

Prologue

A runned down, post-apocalyptic, “paradise”.

Or, used to be paradise. Even with magic, the world had become crumpled and vulgar with broken tech screens and flickering lights that used to blare proudly. A symbol of unity, now filled with division among their people, forced to live amongst one another. Glitching ads laid among the building walls. An announcement board now distorted and hardly audible. Vines covering the cracks and crevices, a soulless shell of a world that would surprise anyone to hear was still inhabited. The only sounds you could hear were engines grunting as people made their way to jobs they could care less about attending.

Besides that, though, it all seemed eerie. Eerily similar to our world. A world of self-destruction after the technology era pivots. Eerily close to the day we finally end our own world through selfishness and over empowerment.

This wasn't always the case, however. Maybe it was created out of greed of a power hungry god, a cast-away, but it was beautiful.. Magic, hope, promises of a new world. Now, they lie rotting alive among themselves.

The God of Fate, Adam, rough and coarse, had been the start of it all. An angelic appearance with an extra eye down the middle of his browline, nonetheless, his tongue spat daggers, with an architect's callused hands. Blue, somber skin adorned in gold silk. His eyes showed the primary colors, a deep red one down the middle.

His two brothers, unlike himself, loved the worlds they had created for themselves. They adored their work, treasured it even. One World of the Elves, one World of the Fae, and many more. Abel, the God of Life, creating worlds of wonder. Pale grey skin, with white velvet curtains draped over his hips. Gold jewelry almost matching his contrasting eyes, gold with the brilliance of new life. Deep, earthy toned hair lay over his shoulder to display the earth beneath his people.

And Ambrose, the God of Souls, who savored the life his brother made even after death. In the worlds created by the three brothers hands, nobody fears death, only the pain that becomes of it. The souls of the dead are repurposed and reborn. As such, this is his duty. With his deeper, cool toned grey skin, he gives life second, third, or even a fourth chance. His glassy eyes reflect the spirits of his work, crimson red fabric billows down one shoulder to signify the blood that must be shed to reach re-enlightenment. His bright blonde hair creeping down his neck, representing the purity of being reborn.

Adam, however, craved power. So much greed lathered his eyes, making it hard to see through it at times. His vision went red, seeing what could become of himself. So much so, that he sought to rule over his brother's lands. Becoming too reckless, too wanting for his own good. His brothers grew suspicious, though. Whenever they found out, he was banished from the kingdoms. Being sent away led to better or worse. With only his two rough hands, he built his own world of wonders.

Flashing lights and swirls of magic, different species come together for the first time. A united paradise. He called it, "Enosis." A sinners paradise; a paladins rejoice. It was everything all at once. Or, it was. Laying his hands upon the carefully crafted world, he would leave a mark to claim his most significant pieces. A mark of sealed destiny,

given to those who the god had hand-written for the fates to claim. The mark that displays five triangles, lain together to create a united pentagon.

A cruel ruler, Adam was. Some feared their creators' hands, while some worshiped them. He was their world, and made them come together. Even Adam, though, had a flaw that'd end up being what stabbing him in the end. After a while, writing how the story went started to bore him. He started to get risky, gambling the life of his people. His work began to get sloppy; his writing of the fates vague and untelling. Creating wars, politics, divisions among them.

But even that was not enough for him. He dared to gamble his life, in the hands of a shamed blood-elf.

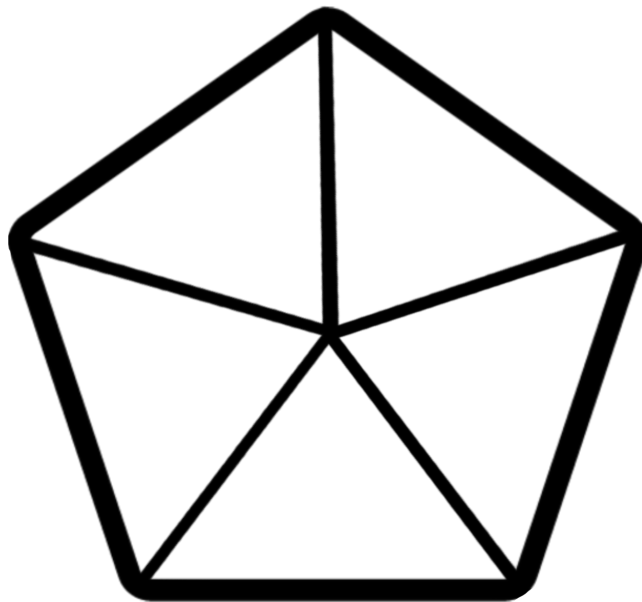
Across his forehead lies the mark of the Gods. A mockery of the third eye that lays on Adam's forehead.

