
Blaze had thought Silver was the only person in the world who had, and who would, care for her. Her parents had never cared for her. They were too busy with their own lives. When she was one year old, Silver had seen her crying in the soaking rain and had gave her a place to stay for a few days. It was an abandoned home, the wood rotting and about to fall apart, but the bed was warm, and Silver had food for her. The candy he gave her had tasted so sweet in her tongue that day.
Silver had soon evacuated her from there as he could tell the home wouldn’t last much longer, but he had offered to keep her in a hotel for a while. And she obliged.
She wasn’t sure how Silver had money when he didn’t have a job she knew of. Maybe his brother sent him some money every few weeks. He had told her his brother, while not exactly rich, lived comfortably, and had tried to help out his brother. But he didn’t tell him that he had no job in Seattle, and was in fact a god that was supposed to defend the world from demons and to carry out God’s and Chip’s orders. He said he worked at a factory that had dispensed yo-yos and other playthings for children. She had never seen the factory in Seattle, but Silver said he wished he worked there, and he wished he didn’t had to lie to his brother anymore and keep using his money. His brother was smart, but gullible, and never believed that possibly Silver was a drug addict or alcoholic.
His brother somewhat learned the truth when he died, that he truly didn’t have a job and in fact roamed the streets, but nobody had found a trace of drugs or wine and beer on him. He was just a
bum who had liked the homeless life. Or he couldn’t find a job. That was what his brother assumed. She had caught a glimpse of her brother, but had never come out to meet him. She was too afraid of people who looked normal and had actually lived in a decent home and had decent pay. They never knew the truth of what it was like to be homeless. They just assumed it was all drinking and sleeping on beaches when it was just that no one had cared about her, even herself. She had laid a piece of bread to the flower, and she said it was for Silver. “It’s not soup, or a muffin, or a brownie, but it will do.” She ate in silence, looking at the cemetery that was a few miles away. She had to go there. To honor Silver’s death. To stain his white lotus flower with red.

Is your love strong enough?
Like a rock in the sea…

Shadow had flickered away his last cigarette. He had no money left to buy anymore. And there was no point in panhandling on the streets anymore. The world was ending. And he might as well make the nicotine in that last cigarette last.
The entire city was quiet. The world had faded away to a black chasm, and the moon had shattered in scattered pieces. His cigarette had soon died, as the people on the planet had died, and he stomped it (them) away. It wasn’t his business, as Chip would say. He was just destined to watch the world curl up in black rotted petals, shed by pencils in a line sketch, painted by intricate paintbrushes in 140 lb. Watercolor paper, made to withstand the heaviest ash and soot and ink.
He had smelled the death of saccharine bodies, the saccharine sweet sky that was lined up with many stars that welcomed him with bladed fingers, the gods that had haunted on his shoulder and had told him that the world was lost, the world was being destroyed, and that his fingers couldn’t save it, they were too fragile, frail, and heartfelt.
“The heart can’t feel anything except its own throat pulsating,” the scarred mouth said. “And even then, it still can’t feel emotions. People are wrong for believing in your heart. It’s the brain that does emotions. Your heart just keeps you alive, especially when the world is beginning to come down like stars bursting to ashes. They are dying. Funerals are being planned for these planets, for these galaxies. Gods are becoming shorter-lived, more empty with their meaningless lives. The gods will have to return, but only if they can eat out of garbage again, like we all did now.”
“I didn’t.”
He saw the black bread, and the red wine that bled around the edges of the wine glass. The scent of the bread was familiar, the smell of the blood was too… It was ripe, with the smell of death. A death of two gods, one that was the master, and one that was only His puppet, His little carrier of His plans. The stories was being written in the sea of ink that had formed an ocean across the border of Lakeview Park and East Republican Street that was as black as the raven’s wings that Shadow had once known to be his best friend, the shadows that Shadow himself known as his friends too, and he could see the light glitter across the edge, as the city continued to be drowned in words, pages upon pages of sentences and paragraphs and anecdotes and allegories were being spilled on the canvas like painter’s blood, and Shadow had sliced apart the black bread, distributed it evenly between himself and the scar on his throat that now had grown a set of stomachs, and he watched the moon become paler as suddenly it was licked out of the night sky, and Shadow could see the world come to darkness, the world that had died so suddenly, when life was beginning to grow interesting.
He slathered some pig fat on the bread that he collected too long ago (ravens had always feasted on the dead, including the fat in all their meat and bones), and he savored the taste of the bread, the taste of the wine.
Just one beat of your heart…

“What do you want to do now that the world is ending, brother?”
He opened his eyes. Miles was gone. He had choked on the rattlesnake. His brother had told him
there was no saving him. He was meant to die by his own hand. He wished he had a gun right now to shoot his brain with, but as the tears had shielded his eyes from the truth, he had sat on the floor, on the remaining loaf of black bread and the remaining glass of red wine. “What are you going to do now?”

His hands were clenched, little balls of white, as white as snow, and he wished he could fight his brother, but he knew he couldn’t. His brother was his brother. He was once a young boy who was so weak he couldn’t get out of the hospital bed himself, with so many tubes and wires attached to him. “What are you going to do now?”

Just one beat…

His heart was going to stop at any moment. It was clawed by this God of Temptation, this God of Desperation. The needle had quivered inside his skin. The silver point had bitten through, but he shoved it back inside. It had grew like a plant in potted soil, wishing to come out and bloom. A new life in the midst of death.

“You can’t do much brother, because you’re going to be dead soon.”

He didn’t understand anything. He didn’t know what was going on in this world anymore.

He was thinking he would soon wake up from this wretched nightmare and find his brother still writing his stories, his mom and dad still around and as loving as they used to be, many years of his life taken away and subtracted to when he was four, when his brother was two. And could already tie his shoes.

He had covered his ears with his hand. He didn’t want to hear anymore.

It is time to get up, his brother said. “No, it isn’t…”

It’s time to get up from this world and start a new one.

You’re God now Sonic.

Right when you die.

“Why would you do this to me Wind? Why would you do this to me?”

Wind had tucked the sewing needle inside him safely, letting it not bloom just yet. Blooming in a cascade of bloody violets and lilies and daisies.

Because I saw potential in you. I saw potential that you could be a great god. Boredom. Not feeling right with your body. You even thought you were some kind of fetus inside your skin. Hating yourself. These are godliness traits, Sonic. I had those same ones too, when I had cystic fibrosis.

Sonic hacked, wheezed, and had choked on his blood and phlegm. I felt sorry for myself. I wished I had immortality. I thought I could be reborn. And then Chip came. He gave me a job. And I decided to do it. But I don’t like it anymore. I would rather die than take it up.

He looked at the piece of black bread and red wine he had seeped from his lovely body, his christening and blooming body as it rose from the ashes of the world.

He had ate the bread, and sipped the wine slowly, and he realized he was eating food of his own flesh. But he was too hungry to care.

Spread it evenly to all those you met and haven’t met. We’re all having a meeting of the minds. A Passover. A feast. Someone is going to betray you, someone who you loved dearly and had felt sorry for.

He tore into the last piece of bread before crying diaphanous tears that had shined in the light that was once occupied by Miles’ mother, as the two lovers had quarreled, spread their naked bodies before the raging ice of the black water, and they sunk to their deaths, while they had their last fuck and their last drag of the cigarette, Roger dying with a flaccid penis, the mother her tits as blue-veined as the finest white cheese, her red lips from Zanzibar as bloody as her neck.
He was locked in the closet, and his uncle had thrown away the key. And the only people he could talk to inside his own world were the shadows, the shadows that had dubbed him Shadow, and of the world around them Of Shadows. His uncle realized his boy had a particular gift, and he had tried to scare it off him, with the use of his blenders, his garbage disposals, his remains of his mother’s legs dangling from the fridge above him, as he had laid out dinner after dinner, of his parent’s bodies, like sacrifices to Aztec gods, their small ornate red blood ready to be licked with their ornate tongues. His Uncle was a savage, a savage animal that never knew eating humans was taboo, especially family members, when the weather wasn’t cold and his lights were still working.

“Time to eat!” he said. And he laughed, a croaked, salty laugh as salty as the sea in Seattle. He had watched the ocean undulate its tongue over the silver valleys, and he wondered if there truly were dragons there, ones that had lived on goldenrod flowers and fed emeralds to keep alive. His father had told him stories of myths in the world, including the gods that had lived in Seattle, including Chip, and the new god that had rested its sleepy, milky eyes as he was carried from his mother’s womb to Sonic’s lap and played with him many games that he could understand, a secret language built between the two brothers, and his name was Wind, and his mother thought great things were in store for him.

He didn’t know why he already knew about Wind. The shadows had told him of a new god. He had told his uncle of the new birthed Christ, and he had only resorted back to his dollar bill pinching, putting the money on the walls. He wasn’t sure why his uncle had done this, but he accepted it, as the walls had spilled of hard liquor and blood, of iodine and cum. He was afraid, but had learned to keep his fear inside. His quivering muscles only showed the pain he had. His uncle knew about the heart he kept inside himself. And he wanted it, raw and still beating. He had tried to hide all signs of being alive to him. As soon as he saw Uncle Death, his breath smelling of parsnips and radishes that had lied sleeping in the earth for so long, as soon as his parents were dead, he was dead too, but still a walking corpse.

The shadows kept him company. They had told him stories of other gods in the air, other gods that had wanted to meet him. They had asked him if he wanted to be a raven when he grew up. And he said yes. Ravens were nice birds. They plucked eyeballs from dead people and had eaten the tissues and jerky of deers crushed by cars. They had talked in quiet, shallow voices, and their wings were the shining piece of the night sky before the moon had taken its place. They told him he stole the moon from the king and he had placed the stars next to it as garland. The sun was the right golden eye of God, and the moon was his left silver one. His hands were stars and clouds. His other extremities weren’t shown, because only hands and eyes should you see of a god, but no other part, not even the foot that had pedaled the potterymaking wheel as he shaped his animals and people, and not his fingernails as he got them grimy and gray and nearly crushed by the pin roller as he made his jeweled eyes, and he had also made every star in the sky of an opalescent piece to be worn as jewelry by him, and the sea was his emeralds, his sapphires, his amethysts, his garnets and his rubies, and the actual jewels themselves were remnants of the sky and sea, the fingernails and stars and eyes of God. He had delighted in these stories, had asked them to tell them to him over and over, as he loved to hear about gods, just like Daddy had. And Daddy would always tell him a good story before his bedtime.

His uncle never told him bedtime stories, or even gave him good meals, or compliments, or even a genial glance. He hated him. He scraped him with his wicked nails, he had cut him delicately with razors back from the 50s, he had pulled on his quills and had claimed to make elixirs from his badness, his foulness, his evilness. The man had lined up the entire house with dollar bills, and nothing else had been on the wall, save for one picture of the man’s dog, named Artemis. The dog had been dead for 22 years. He accidentally ran over it one day, and he had still cried about it ever since.
His uncle was very sick, so he sympathized with him sometimes (sometimes, he still was a crooked old bastard with the breath of vomit and parsley and had eaten nothing but meat and his favorite vegetable, turnips. He ate turnips every other day, and had always thrown them up.). He was considered schizophrenic. Shadow had only sympathized with him when he was a small child, but now had found himself wishing he was dead and his corpse deserved the same treatment as his mother and father, ground up, served with dog and rat food, and fed to him. But when he still had the love of his parents remaining in his heart, he knew about how his uncle would die very soon, in a pool of his own feces and urine. His mother and father who had tried to help him.

He had told him to never go in the basement. Never go in the basement, he said. I have experiments. Things that will benefit mankind. He often heard the screams of women inside. He wasn’t sure if he was killing more of them. But he had to say nothing, and keep his eyes shut, in the shadows and contours of his closet, while the shadows had spoken to him. They said his uncle would soon be caught, and given the worst death inhumanely possible. And he was reassured of this, but never saw it. The shadows had only told him convenient lies to set his heart at peace. Such a small, fragile child couldn’t concern himself with cannibalism and mental illness. Foreign concepts to nymph ears, little six-year-old eyes, but his eyes the color of iodine and blood, he listened to the shadows whisper, and he heard his uncle stomp in the stairs above him, collecting his vials of semen in a fridge above. Why did he do this? The shadows told him to not concern himself. Too small, too prying…

The man was a friend to many people over the Internet. He was called “NocturnusTheorist” on forums, believing that the government had implanted him with lies. That they gave him eyes that wouldn’t see how the world truly was, that these hallucinations were truly the creatures that were meant to be seen in this world. He had hung dead cat tails in his room. Black. As soft as reeds near a pond, drifting away and touching the sky with their furry bodies. He claimed that cats were the animals that had told the most lies. Their pink rough sandpapered tongues had kept flickering fiery stories for the world to swallow, and the cat had gasped, and he had told the man that the world was such a lie, how big and how blue it was, diaphanous angels have come and sheltered the world in sapphires and azurites and pieces of cornflower. The Uncle, his fat chest rolling off like waves back at Seattle, the fat bastard boasting over mouthfuls of human carcasses, he soon couldn’t eat his meals anymore of his imprisoned women, and he had touched the face of Shadow with his bloody, rustic hands, and he had asked him if he wanted to see his dead dog, Artemis, rotting in the fetid ground before him. The only creature that cared about him.

Shadow had wished to saw off his head, even if he was so young, so small and so fleshed and so blessed.

Feeling sorry for him didn’t make him any better. The child had wished for guns, to strike off his head like a match, set it on fire, blazing with blood. The Uncle smelled of rotting roses and of dead meat. He had smelled of Death itself. The Uncle had dug up his dog for him to see, his teeth still visible in his skeleton when he was an old coot of a mangy mutt.

“That’s a…nice dog, Uncle.”

“It soore is. His teeth kept away the nightmares.”

He was a Hellhound, he explained.

“A Hellhound that kept away the demons. That had kept away your mother from seeing your father. Not until I sliced off their arms. ‘Dere was some good blood in ’dere. Blending dem. Yeah, your father was a good man. Until I blended his body and made it into food for you. You got your father in you, soore you do!”

His fist clenched tightly, a baby muscle that is just pink and tender being pulled to restrain him from killing him.

Why didn’t he?

He wasn’t sure.

He had connections to the gods, the shadows had said.

Chip had said he killed people who had bits of the devil inside of them. Apparently they were also inside his mother and father, and the man could sense deep-seated hatred in some people. When he
saw any of the Seven Deadly Sins in any of them, he had murdered them, while dressing blenders with their blood and meat, and feeding his rats, his colony of rats that he held inside, had made experiments with, and his cruelty, so unrelenting, he had conducted experiments on Shadow too, as he held the syringe in one of his flesh-puttied hands.

“Time to get your shot!” he said, with teeth that were gray and decomposing. His Uncle was Death himself.

Shadow had wanted to stay locked up in the closet, as the shadows had told him it was cyanide.

“My Uncle is Death,” he said.

“He is a god.”

“He is a schizophrenic god.”

“I wished he wasn’t here anymore.”

Silence. He no longer heard footsteps. His mind had silenced him, as his uncle struggled with telling him, his hand still holding the cyanide needle firmly in his grasp, that he once loved him, when he was such a small babe. “Soore, a small babe, listening to the waves of the ocean, while you were suckling at your mama’s teat. Soore, your father watching over you, in his damn dapper suit and tie, looking like he was all dressed up on a hellfire as soore date. You looked at your mama’s eyes and you asked why Uncle Aloysius didn’t come and visit you no more. Your mouth still full of your mama’s milk, even. She said, she said your uncle is sick, soore, he’s sick with a disease you ain’t gonna understand. And I always damn well wanted to see you Shadow, and now you’re here, you drive me damn near balls to the wall. You with your…I don’t know the hell ain’t right with ya, but you’re going to be as sick as me. Illness spreads, like a virus, soore, and soon you’ll be like me. I’m just givin’ ya the dose of your medicine that will make you go to a better place, yeah won’t that smart like a bitch, Istu. You goddamn hollerin’ red skin. Father was a damn red skin and I never did like him.”

Shadow closed his eyes, and tried to forget The Uncle’s words. They rolled off his tongue like venom. And he believed he could remember his mother and father if he tried, but he could only remember his father’s stories, and his last tale about the Trail of Tears, a slow, lethal, and agonizing execution that began in this very country, back when such things were apparently all right. Presidents had hated their kind because they had spoken in a language they never cared to understand, had taken lands where they wanted establishments, their McDonald’s and Wells Fargo’s and golf courses. His father once remarked at least if he wanted to go to college he had some benefits to being an Indian.

He told him stories about the raven, on how he stole the sun and moon and stars away from little Shadow himself, and he laughed when he asked if it was true, and he said, “Only if you truly believe it is,” as he took a long draught of Budweiser. “Such things can only become real if you put any ounce of truth in them. And Istu, there is some truth to the story. Ravens are truly tricksters, and they can tell us a lot of things in this world. They are smarter than what white men give them credit for. And someday soon Istu, I think the truth of the world will be laid out to you in open hands, if you let yourself be open to them. Block out and doubt everything, and not believing in a single damn thing you might as well be dead.”

His father was never a sentimental man. He never tucked himself in. He never made dinner and lunch and breakfast for him. Shadow was always expected to do those things himself. And he didn’t mind. It made him believe he was an independent and strong child, just like his mother had always wanted him to be.

