

Ness

A child born in prominent upper middle class was always given anything he ever wanted. Silk ties, sewing machines, voice recorders, typers, rugs, raccoon furs, attention, affection. Anything he liked, he got. His mother was a designer in the fashion world, hailed as one of the rising Always Inspiring Women's clothing designers in various popular magazines such as 'All Women, All Beauty' and 'Current Top Fashion for Women'. Many people in Ness's world ate those kind of reputations and achievements up, saying if you didn't have a name for yourself, then you were an utter waste of molecules. Neighbors, particularly the women, usually passed gossip about his mother; Ness would hear it almost every time he left the house in his chauffeur's car and he would glow with pride for her.

His father was an infamous lawyer in his field; he was often called ruthless, egotistical, and intimidating for his large stature and natural dominance over the courtroom from the moment he entered it. In the courtroom, Ness watched his father leave opponents and judges in stone-cold silence with his fearsome gaze and haughty, yet clear-cut evidence. It was no wonder seduction, charm, and intimidation were methods Ness believed to be sure successes at convincing others to obey. However, Ness loathed the man because he would scream and throw whatever came into his hands at his two younger brothers during times of stress from work. When his mother was not around to protect them or was otherwise occupied, Ness would be the one to stand between the children and his father, taking the brunt of his verbal abuse and hurls. He came to have a complex about his heart-shaped birthmark because his father would insult it every time it came into his line of sight: "Hey princess, got another heart to lend?" "You look like such a girl with that heart. Doesn't help that you're so tiny. Why don't you rip it off that skin you love so much with the money we give you."

It wouldn't be far from the truth for Ness, the older he grew, to fantasize about murdering him with scissors every night. No one should be able to damage his pride and beauty and get away with it. Luckily, his mother frequently and easily subdued—or rather, seduced—his father. "Nessy, you take your brothers and hide in the shoe closet. I'll take care of that brute. He's nothing outside of the Upper Courtroom," she'd say to Ness, then to her husband when he asked for them, "They went out to the library, dear. They have school work, you know. How 'bout you and I take a stroll in the garden? We haven't talked much this week. I miss you." Hand resting on his arm like it belonged there, they'd leave. She seemed to be his one weak spot and she always knew exactly how to handle him; they were old friends, after all.

Despite having his mother to help, in a form of revenge, Ness used to resort to common thievery; he stole whatever he could of his father's and disposed of them, hid them, or sold them off to the less fortunate. The peasants his father looked down upon received great deals from his son! If only he could use the

information to spite the man. Of course, whenever he ran out of things to take, he would go into town to snatch from easy targets to get his fix. In a way, petty burglary became his number two method to lick his smarting ego. His first method was to cut and sew, be they fabric, cotton, paper. When he was making things for animals and people to wear, well, everything felt easy; he also felt like he had a purpose. From that first instance of praise showered upon him when he drew out an intricate school uniform, he was transformed; he sought attention and compliments in the form of his creations. He desired that moment of importance again more than anything. It wouldn't be an impossible dream for him to one day take the title of Always Inspiring Men's clothing designer, opposite to his mother.

Niccolo

In a book room where each wall was filled shelf to shelf and each shelf with book to book from one end to the other, a lone boy no more than seven would be seated on the floor in various sections every day from morning to night. He spent his days filling up his brain with physiology, psychology, science, legends of historically world-renowned ability users, how-to guides for channeling and casting power in both a human body and animalistic body, and nonfiction and fiction about ability users. Many of the books owned by the Altobellos were without dust, and the bookshelves without book imprints, due to him. It was well known to everyone that some people with more of a human body than an animal one were less gifted in ability usage, and such was especially the case in Niccolo's, despite his family's history and genetics of powerful users.

As children, he used to play often with his brother, Calvino, who one day started to take magic seriously and left Niccolo behind. Calvino was perfect. Talented at magic, socially adept with a silver tongue, confident, intelligent. Of course he'd succeed the family, continue the bloodline of ability users. As his younger brother, Niccolo always chased after him, but he knew from the beginning how fruitless his initial dream of matching him would be. He abandoned it quickly and confined himself in the library and study room. No more playgrounds and parks. No more sports. No more magic games.

For a blood child of a powerful family, Niccolo was magically far too weak and inferior. By the age of nine, he should have hit the peak of his magical abilities, but nothing changed. He had as much magic as he did from when he was six. At six, he realized his magic was not improving the same way his classmates' were, so he had done everything he could by studying and training—all for naught. His parents took him to all sorts of ability teachers, magical doctors, and even non-magical doctors over several years. Until he turned 18, no one and nothing had helped change his weak state. Many people, relatives included, believed he was useless; a strong personality like Niccolo's was wasted if his body couldn't compare.