His pale, veiny skin, wreaked with malnutrition. Soft elf ears contrasting his sharp vampiric fangs, but sleek features that blended them all together. A red, shaggy handknit sweater his mother would make him every year.

Hybrids among species had become shamed upon, ridiculed even, so when Ronnie had been born with the mark of fate, he had been doomed from the start.

The upside pentagon ingrained into his skin, red and raised upon his forehead. He swore he would cover himself with his shaggy black bangs to hide his sensitive eyes from the sun, but everyone in town knew it wasn't true. They all knew what he wanted badly to hide from the world, or maybe more like himself.

With his hands and knees glorified in scrapes and cuts, he would have to work the burden of multiple men to make up for the curse the God of Fate had casted upon him. This, however, would prove to be the easiest years of his life. He would have to come face to face with fate sooner or later, which would end up being less of a metaphor then he would have expected.



Chapter 1

Ivan's dead. He's fucking dead.

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When Ronnie wanted to get revenge on his cheating boyfriend, this was not what he had in mind. Maybe he was selfish. Maybe his morals were crooked, and where his loyalty lies being a bit off-center. Even so, despite the rage that had overcome him when he heard that familiar voice sweet-talking a foreign girl and saw their lips intertwine, not once had the thought of Ivan dead crossed his mind. The fates had other plans, though, with a carved sectioned pentagon engraved on Ivan's forehead for the first time; just like Ronnie. A death claimed by the God of Fate.

Now, him in his friends are fucked. And I mean royally, fucked. Scrummaging around his dorm room, he found his backpack. Maybe it was old and tattered around the edges, but he didn't mind. Unzipping it and holding it from the bottom, he dumps out all of his school material.

He is running around, grabbing anything, *anything*, he can get his hands on that might aid him.

Canned food, ramen, clothes, whatever he manages to get a hold of. The night was young, but only time would tell until his name would be plastered across the street. What do you pack as a soon-to-be wanted fugitive? He half-jokingly asked himself.

Turning things into a twisted joke was always a coping mechanism he tended to abuse.

His friends are both doing the same in their dorms. Reina, being the most centered out of the three of them. Appearing calm on the outside, though her mind was scrambled and a mess. Her hooves scatter, trying to find her pocket knife. Long and frizzy light brown hair splayed across perky nose, and fully black doe eyes looking lost. Nonetheless, she is trying her best. She manages to trip over her ankle skirt, stumbling over herself. Just her luck. Shoving her aviator jacket into her bag along with some other clothes and supplies, she chucks her back over her shoulder and books it.

Belting down the hallways, she makes it to Ronnie's dorm. She bangs on the door, saying something inaudible, but it was clear that she knew they didn't have long. Her words were frantic.

Ronnie burst through the door. His bangs were sticking to his face, and he was panting with hands on his knees. His veins pulsed with adrenaline. Maybe Ronnie was also scatter-brained, but he didn't have the wits to over-rule that fact like Reina did.

But then, a thought hit him.

Where was Cruz?

The dragon boy was taking his sweet time. Maybe he was just a *bit* too relaxed for his own good.

Strolling across his room, packing way too many band tee shirts and whatever he could find laying around. That fit his style, though. With bold, blue scales traveling up his arms from his webbed hands, with piercing yellow eyes to contrast them. He had beastly slitted pupils, and a tail that was practically dragging across the floor. Bulky at the base, and gradually getting smaller as it went down. Scales traveling from the tail, up his waist, and onto his stomach. The bottom of his tail blossomed some sort of spikey formations from the top. His wings fluttered a bit as he grabbed his bat, excitedly.

He didn't know exactly what he was doing or what to expect. Either way, he might as well bring protection with him, right? Better to be violence minded then have no mind at all. Unlike *some* elfish vampires, he thought. Bringing the bat to his shoulder, He hoisted his backpack on top of the other one.

He eventually met up with the other party members, strolling down the hall.