His mother, with her golden quills, her blue eyes that were the color of azurites, she had such beautiful white hands that she often lifted Shadow’s head with, had whispered at him to look at her, and she planted a gentle, soft kiss on top of his head. Her hands often sidled away, conjoined together, and he wished he could remember his mother’s kisses so well, when she soon tried to get help for his uncle on his father’s side of the family, as he ranted and raved about the cats that had foretold the future, and how the government planted microchips in his eyes. She never knew the severity of the situation oh no, not his sweet mother, not his candy-coated mother art thou in heaven,
who only tried to help him, oh his sweet mother, where she hoped her son was okay, and not at all in
a place she couldn’t make sense of to get him out.
The room was quiet, even the air was stifled, as his uncle waited for him to get out of the closet. He
would be hungry and wantin’ to piss soon, he said. He would be out before y’alls knows it, he said
to no one in particular.
The shadows told him to go to the basement. It was the only way out of his uncle’s psychosis. He
believed the walls were talking to him, his dog had spoken to him and said to kill Shadow, kill any
remnant of the family, the fucking red skins.
A little girl had screamed into the curdled milk of the moon, the breasts ready for him to suckle and
be out of this nightmare. He just wanted his mother and father back.
“Come on Shadow, this will be a nice treat for ya!”
He was picked up by his large, slab of a hand, and the needle was close to his black, billowing skin,
the needle getting closer, closer…
The shadows had told him to defend himself. To hit him. To run. To run far away from this awful,
disgusting, loony god, and hope that Aceso would be safe.
Shadow’s hands were so small, literally baby-knifed fingers. He had cut up his Uncle’s eye, the eye
that looked so still and lazy. Cried, cried, hark hark! said the man with the glass rimmed eye, the man
with the turnips oozing from his breath, the man with his hands fisted like little hams as he held the
cyanide needle not so delicately (almost injecting himself with it), and he dropped the needle on the
ground, his large meaty fingers looking for the syringe that had contained the secret to dying, the
secret to living a good life in heaven…
The god must die! he claimed. He believed the crowbar near the glaring light of the moon would be
enough to kill him. Kill him for killing his own life. The man who had taken away his joy and
happiness. The crowbar was full of orange, peeling rust, and he had lifted it, the Uncle taking the
syringe, the side of it being held like a blade, ready to stab the hoglet that had once called him “A
nice man” when he was with his father, his father that he so fucking despised with his money, his
Greed, his Sloth, his Pride, his Gluttony! His land that he never got to share when he lived in a trailer
full of trash! His brother never cared, and only left him to rot in his lonesome house, as when he
killed his precious dear not so Navajo wife, he came in expecting to find her, but instead had found
her in a puddle of blood, her arms and legs detached, as Death drove the cyanide needle into his
heart…
His eyes switched to the sounds of screams piling from the basement. It had smelled of piss and
blood and shit. He wasn’t sure who Aceso was, but she had screamed so loud, a rabbit howling into
the cold confines of the mother moon, wishing for her mother to come back to her, to feed her brown
mouth, to feed her with thread and yarn.
What the hell did he do in there? Shadow had thought. It smells even worse than the rest of the
house. There’s blood on the walls. More dollar bills. Women and little girls screaming. God
screaming. A god is screaming down there. Death had wanted to keep the folklore to himself.
He had latched onto his Uncle’s head with the crowbar, plunging the metal deep inside his skull,
足够 for his brain to bleed. The man was choking on his own blood, even throwing up as his
Uncle had always had digestive problems from eating beets and radishes along with horse meat for
most of his life (or so he thought), and he had decided to kill his Uncle, for his many years of
torturing him, for his many years of keeping him away from the rest of his world, from his mother
and father that had always loved him, from having a peaceful life away from this god bullshit.
Shadow had always attributed that he was Yehl from his Uncle. His Uncle had got him hooked to
the god life. His needle had given him the junk, the heroin, that had made him into what he was
today, a despicable creature known as the raven.
Yehl…
The shadows were speaking. They had told him the sun would not last longer, the world would soon
be turned against the moon, the blackness was coming to cover them all with a thick velvet blanket
aligned with jewels, and his Uncle had lied brain-damaged, his eye damaged, and his hands reaching
out for him, to choke him, as the needle was now on the floor, ignored.
The cyanide had begged for him. But the shadows had told him to wait. He would get his punishment. From God Himself, as He kept screaming on the horrors that was inside the basement.

He had entered, the dollar bills melting into obscurity. He heard more screams pierce his ears. The women were naked, their breasts stained with cum, as they had told the young boy to run, and to let them free, to call the authorities.

They were so frail, their bones visible on their bodies. Their ribcages were so prominent, like little birdcages that had trapped canaries in their throats. Their hair was a coarse tangled web. Many women had lain dead, their bodies ripped up, never doing anything with them. His Uncle was a very sick man, a sick man he could no longer sympathize with (no longer a bit).

He had killed many people.

The rabbit girl was in a cage of rats, in a chamber that his Uncle had devised himself, and her brown chocolate mouth was lined with grisly blood. She had asked him to take her away from this hell, but she had remained calm, as the rats had chewed on the cuticles of her nails.

“Do you have a phone mister?”

He shook his head. “No. I lived without a phone for many years. My uncle thought they only brought the government to his house. He’s still alive up there. The shadows had told me not to kill him, but he’s belligerent. I smashed his skull. He’s going to be able to see and kill me in here along with the rest of you. I don’t know how we’re going to get out of here.”

Her insides hurt, with the man grinding into her. She held a shiny red pen, made from the finest rubies in Zanzibar, with silver made from mercury that is bound to make anyone sick with bipolar, and she had told him, “Make a contract.”

“A contract? How is that going to help?”

She stared into him listlessly, her pain too much. Once he signed the contract, she would forget all about this chamber, oh sweet God in heaven, oh Lord Jesus and his shining chariot.

“It is the contract to become a god, Shadow.” No shock at knowing his name. The shadows must’ve told her. “Make a wish, and this will all be over. These women will get to go home. You can turn invisible and fly away from this awful man. I will forget about you, until many years later, as the shadows had foretold. I can talk to shadows too, Shadow. You are the king of the shadows, and they have blessed us with seeing the truth of the world, the absolute resolute darkness. The truth about your uncle is that he is a very diseased man, and he will continue to commit his heinous crimes, until years later when he is captured by the police, and he is given a lethal injection, along with the police deciding to not bury him and put his body in a wood chipper (it was definitely illegal to do that, she said, but the police got away with it, and no one at all cared that was what happened to your dear sweet uncle). He will die without regrets to what he did. The truth is that your uncle is a god. A god who is killing other gods for his own gain. I am a god too, Shadow. My name is Aceso, the god of healing.”

“Why can’t you heal your own wounds if you’re the god of healing? Should you be using your powers to get out of here and not have me become a god? What if this whole thing is risky? What if I become a disgusting man like my uncle? If that’s the result, I can’t be doing this. I can’t be like my uncle. I can’t have my life murdered before me all over again.”

“He knows my real name,” she said without pain, without pity and without joy. “My name is Cream. Once you learn the name of a god, their powers are gone, except for the one lone god in the sky. He can do anything.”

She paused, as she could feel the rats climbing on her shit-stained dress. She coughed, the air fetid, with the ripe smell of bodies and rat feces, and her eyes soon lit up, as she bore into Shadow’s own irises, his blood beginning to flood his eyes.

“The New Christ. The New Bringer of the New World. This world will die soon, and you will be the one to bring The New Christ to the New World. You will learn this one day. I hope. I truly do hope.”

Chip had emerged from the red-hot tongue of the room, the mauve chipmunk with the tail of a rabbit. Shadow had heard about the timekeeper from the shadows, a creature that made sure time runs in a
fluid line from its ink pen, and upon looking at his innocuous face, he didn’t trust him. He had secrets inside his fur, his flesh, and he could tell that he was the devil himself, as his form soon dissolved, becoming a hedgehog like him, except the bloody streaks were teal, as teal as the sea on a clear Seattle day, if those days had ever existed in such a rainy place as Seattle. His eyes were slit, reptilian, and he could tell his body and heart were nothing but crystals. He didn’t care for him or Cream. He just simply needed more sacrifices for this war of gods. And Shadow’s uncle had pledged his life to him, and he thought it was a delicious life, even though his uncle was a hideous disfigured creature.

He smiled an opalescent smirk, his jaws so glacial in the light, and he made him sign the contract, on the terms that Cream and these ladies were never captured, and the moment would soon be forgotten, except for how they became gods.

“Cream is a very valuable god. She threads time into its seams. She is my servant to keeping time flow confluent and consistent. She is my favorite god, but go against my wishes about my time, foolish god, and I shall make sure your god life is full of misery. I can already tell we might not get along. I hate ravens. Disgusting birds, eating carrion and dead bodies. You’ll just be like your goddamn uncle. Eating the remains of your father and mother. I’m sure her tits tasted good, didn’t they Shadow?”

Shadow had swung his fist at his glassy face, but the memory was erased from his line of time before the punch connected. He could see his wicked grin as he told him the truth that the gamy horse meat was actually his mother.

He could see the scissors align themselves before the lone thread of time, as the event of him being raised by his uncle when he was about 6, was snipped and torn away like a burst vein, a slit artery, and although he could remember Chip and Cream slightly, the event never happened. Chip soon had said nothing of the event, and he never remembered an uncle in his life who was diseased and so severely disabled that he barely got by with his SSI and Medicaid.

He found himself back in the present. The shadows had showed him of what remained of the cut line of time in that other life he led. It still existed, it was still inside the computer’s data, but it was dead, and no longer applicable. The shadows told him his uncle was dead, but he never was with him. Chip never filled in the lines from when he was about 6 years old. But the shadows told him they could help him remember his parents from when he was a baby to 5 years old. 6? The number never existed. Shadow became an adult after 5. Satan didn’t find the details of the rest of his childhood necessary to fill out. His memory was ripped from him, God had taken his starry hands and had ripped the memories from his brain and left a white, empty void inside. He had taken the memories and ate them. And they soon were no longer part of the mainframe of this great big computer God had. It was deleted, cleared out of the Recycle Bin, replaced with many 0’s. The memory died, without a scream.

He could still remember that his mother was dead, but from what, he wasn’t sure. He never heard of his uncle or Death, but soon heard in the news that a schizophrenic man was arrested and on death row. Mental illness or no, they let him rot in jail for years before he was given the shot. He looked familiar, but he wasn’t so sure. He had a beard and red streaks, and was a hedgehog all right, with hammy fists and a glass eye and the police wrote that his breath smelled of “decayed meat and decayed turnips and radishes”.

Such a flawed, misunderstood creature. What made him so crazy to lock a bunch of women in his house and rape and torture them? Along with the dollar bills that stuck on the red walls…a very sick man. Very sick. And what a pity it was, that mentally ill people were defined by men like him in the media.

His mother had always picked oleanders for her garden on the reservation (if the government had allowed such a thing), and he always remembered them in black tall vases near the walls, and she told him they were her favorite flowers. He could feel his mother still inside his heart, dying the more he did his godly duties. There was still a piece of his mother inside him, he could feel her heartbeat resonate with his, and he wanted her to claw out of her chest and come to life and let him die as she
would rock him and his torn body and send him to sleep as the shadows had gathered around him and had told him to eat the flowers, as the truth will become more apparent in his eyes without all this darkness.

They told him he would remember everything about his mother and father, including the hidden relationship they all had with each other. He always thought on how strange it was, that his father and mother were rarely together, yet they seemed to still love each other, as if their heartbeats were on, and would continue beating as loudly as a shout or yell or siren many miles away. The oleanders that had been laid by somebody. There was a reason these flowers were here. He could sense Morrigan was not far, he was getting close to the cemetery.

He could see her small purple body, on her knees, crying over a radiant white lotus flower. Her tears had soiled the earth and had grown the oleanders and gleaming wired plants that looked as if they belonged in an art museum by some fancy New York artist, who might as well had been an investor in firms, something said. A multi-talented artist. How strange things had worked that way what seemed to be many miles away to the city of kings.

He gently lifted the flowers off the ground as if they were fragile children, made of glass, ready to be carried by their mother and into a happy childhood, as he swallowed the oleander whole, with no ill effects from the poison. He could feel the heart along with his beat more rapidly, and he heard his throat-mouth say, “Thank you for the gift, Istu. Your mother would be proud of you, believing in these things and becoming these things I told you about. Believing is becoming. And I believe you will do the world some good. Do whatever is truly right. We both love you, very much. Your mother is telling me to say this, but take care of yourself, and remember that believing in something isn’t toxic and doesn’t make you ignorant. If anything, it makes you the happiest fool alive, and some days, people want to be a fool. And that’s okay. Fools are happy. And they can be wise too.”

The shadows were silenced, as they ran to the broken moon. It had made them bleed, and had turned them into a rusty-red, just like the crowbar after it connected with his uncle’s brain.

He felt the sky was soon erupting into dawn, even though there wasn’t a sun anymore. The sky had smelled like lilacs and fetus juices. It was the dawn of a new day, and he knew he was very close to dying.
The rats never slept when the end of the world was beginning to rise. The rats never ate anything worth savoring, all except for chocolate and grape juice. Drunk, their tails gathered together, shit-filled, their teeth like ivory keys, their pink-fleshed hands dashed throughout the city, and people have fallen onto the cement, their eyes rolled in the back of their skulls, their fingernails full of excrement and the blood of rats, their flesh bit and chewed through.

The night had been painted, the stars obscured by my father’s black paint. Without the mother moon coming to comfort them through their time of misery, the rats had cried through the dark, and they wrenched their hands free of the bladed stars (the same ones I want to cut myself up on), and their eyes glinted through the paint, the shiny red lights like little searing flames. They had praised the moon to be their god before, but had soon grown disappointed when it flashed out of the waxy sky. The candle’s flame was no longer there. The rats have ate upon the flesh of the dead humans, Tumbletim telling them the end was nigh, and that the writer of the raven story was a misguided soul, a misguided god that was telling the world of his sickness, his malady of brilliance.

Benjamin scuttled in the street, seeing the orbs of light becoming darker, no longer a sheen of crystal in the light that was visible, but a dismal allegory to how bright Seattle had used to be, the emerald city that had bled through his fingers, the goldenrods no longer as glazed and as piercing as they were. They now looked like pyrite, the gems no longer shining, but were now forever false gold teeth of Seattle. The teeth begun to be shattered, rats forming from its mouth. Foaming. Full of rabies. It was ready to be slashed through with a bullet.

The rats swam through the city, picking up any dead human, the Emerald City (maggot city, do you agree with me here?) rife with disease. Benjamin wondered to find his owner, the owner with the metallic teeth, the glasses that always shined in the blue shattered light, but he had worries that she moved away as the sea dragons were swimming away from the black dismal sea, and Benjamin glanced at his wrists, so sparse with cuts were they, their small open holes so prominent in the black chasm of the city, and the rat sighed, as he put the injuries of the past away, waiting for the girl to pass in his vision.

She would soon come in, with her white floral dress, her braces shining in this deep dark stinking pit, the hands so clean and perfect, unlike his. The rat tried to sniff for her scent, the smell of rat food so clear, the ingredients she used of egg whites and real meat, he couldn’t find it, and she was only a distant remnant of his memories. The little girl was the only one who had cared for him in the past, and her pity at him being mistreated by the other rats, the man who abused him and forced him to commit sacrilege and cannibalism, he watched as the cars grown fewer in the streets, as more men and women were dying, the children were left alone to their meaningless games of hop scotch and jump rope, until they disappeared, sick with the illness the rats handed to them, dying in their snow white bed like they themselves were Snow White, with their lips so pale, their skin like fragile dusted glass.

The parents of Miles, the Queen and the Slave, and the Child Himself, so hung close together with their dead bodies, ripe, rank, and ready to be cut open by the butcher, hanging like dead cows ready to be made into a fine steak. For the rich, for the rich! A ribeye steak for the hungry fools. Let them eat and let them have their bellies full of creatures that once were noble in their lives, until they had sniffed the Oxy’s, until the young one had eaten cyanide and the snake had coiled around his neck. Sonic had picked the child’s blue, cold, suffocated body in his arms, his face looking so glazed as all the air had escaped from him, the martyr who had received his wish, the shooting star so ignited in the air, ready to give the world a last chance before the world had been torn asunder by my bladed fingertips, like the sun I was, the sun that I made disintegrate in my fingertips! I could never make the world shine brightly again, it would all be dark, all be full of death, as the depression sidled away in my brain, as the coldness in my heartbeat began to freeze my arteries, inside I was a sick, very sick boy, with the cystic fibrosis hurting my brother, my lovely brother! Wellaway! He coughed and
hacked as cut the rattlesnake’s body, and he felt the child’s coldness as all the warmth had left his
body, the child as dead as Sonic knew he would be soon, soon to be dubbed The New Christ, the
New World Birther. Soon he would wear white robes and wear a beard. Soon he would become a
carpenter. Soon he would be kissed by Judas! The kiss of death! The kiss of betrayal! How hot it
burned his flesh, like a brander.
The needle beat inside his cheek, like a heart, a newborn fetus ready to come out and be full of
placenta. It kicked, it screamed inside, and he had carried the child’s frozen body outside in the
streets, hearing God talk to him that his life would soon be ending.
God is our savior, God is our witness, God will pull you through…I swear by it…
He had begun to detest his lovely brother, even though his skin had begun to crack like an egg, the
rotten flesh steaming through his soul (frying him, watching him burn in my pan, waking up all the
children I had worship me, making them eat upon my brother’s flesh)…
Come all ye faithful, watch him die, watch my lovely brother die. He hates me now, and I expect it.
Watch as the mercury inside my head continue to seep through, oh lovely blood, oh such lovely
blood that is coming out of my crown of brier thorns…
Sonic died once, and he knew he would die again, and again…
He died when his brother died.
He died when he attempted suicide.
He died when Quetzalcoatl had tried to eat him.
He died when he saw Shadow.
He died when Shadow tried to kill him.
He died, over and over, and he always been resurrected by faith. Faith, and faith alone.
Three hearts were swallowed in his gut, the one in his cheek, the one inside God, and the one inside
himself, the New Christ.
My brother would soon die, my friends.
I watched him as he told me stories in my crib, rocking me to sleep, on that cold, moonless, February
night, when our mother was too busy nursing a bottle of red wine instead of me, my father nursing
his crazy little head to go to sleep. I watched him when we told our very first short story, as we tip-
tapped the typewriter, typing out things that didn’t make sense except to our little hearts, our secrets
that our parents couldn’t understand. He told me he could publish the very first short story we did,
and he gave me high hopes that my tales I spun from my crystallized web were worth much more
than dead insects and butterflies I had caught inside that ashy gray tree in our yard. I watched him
when he protected me from all these bullies, when I only wanted to read Wuthering Heights and
Walden and War and Peace in fourth grade. I knew of what these people were against. I knew of
what these authors have witnessed, their heads so storming with the mighty seas inside, the sea as
mighty as Seattle’s, and I had kissed their shoes and have found out why they were so sick. Always
it was something. Alcoholism. Bipolar disease. Death of someone they loved dearly. I wanted to be
like that. A damaged artist. An artist whose wounds were like broken glass, so visible, so tangible to
everyone else. I knew I was dying slowly as the pill began to overtake me. And this story, it’s
overtaking me too. All of this is true, my friends. I really was such a sick spider, a sick black widow
that wanted to poison my brother, make him into a god as mighty as me. I gave the tiger my small
spider balls and I had given my brother my big tiger balls. He was supposed to be brassy, strong,
ready to tear the world with his mighty thunderous hands, but my brother is sick too. He is sick with
his own illness. He had caught the shitstick from my father. He is becoming depressed, manic,
schizophrenic, dead. He believed in many delusions in this story. And gods, all kinds of gods, have
became the delusions themselves, and were believed in by the people. Their faith was nothing more
but a delusion in itself. And the world had always run on delusions. Money and delusions.
Going on my tangent about these authors, oh mighty they must have been back in the day, with their
mighty pens and swords, their mighty minds so graceful to pluck these words and lay them out like
succulent grapes! I have knowledge of all these authors. I knew what their life was like. I knew what
it felt to write those stories. I knew how the process went. And I became a writer, because writers are
the closest thing to being a god as you can be, with my body so full of mucous, my frail glass ribs
ready to break under my brother’s hands as he had tightened his chest, further and further he wanted to reach into his heart, eat everything I had collected during my all-knowledgeable years of being a god…He wanted to crush me under his weight, and I said sorry to him, and he refused to hear me, as I remember of the plate that had crashed underneath his hands, as he forced me to eat the shards, the porcelain blue glass that would cut my tender gums and he had said, “Eat it. Eat it you filthy bastard.”
The china blue plate. I remember it so. It had spilled with the shit my mother made when she nursed that bottle of zinfandel, and I had watched him pick it up…

My short stories weren’t great, or good, but I tried to show my words to the world. My words that the end of the world was coming, and I have the veined electric that sparked of white and blue hands to prove it, because I am becoming sick, my friends. Sick with the Trileptal, sick with the bipolar that had sickened me upon birth, like my cystic fibrosis. My bipolar was the real cause as to why I was ailed. Not the cystic’s. Not that. It was just our shitty genes in our family, the shitty diseases of the mind. My father being schizophrenic, me being bipolar, Sonic being just like that fucking bastard, as he watched his CNN and wrote theories that the Arabians were coming to take over our country, that the sky was water and the ground was lava and the people were all mechanizations underneath their rubber skin. Sick. Fucking sick. Sick, sick, sick.

