

Mark studied every inch of the archway. He had been here many times before with Rachel. It felt magical and ancient. The stone work was solid. Though much was gone, it was clear that this arch was once the entrance to someone's home. Though nothing appeared different, Rachel woke him in the dead of night to bring him out here. She was excited by something.

"I don't see it," Mark said.

Not certain of what changed, he looked a second time. He shined his flashlight on the structure.

"Keep looking," Rachel kept moving her flashlight from the arch to the ground.

Along the ground, Mark noticed the change, "You replaced some stones."

"You could say that," Rachel said. A large smile lit her face.

"Are you trying to rebuild this place?" Mark said.

"You said we should rebuild it!" Rachel's grin turned to a pout, "I thought you'd be happy."

They found the arch during elementary school. As kids, they would pretend the house was still there, and they lived together. But during middle school, Rachel would sit here alone reading. She would not call him to join her, and leave after he would arrive. The past summer, they started hanging out at the arch to talk again.

"That was as kids. I thought later maybe," Mark turned towards Rachel.

"We don't need to wait. It's almost morning," Rachel looked down, avoiding Mark's eyes.

"No, I mean...well...we just started high school, Rachel," Mark said.

"For two months," Rachel raised her eyebrows as she looked back up at Mark.

"I meant as adults when we can do it right," Mark said.

"What if I have a way to do it now...Do it right! We could spend our whole lives in it, instead of dreaming about it," Rachel said.

"I don't understand," Her mention of spending their lives together intrigued him.

Rachel's smile returned. Brown hair brushed against her shoulders as she spun towards a backpack sitting on the forest floor. The yellow bag was a mess of dirt and stains. Mark knew inside held a mixture of loose papers, pencils, and random items. He marked it up as her dislike of school. She received detention the second week for calling her history teacher a "historically ignorant liar" and accused him of being part of the "history cover-up propaganda task force." They have since agreed to disagree.

Mark wondered what Rachel had in mind as he watched. The sky was starting to lighten as sunrise approached, but it was still dark. Rachel held her flashlight in her mouth. She dug through the bag. The sound of rustling papers was the only noise in the otherwise quiet morning. After a minute, Rachel lifted her bag and dumped its contents onto the ground. Mark shook his head as items scattered everywhere. Rachel tossed the bag aside, and removed the light from her mouth. Rummaging through the mess, let it spread over a wide area. As Mark was about to offer his help, Rachel stopped and stood up straight.

"I remember," Smacking her forehead, Rachel reached into her back pocket and pulling out a tiny book.

It was smaller than her palm and no thicker than her finger. Mark thought that it was a journal she kept. However as she held it up for him to see, he realized it was very old. The worn cover was made of

leather. As Rachel opened the book, he could see the stitching holding the pages. Inside was hand written text. Mark was unable to read it.

“What language is that?” Mark asked.

“I’m not sure what it’s called,” said Rachel as she skimmed the pages.

“Where did you get this?” Mark said.

“At my aunt’s house,” Rachel said.

“Please explain,” Mark said.

“Okay. Remember how Aunt Cecilia taught me that old language?” Rachel walked to the archway and sat on a stone beside it. Mark followed. It was where they often sat.

“Yeah. That one where you yelled, ‘Tea your ask!’ at Jeff when he kept teasing you last year and he fell back onto Mr. Lehrer?” said Mark.

“Yeah, but it was ‘Teorasc.’” said Rachel.

“Tay...row...ask. Tey...oh...rask. Whatever. What about it?” said Mark.

“Well, she learned it from my great-grandmother. Aunt Cecilia called her Mama Luminia,” said Rachel.

Mark nodded.

“Mama Luminia left an old journal to Aunt Cecilia. She showed me years ago, but wouldn’t let me read it,” Rachel said.

“You took your grandmother’s diary from your aunt?” asked Mark.

“No...Well I guess technically...” said Rachel.