"Sorry for the holdup-"

"Where have *you* been?" Reina spat out.

"The usual." Cruz shrugged, waving the others towards the door.

Ronnie followed him. He hadn't said much since it all happened. Over the years of Enosis slowly decaying and the heart of the world

slowly dying, everyone had become less and less sensitive towards things.

Ronnie had always stuck out, though. As time went on, the opposite happened to him.

He had become more sensitive, and it shook his core. He hated the way his clothes stuck to his boney structure, he despised the way he could feel his skin enclosing him. A wallflower, where the around him had all become rough and ragged, but he still blossomed. This, however, left him vulnerable. Ronnie knew this. Sometimes he didn't mind that aspect. Being vulnerable. A part of him had become used to being used. He craved the validation of being wanted, even if he was being taken advantage of. He pleaded for the feeling of being used over, and over again.

This whole situation had encapsulated him. Even though Ivan used him for his body, Ronnie loved him. He treasured him, even. Ivan still loved Ronnie, right? Maybe he loved Ronnie's assets more than the rest of him, but that's still love that he'd cherish. Even though Ronnie hated wearing his own skin, and how he hated the lingering feeling of hands traveling down his hips, Ivan loved it. If Ronnie didn't, he would.

Now that Ivan was gone, who would love himself when he couldn't? He was zoned out. Maybe he was here, speed walking with

the others and creeping the streets with his friends, responding to their words. Still, he wasn't *really* there. His skin felt too real, so did the voices. The whispers. He had ignored those, though. They always went away if you ignored them, but not this time.

Louder, and louder. He could barely hear himself think. Inaudible whispers, shadows darting across his vision. A ringing was growing in his ear. He couldn't tell if it was the police sirens, or himself he was hearing. All he felt was the quick contracting of his legs, the way the ground felt on the soles of his shoes.

Suddenly, his vision focused.

The voices lingered, but became more distant. He began to become more grounded to the surroundings around him. Sirens. Loud blaring noises echoed across the street walls. He was panting with wide eyes under his bangs. They were running, shuffling behind them from bold, blue uniforms.

They slid into a tight alley, behind a beaten up dumpster. Men in police uniforms ran past.

His vision focused in on the scene, feeling his heartbeat rush against his chest. It hurt, his heart hurt. Grabbing his sweater by the heart, dipping his head down. The ringing in his ear was loud. He could hear the people around him. Were they saying something? He thought so. It was all distorted and swirly.

His back slid across the brick wall, and he hit the floor.

His knees crept up against his chest. It hurt bad; so, so bad.

Then, he felt it. His knees being gently pushed down from his chest, and warmth covering his body. He couldn't see straight, but he could feel it all. Arms wrapping around him, a head on his shoulder. It squeezed tight, but held him gently. Ronnie recognized the feeling. The feeling of being held, the way the scratchy but gentle hands held him.

He softened, and leaned into Cruz's embrace.

Eventually, the fog cleared. The ringing began to die down, and his thoughts seemed to sort themselves out. Focusing on the hand rubbing up and down his back, everything seemed to come back into focus.

His hands slowly unclenched, and before he knew it, he was holding onto Cruz as well. His heart rate slowly but surely started to drop. He focused on how his chest rose and fell against the boy in front of him, and how it began to dim down. He sniffled, holding onto tears that never dropped. After he was calm, he gently pushed back against the dragonoid, and Cruz immediately broke off the tight hold he had on him.

Ronnie didn't want to talk about it. Or, maybe he did, but he would never give into that temptation. Something about it seemed so wrong to him. His cold, sheer skin contracted, as a shiver ran down his spine.

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Pushing himself off of the ground, he mumbled some sort of incoherent apology.

He walked past the group, and began to continue his mission. Reina and Cruz followed his lead, their walking pattern in sync. The setting sun laid dully on his face. Ronnie studied the scenery around him as he walked, lost in thought.

His surroundings were unfamiliar. The same, tall buildings and empty establishments crowded the streets. Through them, though, greenery began to flourish. Cracks were filling with moss, vines being seen more and more as they trudged on. The more they traveled, the more the city began to feel lively, despite them being the only ones inhabiting the streets.

It wasn't a lot, but it was lovely. It sparked something in them all, but no one could quite place what it was.