Staying up for days, weeks, writing. Writing so vividly, people can imagine themselves in that world, that world I felt so proud of. Feeling happy about everything, feeling that ricketing euphoria as you made these bold decisions, as your story didn’t make as much sense as it used, what seemed to be eons ago it made sense really, as you sleep for days and sleep even the mornings like nights, as you sleep the afternoons like they’re dull abscesses in the sun as it shined on your fucking skin and made you want to puke. As you listened to a person’s voice and suddenly remembered why you hated them in the first place. Why you instantly felt cerulean blue upon the sound of them scolding you or criticizing you and calling you a piece of shit. Mania is intoxicating, as intoxicating as the finest wines my mother drank, it makes you feel like you can do anything, and that your future is bright, and the light will always shine in your direction, and the sun will always be in the sky with bloody knifed fingers. Stabbing me with its rays. I had watched the sun go down and then I had descended into darkness, as the moon showed its glacial face and I became a personification, as I became a tree knifed by the moon, becoming a screaming banshee as I continued to sway my arms, dancing with the moon, dancing with this madness inside my skull, seeing all the black overflow my eyes. The moon was my symbol for my depression. It had shined so brightly whenever I had slept for three weeks, it shined when I thought of crying and cutting upon my lovely skin that the moon effaced, I wished to jump off the bridge near our home and drown in the sea, but too many people had watched me, too many people wanted to keep me safe. For my stories. For my intelligence. But I could tell my mother and father no longer cared. Just my brother. As I gazed at the moon, watched it ascend in the sky, and soon, my blood had turned cold, my hands went limp, and my eyes had turned down, and I was ready to sleep for I only knew how long. Three weeks. Three months. Three hundred days. It was always three. Three was my unlucky number.
The mercury had became black. And I had spent weeks in bed, sleeping. I slept for that three days straight that one lone day that my family had never bothered to check up on me. I never came out of my room. It was as dark as the window, with the stars never searing through it, like a hot poker through the black leather of the night. It was as dark as I felt. My heart continued beating, but the blood didn’t flow. It had coagulated inside me.

Sonic would often bring my dinner to me in a tray, telling me I had to get up. But I said no. I wanted to die.
I wanted to take the knife that was inside Sonic’s bag, and rip myself up like a cold slice of turkey meat…Make myself a nice lunch that everyone could enjoy. And then tear my heart out and let him eat it. I knew that the Aztecs had always sacrificed hearts to keep their lives healthy, their folklores withstanding. I am not an Aztec god, but would it be nice to have that fit of barbarism, that blood flowing inside your mouth, that heart still beating for half a second before you tore into it…I was a god, and people worshiped me, and now I would let people worship themselves as they ate me.
Worship my brother, as he ate my flesh and my blood, and has been christened The New Christ. I am The Old Christ. There were multiple Christs through this world, did you know that? They lived in different generations, different eras of time, and now, it was time for the new gods to come in, and take over everything. I couldn’t live like this anymore no more no more I am heart stricken with thunder and envy I no longer need to be alive I no longer need to be so outspoken my stories are all garbage I never should’ve write them now I’m going to be remembered as the shittiest writer of all time and everyone is going to eat upon my shit words and say how disgusting it was, even though that shit was made with wine and bread…

Make the blood fall to the floor. Like they say in Clockwork Orange, kroovy blood? So red, so full of life. Only bleeding would make me alive. Only dying would make me alive. Make myself so bloody, make myself see only blackness and the bruises that were growing on my wrists like ugly plums, ugly violets, and Sonic had forced me to eat, because I refused, my gaunt body ready to fall apart like sand and sawdust. My mouth was wire-trapped shut. I didn’t want to eat my mother’s disgusting shit-brown stew. I wasn’t even sure if she made it with her own hands. She could’ve used her ass for it.

“Open up,” he said.

I clamped my mouth shut, like I was stitched (black stitches that Sonic once had on his mouth, right readers?). He held the spoon away from my face, of the slop my mother made with her own shitty iodine hands (or ass, when drinking so much liquor her head was swimming with how much she hated us). I was like a fucking child, a fucking infant, when he tried to put the disgusting shit in my mouth, to force me to chew, to force me to suck and to be nourished by food, this foreign thing I didn’t need. I would’ve died of starvation. And that was what I wanted, even with my cystic body ready to die a year later.

“We’re going to get a goddamn feeding tube to feed you, Wind. And shove those fucking tubes through your nose. Doesn’t that sound like fun? Do you want to be treated like a fucking anorexic?” It was one of the first fights my brother and I had. He had slammed the plate of food onto the floor, shattering it like stars in the sky, and I remembered that was how I had made the universe, too long ago.

I had shattered one moon in the sky (we used to have two) and I made the stars. Just like that plate. I was thinking of shattering the other moon too. It had reeked of my decay.

The slop remained, and he had told me to eat it off the floor if I truly wanted to know how disgusting the food could be. With the shards of glass intact, he told me to eat it.

“I thought you loved your brother,” I said. “I’m not going to eat shit that can destroy my body and cut my tongue up.”

He had placed his fingertips in the food, swiping the slop, the blood from his finger and the glass shards inside, and he had placed it inside my nose, and told me to snort it all. Like a cocaine addict. Like someone addicted to Roxy’s.

“I’ll call the fucking police! You can’t be doing that to me! I’m going to call the police and you’ll be in jail for domestic abuse! Do you want that, brother? You’ve already been in a mental institution for running away for a week cause the police thought you were suicidal! You were ready to jump off a bridge! What the hell is wrong with you?”

The blood dripped from his finger, the slop turning red. My brother wanted to kill himself a year ago. He couldn’t deal with my death, me slowly dying as the moon rose higher in the sky. He couldn’t stand to see me going back into the hospital the next day. He avoided me as my mother and father had doted over me and had told me they’ll see me in a few hours and to be sure to eat all the good food the hospital had (charming laugh). But Sonic was never there. He thought of killing himself again, which is why he trapped himself in his room, watching the sky fall and bleed and die. He could see the sun die, so many times.

He paused, thinking about the mental institution again. He was supposed to be institutionalized for many years, but he had convinced the doctors he was not suicidal anymore. He had convinced the world that he was no longer sick. He had believed his soul and body were dead for years, as dead as
my body was going to be a year later.
“I thought I told you we weren’t going to talk about that, Wind.”
Silence erupted from the halls, in my room. The blood continued to emanate from the finger, his scar
looking purple, possibly becoming infected. But I knew my brother didn’t care. He probably
welcomed it.
“Mental illness spreads in the family,” I said, nonchalant.
He gazed at the ground, seeing the slop lapped up by insects. He had wanted them to lap up his
blood too, the blood that was riverrring from my nose.
“Dad had been in that same mental institution for a year, you know that, right?”
“He was supposed to be there for the rest of his life,” I added.
“His prognosis was poor. He’s on the computer all the time, talking with this guy named
NocturnusTheorist. Chatting with him. Talking about how the government is against them. Their
conversations I can never make sense of. They speak in typed tongues.”
“He doesn’t take his medicine.”
“He thinks machines are added in those pills.”
“I wonder if this NocturnusTheorist guy is just as insane. He’s probably in one of those fancy
institutions where they actually let you on the computer. I’m sure he refuses his medication too.”
“What did they diagnose you with, brother?”
The blood begun to reach my lips. I was becoming a clown, with my face so pale, the mouth so red,
the eyes so sucked in. I was a harlequin ready to entertain children and make them shit their pants.
Sonic had stood motionless, remembering the papers the doctors had handed to them, his mother
crying a few small tears at the realization that the family was full of lunatics.
“Delusional disorder. Possible emerging schizophrenia. Maybe bipolar. They didn’t know. They
diagnosed you with bipolar type I, right? One where you’re mostly manic?”
The window had been painted black by my father a long time ago. Our mother never bothered to fix
it. I can only see the small blades of car lights passing by. She said she would have to get a new
window, but other things had preoccupied her. Like merlot. Like the many other flavors of wine that
danced throughout her tongue.
“Yes. But I like the mania. It makes the world all the more beautiful. And I often finish a lot of my
short stories with it, the novel I am planning to write…”
He knew the mania was killing me. He couldn’t watch me die slowly anymore. The blood continued
to drip from my nose, and he wiped it away, but no more, as the blood continued to drop to the floor,
and I didn’t see my brother for the rest of the day.
Sonic had left the room and had cleaned up the mess as to not leave any evidence of what occurred.
The bleeding soon stopped, and Sonic had cleared it of glass and had bandaged it. He did not clean
the wound.
Like father, like son.
I had stood in the hallway around my empty sack of a body, watching as my brother had left the
home again, riding his bike, to God knows where. My mother said nothing. She never said anything.
Neither did Dad.
I continued to write this story. The raven story was already completed a long time ago, my friends. I
have given them a rough draft of the first few chapters. That story wasn’t my best, but this one, it had
contained my struggles, the beating and bleeding of my useless heart, and as I watch Sonic bury the
small child in the backyard, along with the Queen and the Slave, he had prayed to Me, and had told
Me that he wished they would have a safe journey in heaven. But I told him there wasn’t one. Only
Hell.
And they all had entered inside its bloody, fiery mouth.

—

The rat had waited for the woman who loved him to come back, but she never came.
She was dead, he had said. She was dead. As dead as me.
He wondered what happened to Durden, to Holden, to Gatsby, to Beowulf. They had died along with her, their bodies rotting with hers in her grave. The other rats were a year older than him, he was sure they had died. Rats only lived for about two years before they had turned into machines. He had seen Tumbletim and the others, swarming the city, diving into the humans’ body and sucking out their fat and blood. He had witnessed the rats dying from their traps, the rats being stomped on as the humans had screamed and flailed, and the Black Death had sucked the life out of the Emerald City. The shops no longer had customers, the delicious food being licked to cleanliness by the rats. The parks were full of dead bodies. The roads no longer had cars. No one was driving anywhere. They were all too sick, the ridges of their eyes full of pustules.

He unhooked his fingers as he watched a black hedgehog walking down the street, his gun gripped so tightly in his hand. His wings had scraped the paint off the house his owner had lived in. With each step he took, his wings seemed to grow. Becoming as large as the entire city, his eyes becoming more brilliant with flames that danced inside his irises.

The gun rattled in his hand. His quills had looked shaggy, unkempt, and the cigarette stick had dangled from his mouth, ready to fall, unlit. Such a small stick, Benjamin had thought. He was out of cigarettes and smoking half ones from the parks.

He could’ve stole some from the store, but he could tell the hedgehog had thought it didn’t matter. There were other things in his mind.

He carried a plastic bag in his other hand. He imagined it was food, some simple groceries, but as he looked closer, they were stakes.

The rat had looked up to him, and spoke, his eyes wavering. The sky was cracking up, little by little, as fists rained down on it.

“What are you planning to do with those stakes? Where the hell are you going when the world is ending? I can’t find my owner, and I’m pretty damn sure she’s dead. Dead as you’re going to be soon.”

He faced him, his eyes looking luminous even in the pitch of night.

“I got something important to do. It’s none of your business. Leave me the hell alone.”

Benjamin’s eyes couldn’t stop glaring into his. Their eyes were both that cherried red, bloody and looking as if they haven’t slept in so long, the hedgehog continued walking, walking over the bodies of many men and women and children. Blind, deaf, and dumb, he thought. They never had seen this world beginning to die.

The rat had chittered and scattered along with him, his feet so small, so slow compared to how the hedgehog walked. His body had grown much more raven-like as the night had grown darker, his feathers beginning to slink through his skin, the muzzle hard, yellow, a long slender beak that carried apothecary flowers to burn, the skeletal wings becoming monstrous, wings that carried the same glass-like quality, the obsidian night looking so ornate, so shining, the same glass plate that had smashed against my floor, the same window that was painted a smeared black…

The white rat, the eyeballs so red and tired, had seek out his plastic bag, and he had rode with him as his feet had stomped on the rolling sea of bodies, waiting for him to make the dead body count rise to one more.

He gazed at the cemetery, and he felt the cemetery gaze back at him.

The cat with black eyes had welcomed him, as she carried the white lotus flower around her hands, igniting the darkness into light. He could feel it beat. A heart was inside it, of a long dead god.

The gun around his hand had been gripped tighter, tighter, that his hands were red and sore.

Benjamin watched the raven crow out its song, as a shooting star had crashed into the obelisk sky of the night, and had watched it shattered, with the blood of God streaming through it.
Blaze and Her Journey in Hopelessness

The mutton and potatoes were always bland, and the chicken was often overcooked to a crispy black leg. Her father once in a while had given her fried fish, but only near February. Blaze thought about the holiday of Lent in Catholicism, and she thought it was all a crock, and just an excuse for Catholics to eat something good once in a while. Fish was her favorite food, and often her pastor had made it a delightful dish. Maybe he cared about her only during Lent. Such a far off holiday. On such a short month.

Silver invited her to go to a coffee shop. Take a nice book to read, he’ll pay for it, and he’ll pay for her lunch too. And he’ll tell her all about himself. He was a god, he said. But a god that wasn’t like God. He was hired by God, to keep the demons in the world aligned.

They went to a bookstore that smelled of roast coffee, as the scent of boiling tea and soups were ingrained into her nose, they had taken a seat on fine, ivory carved chairs, and he told her his name was Fudo, a Japanese fire god of wisdom.

“And I was drawn to your intelligence, Blaze. You seem to be a very intelligent child for your age. Now, what would you like to eat? I suggest the clam chowder along with a frappe. They make the best clam chowders and frappes.”

And she ordered just that.

The clam chowder and frappe were both condensed in a white frothy foam that could’ve been piled with a decadent cherry, and though she had never tasted of clams before in her seemingly short and insignificant life, she enjoyed it, and even cleaned the bowl with her tongue and had sipped the very last trail of liquid in her frappe. She never had such a soothing meal before, with a warm soup, a nice coffee, and a book to read and relax to as they played the Indigo Girls and the Goo Goo Dolls, and the music of her world, Orla Fallon. The song that played as she was rocked and cooed to sleep by both her books and Fudo was Gartan Mother’s Lullaby.

Sleep, O babe, for the red bee hums the silent twilight’s fall
Eeval from the gray rock comes to wrap the world in thrall
A lyan van, o my child, my joy, my love and heart’s desire
The crickets sing you a lullaby beside the dying fire…

His arms, how safe they were, how safe were the nice worlds inside a good book…
Her eyes had grown milky as the tune seemed to melt in her ears, becoming a liquid mess of notes and Irish lyre, and she wondered if her father was ever Irish and had spread that full-blooded madness inside her, the drinking he had done, the Catholic upbringing that now pervaded her as she was with a pastor who often warned her against the heathen world of believing in other gods, oh how polytheistic all of this was! Only monotheistic beliefs were made to survive in this world of myths and lies! She had remembered of the tales her mother had told her by the wicked spindly trees in their backyard, about how the ravens had meant a war will come, and the leprechauns had hoarded all of the gold inside this tree, and if they tore off a piece of the bark, they would see a spark of honey and a brilliance of the metal, a piece of golden wire inside the tree. And that good luck would happen if she ever stumbled upon a four-leaf clover, and the blarney stones, yes those, and the Celtic music that always played and rumbled like the falls of a creek spilling a rainbow spray from its mouth and from its bloody muddy skin, and her mother had danced with her, had given her a tale to watch out for Morrigan, the crow that could also turn into a heifer, an eel, and a wolf, as the snow had fallen delicately upon their modest house like a naked porcelain woman, their house her bed as she sat beside her lover who made her orgasm, the sun.

“When she comes, she foretells a war, and bloodshed, my dear Blaze. She had warned many soldiers, but they soon had died. They never listened, and I want to let you know that it can still happen. Gods are all around us, Blaze. They are real once you give them flesh and bones and a tongue and heart. They are real once you lend them your heart and tongue and they begin to use it as
their own. I can tell something strange is going to happen, Blaze, and I don’t like the smell of it.”

Her mother always had an acute sense of smell. She could sniff her father’s cigarettes and stench of beer what seemed to be miles away. She had asked her husband if he had been drinking again, and he told her that she could go to sleep, she is weak and full of hysteria.

“I’m not being hysteric, Donovan, I’m just hoping you’re not drinking again. You drink too much. You know that. The whole city knows that you’re a drunk. You tried to quit, but it never helped, and I was basically here to make you feel better. But I want to take Blaze with me any moment I can get and leave you behind. I could get a lot further if I wasn’t so dependent on your insurance.”