Rachel turned the book to a page. Mark watched her skim the lines of text. She set the book down after finishing the page. Without a word, she placed her open hand on the ground. With her free hand closed in a fist, she traced with her thumb a circle over and over on the back of her hand on the ground.

“Fluri. Crescicum,” Rachel said as her tracing hand completed a circle and drew a line up her arm.

“What are y-” Mark hesitated as Rachel’s hand started to faintly glow green where she had traced.

Rachel smiled while lifting her hand. Under was a violet that rose at the same gentle speed. It was vibrant in color. The petals and leaves unblemished.

Mark watched in stunned silence.

Satisfied with the height of the flower, Rachel closed her hand. The glow vanished. Mark remained frozen in awe. His eyes locked on the flower.

After a minute, Rachel broke the silence.

“Mama Luminia left my aunt her spellbook,” Rachel said.

Mark nodded, but refused to stop looking at the flower.

“Did you hear me? A spellbook. Magic. Supernatural. Witchcraft and wizardry.

WoooOOOOooo,” Rachel made playful ghost sounds as she wiggled her fingers towards Mark. With no response she prodded Mark in the side.

Mark turned his head, but kept his eyes on the flower.

“Yeah?...” Mark trailed off. His head returning to the violet.

Rachel gave up and walked around cleaning up the mess she had made. Every few moments glancing at Mark. His face still frozen on the flower.

Mark's mind was buzzing with questions. He knew there had to be a trick, an illusion, to what he saw. Yet, there was no way she could have planted the flower while he watched, and not disturb the soil. How did Rachel's hand glow? Did she apply some kind of glow paint? How did she have activate it? Did she say 'Magic,' or did he just imagine that?

"No," Mark said.

Rachel let out a yelp as she jumped in shock. She had finished cleaning and was standing beside Mark about to poke him in his side again. Her jump startled Mark, and he jumped.

"I started to think I turned you into a mannequin," said Rachel.

Mark let out a short chuckle.

"No. This isn't magic. I can't figure it out, but you fooled me," he said.

Rachel pursed her lips as she stared at Mark. He stepped back from the force of her look.

"I-I guess you could explain first," he said.

Rachel's smile returned, and without any grace, she plopped down to the forest floor. She crossed her legs as she opened the book. Mark sat beside her with the speed of a hiding sloth. He was unsure what to expect.

"This is a spellbook. A real spellbook!" Rachel bounced with excitement as she flipped pages.

Mark remained silent as he watched. Her excitement was infectious. Mark found himself smiling as Rachel would point to a page, call out some word or phrase he did not understand, and then give a short explanation.

"Crescicum. Grow a plant. Vedintuner. See in the dark. Mergettacut. Walk silently," Rachel flipped page after page.

The sun was just above the horizon. Songbirds began greeting the day. Mark became lost in the moment and stopped hearing Rachel call out spells. He focused on her sitting beside him. She leaned against him every few pages. She would turn her head and smile as she spoke. There were more pages than the book's size would suggest. He did not care. He was happy.

Rachel sat up and turned towards him, "There are even pages devoted to how to properly make new spells, and even better...How to train others to use them."

"Okay?" said Mark.

"It means I can teach you a spell that I create or is already in the book," said Rachel.

"Is that safe?" asked Mark.

"Yeah, why wouldn't it be?" Rachel flipped back to a page she had passed, "Imidau timpul pentruasta."

Mark waited for her to explain it. Rachel skimmed the page with her finger, but said nothing. Mark watched as she started back at the top.

"What is that one? 'Emmy dow. Temple. Pen truest, ah?'" said Mark.

Without answering his question, Rachel jumped up and faced the remnants of the stone wall beside the archway. She looked over the stones on the wall and those that fell to the ground years before.

"Come here," said Rachel.

Mark stood. As he brushed dirt and leaves off, Rachel put the spellbook in her back pocket. Mark stepped behind her.

Extending one arm, Rachel traced an 'x' on it with the middle finger of her opposite hand. After drawing a line up her arm, she paused for a moment.