He tried his best to make up for his magical inferiority in brain power, knowledge, and strength of character. Call him a nerd if you will, but insult his low abilities, and you'd be rebuked for lack of aiming talent, inadequate control of energy, or whatever other flaw ailed you. One mere look at an ability user and Niccolo could easily determine a few statistics about their strength, ability, and flaws, having honed his skill of observation. However, while he seemed to have a tough attitude, he wasn't as strong or intelligent as he tried to appear, especially where his weaknesses were concerned. The fact he wasn't a genius irritated him the most. He was neither prodigy nor genius.

Although students were not kind to him, one ability teacher in high school always treated Niccolo generously. He interjected when kids picked on him in class, asked him questions that he would always answer correctly, permitted him to work alone on group assignments, spoke with him during breaks in class when he didn't have a book to read, left him alone when he wanted to be alone. Niccolo loved him like he loved his books; he was a free and gentle source of knowledge. While his family did not bother to hire a personal trainer for Niccolo, his teacher sparred with him and trained him privately. Because of him, Niccolo decided to follow his dreams of becoming a magical librarian and researcher; he became who he was today, a proud magical educator, all thanks to good mentor Mr. Manski. Thanks to him, he no longer saw adults as capable of only being self-centered power chasers.

Xereth

"I'm ... sorry."

Xereth always pulled off the tough boy exterior, cold as an iceberg in a winter sea, as a child. He was the same as his great grandfather, whose heart was never touched even after he had children. Most of the family never knew what to do with him, what to say to him; if he didn't respond, let alone smile, then *what was the point?* they all thought. Kids let him be. Adults let him be. He grew up alone, forced to go out wherever his parents desired. He may have seemed like a shell, but he liked being productive. He discovered a little spark of life in doing work for other people, serving humans, so as he aged, he undertook job after job—even it meant doing odd jobs. Ranging from shopping errands to investigating a potential kidnapping, he was asked to do many things after those in his hometown discovered the results of his diligence. He enjoyed production and effort due to the thoughts they generated in his head; as long as he didn't feel empty, he would keep living through work.

When he was only a boy, Xereth was forced to watch his parents drown in a torture tank, which their sworn enemies locked from the top. He had been sitting in the viewing room, trapped and helpless. Even if he couldn't pity his parents, for several minutes that stretched like hours, his stunned eyes could only take in the extent of suffering on their faces; as a result, his brain was forcibly rewired to comprehend near-death or death situations as "not good." His parents and ancestors had also been born with a lack of empathy or compassion, and lived all their lives as such, so Xereth's transformation was new and unheard of. While his distant relatives wanted to experiment on him or cast him out, his parents would have been both delighted and envious; too bad their deaths were what triggered the change.

Second Xereth: Let me tell you a story. When I was hatched in the bland brain that is Xereth—he's hateful I tell you—I was semi-horrified. He was an empty shell of a living being. Nothing gets in his head or heart. I don't understand how he's functioned for 11 years; heck, even after I spent 21 years inside him, I still don't. Work does manage to worm into that noggin sometimes: "Tell 'Singer Number Three', West, to wake up at nine. Scold 'Singer Number Two', Lionel, for being late to rehearsals. Make sure the chef cooks and serves what's only in their diet. Work work work." This probably comes from his genes; the whole family's like this. At least the workaholic shell cares about something.

Whenever I emerge, I try to niggly my presence into his consciousness, but he's always completely out cold. Without fail. Every day. I think when I show up, his brain can't handle two working sides at once, so it shuts the little guy off. I don't know why I'm sometimes aware of what he's doing; maybe I'm tougher. Maybe I can recall things since it registers in my head, unlike his. I try to make things right with people in his sphere (a pathetic excuse of one) sometimes, especially the ones he somehow pissed off. Humans can be so...silly. They can take things out on others when they don't know what else to do. I don't

understand them; sure, I can be a whole lot more understanding than the other me, but that's different than me "getting" them. And when I'm fed up, I don't really care to do much. It's fearsome how much I can become like Work Xereth. I thrive on work when everything else is a bother. It's because when I'm working, I would feel like nothing in the world matters.

Liam

Liam's mother, Laura, raised him from infancy with a motherly and womanly nature. When Liam was six, his father had been killed in a gruesome accident (crushed by steel beams near a construction site) due to someone's carelessness. Laura feared that Liam will meet the same fate and she became overprotective. He was gentle by birth, so just a little bit of scolding frightened him, and it happened any time he displayed mean behavior toward other children or disrespect to adults.