He coughed, almost choking on his own vomit and burps and hacks, and he said that it was alright, he knew she would die before him anyways.

“I won’t. I’m sure I can beat this cancer. My fur is falling, shedding, and I can no longer have cigarettes, a lot of medication that puts me to a lulling sleep, and I’m sure I’ll be fine. It’s what cures cancer. That and a very long sleep, away from you. I wouldn’t have minded it if Blaze wouldn’t be so affected.”

He said nothing, shook his head and his spinal white hands as he huffed out his last cigarette, and he stomped it on the floor, taking another swig of Pabst to drown it all out, the cigarette and her words. Then he finally spoke with words that had substance in them, real flesh and bones. “Of course she will be affected. I’m her father. And I will give her better care than you ever did. You with your Irish Celtic shit. She doesn’t want that. Our little girl needs God. I can tell she wants to pray to get you to feel better. I have Bibles to hand to her, but she won’t read the goddanged things, the poor girl. The poor sonofabitchin’ girl.”

And he spat, as if the words contained her physical image and the spit had seeped in the cracks of her hair, her fur that was dirty and unkempt after refusing so many baths from her father. He didn’t care either. The spit would remain in her calluses, and he could simply drink his away. The spit he had received when he was a drunk, from God (Me Myself and I).

“Alcohol is the blood of Christ. And hell ain’t I a sinner if I drink so much of it.”

Blaze watched the window of the house expectantly, waiting to see the green car of her mother pull out of the driveway and into yet another research center for cancer, or another hospital to get another medication for her bladder and her shedding fur and her eyes that swelled up too much, and to go to another bar to meet a man who wasn’t a drunk like her father, and come home after his cock was in her mouth, tasting of salt and cream and breast milk.

She had smelled that scent in her mother, and the scent of roses and incense.

Light up the incense! Let the spirits rise in the dark! Let them crawl towards you! claw you! feed on your skin! and her mother would pray to the Celtic spirits, telling them that she wished her daughter all the best after her death. The cancer was terminal. She was going to die in a month.

Blaze saw crows in the backyard, sitting on a lone branch, their beaks so cadaverous, their wings so wide, like the night sky…

They had told her that a great war was coming. That the spirits, the shadows that had fell in her mother’s room, ready to pick up the ashes of the incense, pick up the tears in her mother’s eyes, and tell her that everything was going to be alright, cause the shadows had cleaned everything in the world, had hidden everything in a shroud of black. Her tears were hidden. So was the smoke of the incense, the ashes that had dusted the floor. They had taken their metaphorical broom and had swept it away.

Her Celtic mother and her Irish father who split his head and had borne a new world inside the concrete, the city of rats. God bless them (I didn’t.).

She imagined her father a man who was nothing but a giant sack of rats, ones tortured from a life of being treated by a sadistic man. She wasn’t sure where this allegory came from. But she could feel the rats running and scattering and thrumming through the streets, and inside her old man’s organs, where they ate his bitter heart like chocolate, and had drank his liver like the fine wines he had always sipped when they were at the dinner table. He was full of rats. His stomach digesting them all. The rat tails being his intestines. Rat kings full of shit. So bloody full of rats, she thought.

The fall had ended when she died, and the winter had begun its tyranny, the snow killing everything
it touched, its own form of natural genocide on the plants and trees that wanted to have a regular life, living in the slums of this world when their clothes were taken away, and now they were deloused and taken to camps. And she thought of her mother much the same, as the nurses had taken her to a sheeted room, chartreuse room, where the knives had contrasted the yellow, the blood so bright in her eyes, the wallpaper beginning to peel from the bored patients who waited for so long to get treated…

Her mother had no muscles in her body, only bones and only shivering tissues of her organs that were slowly failing and nothing else, and her head was as bald as the sun’s, and her body was as frail as the trees outside her window, being full of crows and ravens. And they had taken her away, to the concentration camp inside the sky. She was being killed for being a gypsy, and that’s why Satan had given her cancer.

Blaze had traced the words of the Celtic songs she heard on the sand of the beach in Seattle even when it was so cold her jacket was never enough to keep away the frigid dead snowy hands of winter to take her to the camps, and she hoped someone could hear her pleas and cries for help that her Celtic mother had left, but her father, the father that had ingested so many rats, had told her it was time to go back home.

“I want to stay here,” she said, with no emotion.

“She’s gone, Blazie. She’s gone and never comin’ back. Let’s go home, I’m starving. You can mope about that bitch when you get to your room and you can listen to your shit.”

She refused to argue with him. All the energy had gone out of her body since her mother died. She no longer was the energetic Blaze everyone knew of. Tired, always willing to go down with her father further into the reaches of Hell they had warned her about.

She was gone. As Fudo carried her back home to her lone church and castle, smelling the bland scent of chicken being cooked, she wearily watched him as he tucked her into her bed, had told her that she will be a god that will see the end of the world, will battle with strength she never she had inside, but as the moon had lazily stretched towards the sky and was soon sent to sleep too for cheating on the sun’s woman, she soon forgot all he said. She closed her leathery lids and went to sleep.

Blaze meditated as soon as she got up and took a warm shower as warm as the church would allow, what Fudo wanted with her. And why she was supposedly so important to the gods. The gods that she was told had never existed, except by her mother. Smelling eggs being cooked by her pastor, but she knew they wouldn’t taste as good as the aroma it gave off. The pastor continued to say very little words on where she had been, and she dusted her eggs with a lot of pepper. It was the only way to make them have flavor in her mouth. Even if they were too spicy when she later put Tabasco sauce on them.

The next night, Fudo came again, and he asked her if she had ever watched the sea at night before, when the plankton illuminated it to an electric blue. She said yes, but only with her father, the ratbrained idiot she always hated. He said this time, this moment would be special, and he held out a gloved hand (razorred with small red marks that she knew was where the fire had come from), and as she watched the stars glow like the flowers she had decorated her room with, swaying so slightly with the night spring breeze, he had taken her hand and they walked to the sea of Seattle, the beach where she wrote her mother’s name and the call for help in Celtic, the call that only ravens and eels and wolves and cows could understand.

She saw a raven, with metallic wings and an eye that oozed of burning universes and suns and stars, it stared at her as she walked on the sand, noticing how soft it felt between her toes, not at all like the hard floor she knew of back at the pastor’s abode. She never realized how delicate sand was before, as she had taken Fudo’s hand and had taught him to dance underneath the watchful eyes of the stars, his movements slow and awkward. She laughed as she felt herself become a queen again, like her mother had always told her she was, when she had given her a bouquet of violets and orchids and goldenrods and oleanders, a strange arrangement of flowers, but her mother said that all the flowers were special.

“When I was meditating last night Blaze, I thought I could sense these flowers becoming a big part
of your life someday. And lotus flowers too. I’m not sure exactly how this will come to be, but I believe in the gods and goddesses’ power in keeping you safe and making you have a safe journey without me. At least, I hope so. I thought I could hear one of those gods saying that it wasn’t true and you’d die like the rest of them.”

The flowers was soon rotted by the smell of her father and his alcoholic breath, his fingers staining everything they touched. He was a dirty man, a man who had so many creatures inside his gut implanted by the gods, and as he drank more Pabst’s and cheap beer, she could tell he was a very disgusting man, eating meat raw without a forethought, even attempting suicide by eating a raw bloody chicken. He never died. His body had absorbed it, as the rats had ate through it clean and had picked through all the bones and used them to clean their front teeth.

“What are you thinking about, Blaze?”

She couldn’t think straight, like most people could. She thought in jagged lines, in lines underneath those lines that curved and led to nowhere and went about 180 degrees away from where she wanted to be. Scrambled as the scrambled eggs she ate with no flavor except for pepper and Tabasco. She held onto his hand so tightly, her eyes brimming with tears as if it was a latrine, and she kept holding on, as the waves had swallowed the shore, had kept devouring it and puking it and eating it, like a masticating cow eating its lonely supper of grass, when it truly wanted steak from its brethren.

She could see how there was going to be such a large bloodshed ahead of them, a great war that would damage and fringe the edges of the world, and she wanted to believe it wasn’t so late she could have yet another piece of berry pie in the cafe. Fudo had said he brought her here for a special purpose, and he needed to discuss her future plans, with her staying with her foster father, the pastor.

“Blaze, I think…well, the whole thing that happened with your mother…it wasn’t a coincidence. Your mother…she was a god. For a long time, before she ran out of folklore and had cancer. She was Ernmas, a Celtic mother who gave birth to other gods out there, before you, with multiple men. And you were one of the last ones, Blaze. You are destined to become Morrigan, the goddess of battle and war. And I know you’re not happy with your life. I know you’re not happy being with that pastor, who’s supposed to be your uncle on your father’s side. Being a god is hard work, but…”

He turned over, his golden, honey-rimmed eyes gazing into her own. “You don’t have much to lose, I don’t think. And you have me. I can take care of you better than your uncle can. Trust me.”

Her mother was a goddess. A Celtic goddess that lived for about 500 years before she soon had grown sick with not finding enough folklore and settling down and raising her child, Blaze. Her other children were with other fathers, other gods, but yet she had chosen to stick around and raise her. She must’ve been something special, she thought. The others she possibly never saw again or divorced the fathers without gaining custody of the children. She circumspected on why she would never meet her own children again except for her, but it was possibly the god life that had absorbed her and kept her alive for so long. Her mother barely showed any signs of aging except when she was sick, her skin wrinkled and withered, her lips no longer the color of fire, her eyes dull and itchy and irritated. Her mother had led quite a life until she gave birth to Morrigan, then she died while Blazie was stuck with her drunk religious nut of a father, as he gave birth to a million rats in the street. Maybe he was a god too. She wasn’t sure.

“Why would I want to become a god, Fudo? Sure I can live for many years, no longer be with my uncle, be with you, but…I don’t think I’m up for that. Fighting other gods and demons, getting folklore and all that…I don’t think I can do it. It seems nigh impossible for me to live this life. I think I’d rather be with my uncle and live in his cruddy church. And his cruddy food. And dealing with everyone being fake and believing they’re going to heaven when I know they aren’t cause they poisoned their dog and they abused their children…”

He gazed at the stars, saw how they bleed with the color of cobalt blue, fluorescent and nearly matching the sea that had drowned out the sand between their feet as the plankton crawled towards their toes.

God’s creation lighting up the sea and making it a bright cerulean blue, as she could hear the cries of the sea dragon, mournful and melancholic, seeing its crystal eyes stare back at her own, shining brightly against the light of the moon. An illumination of the sea dragon that lived underneath the
pier, as it cried and called out for the gods to feed it, to feed it with a spoon full of oatmeal and mashed sweet potatoes…

“Again Blaze, you don’t have much to lose. I can see you can become a powerful god. I can see you seeing the dusted night sky, with a purple aurora making it bloom with vivid vivacity, when the world is…well, I’ll tell you about that later, but…I need help Blaze. I can tell my folklore is low. I want to keep living. I want to keep trying to make people happy. There were other gods I made follow my footsteps, until they realized that life was so precious that they wanted to live for many years, even a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, five hundred, a thousand years! Life really is grand to live so long for, Blaze. And if you fish for folklore once in a while, you can live for as many years as your mother. You see how the sky changes with each season, how the trees become a chiaroscuro of colors during the fall, that winter kills everything it touches but yet brings happiness to all the children that they don’t have school. Spring is the rebirth of Jesus Christ. Summer is when things boil in this pot and becomes exciting, with its fireflies that are the stars that are so close to us that we can touch them and not get burned. Seattle is a wonderful city worth living for, Blaze. You don’t realize how lucky you are to live here. I used to be in New York, and that place was full of people who didn’t truly have a nugget of wisdom in their brain. But here? It’s beautiful, Blaze. The sea, the shops (especially the cafes), how everything seems to just…spring in color, with a painter’s eye to detail. And I can’t leave a place that’s called The Emerald City. It makes me think there’s a wizard here, one that will grant me wishes. One that will give me a heart, a brain, courage, and to let me go home to where I belong, here. You are lucky to be born here, where the gods flourish and they seem so alive, so full of organs and their heart carries so much electricity to their brain. I am the god of fire. I destroy things, but I also make the forest come back to life. A phoenix, if you will. And I want to bring you back to life again, like your mother had in the past. You once were born dead Blaze, until your mother…”

“But you can’t bring back my mother. She’s gone, Fudo. I can’t have her back. And I’m sure I can’t make her happy by becoming a god. She would want me to have a happy life, even if it’s…”

“You have nothing to lose, Blaze. Just talk to Chip and sign the contract.”

Silver had known every detail to her life. Every trickling detail that fell to his fingertips. Her life was becoming as old as her mother, and she was only 14. She had enough of the church jobs, the ignorance and the apathy from her uncle, the lack of good food in her stomach, barely able to read any good books, because her uncle had deemed those books unfit for logical consumption… She wanted to enjoy life as much as she could. Reading her books. Even living for so long that she read every single book in the world. Eating all the good food in the world that she would have a degree in both literature and gastronomy. She lied on the beach sand, watching the stars beginning to fade away. They were soon covered with a ribbon of pink and yellow, xanthic and the dawn began to crawl towards the ocean’s fringes like a bleeding watercolor, as her pastor had come looking for her by the small sliver of his lantern light. Like he cared, Blaze thought. He just wants to be like a normal person, caring about his kids. But he doesn’t. He never cared about me… Blaze could hear his husky voice, in the roar of the waves, in the roar of daytime being born, and she had asked Silver where they could sign the contract.

“I’d rather sign it than be there with him again. The bastard. He never lets me read the books I want. He says imagination is a thing to waste when there is only one god to worship out there…”

“He is a god too, Blaze. A god that people worship to keep their rules aligned, their perfection kept in their little small vials around their neck, and be seen as normal as possible by other people who are possibly insane or abnormal. He is the god of normality, Blaze. He is bland. He wants you to live a normal, boring life. But I’m here to take that all away.”

Imagination led to extraordinary things. And her uncle wanted to keep her as rooted to reality as possible, even if she thought believing in only one god was far from reality.

“And my father?” she piped up. “Was he a god too? Is everyone in my family a god?”

“Your father? He’s Bobd Derg, the Red Crow. He once was an almighty god, a king of an old country town back in Michigan, but he soon moved to Seattle to get more folklore, cause he devoured all of them in that California. But he soon learned about alcohol because the big cities
always caused him to drink. He was sick, for a long time, and now he is a rat king, with his tail covered in feces and other rats. How the mighty have fallen, my dear Blaze…"

Alcohol had always turned people into rats. Dionysus himself was nothing but a rat, when he often sipped of that almighty wine. Blaze thought maybe Jesus was nothing but a rat, with his blood so full of alcohol he believed he was a prophet and a son of God. She asked Silver if there was a god who was Jesus, and he said no, not yet, it was all a myth for the humans, made up by other gods, to fork money and resources to the churches, all a fabricated tale to believe in something that didn’t exist yet. Didn’t exist yet was the keyword, my dear Blaze.

She had seen Chip, a nymph creature made of satin and velveteen, dark red fur the color of blood and with fairy wings that could barely lift his fat jolly body afloat, as he ate licorice, long strings of black velvet down his throat in nearly one gulp. He asked if she wanted a contract to become a god, and she said yes Chip, yes I always wanted to be a god and not live the life of drudgery with my uncle, the man who always believed in perfection and order, and his bland normal food and I think… I think… I am becoming something more with Fudo.

A god that had an angry face, had a six-pronged sword, but he was a protector, and would always protect Blaze, and her life was sealed in the contract, becoming, with a flash of black, as the crow with the universes in its eyes had watched, she became Morrigan, the daughter of Ernmas, and her eyes had glowed with the fires of ebony, her body seemed to be full of hate against the atrocities of her father, her uncle, the atrocities committed by the world, the sun that always fell an hour earlier in the eave of winter, the moon that had struck depression to those with my disease, she had become wrathful, except when she was under the guise of Fudo, who protected her, who guided her, and who always made sure she had something good to eat and never left the world hungry to do her godly duties.

And her godly duties were always such hated acts, as she had grown to hate the crow that sat on the branch during her knighting to godliness, its wings full of stars, its eyes full of galaxies, and meeting his real form, and even knowing his true name, and learning about his past, she thought with their similarities, she could hate him more, as Chip had told her that he consumed all the folklore her mother was supposed to have, and he was the one who injected her full of the cancer, and had made her die and left her with her rat king father, as the rats had bitten through his heart, and made him into a rotted old bastard for the little furry creatures to masticate on. He was nothing but a wooden door that contained no secrets, but only led to something useless and filled you with hopelessness.

Rats chewed on doors like that all the time, I believe.

They’ve even begun to chew on me.

The lotus flower signaled to her the way to the cemetery, where she knew she’d be able to kill Shadow, and then killing Jet, who was such a dirty rat that he had murdered her protector, her new father, her parent that had never disappointed her.

She smelled the scent of rats everywhere, as they crawled through the cemetery, eating the old worn-down flowers in the graves. Blaze believed that her father must’ve been doing such a good job of leading them. Because they were all just like him.

She heard the sound of the rain rustling in the sky, pouring on her fur, and she watched the flower close on Silver’s grave, hearing the footsteps of Shadow coming, the shadows beginning to envelop her…

Don’t kill him, the shadows said. He did not kill your mother. Other factors have led to her death.

“Liars,” she replied.

Shadow stood for what seemed to be another universe collapsing and hatched out of its starry shell, as the cat with so much hatred had cried, letting the flower absorb her tears, the oleanders blooming as Fudo had promised they would. Her tears were full of life, even in this soon dead winter.

And Shadow swallowed them whole in his second mouththroat, for his mother, as well.
The graveyard, moist, red as a tongue inside a bleeding lady’s mouth. Blaze had sat and waited for the crow to come. The crow that would grant wishes. To bring birdmilk to her bleeding mouth. The galaxies in the sky, plum-colored, violet and vivacious, she twists her fingers, she twists them until she couldn’t use them anymore. The light had died away. Only a faint maudlin glow of the sun that was killed remained.

Oh, bring me my supposed loved lotus flower, let it shine in the night! Let Fudo scream out in the dark petals of the space’s sky, let him love her, guide her, give her rosaries in her hair, give her the best food there was to eat in Seattle, let her cry next to him as she mourned her mother, Celtics dead and gone, the night mourns the loss of so many gods, but the spider that hangs his web in shame, he doesn’t care except for his own loss of life. His black legs, his red hourglass mark, he eats the souls of the dead gods that lie in his web like little crystal-dusted balls of rainwater, and he prepares for his great feast.