Mark worried when nothing happened, but decided to wait. He was unsure if anything should happen.

Without speaking, Rachel turned her arm over and opened her fist. She took a deep breath. With her palm facing up, she drew a line back down her arm to the center of her palm. Reaching it, she lifted her finger and clenched her fist. Mark watched the tendons in her arm straining to keep her fist tight.

"Okay, I think I got it," Rachel spun around and looked up at Mark.

"What?" said Mark.

"I was practicing a spell," said Rachel.

"What does it do?" Mark's eyebrow raised.

"Imidau timpul pentruasta. I told you earlier," said Rachel.

"Oh..." Mark was embarrassed that he missed hearing the spell. He panicked when Rachel remained silent. Worried that he was blushing, and that she would notice, "Um...I, um, forgot that one."

"Really?" Rachel furrowed her brow and pursed her lips.

Mark sighed in relief. Her overemphasized expression was something she did before when when pretending to be mad.

"There were a lot to remember," he said.

Rachel rolled her eyes as she dropped her expression.

"Fine. I guess I can explain it once more. Imidau timpul pentruasta. Reverse the effects of time on something," said Rachel. She turned back towards the wall, "Now watch."

Mark remained silent as she raised her arm.

"Imidau," she started the same movements.

"Timpul," she reached the top of her arm.

As Rachel paused, Mark felt an energy in the air. The birds were quiet. The world was paused. He saw goosebumps rising on Rachel's arms as she started to take a deep breath. Mark watched her finish the remaining motions, ending with the same clenched fist.

"Pentruasta," Rachel whispered the last word and remained motionless.

Mark stood frozen. Starting at the top of Rachel's arm, the lines traced by her finger started to glow with a pale blue light. The light travelled down her arm like a thick syrup leaving a faint glow as it passed. There was a brief flash as the light reached her hand. Birds returned to their songs, and Mark could hear leaves rustling in a breeze.

"Here we go," Rachel looked back at Mark and gave him a quick smirk.

"Okay, I'm ready...I think," said Mark. He offered up a weak smile.

Rachel looked back at the wall. She opened her hand with the palm facing the wall. The glowing lines brightened.

Mark tried to guess what would happen. How would the effects of time be reversed? He looked at Rachel's glowing arm, and then the wall. Back and forth his eyes darted. The lines remained brighter, but the wall remained the same. It felt like minutes passed as he waited. He thought maybe the stones appeared a little less worn, but it was subtle.

Rachel remained motionless. Her breaths were steady as if sleeping, but her eyes were wide and focused on the wall.

"Rachel?" Mark started to worry that something was right. He wondered how to help if there was a problem. He could shake her, but worried it might be too jarring.

At first he failed to notice the dust. At the base of the wall, a small cloud was rising. Something was disturbing the ground. Mark gasped when a stone lifted into the air. Rachel was unfazed by the floating rock. As it approached the current height of the wall, it drifted onto the wall.

Rachel closed her open palm. Turning to Mark, she gave him a weak smile. She appeared tired.

"See?...It...worked," Rachel stuck her tongue out.

"Are you okay?" Mark reached forward to catch her as she stumbled.

"I'm...good...Just makes...tired...me," she yawned and ended it with a grin. "All...in...book...just read...while I...sleep."

"Um, I can't?" Mark said.

"Hmm?..." Rachel kept talking as she closed her eyes, "...I read...some...I...oh...thanks...for the...catch...hit head...last...time..."

Mark lowered Rachel to the ground and sat holding her as she fell asleep. He was worried. She said nothing about this, and now all he had was her instructions to read as she slept.

"Rachel, I don't know how to read that book," his words went unheard. Rachel was fast asleep. Mark sat alone, too nervous to let her go.

He sat for a few minutes trying to figure out what to do. He studied Rachel's face up close. Without her constant movement and exaggerated expressions, she seemed older. He could see the subtle hints of where lines might one day form on her face. He tightened his hold to give a brief hug, and leaned his head towards her ear.