The sun had set, and the night sky was just a little brighter than usual that night. Maybe the layer of pollution and debris that smeared across the stars had dimmed a bit. Even so, it was still very present. None of them knew what the world was like before it all. Before division among the world that was supposed to be a land of unity. Before the God of Fate, had gotten reckless and made his people battle among the heart of Enosis. Now, buildings lay crumbled, tattered newspapers litter the streets. Despite how it seems, the God that had put them up to this was not the only thing that had destroyed their paradise.

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The people craved magic. Magic that people would only dream of, they had. A new sparkling city of lights with a diversity among it. Even

so, they would inevitably be their own downfall. The Fates only sped up the process, highlighting the blood shed that splayed a town of greed.

After the battle and cocky victories, the remaining people had shut themselves in. The only people who littered the streets were the people who wouldn't accept that through their victory, they had lost everything else that remained.

An unlikely trio formed through the treacherous halls of their community college. A faun of nature, Reina, hooved and understanding. A hybrid of vampiric nature and elfish magic, Ronnie; with corrupt but well-meaning ideals. A draconic boy, Cruz, with an overwhelming sense of fragile masculinity; a pink, blue, and white flag crushing him.

Despite their differences, they fit and molded together perfectly.

When one goes down, the rest goes with them. Right? After being caught in front of Ivan's body and accused by a school administrator of committing such a crime, they would in fact, all go down together.

Their paper faces would cover the streets by morning, that much Ronnie knew. For now, maybe they would just enjoy everything around them. A city that even despite its horrible scenery and less-than-average architecture, felt like home.

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Ronnie simply smiled. It all went to shit, he thought. He wasn't happy, not at all, his lover had just been killed by the same god who had claimed him since birth. The irony was pretty real. Even if Ivan's body was marked, nobody would believe him.

Blood still stained his palms. More sat underneath his fingernails. He couldn't help himself. He had to hold him one last time. When they found him kneeling next to Ivan's limp body, a blade slit traveling down his body in the shape of a cross, it didn't give room for imagination. They blamed him, and his friends that were next to him for comfort. His black jeans still smeared soaked up blood against his knees.

He snapped out of it, blinking rapidly for a moment. Gravel crunched under his dirty, beat up high topped shoes. Time had passed. His friends were traveling with him, silently. Cruz was gritting his teeth, staring ahead of him. Reina walked, swinging her arms as she did. Her hooves were a little louder than everything else.

"Thank you for everything." Ronnie broke the silence. It wasn't directed at any one of them specifically.

"No need, dude. It's the least we could do." Cruz shrugged. It really was the least Cruz could do.

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It might have even been implied that he wanted to leave. The way he spray-painted the alley walls where they live with encouraging words

of revolution, and the way his anger burst out seemingly without reason, anyone could see that it was good for him to get away for a bit.

Ronnie chose to believe it was for his sake that he was still here.

Reina nodded in agreement to Cruz, but it was a big deal for her. She liked her scheduled and planned out days. She was very level-headed, considering her options before going through with things. This was unlike her. Cruz could tell but said nothing.

They walked in comfortable silence. Through the roads, passed the decaying buildings. Maybe they didn't know where to go or what to do in a situation like this, but they would figure it out on the way.

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They stopped at a worn-down building, presumably those tall, multi-floor parking garages near hospitals and such. They were tired, and their legs began to ache. Even so, they continued up the first few levels, just until the floor was without any residents' parked cars.

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Before they knew it, they had found an empty floor and settled down. Their voices echoed eerily; it was dark and damp, but they were too worn out to protest against these factors.

Blankets they packed were laid across the concrete. They tried to get as comfortable as they could under these conditions. Shuffling and scraping of fabric across the concrete, they settled in.

After a while, Reina's eyes closed.

Ronnie and Cruz began to get sleepy, the elf yawned and his fangs glistening against the moonlight creeping towards them. He turned his head towards Cruz's.

"I.. I'm scared, Cruz." Ronnie whispered, breaking the silence that the wind carried.

Cruz didn't respond for a moment. Ronnie didn't need to specify what he was scared of specifically. Maybe he was scared that they'd be caught, and charged with a crime they didn't commit. Maybe he was scared that they had left their old life behind that morning. Or maybe, he was just scared to be alone. Again.

"It's okay to be scared," he soothed.

"We'll get through it. Me and you, together."

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Reina twinged with jealousy.