One god lied awake as the capital G god was asleep, waiting for the stakes to be stabbed in his wrists, the Timekeeper eating his great harvest of food from the Queen and the Slave’s cupboard, and the entire red room that looked much like a womb, it turned blue, as blue as badly oxygenated blood.

He could see the many dead bodies lying in the streets, the hole inside the wall that told him many humans were dead, and there were only 12 left, 12 humans left to die in 3…2…1…

Humans had no true souls. They were never eaten by the Black Widow Anansi. They were just recycled for the next world. The humans would continue to be blind deaf and dumb. They would continue to not know of gods until new religions were born out of their tiny pink brains that couldn’t know the truth of what these gods did, of fighting to the death, of sacrificing their own blood for the black blood of their brains.

Their brains full of lies and frost still from the dead-set winter that was dying away, recycled for the next year. Next was spring. Next was the new world. The new god.

“The New Christ,” she said, her pink tongue bloodied with the taste of a pomegranate tree she saw in the graveyard, draining the blood of the dead people who surrounded her.

She wondered if Fudo had ever liked pomegranates.

Had they ate one once? Maybe had a pomegranate tea in a coffee shop. She watched and waited while Yehl had flapped his starry wings over the silver branched graveyard, the flowers beginning to wilt in his wake.

Bloody orchids, beginning to rot with his touch! He was the bringer of death, and he knew it. He knew the cross he brought would be used to kill and used to drain the Christ’s body and bring upon a new god. Yahweh was made into Yahweh for the purpose of becoming the god that led after Anansi.

Stories were godlike in nature. Anansi spilled his web for all the world to see his stories. He made an elaborate story, a story of how humans were blind to everything they saw, were deaf to everything they heard, and were dumb in everything they knew, except when it mattered to them. Even the humans who were spiritual truly didn’t know what these gods dealt with. Only Blaze’s mother knew. And she was dead. Her tales were collected on Anansi’s web, but he had no use for it. He was still full from the dead gods he ate, except for Fudo, finely wrapped in silk, waiting for the flames of his poison begin to overtake him.

Dying dying dying he’s dying the more I forget about him he’s a dying god no one worships him anymore but I can still worship his memory…

Fudo, a great god, killed by the great wine-taster of all the gods. Horus used to be loved, but even Satan knew he was a despicable god who deserved to roast finely in the flames of Hell. A fine steak for all the demons to chew.

Satan had told her if she could bring him the blood of Yehl, he will bring back Fudo in the next
world.
(Manipulation, his weapon of choice. He manipulated me too.)
(He only wanted chaos.)
(He could be Loki too. Satan and Loki had many similarities. Satan had multiple forms. I know this. Cause his mind is split. His mask is in the form of many masks. One with a grave smile, one with depression aching its eyes and mouth. He wanted all the gods to suffer. And he would make sure of that.)
(Aceso kept threading my spider web. Her needle was the cosmic star point that Satan had given her. She gave birth to ugly things. The ugliest thing she made was when she decided I would be a spider. With a cosmic web that trapped all the souls of Earth. I ate them, recycled them, I was a gluttonous spider, and gluttony was one of the seven deadly sins that Satan created. I had all of them when I was mad with my mania. Pride. I thought I was the greatest writer in the world. Greed. I wanted money and fame to drop to me like dew from the leaves after a spring rain. Gluttony. I ate all these souls with much relish. Wrath. I hated the doctors who denied me my new lungs. My machines to breathe. Lust. I wanted to fuck everyone in the world. Sloth. I procrastinated writing this story for a thousand years before. Envy. I wanted to be just like Hemingway. I wanted to be just as godlike as he was. But I knew I could never achieve it.)
(I told Aceso that it was time for the Needle of Faith to arrive. And she said yes, with the affirmation that after this whole ordeal, she will die.)
Drink his blood like liquor and whiskey.
The lotus flower greatly strengthened her power. She could feel Fudo inside of it, smiling, telling her to bring back his blood, to kill Horus and the Thunderbird. Wave too. Become the new Timekeeper in the world. Chip was both sides of the coin, as his smile was wicked, sharp as a razor blade, and he told her that if she could bring the blood of Sonic and keep him alive, then she will be the new Timekeeper. The new true god.
Anansi didn’t know what he was doing, she said.
He continued to gulp down all the Trileptals, see the morning bleed purple and gold, see his knife inching closer to his neck, more, more he was dying! His stories had grown pale. They were dying with their age, not aging like the finest wine. There was nothing more for him to live for. She could become a sane God, a rational God, and she could create creatures with sense, make bouillons that would seep into the stew of life, make amoebas, cells, lizards, fish, birds, mammals, humans come out of that bowl she insisted to drink, and she would drink it with pleasure, as if it was a nicely cheddared clam chowder.
(It won’t happen, I whispered.)
Thinking of it again, her favorite dish, still made her want to puke. She loved him, so much. Dying more by the minutes. She clutched the lotus flower between her fingertips, had let it float softly into the sky, let the light devour all the darkness and let the wings of Yehl be overtaken by bright exploding novas, and the lotus flower of Fudo’s after he died, it replaced the broken moon, that was soon swept away by Anansi’s broom and dustpan that he twisted to his slender fingers. The crow fell silently to the ground as the lotus flower gleamed in the night air, slitting through the darkness that once surrounded them.
She could kill him, right now, as he only held his plastic bag of stakes in one balled up fist, smoking a cigarette in the other hand. A used-up cigarette he found on the way here. He was dying already, slowly. Couldn’t live longer in this dead Earth. The cigarette flared up, a bright bloody orange as Blaze continued to gawk at him, and he blew out curved swirls of blue smoke, about as blue as the rays of the moon.
“The demon egg,” she said. She held it in the firm grip of her hand. “Do you want it or not? Hurry up before it hatches.”
The cigarette died. He threw it on the grassy floor, stomped it out, and watched as the smoke dissipated between them. The spirits, the shadows, were listening, and his ears had grown cold with the sounds of their words.
Don’t kill her, Shadow.
Don’t.
Don’t let her drink your blood.
Don’t let her keep Sonic alive.

He didn’t realize his blood was made of the finest Indian whiskey.

“Do you want it or not?”

Eyes so bloody, cutting the whites, bloody bloody Mary’s, bloody bloody irises, staring back at the ale eyes that wished to be drunk by his seething need for a beer.

He remembered his father, drinking his Budweiser, telling him of bedtime stories, saying that he will always be a brave soldier in these dark times as the white man took away their land. The white man who never gave up and wanted to make them all their slaves.

“I’m not sure if I do want it, to be honest,” he stated.

“Then why are you here?”

This goddess would be washed away with the shores of Anansi. Her mourning would soon be gone, no more of the crying for her mother, for Fudo, for her life before her father had taken it all away. He could tell in her golden eyes that the cat had nine lives, and she died three times. The murderer was him. Her mother was diagnosed with a cancer shortly after he took away her folklore. He drove her father to alcoholism. He could’ve been responsible for Fudo’s death as well, for all he knew. He could barely remember all those years ago.

But he knew he wasn’t the culprit. The truth the shadows had shown with their dark hands, cracking towards the light bloomed from the lotus moon, he wasn’t responsible for it at all.

(We all are connected, I told the shadows. We all are.)

Such a small girl, she was. Hiding behind Silver’s flaming sword, waiting to be protected by him. Silver acted as a true father figure to her. She worshiped him as much as the Japanese worshiped him. And he dwindled away like a fire suffocated by sand, and he soon transformed into a flower that Blaze could always hold and remember, and he became the moon.

The moon said goodnight to Blaze many times, before she was set to try to kill the bastard crow. He loaded his gun. There was no use convincing her that he truly was on the good side, the winning side.

(Will he kill her? Aceso asked. And I wasn’t sure. The raven had more sympathy for the pious than he did now.)

“Why do you believe Satan will bring back Fudo for you? He won’t. He just wants a devout follower to feed off. Fudo is never coming back, you know it. And…I’m pretty sure I wasn’t why the reason your mother died (the shadows whispered, whispered like the small slits of wind carolling down his quills and cheeks), your father being a loser drunk. I needed to be in this world for a reason. For things like this, Blaze. The end of the world is coming, and I’m responsible for bringing the New Christ here. Chip and Satan never liked me, but Anansi knew I was important. He messed with these events all those years to keep me alive. Anansi is dying, Blaze. He needs a new god. And Sonic is good enough for him.”

“You’re going to kill another god, is that it? You’re a murderer, Yehl…”

She realized he knew her name, and she didn’t know his.

The magic out of her folklore was sapped away, by Shadow’s tongue, the raven that was always hungry, greedy, and has torn the eyes out of her skull while she was dead, she was sure that was what he wanted, to kill all the gods of the world to make himself God. Greedy, presumptuous bastard. His gun was still aimed at her forehead.

“I can forget your name, Blaze,” he said.

“You want to stop me? Maybe I’ll let you try anyways, because I feel bad for you. I knew your mother, Blaze. I didn’t want her to die. But Anansi needed me. He wanted me to make this new world for him many years ago. He knew the humans were becoming too much for him. Wanted to drink, party, and become ignorant of his pleas for them to be good. Your mother was a good god, and she really did her job well. Your father just had a lot of hatred inside of him. That hatred turned to that rat world we had underneath this city. The rats are the byproduct of ignorance and the seeping of mental illness, the refusal to get help. Blaze, you are becoming another rat like him. Soon enough,
you’ll keep feeding the rats. You’ll keep puking them up. Then you’ll die just like your father. The rats have whittled down the bone of society in this city, with their collections of machines and their stolen medications, they’re the reason Anansi is dying. They are becoming the reason he is truly the magnificent mentally ill bastard that he is. He knows he’s becoming a rat too. And he has to kill himself before this world rots away.”

“You’re a liar, Yehl.”

It was her only statement to quiet the worry inside her mind, the wires of her heart beginning to pollute with more rat feces, the craving for lead chips making her mouth drool.

“These words I speak of are nothing but the truth. I was chosen to bring the New Christ. Anansi knew his brother and I had some sort of connection, our pasts seemed to intersect somehow. The schizophrenic ramblings from both our relatives, he told me. They thought the world was going to end soon, and they were right. Not by Arabians though, and not by the government or the United States. By us. Only a few know of us now, Blaze. We have a lot of folklore, but a lot of humans still don’t know who we are. Ever hear of anyone worshiping the trickster Indian Raven nowadays? And what about you, Morrigan? No one cares about you. No one cares about you. No one cares about us, Blaze. They just want Yahweh. Anansi knows this too. That’s why he hides under the guise of another god. The trickster Anansi is really the god of us all. The keeper of time and the destroyer of time and the one who decides you used it wisely is truly Satan. Go to Hell, suffer for eternity. Because you didn’t use your time wisely. Feel the worms eat your vacuous face. Let the fires lick your own tongue and sap it of taste and moisture except for shit and rot. I don’t know where I’m going after I die, Blaze. I’m just doing my job, and I’m sure I would be forgotten for the rest of eternity. You too. And Silver. And the other gods that died. Yahweh is a new god that’s taking up all our folklore. It’s why I hated him at first, but…”

He paused, his hands fumbling for another cigarette. He gripped onto another, lit it at the blue eave of the moon as it opened its petals, and he began again.

His hands shook more rapidly at the sonata and crash of his every word.

“I realized how much power he had. And influence. He cared for Miles, before he committed suicide, for as long as he could keep him. He tried to listen to other people’s prayers and grant them. I never did that. I’m a selfish, trickster raven. Why the hell would I care about anyone else? I soon realized the smaller brother inside of him, Wind…he was truly God. And he kept playing this song and dance for all of us to follow. Like we were his little puppets. His strings are super-tight and could never be eviscerated. Wind was playing a tough game, having us play this movie for him, that we all want everyone watching us to pity him, and as he continues to pull the strings, make new puppets, get rid of old ones, Sonic was the puppet that he so loved, because he was his own brother. Chip is nothing more but a puppet too, Blaze. They’re one and the same. The shadows have told me this, and they never have lied to me. We actually all are parts of him somehow, in his little damn story.”

Watching the lotus glow near the glaring stars, he dragged his cigarette as long as he needed to. Anansi was all inside his brain, pulling out his motivations, his fears, his desires. The puppet that dangled his legs while the children laughed and watched him as he bonked Blaze on the head. Such family fun for the children. Her face continued to carry no emotion, still firm, still wishing to kill him, still wanting to believe Chip and Satan had wanted her and would keep her safe from her pain. Shadow’s eyes bladed through the azure sky and he continued to speak, wanting to get a reaction out of her. The shadows were still hiding the truth from her. Because she was too blind to see. Too deaf to hear it. Too dumb to know it.

“The demon egg is about to hatch, Yehl,” she said, monotone.

“It doesn’t matter. Anansi is continuing to make us dance. We’ll fight this monster, I’m sure we’ll win, then I’m going to go and crucify Sonic like they did with Jesus. Funny, isn’t it? How nothing truly matters? You live all your life, doing all you can, then suddenly, you’re sick with God knows what, it could be cancer, it could be schizophrenia, it could be whatever Sonic’s family has, Borderline or something, and then you learn that if you lived further on in life, nothing would change. You are only an insignificant mustard seed in this garden of life. The farmer isn’t going to plant you and make you grow into a plant. He’s got enough mustard plants. He’s got enough faith in
the palm of his hand. Faith larger than a mustard seed. Faith that is so large, you can’t even hold it, no, lift it with your hands. So many people believe in God, Blaze. They believe in Sonic. In Wind. Maybe one day their religion will die out, but not in a long time. He will create more gods to do his bidding. He’ll make sure Satan is checking on everyone’s time and deeds. They’re both partners in this little hole of life. Good and evil, working, to see if humans can behave. And they’re not. Too many people are going to Hell. So we might as well throw away their lives and start all over again. Does that make sense to you, Blaze? It doesn’t. I could go ahead and kill you right now, but there’s no point in it. I’m letting you go.”

The cigarette nearly fell from his hook-like mouth. Blaze thought of his sudden, rapid intentions towards her. He wanted to kill her one minute, then realized there was nothing more to be gained for her death. The demon inside the egg was moving slowly from its core, its yolk, and there was no sense anymore in the folklore. No gods could live, except for Yahweh. He was the only god that survived the aftermath of the self-destruction from the humans. He was the only one that could save the damned souls of the humans, those who were blind and deaf and dumb.

It felt like a crumpled autumn leaf in her fist now, the egg that shattered. It even smelled like wet autumn rain. Her eyes focused on his, the liquid inside his eyes flowing, his blood vessels nearly protruding from his sockets. Such a bloody look, she said. Such a look of someone she still finds difficult to forgive. He still murdered her mother. Still caused her father to drink. She wanted to hold onto those lies and punish Shadow with a passive-aggressive flair, but Shadow had enough of lies in the world. The shadows were showing the truth now, as the land became bright, the shadows sapped from the lotus moon, the lotus sun, the memories of Silver still fresh in her mind as she watched the golden knife plunge into his heart, from the god that delved in wine the color of god’s life.

The cigarette shook, even in his mouth. Was he nervous? Very, she could tell. He continued to speak, the crescendo of the truth playing a harsh, dramatic music in her ears.

“I need to do my job and just let this universe die. Doing as I’m told. Little puppet on a string. I have no say on what will happen in this world.”

He thought about aiming that gun towards himself. He could hear it click against the roof of his mouth, the galaxies ready to burst in his brain.

Decided against it. He laid the gun on the earth, as the flowers surrounded it, wondering what the device would do.

“I could end it right now for you Blaze. But you don’t realize that even though I fucking hated him when I first saw him, I’m somehow convinced I have to take care of him, right?”

More tears streamed from her eyes. She knew she was going to die, no matter if she killed Yehl in the end or not. It wouldn’t matter if she said the name the shadows called him. It wasn’t his real name. His blood ran in vivid spurts, the red becoming a gleaming ruby color, garnets arising in his bloodstream, and he became more livid, more excited as he talked of Sonic, the god that was supposed to help him be led to the next generation of human society.

“I cared about him, the more I learned about him. The shadows told me everything while I was being killed by Horus, the tear in my neck told me everything.”

“I told you everything,” the gargled voice ushered, breathing in a fine spray of blue smoke from his cigarette.

“If Sonic was here right now, he’d deny these accusations. He couldn’t stand to see his brother die, so he would rather die himself. And he saw him, his limp wrists and his entire skeletal body falling apart as he was crucified on that hospital bed, the tubes not enough oxygen for him to run through his blood and brain. He had to revive him. So when he died again, he couldn’t see him. He could forget everything about him. And his mother and father. His mother is an alcoholic. His father is schizophrenic, and was once committed in a psych ward for a few months. The same had happened to Sonic. He planned on jumping off the bridge a few miles from his house. He faced the water that had welcomed him and wanted to snatch his life when some policemen noticed him, asked questions, and he was put on suicide watch in the hospital. That hospital was Sound Mental Health, and there he met Vector. While Vector wanted to save him, he wanted to forget about him too. Sonic was slowly dying. He knew that with his newly formed godlike powers. Sonic is dying the more the
spring keeps arriving in this Earth, as you bloom each steel flower from the surface, and I’m afraid I felt like…there was something about him that I had to love about him. That he cared. He cared too much, I think.”

The flowers bloomed with their glass and steel petals. They shined in the glow of the lotus. Growing larger, absorbing the moonlight, they illuminated a soft baby blue for all the sadness the humans felt. They illuminated a red the color of flames and roses and passion and lovely vignettes given to a beautiful woman, for all the madness in the world. The flowers kept glowing. They kept exploding the cemetery with color. Blaze’s fingers had become hooks of flowers. Shadow’s stakes became the roots at the end of a Methuselah tree. They were silver, and were imbued with life. The white that combined with the blood of Christ in candy canes. The cigarette became a rotting plant, as his neckhole ate it, its stomach wooden and hollow, a tree stump that would grow the tree of Eden.

“You’ll probably die too,” Blaze said.

The gun that was placed so tenderly to his frontal lobe of his brain, he took it away, and watched as the flowers nearly consumed it with their petals and blossoming leaves. They blossomed into galaxial trees. Stars as their fruit. Novas as the leaves. The black empty void as the branches and the trunk. The world was bursting into life at the seams, and he was dying, and so was Sonic, and so was Blaze.