"I like you a lot, Rachel," he said. "Please be okay."

Time passed as Mark sat. He debated leaving to get help, but Rachel did not appear distressed, only sleeping. The sun had risen well into the sky before Rachel woke up.

"Good morning, Mark," her voice soft, but cheerful.

"You're awake!" Mark, startled at the noise, dropped his hold on her.

Rachel let out a yelp as she dropped to the dirt, "Well, I am now."

"Sorry," Mark said.

"So how was that? Believe me?" Rachel got up and walked to the wall to examine it.

"You got me. I believe you, and you can teach me this?" Mark stepped next to Rachel.

"I can sorta teach you. I do the same spell, but on your arm," Rachel said.

"And there's no catch? I mean, you passed out for a while, but it doesn't hurt you?" said Mark.

"Nope. You have strange dreams, but nothing bad," said Rachel.

"Strange dreams? Like what?" said Mark.

"Well, this time, in my dream, there was some old guy in a casket, a funeral or something. Had a nice family. Weird, but not a bad dream," said Rachel.

"And you didn't know any of them did you?" said Mark.

"Nope. It was just a dream," said Rachel.

"Well, I guess...can I try it?" said Mark.

"I was hoping you'd want to," Rachel smirked as she grabbed his arm.

Rachel explained the steps. The process was the same except she would hold his hand to draw the lines on his arm while speaking the words. All Mark had to remember was when to open and close his fist.

They practised a few times without the words. Mark felt a rush of excitement each time Rachel took his hand. He fought a blush when their eyes met on the third practice.

"I think you got it," Rachel said after the seventh.

"So...the real thing this time?" said Mark.

"Yup. You ready?" said Rachel.

Mark took a deep breath, "Yeah...I think so. I just hold my hand towards what I want to repair?"

"Yup! Point your palm towards the wall and it will fix it by un-aging....de-aging?...reversing the time on it," said Rachel. "It will start slow, and speed up over time. When you want to stop, just close your hand."

"Alright. Let's do it," said Mark. He was hesitant, but excited.

Rachel began the ritual as they had practiced, but this time she spoke.

"Imidau."

Mark felt a tingle on his hand as the lines lit up.

"Timpul."

The sensation travelled up his arm. It passing where Rachel stopped. He felt an energy buzzing from his hand, to his head, and down to his feet.

"Pentruasta."

Rachel finished drawing the lines on his arm. As Mark completed the ritual's final motions, it felt like energy was flowing from his entire body to his clenched fist. He felt Rachel beside him holding his hand. They both had goosebumps, and the light hair on their arms brushed against one another. Static shocks jumped between them.

"Okay. You are ready to go," Rachel pulled her hand away.

Mark looked at his arm and fist. Glowing blue, he could feel the energy ready to jump out, "Anywhere?"

"Yup, anywhere. Just think about what you're point at with your palm," Rachel nudged him toward the wall, "and when you're done, I'll catch you."

Mark found a spot on the wall near the arch. It was where Rachel had worked. He opened his hand and pointed it at the wall. He was unsure whether to think about how the wall looked now, or how it might look. He decided to think of it as complete. His arm glowed bright.

He worried when nothing happened, but remembered Rachel explained that things would speed up. He was relieved when he started to see dust. Mark felt energy flowing through him and out his hand as he watched a stone lift back into place. When it settled in position, he closed his hand.

"Did you see that!" Mark yelled. He immediately regretted it as he felt his energy drop. Rachel caught him as he started to fall.

"Careful," Rachel lowered him to the ground.

"Was...not expecting that...so...fast," Mark yawned as he spoke.

"It's okay. You're going to fall asleep. I'll keep watch over you. So don't worry," Rachel said.

The world around him faded as he fell asleep. Rachel disappeared from his sight, an elderly woman replacing her. Mark was enveloped in a dream.