Once when he was eight, he had stolen a kitten who was being mistreated by the owner, a classmate. When the owner got him back, he mistreated the kitten again, riling Liam into slapping him harshly. Liam received the worst scolding yet, as well as a slap, from Laura, and he vowed since then to not hurt another person again. Well, as a result, he became insecure and careless with himself, while at the same time he regarded other people in a better light. Other students picked on him in the early years of high school due to his soft nature. Rumors that he would do anything anyone wanted spread quickly, but when it became apparent that wasn't true and that he barely responded to bullying, many grew bored of him quickly enough.

Laura couldn't take the judgments cast on her for marrying a man of lower class than her family, so she threw them aside and glued to her independence like butter on bread. She was a stubborn woman in the first place, so it was just a matter of time before she left their restrictive lives behind. However, her grandparents' and parents' strict beliefs had become ingrained into her very fiber. Although her husband was of a lower standing than them, she could not imagine anything less than the status of overachievers or sought-after careers for her son. She loved him too dearly to let him go astray, living in dumps and trash like the rest of those failures of a musician in their large city. Their own neighbors testified to their musical careers being wasted time, and look at their drug-addled lives now!

Liam grew up hearing about how badly the music world treated his father and his family. He grew up listening to many horror stories about their livelihoods, their rapidly depleting bank accounts, their increasing debts and need for loans, their terrible romance affairs and cheating lovers. The horror stories about the cheating got to Liam most. Despite all this, he still loved music like he loved Gofer, his pet hamster whom he cared deeply for six years. Loved music like Laura loved her son. Therefore, he believed music would be worth the risk of heartbreaks and heartaches. Always. Thusly, he decided to move to his university dorm in order to become independent and follow his dreams.

Altair

When Altair descended onto Earth, his memories of his native planet disappeared, as if a house labeled 'new memories' shoved them so hard, they flew out of his head. It was more than a little jarring to wake up with a headache, blank mind, sunglasses clutched in hand, and two human men touching his sets of wings in awe. In truth, Altair was one of many pure Cherubs, and only two things were different about him: his lack of memories and a rare birth defect regarding his eyes. While the sun empowers all Cherub angels, his eyes do the opposite: they fade, blur, and darken under the sun's rays within a matter of hours - or less if his energy depletes. He can end up going blind for days, weeks, or even permanently if the damage is severe enough. Thankfully, in the sun, the eyes on his wings grow stronger instead, as do his body and energy.

Altair became a private informant at the age of 25, when he had just lost his ill wife, his career as a dentist, and his home. The community in the small Japanese town he lived in at the time began to disintegrate, housing more people who were in the Yakuza or otherwise stupid, isolating him from everyone due to his foreign blood. Stores weren't safe to go in because he was loathed. A stranger to the city found his intimidating and aggressive demeanor to be an asset, and his mental strength to be full of potential. You could say he was saved by the sort of well-known Spanish organization El Destino de los Desiertos (Destiny of Deserts), which trained him in combat simulations, strategizing, and information hunting. PIs were in constant demand at the time.

His most recent client was a strangely optimistic man. Because of him, he realized that the fate of an ol' informant was not a path to stay on forever, and that he shouldn't have given up on life just because of a few life-changing setbacks. He looked back on it and discovered a pathetic side of him, even though he had always prided himself on his mental control and willpower. He rediscovered his professional interest in the humans and other creatures residing on Earth.

OLD

Delmont

Delmont used to be in a small, renowned street gang for a short time, and briskly worked his way up the ranks to right-hand man and mentor. The boy he adopted and raised, Jonny Randolph, had foster parents who were murdered by his gang. Delmont protected him during the incident and since then, Jonny had watched him work and breeze in and out through conflict after conflict like it was all a game. When he grew bored of gang activity, he left as quickly as he entered it, and later joined the business world.

Honestly, it was something amazing for him to grow so fond of Jonny and kept him around in his life as long as he had, half of Jonny's age. He didn't normally like children, but his past reminded him of his own. He grew up as an orphan and his only foster parents, both old people, passed away after he graduated from high school. It was also extremely difficult for him to get stuck on something, which was why building and managing a chain of cafés had shocked his friends so. As for friends, Delmont found keeping them would be a liability to his wandering lifestyle, and trusts only two with Jonny/his life: former members from the gang, Benji and Han.

When he left the gang, he entered a state university that was most known for its success of business and financial graduates. He studied to become a professor of a business school with an open position, aiming to graduate as soon as possible. Over the years, he gave himself adequate time to relax and think of nothing inside the quaint little café near the school. It was the most relaxed freedom he ever felt, and in months, he decided it was the one attachment that was right for him. Before he finished college, he used his education to establish his own business, thinking it would be too late for that if he became a teacher first.