There was no use fighting it anymore. Even Benjamin, who remained so quiet in Shadow’s bag of Bible Trees, suddenly wanted to die and fade away like everyone else in the lonely world. All the bad things were dying. The good things rose. Like God said they would. Anansi never constructed a vivid lie in his web.

“We are dying, slowly. Every second a person dies, did you know that Blaze?”

She wished Fudo was here. Shadow was only a stranger, yet she held his hand.

“The Earth is beautiful when it’s quiet. I remembered waking up very early in the morning, at the crack of dawn while it was still an egg to feed the hungry gods in the sky. And I heard this music. This beautiful humming. The birds chirping along. The drips from the rain last night, as the dew collected on my father’s lawn as he drank a Budweiser. I could hear him breathing too, so silently. When you wake up that early in the morning when nearly no one in the world is alive or awake, you hear wonderful things. You appreciate life much more. You want to do art. I was in my pajama’s. I went outside while my father stood with his long, black and brick-red legs, watching the sun gape open its huge red mouth, and he told me to just sit, and watch as the pretty things went by. He told me that white men were too busy with their electronics and their cars and their businesses to really understand the beauty of nature. My father was related to a rare Indian tribe, a long time ago. He had a big reservation for me to play in. And my mother always made me whatever I wanted in the morning, because she said the morning was my special time of the day. Every time I woke up she said, I was the sun to her. I was dawn.”

“And you were…”

Their grip was tighter. Blaze had never felt more nervous, in her life. Shadow squeezed the bag of stakes, Benjamin crushed by his bony fingers. Blood seeped from his body. He cried about his injustice caused by his relative no longer.

“I stole the dawn, Blaze. I stole the night. I stole the afternoon, the stars. I was God’s right-hand person to making the light. The raven brought everything to man. The Raven is wise, wiser than Man, and had brought fire to Man, and weapons to Man, and brought Man out of their clam shells on the beach of Seattle. I stole those things, I stole them from Satan. And that’s why he is angry with me. Satan is proud of his little maiden Aceso, using her as his puppet, as she threads all the ugly things in the world. She tried to make nice things when Satan brought her that hell of Death, my supposed uncle, but she is planning to make a very nice thing for us soon. A brand new universe. All her own. Her first beautiful thing made from her needle that I implanted in Sonic’s cheek. She struck
a deal with Anansi that she will create nice things in her universe, but Satan is going to try to kill her, after she gives birth to this universe. I can’t help her. Aceso would simply be a corpse among the stars. After she makes the most beautiful thing any being could make with a sewing needle and thread.”

Blaze’s fist tightened. The demon egg’s shell rustled in her hand, but the folklore was a pointless endeavor that she learned was created by Satan to keep his demons aligned and to grant a reward to the gods for doing the work he didn’t want to do. It was a meaningless thing that kept her alive for a few more moments when she knew the death of the world would come, and she wanted to die already, she wanted to die, her eyes seeped, her teeth chattered through the cold of the dawn, and her grip on his hand was so tight Shadow thought she would crush it. Her black eyes bled through her corneas, and she could feel all the emotion beginning to take her over. Crying tears as if she had mascara. She wanted to puke. She thought of the clam chowder that Fudo recommended for her and she puked. She loved him. And she no longer hated Shadow, but yet could not bear to love him. Although she wanted to. Aceso, her friend. She was going to die from her false friend.

“Vector is a lot like Sonic in a few ways he doesn’t realize. He couldn’t bear to see the death of his father. His father had cancer and he could never help him. His mother never truly loved him. Maybe Vector’s father was a god too, because he was very wise. But the shadows never told me. It’s another mystery I can’t solve. Vector held onto Espio because he reminded him of his father in some ways, and he was obsessed with being an influential musician. He thought the god powers would make him loved, like his father was. But it never happened. He became homeless. Espio too, because he couldn’t stand to see Vector suffer alone after the hospitalization. Vector didn’t know that he tried to eat someone who was so close to him, that he wanted to swallow his entire personality whole, and let his suffering become his own and dissolved away.”

“What about Horus?”

She wanted to kill the relatives of Horus, his brother and sister, and the wretched drunken bird that killed her love, years ago. His blood would be mixed in with his own. She held the hilt of the sword while still holding onto Shadow’s hand. She couldn’t love him. Not yet.

“Horus is dead, Blaze.”

His blood could not be stained on her sword. The blood she wished to drink. His hatred becoming her own.

“Satan killed him a few days ago. He just used him as a puppet, a sacrifice to show that he had such power over us. But no one cared that Horus died. None of us. But he killed Fudo. Fudo was actually another friend of mine Blaze, and I hated to see him go. He told me about you. He said he loved you and even wanted to make a vow to you. It never happened. But he became the moon. He became the guiding light in all the dark moments in your life. And he will shine in the darkest moment, until you are recycled for the next generation. What will you be in the new world? I’m not sure. But I hope you will be loved, and you will have a happy life. I’m sorry about your mother. I’m sorry about your father. I’m sorry about Silver. I didn’t know they hurt you so much for you to be a goddess that thrives on war, but you will no longer drown in rats and hate anymore.”

The tears streamed further, into a river on the earth, and soon, more life bloomed around her sadness, as the rivers let the animals drink, and let the flowers glow and grow. Her emotions fed into the world, and Shadow still held on her hand, still listened to her heart that needed to be cradled, and he told her more secrets she wished the shadows would take away in darkness.

“I wasn’t responsible for killing your mother.”

“Horus’ brother and sister are Wave and Storm. Wave replaced the role of her father after he was institutionalized in the same hospital Sonic and Vector were in. He was driven to obsessive-compulsive madness after Jet began to drink and drop out of school and no longer take care of their ailing and soon-to-be-dead mother. Storm was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome with a near-genius IQ, then when he leaves Wave, he is lobotomized by an icicle, and he becomes mentally retarded,” the hole in his neck continued to speak, telling more truths that Blaze never wanted to
hear. “Horus was a selfish god. But Wave and Storm are trying to take care of each other. They try to get by. Vector forgot about them, but he knew he had to sympathize with them, because he never had the same kind of happiness they had in many years. Wave wanted to kill Sonic for taking Storm’s demon egg, but Sonic granted her a prayer that Wave and Storm would be alright for one winter night. He sympathized with them too. And Miles wasn’t a god. He would never be a good god. But he wished to be a martyr for committing suicide, when he only saw religion as his way out, but was still plagued with madness. Sonic realized gods can’t change the chemicals in people’s brains, and their own. Miles never got what he wanted. He wanted pity from his parents, and the school children who teased him. Miles is forgotten. He is buried, however, and Sonic blessed his soul. Maybe that’s the best gift Miles could ever get in his life. A blessing from an angel, and the path to a better life in the new world. Even Jesus can’t save everyone.”

Wave and Storm saw the city become overrun with reeds and plants, as the silver and emerald of Seattle soon died away, the technology that she used to love become ghosts that the rats had worshiped, more animals walked in the traffic of dead bodies as they floated up to the sky, up Anansi’s web, to recycle their souls. To purify them with his venom.

Wave’s face, constructed of dirt, of stress, of melancholy, and of tears, she held on Storm’s hand, as he asked her what was going on.

She couldn’t bear to answer his question. She knew what it was. She heard the other gods speak before she climbed up the bridge with her boots stomping in the rain and mud. She could hear God crying. He was crying, and she could catch His tears in her mouth.

“What’s going on, sister?” he asked.

So much was going on, she wanted to answer. So much is going on and we aren’t invited to the culmination of all this birth and death.

She was dying slowly, each step she took. The rain drenched her feathers, her eyes carried a sense of defeat, that she took care of her brother for so long, that she couldn’t protect him anymore.

Jet was gone. She could tell. And she couldn’t save him from his own death. By killing him and committing fratricide. Never loved her brother, she said. But yet she wanted to be the one to kill him rather than have a passive-aggressive death wish on him.

Your dreams never came true when you were passive-aggressive. But they did. And she wished to hide her face in the shadows, in the latrines of the puddles in the Earth. They were just as silver as the bathtubs she saw her father in, getting hydrotherapy when she was still a nymph.

My father never had psychiatric problems never he never did I can assure you he never did I know Jet hadn’t poisoned him I know neither did Storm or our mother I was the perfect child I would be ascended to heaven I know I will be I know God will capture me with His celestial hands and take me and Storm to heaven and then we could drink Dixie cups of Kool-Aid and watch as the angels pluck their lightning bolts from the sky to strike those who sullied their name and see our dead dog Patches and see the angel who helped me the angel that…

Storm lifted his large, silver feathered hand on her shoulder. He could tell she was crying. She could’ve been laughing, but he knew she had nothing to laugh about anymore.

The storm ushered on, in small, rainy whispers. The Earth continued to grow, to rise from the Lotus Moon, and Wave was too blind to see all the beauty that happened before you died, because she was too scared. Too scared to let go of Storm.

She heard of the phrase “To reign in Hell is better to serve in Heaven”.

She wondered if it was true. She could see Jet. She could watch him bleed for eternity. And she could atone for her sins. For what they all did to mother. For what they all did to their father, who she knew was dead now.

The gears of the machine slowly turned. The clocks ticked away, counting down their final minutes. She could imagine a loudspeaker played all over the Earth as the last remaining survivors and the gods had cried and mourned, a kind, chirpy voice saying, “You only have an hour left on this world, shoppers! You might start considering finishing up your amends and say goodbye to your family before we close down for many millenniums!”
She could feel her soul slipping through the cracks, the bleeding scars of her body. Through her eyes and mouth. She wanted to stay with Storm during her last hour. She had to set him free, a firefly remaining in its jar for so long, it nearly suffocated.

He was a Thunderbird by heart. His name even said he was a seething, pearly glowing bird made of ivory bones and the blue winter eyes her father had that she could remember clearly, when she knew him all those years, before he left to get sanitized.

“Storm,” she said.

Cold, shivering, he wished he stole a jacket while they walked here. “What is it, little sister?”

“I want you to turn into your god form, go as high in the sky as you can, and never talk to me again. Everything is going to be alright. I will be up there with you. Things will be okay. I promise you.”

Cold, he huddled to her for warmth. Wanted to remain the last day with her, and he was stupid, but he couldn’t believe that everything would be okay, and that she would be up in heaven. He desperately wished he could believe in those lies, but the world was dying, he could tell, his heart resonated with everything in the earth, with every animal, and he knew the world was dying.

“Please Storm, just do it.”

Storm never wanted to leave her. She kept running from him. He kept trying to catch up. Her anger rose. She kept screaming for him to go away, go up in the sky and go to heaven with her. He pleaded to stay with her. Running again. Running, they kept running. They were nearly at the cemetery. Told him to go to heaven. The opposite of “go to hell”. Running again. Wave ran so far away that Storm couldn’t catch up to her. She said she would be up there with him. It was the only way. Go to heaven. God bless you. Go to heaven.

Wave soon disintegrated into the night. All alone, he wondered why she wanted to leave him. Why the world was tearing itself apart from its sewn threads. He wished to know everything in the world. Wished to gain knowledge about the birdlike condition, of why their father had left them, why their mother didn’t care after she died that Jet spat in her face and she wasn’t burned to ashes like their dog, why Jet chose to become an alcoholic, why Wave tried so hard to keep the family together when there was no point in keeping it together. He wished to know why his sister felt responsible for everything.

He would do what she said. He would go to heaven. He would meet their dead dog. Their dead mother. Their dead father. They would all come together in angel garb and sing and play songs on the harp. Have little wings on their backs even though they already had wings.

The rain deepened in the world. The world was drowning, just like the tale of Noah’s Ark that he was told when he was a child. His father kept saying if he believed in God, believed in Jesus’ ability as much as a tiny seed that he saw no one plant before in his life, then he would come, and bless you. And they would become a happy, Christian family. Even Jet could come to heaven. They had all of Jesus’ blood he could drink.

Storm turned into the Thunderbird with screeches that pierced the eyes and skin, his talons made from the bones of electricity, the eyes that sizzled and cracked every time anyone looked at them, and his wings popped the air, the crackling of lightning striking the gray skies of morning, and he cried for his sister, he screamed her name as he became the greatest roar of lightning that the Earth had ever experienced, and he split the world in two halves.

The only way to create something so beautiful, truly, was to destroy everything you had. I understood this lesson, very well.

Blaze, oh poor little Blazie, her earth had been torn like paper, she could no longer hold Shadow’s hand. She no longer had comfort. Her eyes continued to shed tears as much as her blood. Shadow carried the Methuselah stakes, he continued to be emotionless of the whole ordeal. Blaze, have you ever noticed that when you cry, you create more life for me?

But I have to destroy them. That’s just how I work.

Shadow shouted over the rumbling and seething of lightning in the distance. Blaze could barely hear him. The thunder continued to scream for his sister.

“I never killed your mother. Other circumstances killed your mother. Your father did. He had a lot of hatred for her. So much hatred, he brewed rats inside his stomach. He craved disgusting things to eat.
He gave her cancer for just being so hateful. His negativity, his depressed views, his alcoholism, his denial of seeing these wonderful things around us, that’s what just killed her.”

More words were gurgled from him. The thunder grew more vociferous, more dangerous as he killed the trees made of silver threads, the golden wired flowers, and the plants that devoured all the love in the world.

Sonic
Listened
Wishes
He said
Mother
Can’t let her go
See her
Irish cause
Immigrants came
To America
Rats carried
God knows if you will
You can’t die I will
I will
I will
Make sure
You’re okay

More seconds passed by did his words sounded like the choking of his neckhole. Shadow felt he could no longer speak. His mouth was becoming threaded, with black stitches, and he tried to pry his lips free with his nimble fingers, but he was more of a puppet by Satan’s control. The New Christ couldn’t be revived, he said.

The Devil’s touch resonated in his body. The blackness that curled inside him, the helix that killed all the kindness in every inch of his body. The gun was in his grip, the trigger close to being pulled in Shadow’s head. I want to kill you, Shadow said. I want to kill you. I want to kill you, for making my first life miserable. My second life miserable. My third life even worse. I cannot be killed. Evil cannot be killed. It forever lives in every part of the universe.

There is deep evil inside of you, and I know how you can make it go away.

The gun was nearing his temple again, the galaxy bullets that the Evil Self inserted before the flowers had taken them away. He watched the Earth shrink as he moved perpetually in space, Satan’s grip on the gun next to his frontal lobe so calm, nearly precise.

Sonic was out there, he thought. He will be crucified. Satan is just trying to stop me. He’s just trying to stop me from creating The New Christ, the New God. I got the grenade in my cloak. I could kill us both, but where would Sonic go? Anansi couldn’t do anything. He’s too busy in his cosmic web, crying. Watching the sands of his red hourglass bleed through his body, see the grains and threads of the universe slowly drain from his grasp…

He unraveled the threads slowly with his tongue, and tried to speak. Satan continued to gaze at him, with his slit eyes, the snake eyes that threatened to consume his body whole.

You took everything from me.

“I stole those beautiful things from you so you couldn’t ruin them further. You ruined the night. You made such a tender time for me and made it into a time where the humans could fuck and drink and kill and steal. You still have your mark on those things, you bastard. You still have teenagers drinking and fucking the night away. You still have those rile sex acts, those murders, those devi...
things the blind deaf and dumb people do at night. You wanted the blind deaf and dumb to no longer care about gods. You wanted them to go to your kingdom of brimstone and maggots. But there’s some value in those blind deaf and dumb people. When they realize that there is truth and spiritual things going on with God’s fingers in their life and the prayers that are answered to only a few lucky amount of people, they are no longer blind deaf and dumb. They will know. And they become just as good as a vessel for Anansi to take care of than anyone who believed in the beginning. You never had to be a devout follower for the humans to go to their own version of heaven. If they just believed…”

The mustard seed. Yes, right. But that faith isn’t strong enough. Gods need more than just faith, my friend.

The threads were pulled up to his tongue, to his mouth, to the neckhole as he tried to usher in more words of hope, but that hope was dying along with the planet. All hope had to die, as Anansi soon cried his tears, as they kept rolling along with the sea, and yes my friends, I too am dying. And I felt even with the faith of only a million people, it couldn’t keep my sadness drained away. I kept writing this whole battle between them, had kept trying to figure something out with my mind, but Shadow had kept resisting, even when Satan had told him that the lies were real, and he always wanted to believe in lies ever since his uncle had forced him to eat his parents in that other deceased timeline, he said he could bring it back. He could bring it back to make him suffer, to toy with his emotions, but Shadow had lunged towards him before he could fire his gun, his fist about to touch the scaly and reptilian face of the devil, then the trigger was pulled, the bullet that once it stroke him, it made his organs melt, his godlike body dying, that the scorn of humans, their unbelief at a raven trickster god who took away Satan’s night and stars was still alive and still cared about these humans, rotting away his flesh, with his own touch of sin inside these bullets. The holy fire of sin that made Shadow feel ashamed, the powers of manipulation from his weapons and words driving him to a near state of cataclysmic depression.

He still had a job to carry, he told himself. He had to usher forth the New Christ, the needle that Aceso held in her thin little fingers.

Hurry! Aceso cried, as she frayed the edges of my old cobwebs. Hurry!

His body decayed more as the seconds elapsed when the lotus flower canvassed the sky, and birthed the golden yews of the sky, the eaves of the pink and the branches of the purple, the veins of my heart, visible in that morning sky.

The left arm was useless. It limped alongside with him. The stakes still held firmly in his grip in his other hand, the silver roots shining on the frost of the stars and sun.

He could still smell fire, he still felt the burn of sin inside his body. He could see Aceso’s prying eyes as she prayed to him, as he prayed to Yahweh, that she could create something wonderful with her gifts.

She knew she would be killed by Satan. But the Plath effect was enough to let her be okay with her inevitable death.

(Me too I said. Me too.)

Satan held the gun, pin-point accuracy, his claws icy, nearly colossus-like in his stature, the starseas crashing against him, the cracks and flaws inside him large like the Liberty Bell hole, and he let Shadow go into the abyss, his one arm necrotic, his eyes dulled of their fire as he begged for Sonic to come, to become his Jesus.

Because he cared. He cared too much about his suffering.

(I could see the trigger being pulled, so slowly, Satan smiling, beetles resting in his jaws and eyeholes.)

The bullet was ready to split the air and bleed inside his brain. Shadow walked with a lurching gait, to the blue hedgehog that walked miles ahead of him, trying to find the meaning of being a much-worshiped god. Sonic was very sick, and his footsteps were weak, as much as his own. The cystic fibrosis I spread to him was killing him, his lungs collapsing under his soft skin.