The woman was smiling as Rachel would. She was resting a hand on Mark's arm as he lay in a bed. She sat in a chair beside him.

At the end of the bed stood a couple. They were adults. The man was unrecognizable, but the woman looked familiar. She appeared to be related to Rachel. He thought maybe a cousin or aunt he did not know. The couple held a tiny baby. He had not seen one so young, a newborn. Everyone was talking and laughing, but he could not hear anything.

"I see you waking," Mark heard Rachel call out. He could feel her playing in his hair.

Mark groaned as he tried to open his eyes to the daylight, "That was definitely weird."

Rachel laughed as she helped Mark sit up. He told her about his dream, and she agreed that it was odd. They got up and examined the wall.

"Looks like your spell works," said Mark.

Rachel nodded. Her eyes focused on Mark's face.

"You're getting facial hair," she said as she reached towards Mark and tugged on a stray hair on his chin.

"Ouch," Mark rubbed his chin. "So, this will take a while."

"I believe if we don't stop after each stone, it will speed up. Stones flying everywhere!" Rachel imitated stones in the air with her hands.

"Okay. So I guess you want to start me up again, then yourself? Can you do that?" said Mark.

"You can do it without me," said Rachel.

"What?" He tried to understand, "How?"

"You know the motions, and according to the book, once I cast through you, you can do it yourself," said Rachel.

"That's...interesting," said Mark.

Rachel had Mark repeat the words of the spell, "Imidau. Timpul. Pentruasta."

He struggled with the pronunciation. The words felt odd in his mouth, but Rachel pressed him to get each one exact.

When satisfied that he had it, Rachel prodded his side, "Took you long enough. Now cast it."

Mark took a deep breath. Closing his eyes, he went over the spell. He reopened his eyes and began. Much to his surprise, as he started the spell, his arm lit up. Rachel cheered Energy flowed through his body. As he finished, Rachel cast it herself. He watched with a smile as her arm glowed like his.

"Let's do this," Rachel said with a smirk. They opened their hands and started working.

Everything was slow as it had been before. With the first stone in place, the two continued. Little time passed before another stone rose back in place followed by two more. Rachel laughed as the speed of stones increased. Rocks leaping from the ground, eager to return to the wall.

Rachel danced around what would become the interior. She was directing stones in a chaotic symphony. At times, they zipped through the air. From origins far outside the forest. Mark knew someone would be missing their walkway.

Mark stepped through the arch and focused his time on it. A pile of stone jumped up from near the growing structure and flew to the arch. Mark watched as a window reconstructed above.

He was unsure how many years they were erasing. Though it was early fall, and the day held to the warmth of summer, snow would at times appear along the wall. As quickly as it appeared, it would vanish.

He tried counting each snow. He thought it would keep track of the years erased. The speed increased, and Mark lost count.

“Isn’t this great!” Rachel called from the other side of the wall.

“This is amazing!” Mark could no longer see Rachel over the wall.

“I think I want to stop soon and see our work,” said Rachel.

“How soon?” asked Mark.

“Go ahead and close your hand now. But sit down! I don’t know how quickly we’ll fall asleep. Meet me at the arch if you can make it,” said Rachel.

“Oka-...” Mark had closed his hand. Before he could respond, he felt the world slip away as he fell into asleep.

Dreams invaded Mark’s mind. Scenes passed at a pace difficult for to keep up with. The elderly woman returned, each dream, appearing younger.

The adult couple were in a few of the dreams. In one, he was at their wedding. They appeared younger. He sat beside the older woman. She was much more youthful. Her hair was darker, less grey and more brown, and wrinkles were smoother. Her features more familiar with the loss of age.

Dreams passed.

The older woman remained, growing young. The younger woman appeared more. She became a teenager, then child, and toddler. Mark saw the older woman in a bed holding her as a newborn. He was happy as he took the infant in his own arms.

More dreams.

He was at an altar. He recognized his parents. In the distance, a bride approached. He knew it was the woman.