The hedgehog walked, nursing his dead arm that was ready to drop from his flesh, the lotus opened its petals slowly, light spreading to all the corners of the sky’s canvas. God had painted coruscate
flashes of color, ribbons of light spreading from his fingertips, the violets and yellows all viscid and vivid. The reds looking like the holy blood of a babe’s. The blues the eyes of my sadness, oh pretty sadness, stare at Shadow, your foster-father, thank him for making you into a beautiful thing. A beautiful, quiet sadness! A painted malady of my manic-depressive state.

He had to kill him when the sun was rising. Sacrifice his holy blood for the good of civilization. The babies of the next generation. The pregnant mothers of the next generation. The next cocks from men of the next generation, seeping of seminal fluid. The next teenagers deciding to fuck. The next children who don’t know anything about procreation and assumed only storks brought babies from the sky like rainfall. A facile lie to keep the children occupied from the parent’s sex life.

The gun still didn’t fire. Satan waited until Shadow could finally grab a breathful of air with his tiny fists of gasps, and the gun was nearing closer to his temple (somehow someway I said. I wasn’t sure of what was happening. I downed my Trileptal. I licked some LSD. Wasn’t sure wasn’t sure…). The trigger closer to click. The devil laughed, at the errors of a god.

“You’re Satan,” he said. Another gasp of air filled his lungs. This much oxygen he was once deprived of made him wish for another cigarette. “You can just send me to Hell if you wanted to. I don’t know why you’re taking the hard way and wasting your time just holding the gun to my head and not firing. It’s not like I loved this world enough to keep living on it. All I care about is if Sonic will be okay. You can’t kill him. If anyone is going to kill him, I will. From doing my duty. His brother can’t have that satisfaction. I’m not letting him have it.”

His web could barely string together all of his wonderful meats that lied in wait for him. Taken an extra dose of Trileptal. To keep the creativity up (I can’t believe I’m dosing myself with more madness taking some extra LSD while doing this story and drinking you gotta be crazy I wouldn’t do anything like that to myself would I would I would I…)

The gun turned into a blade and stabbed Yehl through his brain. His metallic wings grew high, a skeletal structure that once was nothing but a skeleton, but it soon grew into another form of a crow, an albicant crow with hard-set blue eyes, its wings the clouds of the sky, the eyes keeping the God’s universe inside himself. His beak had carried the blood of so many lost souls, prying their eyes of the truth.

(I lie! I lie! I lie! Is it true? Do we feed constantly on lies? In this society you do! I see my mother’s breast opening up for me, a monster grinning with bloody teeth and bloody tongues like Mother Dawn, like the milk she was languid with, her body possibly unable to hold so many miracles. Mother? God? Couldn’t be! Father was the Mad Hatter! She was the March Hare!)

Its heart had shown, had pecked underneath its skin, and the crow roared like a tarantula. The wings were the broken shards of the moon, and up from its mouth, up! Up! Up! Was the dead bodies of all the rats that had been vanquished by the sleight hand of God! Mighty wisdom! The ignorance that displayed in these deplorable rats! The eyes could watch the hedgehog crawling through the streets of Seattle to Harboview Medical Hospital, getting one last chance of life, to die in the same land his brother had oh his brother, oh his brother art thou in heaven, glory be to peace with all these disgusting creatures…

The bullets fired, novas and galaxies showered in its eyes! Vivacious flowers they had become, with water as petals, with fire as leaves, with the earth turned asunder with gold! Things were swirling around them both, the liquid world that became ruddy pink, a vibrant yellow, the sky soon shattering under Shadow’s fist, attempting to smash Satan’s head to the pavement, his brain still in-tact, some blood collecting on his fingers as he desecrated my heart (oh, my heart! It beats no longer with passion and joy, but sadness and ache!) The veins pumped more blood, but my face turned blue, as blue as Sonic was, as blue as the Earth, oh I missed my older brother, why did I have to detach from him! Shadow ran. Yes, he ran. Yes. He kept running to the dark corners of space, Satan firing more galaxies as the bullets zoomed past him, sucking up all the debris and the ruins the humans created before they died, and the planet was slowly crumbling up like a piece of paper, a paper heart I had replaced with my real heart, as I was a writer who couldn’t deal with these stories I shed with my eyes and chest anymore.

The red wine tasted salty on my tongue as I sipped it. Tasting like the Seattle sea. How I remembered
going there with my brother, before my father slipped into the shadows of Sound Mental Health, staying there for months, not receiving a single letter from him.

I don’t care about my father. I never have. When schizophrenia claimed him as a statistic, I no longer associated with him. He went into the waves and showed us how he could swim on his back, with the salt burning through his quills. Mother kept drinking champagne as we swam. She kept it in a little flask around her neck, glittering as much as the silver sea.

I always felt my brother was a savior. I once traversed through the waves, seeing where they would take me. I wanted to see the many sea creatures under the ocean. I didn’t care that my eyes burned underneath the tides. I wanted to be an undersea diver one day. So many career choices. I watched as the waves took me further to the abyss of Seattle’s sea, I drank the sun in long gulpful’s as I was rained down with rays, I waved to my brother, who told me to be careful, cause the cystic fibrosis made me too weak to swim so far. He told me if I went any further, I would drown.

I didn’t listen.

I kept hearing the hungry cries of gulls in the desolating air. The sun kept burning my back. The dragon underneath me slithered underneath my legs, I could see its crescent teeth waiting to chew through me, the blood ready to seep through the sea, the rivers running with my life. Like Jesus’ life. The white and red. I wondered if the white was actually cum. It could’ve been the semen his father never used on the Virgin Mary.

Shadow ran, I remembered telling you earlier.

I can’t get too off-track, I believe.

He dashed to the ends of space. Seattle soon evaporated under the stress of the galaxies. Shadow still had his abyssal grenades in his cloak. He could’ve threw them against the faces of all the stars that watched and stared and shined with so much holiness, but Satan continued to run faster on his goat legs, his quills green, the eyes jaded slits. He still looked like him. But the quills soon gathered with the frost of the winters of space. His torso was becoming more animal-like than he was. The goat legs and the demonic tail. He could imagine him with a pitchfork now. Satan, Shadow learned, had truly no weapons. Except manipulation and evil. His gun was the only thing he had. It would soon run out of bullets. But readers, I planned for him to keep one bullet and throw the rest away. That bullet was faulty. It was only good for the self, and Satan had a strict policy against that.

I’m tired.

He kept running.

I kept getting tired.

These lugubrations aren’t helping my mind. I can feel the dark crevices of depression opening and sucking me in. Sonic, with the bowl of my mother’s slop on the floor, trying to shove it up my nostrils as if I was on feeding tube…oh, were those the days.

He threw the gun away.

Satan had flashed a smile, black, ghoulish, with spiders and beetles crawling through his plaque-ridden and masticated teeth by rats, as many rats lived inside Satan, and he asked Shadow, “What is your real name?”

It was already black, but I could tell the world was becoming darker. The black turned into a black that was never saw by humans, except when they faced their worst fears.

The dragon kept coming closer.

I saw that blackness, my friends. I saw it in the sea dragon’s mouth, as it tried to take me away to the deepest tundras of the sea, away from my family. I called out to Sonic as I was driven to the jeweled trenches of the sea, seeing the sapphire surface before my very eyes.

Was God truly a jeweler? I thought to myself.

Did he fashion the Earth into the most beautiful jewel anyone saw, and then as time grew, the jewel was soon run to the ground by the humans and animals, and eventually, we all had our sapphires and diopptases and fluorites and topazes underneath the earth for us to discover, and oh! do humans just
love jewels.
The sky was made of jewels too. A jewel that changed color. An opal.
Special kind of opal.
I could feel my life sapping out of my body, as the dragon clamped through my legs, and I thought if I even survived this, I would be paralyzed. My hands weren’t taken from me at least I told myself. My hands were special. I could draw and paint and write with them. I couldn’t imagine an even worse fate. Either that or suffering through severe brain damage. Or being blind.
I blacked out, the blackest black I ever saw. I could feel warm hands and a warm breath breathing through me. I could hear more seagulls fighting over food. The swig of my mother’s flask. My father swimming on his back and laughing. Nothing seemed to change in that course of time. Sonic only knew. He knew how bloody my carcass seemed to be. He told me my leg was bloody, there was some damage on it, but the doctors could fix it.
Father swimming on his back. Mother drinking through her flask. It was as if they were stopped in mid-motion. That what happened to us didn’t matter. They were stuck in only one time frame, only one scene in an animator’s cartoon. I felt sick. I wanted to throw up. I wished Sonic could just take me to the doctor, but he didn’t have enough strength to carry me. He couldn’t drive. Mother never acknowledged I was hurt. Father talked about how the sun got nearer to the Earth every year until eventually the Earth would totally be absorbed by the sun’s fire. I wanted to cry. Sonic told me we will get there, and he tried to walk me there, with my leg feeling like a million swords had sliced through my skin. I wanted to scream. Scream for everyone to pay attention to me. That I was hurt. That I was alive. But Sonic told me to keep calm. We’ll make it, he said.
Mother continuing to belch and drink by the sea.
Father continuing to listen to his police scanner, hearing about a man who had a fire in his home and had to be rescued by the fire department. Glad I’m not him, he said.
I never wanted to be more safe than this moment. I wanted to just be with my brother, to absorb the sun in my skin, to let all the blood suck back into my body like a sponge, to have the stitches tear through and keep the wounds in place, like I was a teddy bear with a torn leg full of fluff. No one at all looked at us and asked if we needed help. My damage, my fractured leg, seemed to only be supernatural, that no regular human could identify it. Only Sonic. Sonic knew what happened. He knew that a dragon had come and decided to eat my leg as if it was a mince-pie.
I watched the ravens crowd around the trees as the blood filtered from my leg to the sidewalk. I panicked that I was going to die. Sonic told me that I wouldn’t and I would be okay. Yet the pain made tears seethe through my eyes. I told him that the only one who could help us through this ordeal was God.
A god who could understand our plight. I could feel the dragon’s saliva searing my leg apart, make a hole in the whole ligaments, and I could see that I would lose my leg, and not a single doctor, or anyone else, would care enough to help me.
Father still listened to his police scanner as the dusk crevassed the eyes of God. He heard of reports of complaints about a man’s house, that it smelled too much of rotten turnips, and she heard screams in the middle of the night erupting from the home. Police investigated, they said, as my mother watched the sun dive further in the sea, and they saw no evidence of the woman’s claims come to fruition.
I knew that was a lie. Somehow, I knew. He gave them a hundred-dollar bill under their noses and they sniffed it and liked the smell of riches. Was the man truly rich? He kept his money safe, and never spent it, except when the police came over to assess the claims people made about his rotten fetid home.
The system works.
I don’t know where I was going with this. I kept getting off track. Something about my leg. The sun had many tendrils reach my face. The Mother Squid of Prosperity, as it swam in the sea. I could hear the sounds of hellfire emerging from the sidewalks, the smell of coal and burning carcasses. Sonic couldn’t tell, but I could tell how many bodies had roasted in Hell like an open fire.
712,645,250,666,666,666,666,666,666,666,666,666,666…
He wasn’t the devil anymore. But a fey-like creature. A satyr like Pan. Play your little flute Pan. Play it and be happy. Dance! I could see his little furry toes dance before me, as he told me the benefits of signing a contract. My leg would be free from the clutches of another god. I would go back to live with my family. I could live for many years as long as I absorbed all the folklore. And then he asked me if I could do a job for him.

Your brother, back there? He asked me.

Sonic wasn’t aware of my conversation with a little fairy in my eyes, grinning like a knife under the hot moon.

Your brother…he’s important for our cause, he told me.

A new god, I learned.

We were overthrowing the old God, cause he was too old-fashioned. His beard was as white as bitter winter in February, as immaculate as Fudo’s, and his fingers were like old tree roots as he smoked from his peace pipe. His eyes could barely see much of anything. He gave the Republicans power when he was blind to know they were the evil ones. He couldn’t see that children needed to outlive their elders. He couldn’t see that the brilliant shouldn’t suffer from such thick black maladies like I suffered through.

The Old Testament was replaced by the New Testament upon the birth of Jesus Christ. Then he became the new God, treating his followers with kindness and love. But Jesus and the Holy Ghost, they were becoming too wrinkly and deceased to rule over the new world, our new saturnine America.

I see spiders eating my fingers. Not my writing hand, I told them.

Sonic didn’t care for anything else anymore. He didn’t care for the people who followed him. He didn’t care for me. The spiders are biting my heart. I can’t take this. Sonic, my brother, I can’t describe this to you when you see this story after I’m gone…

The fairy told me all about the monarchy of gods. How there was a king ruling over all the other gods. I was going to be that king, temporarily, until I was overthrown by my brother.

Why? Cause he was foolish enough and kind enough to be God.

He desired my bloodlust for power! I thought writing my own worlds, to be trapped under the navy blue seas in my wall and have my mother leave my favorite meal for me by my doorstep as I wrote was enough power I would ever experience. Controlling these characters to do my bidding, having them kill other people as if I was a voice in a schizophrenic’s head, to help one another, to tell their heroes they had done their good deeds and they shall be rewarded. I couldn’t think of anything more godlike. My mother gave me that luxury to have my last few months as comfortable as possible when my leg instantaneously recovered. I only had three months to live, my doctor said. Three months to write my novel of the raven, the novel that I’m writing, right now.

Those months took a long time. More than three months. December I worked so hard, February I worked even harder, March…

March is where I will make my final mark as a writer. As a painter writes their signature on a piece, I knew I would make my voice be heard in this story.

Do you hear that? That’s my heart beating inside these pages. All of these sentences, my friends, are veins. The same veins that were in the sky just a moment ago before the sky was fractured. All of these sentences and punctuation marks and the flow of my blood, they all have an intricate system.

An intricate system of time flowing through here, my blood, on this page, imprinted by your fingers. This is the only copy to have my blood and veins as you hear the gentle ushering of my heart for you to hear and to see and feel, my body is yours as you are reading this story. This is my mind you’re dealing with. My heart and soul, waiting for you to hold, has come to you with these words uttered by my fingers, as I type at this typewriter like a piano, hearing the keys ring in audacious harmony, and Sonic, I see you, facing Shadow. I can see the tension in your eyes, your fists balling up like
tired cats, your eyes gleaming as if they became stars in this universe you were in, and Shadow…
well, I liked him. Honestly I do. But I can’t forgive him to kill you, brother.
He asked you if you loved him.
You don’t know how to answer him, but he said when he became a god, he couldn’t hate anyone.
His heart was too big to hate. He couldn’t even hate me for what I did to him. If Shadow wanted to
kill him, he didn’t want to hold a grudge. Hate him during his infinitesimal afterlife. Sonic barely
knew anything about Shadow’s past. But it would hurt him for a very long time. His uncle would be
immortal in his memory, even if he was no longer existent in this plane they were in.
Sonic asked him his real name.
Istu. My real name is Istu, he said.
Can I ask you a question?
(Shhh, the universe said, as the stars rotated slowly, as the sun’s no longer glimmered and stared.)
What’s that?
You’re supposed to be Judas, aren’t you? But I don’t remember Judas being Indian.
Want to know some interesting facts about ravens?
(Of course you do.)
Ravens are one of the most intelligent animals in the world. They actually make their own tools and
toys to play with by constructing materials that the humans left, or bundles of sticks and twigs.
Ravens are another species of bird that are known to engage in play. Sometimes, if you look closely,
you can see ravens playing by rolling down car windows and tugging animals’ tails.
As humans can completely forget about the appearance of a human and how they treated them,
ravens never will forget how another human has treated them. If you fed them, they will approach
you, possibly wondering if you will give them more food. If you are cruel to them, they will warn
others to never approach you.
The raven that Istu was, he remembered Sonic. He remembered him as a fool, but a fool that was
willing to sacrifice his own life for his brother. As dissociative and as crazy and even as bored and
childish he was, he couldn’t truly hate the ones who wronged him.
I thought he hated me for all the neglect he suffered from his childhood. He couldn’t hate the doctors,
not even the ones that had their snouts punched by him. Istu knew he had a heart, another heart that
beats in unison with mine in these pages, and as he drove one stake into his left wrist, Sonic stuck to
a star that was shaped like a crucifix, he kissed him.
(The Kiss of Betrayal that was ultimately good for the world. As Jesus rose up and atoned all the
humans for their sins…) The needle poked through, little by little. He could feel it lacerate through his skin.
Sonic never felt as alive as he ever did with the kiss, even when his blood was streaming from the
1,000 year old tree bark to the ends of space.
Why are you doing this.
He drove the second stake through his right wrist. More blood ran a river through the shattered Earth.
Why are you doing this.
The needle came out further, a silver point that was as sharp as the Seattle Space Needle. (I laughed
to myself, it literally was a Space Needle. It was growing from his fleshsoil, the galaxy starting to be
birthed…) (Watch children, watch the baby being born…) Please answer me.
Istu…
Please answer me.
Don’t call me that name anymore.
The third stake, tearing through his right leg.
(The Space Need was almost completely out! Take deep breaths, Sonic! Push!) My brother screamed, he cried like the infant he was back at Sound Mental Health! He begged him
to stop. He begged that he will love him through the eternity of the universe, have their blood turn a
frosty gold like the finest wine, and he kept shouting his name, he kept shouting at him to stop!
That was the name of the raven in my other novel. His name was Istu.

Shadow was the embodiment of that raven. He was a character I molded to life with my mythril clay.

You’re the character in my brother’s book, right? And he created you? Originally, my dear readers, Shadow was chopped up to pieces and his uncle’s rats ate his remains. But I made his uncle grow an ounce of sympathy and jealousy from his father who was level-headed and was a great father and husband to his wife, and he let Shadow live and tried to raise him. I gave him a tragic backstory instead. I gave him a reason why he became my raven.

As Kurt Vonnegut said, “Give your character a motivation to want something. Even if it’s just a glass of water.” Shadow wanted lies, yes, but he also wanted someone to feel close to. He never could get close to anyone, and at that moment, when I made him sympathize with Blaze, and feel bad for my brother’s suffering… Shadow had a heart after all. Despite many claims that he never had one.

Shadow said, I want to die with you.

I can’t do this anymore, but I have to keep doing it. Otherwise there won’t be any other world for us to live in.

The stake lancinated Sonic’s left leg.

Aceso gripped the now placenta needle, and through Sonic’s flesh in his mouth, the teeth that was aligned to speak the truth for so many people who looked up to him, and with her deft hands, her nimble hands, she created a brand new universe! She created blue stars with blue thread! Red novas with red thread! She made a new dress for all the new God to wear. He lied as his teeth was sewn away from his mouth and were made into planets and stars, and his tongue was the new sun for the new world. Her thread and her expert hands tore through his body, and like a mortician, she took his non-beating heart and made the new planet. And it became a new form of him, as his body hung like a hock of meat from a butcher, Aceso knowing with her nymph hands she had to be killed for her genius.

(I am yours, she said. She closed her eyes, eternally. Satan drove the blade of his claws through her brain. Did he regret it? Yes, Satan had an ounce of regret, as her blood covered the stars and the galaxies. Her fingers, however, Satan decided they would be preserved in his little collection in Hell. He also had Hitler’s eyes, Stalin’s ears, and Einstein’s brain (he coined the creation of the atomic bomb, he claimed). Ha! He may think he has the collection of blind deaf and dumb, but Einstein never was dumb I remarked! Just autistic!)

The sun boiled his hot flesh, as Shadow knew all he had to do was raise the star above the sun, and leave him to die, until three days later, he was reborn.

He asked me where his gun was at, and I told him I kept it, and I could not allow him to die, otherwise Satan would get angry with me.

“He was behind all of this after all, wasn’t he?”

His eyes grew dark, caustic blood that was darker than Sonic’s blood that flowed and pollinated the new Earth, in its green silky threads.

Evil always had to have a place in the world. Without evil, no one would know what good even was. Or why heroes deserved to be respected. There was good out of all of this, I told him. The new world that both him and Sonic would be a part of. They could make their own gods, their own folklore, their own people (but they had free will, I
reminded him), and they now had the roles of kings, of writers, of artists, painting their own canvas, writing their own novels and stories, commanding their own plot of land. People couldn’t become good without evil. It was the opposite too, but evil had a place in time. That was why the rats lived in the bottom of Seattle and made a despicable world with their machine gods that, little did they know, actually controlled the misery of the humans, as each gear rotated, yet another life was ruined. A baby being miscarried. Someone being murdered. Someone committing suicide. Theft. Even extreme cases like genocide and bombings and slavery.

The rats controlled everything. Evil was really what made Earth so different from the other planets, the other worlds. Because we, and the humans, are capable of committing heinous acts. Only us. Humans made everything interesting. And so did we, with our prowess to become gods.

I told him it was too much evil that was what drove me away. Satan knew that too. Hell was becoming overpopulated. So I wanted to try again I told him. Except Sonic would be God. Because unlike me, he cared. I never cared about anyone but myself and my stories. I never felt anything for my characters.

Sonic’s life was becoming smaller, smaller, his breaths soon as small as his fists, his body seemed to decay like a rose in winter, the sun baking his taut body, and I felt the same way that Cain had felt when he killed his brother. I was behind the murder, truly, but Satan just gave me the blueprints to follow through with it. I wasn’t sure who the culprit was anymore. Manson was charged with murder when he brainwashed everyone to do his deeds. And Satan had brainwashed me to create a new world.

I could imagine the sun had fingers, touching my brother, stroking his face, telling him everything was all right…

The lotus flower floated in space, along with Benjamin’s crumpled up body. And Blaze’s tears that burst into wired flowers, and Wave’s fur boots Storm gave to her, and the one flash of lightning that signaled that Storm was still alive somewhere, looking for his sister in the heavens above. He flew very high, and found nothing, but relative peace. Cream’s body floated too, like a body down the river, along with the miscarried objects and fragments of memory of the other characters I met. There was also Jet’s wine and his bloodied, moist bird lips, but no one really cared, let’s be honest.

What is my real name, Itsu, Satan had asked.

He knew it wasn’t Chip. It was only a pseudonym. A disguise to trick the other people living miserable lives into becoming his slaves. Shadow truly didn’t know, and didn’t know why he would give him such valuable information, when he could stop Satan’s powers at any time.

Mephiles…

The first God that became king assigned him as the creator of evil, ever since Eve bit the fig that caused women to become pregnant and have periods, and he was a snake that crawled on his ribs. He was only a Gardner snake with no fangs. He had no other weapons besides manipulation. I promised her an interesting world, he said. I promised her a world where men would suffer, and women would be the creators, but I gave her pain when she gives birth. I gave the dawn pain when it gives birth to the sun, before Itsu stole that from me. Pain makes things interesting, don’t you think? It makes us stop doing reckless actions. Cause we’re afraid of getting hurt.

Shadow knew that too well.

He said if pain would make him stop doing reckless actions, then he would’ve never killed Sonic on the crucifix star. His body nearly ruptured at the thought of killing him. Someone he sympathized with. The only one who could hear out his pain that his uncle didn’t stop.

I started shaking. My body couldn’t take the LSD any longer. My brain couldn’t process these strange images that I had witnessed with my gold and silver sun and moon. I lied in bed, I watched as Shadow waited the three days Sonic would be revived like a loyal dog, and I threw up, rats floating in space and being collected in the debris to be sucked up by black holes. The hate that stars gathered in their hearth.

I waited.
Easter Sunday came to space.
As the glaring sun came forth with its golden face (my golden eye), Sonic’s body had shriveled up
like a dehydrated and wrinkled fruit, and I thought I could catch his body slowly rising up, gathering
all the breath inside him, then coming out in zephyrean gales that blew the old decayed Milky Way
away, and Shadow held onto the crucifix star, having the wind caress his quills, while I could hear
and see the laughter and smirk of Mephiles as he devoured all remnants of the old memories of Earth,
and I knew Satan would be a part of people’s folklores in this new world as well. Whether he would
be abhorred or worshiped by ignorant teenagers. I wasn’t too sure of which would be more, but he
was evil, and he was smart, and he had sincerity and charisma, and I wondered how I fell into his
trap in the first place.
I regret placing so much suffering on my brother. And my family. Both of them were killed by
Mephiles. Maybe unintentionally, sure, but Myself, I couldn’t deal that I basically killed my entire
family…
Will they come back in the new world? Will I have mom and dad take me to high-class events again,
like opera in the theaters, watching The Great Gatsby with them on a warm Saturday night as people
were full of ice cream and summer beer and sex, walking to parties and dancing on the veranda as
the women got naked and showed their breasts and were caressed by their demonic and sinful hands
that disintegrated her soul as they touched, and Sonic, protecting me, telling me bedtime stories when
mom was too busy, when dad was off reporting, rocking me to sleep as he read Great Expectations
to the best of his ability, and I fell asleep to the soft lull of his words, as if he was a comforting tidal
wave in the shores of Seattle...

Tidal waves don’t beg forgiveness
Crashed and on their way
Father, he enjoyed collisions
Others walked away
A snowflake falls in May...

Not yet.
Not yet, my friend. Not yet.
(Click. I could hear it, ready to speak with lead.)
The stakes, how silver, how many years seemed to pass before a new world was made! (Days to
God could’ve been thousands and millions of years, did you know that?)
Four million years it had been, since Shadow waited, since Sonic woke up, stretching his arms over
the sun and crevassing his body, his ribs protruding from lack of food and drink, and the trees had
He still loved Istu, despite what he did.
I told him about the world he birthed. The world he rose with the needle that Aceso had carried, the
needle that Shadow gave to you in your cheek. Look how beautiful your son is!
I wrote this, to briefly described the millions of years it took to shed more life on the planet:
The world was barren, hot, and barely a single green life had grown on it, but when Sonic and
Shadow had landed on the brown planet, they discovered hope. And with their hope, they began to
cry. With their tears, with their happiness of this new world, the tears soon formed plants. So many
trees! So many grasses and flowers and fruits and vegetables! The tears had formed rivers. They
decided that the new humans could name the rivers, for both Sonic and Shadow believed the world
truly belonged to them, the creatures with free will.
Their tears gave life. Protozoa and amoebas grew from the soil. This is where life started at. This is
where life began, I told them. It will take their own version of days to make the life get to where it
was before. And Sonic had to take care of them. Hear their prayers. Cultivate their passion and hopes
and dreams and desires. Let their happiness grow in your heart. Make Shadow understand, too, that
life wasn’t full of pain.
Life was truly a miraculous thing. Something made with so much emotion. You can tell, cause the first God was bipolar. He was a gifted genius as he made his world. But me? I couldn’t take credit for all of this. The first God was my inspiration. He was more of an inspiration to me than Fitzgerald and Plath and Hemingway, all those guys, and I learned his secrets to creating art.

Sonic and Shadow both held hands, as they experienced the first of the sky giving birth to the sun, as the blood revealed the shining balding head of the new baby boy who would give life to the plants and give the human their light. And they couldn’t be happier. They were its brand new fathers.
A Spider's Goodbye

Spider

Anansi, black busybody of the folktales,
You scuttle out on impulse
Blunt in self-interest
As a sledge hammer, as a man’s bunched fist,
Yet of devils the cleverest
To get your carousals told:
You spun the cosmic web: you squint from center field.

Last summer I came upon your Spanish cousin,
Notable rubber baron,
Behind a goatherd’s hut:
Near his small stonehenge above the ants’ route,
One-third ant-size, a leggy spot,
He tripped an ant with a rope
Scarcely visible. About and about the slope

Of his redoubt he ran his nimble filament,
Each time round winding that ant
Tighter to the cocoon
Already veiling the gray spool of stone
From which coils, caught ants waved legs in
Torpid warning, or lay still
And suffered their livelier fellows to struggle.

Then briskly scaled his altar tiered with tethered ants,
Nodding in somnolence
Appalling to witness,
To the barbarous outlook, from there chose
His next martyr to the gross cause
Of concupiscence. Once more
With black alacrity bound round his prisoner.

The ants—a file of comers, a file of goers-
Persevered on a set course
No scruple could disrupt,
Obeying orders of instinct till swept
Off-stage and infamously wrapped
Up by a spry black deus
Ex machina. Nor did they seem deterred by this.

-Sylvia Plath

It’s been so long since this creation of the world. Days passed. Soon, the world sprouted more life from their tears and the beatings of their heart. I could see life imbued at their fingertips. I could catch the hint of Satan crawling around in his amorphous gray puddle, waiting for the humans to spread sin with their gullible brains and their greedy mouths waiting to devour both other humans and luscious food, like the figs. Sonic had guarded the fig tree that contained the wretched secrets of the old world inside it, and while he knew he could’ve simply destroyed it, he kept it, to remind himself of me.
I’m not sure why Shadow had remained on the planet after he was manipulated to kill Sonic, from both me and Satan. But he couldn’t think about living on the other side of the world without Sonic. The only one who could possibly understand him. He knew if Satan had come with his ribs, had told the woman of how she could gain so much power in this new world she could create, then Death would come back, and he would torture him through this hellish life, again. Would I be repeated? I wondered. No, it wasn’t possible. Our mother and father would give birth to different hedgehogs. Ones not so extraordinary as us. They would suffer from my mother’s blatant alcoholism, my father’s schizophrenia, yes, our brothers and sisters we could create to suffer in the world. I couldn’t stand to watch it anymore. My mother lived again, my father lived again, I should be happy, but I learned of how ignorant and selfish they were. I learned they only wanted children because their other relatives and friends had children. Father had a lot of money back then, and mother quit her old job to live with him, to suck up all his wealth while she grew bloated with Sonic, and then eventually me.

Sonic was truly my friend during those times. He first taught me how to write on the typewriter, when my father was too busy watching CNN, when mom was off drinking in some bar somewhere, using up my father’s SSI checks. Listening to him read those stories to me, even though they were much more advanced than his age…I gained my love of literature from him. My love of writing as we both typed our own story for us to tell the world. And when I wrote this story, I imagined Sonic there, encouraging me, when he was actually too busy planting his life in the Earth like a farmer, as Shadow inspected if things would be going okay. I felt alone again. Sad, bleak, depressed, I really couldn’t get any goddamn lower than this. I wanted to be with my brother in this new world, but I’m stuck in an infinitesimal loop near this planet, never being able to communicate with him. Sonic was the only one I felt I could talk to. I only talked to Mephiles, Satan, whatever the hell his name is, because I wanted what was best for my brother. I knew how depressed he was. He no longer went to his high school classes. He had no desire to go to college. He saw me as an inspiration with my writing when I was so sick and small, when I knew my brother would be bigger than life someday, and I would make him bigger than life, even if it took me all my strength I had in my shrunken little body, with the machines hosed into me and giving me oxygen.

I couldn’t get a new lung. I didn’t have Medicaid despite technically being disabled. My father, however, had SSI and got money for doing absolutely nothing. During my final moments, I relied on Sonic to take care of me, but I couldn’t hate him despite that he couldn’t watch me die. I only had three months to live, and he was admitted in Sound Mental Health for almost attempting suicide. I couldn’t see him go that way. Not my brother…maybe he was crazy. I can give you that. But if my father ever killed himself, I wouldn’t give a rat’s ass. But if Sonic died, I would’ve died immediately. My system would immediately shut down. I wouldn’t allow myself to live anymore. I don’t have him anymore. He’s off in his own little world, and I’m off with only a typewriter to keep me company. The same one my father used, back in his reporting days.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

Writing had kept me sane all these years, I can tell you that, but I got my wish, and it seems like all I lived for was my brother really, instead of writing down novels that no one would read. Although I addressed to you as my readers, the truth is, no one would be able to read this. It would just float in space, indefinitely, for probably billions of years or some shit. The novel about the raven? It would also be forgotten in the annals of space. At least Shadow is the biggest testament to my work, for I have created him and changed the time the Timekeeper had kept in his storage when I wanted to make the biggest reference to my work, but Shadow is unaware of the novel. He can’t tell anyone I made him to be basically my life’s work when I was dying. I had constructed him out of words, I constructed him out of verbs and nouns and adjectives, but he doesn’t recognize me as his father. Possibly cause his real father was a better father than me, but I made him that way.

So… That’s all my work would ever amount to. Novels that no one would read. Would never get
published. Would never get acclaimed for. But it isn’t about me. I did this for my brother, all in the end. And that’s all I can ask for.
But the lesson here is, any reader who ever comes across this story, is that you shouldn’t think you can ever become a god. And if you do, it’s more misery than it’s worth. I learned that the hard way. I made too many deals with the devil to finish my work, and he gave me all the time in the world to put forth so many ideas in my stories. But if you can’t go anywhere, if no one can appreciate you, if no one could tell you what you did right or wrong with the stories, then there wasn’t much of a point in the whole writing thing. Some writers only write cause it’s the only thing they think they can do. And that was the same for me. And I have no urgency to write. I’m no longer fighting for my life with my cystic fibrosis. I’m no longer poor and hungry and wanting my brother to feed me like a baby.
Before I go, I want to tell you one last memory I remember of my brother.
I was in my crib, in an aubergine purple room (before it was painted sea blue), and my brother, with a wide smile like the milky moon I saw in my crib surrounded by so many celestial knives on his young face, picked me up, cradled me, and while he held me, holding the milk bottle deftly in his hand, I could hear his heart beat, and it was slow, rhythmic, like the waves my parents showed me. The sun inside his chest. Even when I was so young, so fragile, I could tell one day, he would become a god.
He fed me. I drank his milk, warm and sweet-tasting. When I was listening to his heart that was underneath all that guarded chest made of steel (Sonic soon no longer showed his heart except to me, as our parents broke us with their neurosis), he reiterated my favorite parts of Plath’s poetry, even if I was too young to handle the content matter of her depressed and black manic poetry.
He remembered all the lines of her poem, “Spider”, and yes! Yes indeed! A line I will post of Suicide off Egg Rock:

He smoldered, as if stone deaf, blindfold,
His body beached with the sea’s garbage,
A machine to breathe and beat forever.
Flies fling in through a dead skate’s eyehole
Buzzed and assailed the vaulted brainchamber.
The words in his book wormed off the pages.
Everything glittered like blank paper.

Everything shrunk in the sun’s corrosive
Ray but Egg Rock on the blue wastage.
He heard when he walked into the water

The forgetful surf creaming on those ledges.

I’m facing the Seattle sea, my readers. And I feel the Seattle sea is facing me. The sea that died a long time ago, millions of years ago, but I still remember it. I still remember it oh so clearly. The same sea that Sonic had tried to kill himself with, twice. The sea that I would sacrifice myself into, into the garbage of the universe, floating away as it’s consumed by black holes. The hate of the stars bleeding and making my body sore with cuts as soon as I pull this trigger.
Sonic died, and then lived again. Twice. I have died, and lived again. This is my second time dying. I’m not dead yet, but I will be soon.
(I’m pressing this gun, this same gun that Shadow once held, ready to burst another universe in my brain and give it the same color as my blood).
This is the result. This is the conglomeration of both my experiences as god and my act of fratricide. My brother Sonic, the god that is creating so much beautiful life there without me, I had killed him twice in my story, maybe three times, and he was brought back to life in three days. In the course of
three months. Although I spent many days (or millions of years) writing this story, I feel this is all I can write. As Sylvia Plath felt that Edge would be her last work she will ever write, this story that I’ve decided to title Fragile Angels (for we all are despite our godlike strength), is my second work completed, and maybe my first major work. Who knows what else I could’ve wrote. But it doesn’t matter.

Sonic, if you find this manuscript in the harsh voids of space, all I wanted to say was that I loved you. And I hope you will become a successful God. Because I wasn’t a very good one. The last God was passionate, a narcissistic genius, but I could never amount to his work.

I hope you’re proud of me anyways. I’ve written you in an accurate light I think. And Yehl and Istu or Shadow or whatever I guess too. And the rest of everyone else.

After you read this entire work however, give it to Satan. And he’ll burn it in the coalfires of Hell. There’s no further use for this work other than for you to read it.

This is where the story ends, my brother.

If there’s one thing that I’ve learned from life: it’s that gods truly aren’t immortal. They are just as flawed as humans. With their pride, gluttony, envy, wrath, lust, sloth, and greed.

I’ve been tired for a very long time.

I remembered when you tucked me into bed, making the sheets so tight against my skin, kissing me like my mother used to do years ago, and you told me I should get some good rest, I haven’t slept in what looked like many years.

And I promised you that I will.

(The sun sinks, everything turns black, my sorrow overtakes me, I am drowned in the sea of bitter jealousy and hate and self-loathing, and my body drifts to the ends of the space. Bless me bless me. Done so much for you. And I hoped that my life truly had meaning, that I was truly a martyr for the cause of sin and genius.)

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