More dreams.

The woman appeared often, now young. She was beautiful. She turned around to smile during a dream of his high school graduation. He saw Rachel.

“Mark.”

Mark heard a voice. Familiar, but different.

“Mark...please...”

It was sad. Mark struggled to open his eyes.

“Mark?...Come on...”

It was pleading.

“Can you hear me? Mark?”

Painful light streamed in. His eyes opened. He was awake.

“Oh, Mark! I’m so sorry!”

Someone hugged him. The person buried their face on his shoulder.

“What is...what is going on?” said Mark.

He was sitting in front of the arch. With the back wall still missing, Mark could see the sun setting. It was framed by trees bare of leaves. He saw time passing.

“Mark. I messed up. I read more. I messed up.”

Mark the voice was Rachel, but different. He reached to her, and caught sight of his gaunt hands. The skin marked with age hung loose.

“What happened?” he asked.

Rachel lifted her head. Tears streamed from her eyes. Mark was looking at the elderly woman from his dreams.

“Mark...the spell...it does more than just reverse time on something,” Rachel said.

“What did it do?” said Mark.

“It takes your time...It gives your time to something,” said Rachel.

“It takes our time?” Mark was confused.

“The spell...it takes the years of our life away...and it gave them to the house,” Rachel composed herself.

“What can we do?” Mark tried to adjust how he was sitting, but pain shot through his hip.

“We can’t,” Rachel started to cry. “The house has our years now.”

Mark did not know what to say.

Rachel sobbed again, “Mark...the dreams...do you remember them?”

“Yeah?...” Mark hugged Rachel. He rubbed her back as she cried. Her hair was longer.

“The book...it said...I didn’t read it before now...” Rachel stopped for a moment.

“It said what?” said Mark.

Rachel continued.

“The dreams...they’re the memories...the memories that are gone...” said Rachel.

“Gone?” said Mark.

“Those dreams...that was our...future...the future we won’t have...anymore...” Rachel stopped.

Mark sat stunned. He was at a loss of words. He was starting to understand what had occurred. He cried.

Time passed. The sun moved closer to the horizon, and Mark’s hip still ached. He thought about what he would miss. He wondered how long he had left to live. He had dreamed of his high school graduation, and he was a freshman.

“Three years? Maybe?” Mark said.

“What?” Rachel sat up and looked at Mark.

“Three years. If your dreams stopped when mine did at graduation, we have maybe three years left until we die,” said Mark.

“I don’t wan-” Rachel tried to put her hand over Mark’s mouth, but he turned his head and continued.

“We wanted to spend our lives here...together. Well,” Mark looked at Rachel, “we did. We mostly have the same memories, and we got them all here.”

Rachel lowered her hand, but remained silent.

“So let’s agree to stay together,” said Mark.

Rachel moved her head in a slow nod.

“I was scared to say it to your earlier today, but I care for you. And I guess at some point I would have gotten over that fear if my dreams were true,” said Mark.

"I...I know," Rachel took Mark's hand in her own.

"Huh?"

"Remember when I avoided you a few years ago?" asked Rachel.

Mark nodded.

"I liked you then. But I thought you would find me silly. I'd come out here to read hoping to see you, but when you would arrive, I got nervous and left," said Rachel.

"Really?"

"Yeah. When I realized you liked me this summer, I stopped running away. I kept hoping you'd say something, but you were nervous, and I didn't want to pressure you," said Rachel.

"Aren't we a pair," said Mark.

"Yeah," Rachel laughed. "The one thing I didn't jump into blindly."

Mark shook his head as he laughed with her, "Well, I guess we have each other now. Let's sleep here, and tomorrow we can go yell at some teenagers together."

Rachel stopped laughing, and stood up, "I can't."

Mark looked up at her. Her head was lowered and eyes closed.

"Mark, I saw you before I fell asleep. You fell hard, and I think you broke your hip," said Rachel.

"What? My hip?" said Mark.

"Also, I don't know how long, but we slept for days, maybe longer," Rachel looked around. "The leaves have all fallen, it's cooler out. I guess it's late October now, maybe November."

"But it was the start of October. Why did no one come looking?" asked Mark.

"I don't know. But I'm too weak to carry you, and you can't walk. What's worse, I looked. Your leg is turning green. I think you're dying. This isn't the first time you woke up," Rachel's tears continued, but she spoke with resolve.

"I...That's why my hip and leg ache," Mark said.

Rachel nodded.

"Is there not a spell to fix this? Cure disease? Mend? Heal? Greater Heal?" said Mark.

Rachel smiled through her tears, "I looked. There was nothing like that written down. I also looked at how to make a new spell. The time needed would be too long. At least to ensure it worked correctly without any bad side effects."

"Like aging a whole lot?" said Mark.

"Yeah. The notes later in the book mentioned that spell was still being perfected, and warned against using it too long. We could have continued past our current time. Go all the way back to our birth," said Rachel.

"What happens if we did that?" asked Mark.

"We drop from everyone's memory. If we passed our current age, we would have died as soon as we finished our dreams. Everyone else would only remember us up to the point we stopped existing in time. Then they would have some vague idea that we disappeared and were presumed dead or something." Rachel made short paces in front of Mark.

"Well, at least we got to talk again before I died," Mark sighed. As death kept jumping closer, Mark became less afraid of dying.

“There’s one thing. When we give time in that spell, we somehow give more than we lose. We gave centuries to this building, but only lost decades,” Rachel stopped pacing and stood tall before Mark.

“What do you mean?” Mark looked up at Rachel her arm extended, “What are you doing?”

“I still have a few years left. Fourteen to Seventeen to be specific. That should be more than enough to remove the decades you lost. It will cure you, and when you wake again, you will be fourteen,” Rachel practiced drawing on her arm as she spoke.

“But-” Mark tried to get up, but pain once again shot through his hip.

“You will forget me, forget my impulsiveness, and this folly we got ourselves into,” Rachel ignored Mark’s attempts to distract her from the ground.

She rushed through the ritual, “Imidau. Timpul. Pentruasta.”

Mark sat in front of Rachel pleading for her to wait.

Her arm glowing bright, Rachel’s face softened for a moment, “Live a full life for me. Okay?”

Mark tried to speak, but as Rachel opened her hand, light blinded him. Within moments, Mark was once again sleeping.

“Son! Wake up!”

Mark opened his eyes, squinting into the daylight. Someone was shaking him.

“Hey! Can you understand me, son! What is your name?” said the figure.

Mark started to sit up. Leaves stuck to his face, and the daylight still too bright for his eyes.

“Careful there. Don’t sit up too fast,” said the figure.

“Who is he?” called another person from behind the first.

“Not sure. He just woke up,” said the first.

As Mark’s eyes adjusted, he saw the figure wore a dark uniform.

“This woman’s dead. She looks ancient, but she’s dressed like a kid,” said the second person.

“Look through that bag, see if you can ID one of these two,” said the first.

“Police,” Mark remembered the uniforms. They were police officers.

“Yeah, son? It’s going to be okay. I’m Officer Stanton, and that’s Officer Collins,” Stanton gestured towards the second person that was looking through a dirty yellow bookbag. “Do you know your name?”

“Umm, Mark?”

“Okay, Mark. Do you know why you’re out here?” said Officer Stanton.

Mark shook his head. He looked around. Nearby stood a stone archway in a stone wall. The structure was partially ruined. Stones sat on the ground.

“Okay. Do you know her?” The officer pointed at a body on the ground.

Mark looked it over. She seemed familiar, but he did not know why. An elderly woman, her face looked worn with time. Mark shook his head, “No, sir.”

“Let’s get you out of here then. Get you home.”

Mark followed. In his back pocket, he felt something, a small book made of leather. He glanced back at the body and wondered what happened.