From the author, artist, poet, composer who created the contemporary mythology known as the WingMakers, comes a new journey into consciousness that is equally provocative and stirring to the soul.
THE DOHRMAN PROPHECY
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE

SECTION 1
Chapter 1: The Birth of Knowing
Chapter 2: A Forest’s Secret
Chapter 3: In the Hands of God
Chapter 4: A Plotted Destiny
Chapter 5: Tangled Strings

SECTION 2
Chapter 6: The Reunion
Chapter 7: Era of Light. Tomb of Darkness.
Chapter 8: The King’s Star
Chapter 9: Chronicles of the Oracle

SECTION 3
Chapter 10: The Path of Inception
Chapter 11: Rite of Passage
Chapter 12: The Clamor of Power
Chapter 13: The Orphic Dawn

SECTION 4
Chapter 14: Prism of Spacetime
Chapter 15: Acts of Conviction
Chapter 16: Apocryphal Currents
Chapter 17: Reluctant Accomplice
Chapter 18: A Shorter Fuse

SECTION 5
Chapter 19: Deliberate Exclusion
Chapter 20: The WingMakers
Chapter 21: A Wall without Sides
Chapter 22: Selfless Fusion
Chapter 23: Before the Compromise

SECTION 6
Chapter 24: The Prism’s Edge
Chapter 25: Gift of Storms
Chapter 26: Chimeras of Atonement
Chapter 27: Innocence Derailed
Chapter 28: Virtues of the Heart
SECTION 7
Chapter 29: The Truth Reader
Chapter 30: Atavistic Legacy
Chapter 31: Leaning Against a Stone
Chapter 32: The Firmament’s Rule
Chapter 33: Tool of Guilt
Chapter 34: Temples of Infancy
Chapter 35: Dreams of the Heart

SECTION 8
Chapter 36: Orphans of a Multiverse
Chapter 37: Flower
Chapter 38: Heroic Spires
Chapter 39: Royal Plot
Chapter 40: A Million Questions

SECTION 9
Chapter 41: Protest Thrust Skyward
Chapter 42: Son of Completion
Chapter 43: Frowning Gods
Chapter 44: A New Universe
Chapter 45: The Active Door

SECTION 10
Chapter 46: Winds of Prayer
Chapter 47: Heart-shaped Contempt
Chapter 48: Luminous Eyes
Chapter 49: A Shifting Maze
Chapter 50: Asmodeus

SECTION 11
Chapter 51: The Blue Man
Chapter 52: The Waking Sleepers
Chapter 53: Ouroboros
Chapter 54: Shadow without Substance
Chapter 55: Hearts of the Night

SECTION 12
Chapter 56: The Gateway
Chapter 57: Alchemist of Spirit
Chapter 58: Self-crowned Power
Chapter 59: Final Barriers

SECTION 13
Chapter 60: The Cold Gods
Chapter 61: Seductive Light
Chapter 62: Offspring of Darkness
Chapter 63: Touch of the Eternal
Chapter 64: Side Effects
SECTION 14
Chapter 65: Gold to Stone to Light
Chapter 66: The Claw behind the Door
Chapter 67: Inside Forgiveness

AFTERWORD
Introduction

The anthropologist, Francis Harwood, was interviewing a Sioux elder about his tribe’s myths and penchant for storytelling, and asked why his people told stories from generation to generation. The elder answered, “In order to become human beings.” Harwood then asked, “But aren’t we human beings already?” The elder smiled in a knowing way. “Not everyone makes it.”

Becoming a human being is not as simple or automatic as most people believe. Sure, our bodies are human, but we can live in the hollowness of one who is indoctrinated to give their attention away. Our attention is like an impulsive wind, scattered and unsure of what to anchor to. What to believe in. What to express. Our true humanity remains in the chrysalis of a protected state, waiting to break through the thinning walls that contain it.

What are these walls? Why do they exist? How do we emerge from the chrysalis and spread our wings to explore the finer dimensions beyond our human senses, and in doing so, become more human? These are the questions that are explored in The Dohrman Prophecy.

As a young child you may have looked up at an apple tree, and seeing apples hanging from a branch, believed they grew from the branch. Later you realized that the branch is only a part of the tree, and the tree is only a part of the earth, and the earth is only a part of the cosmos. In this chain of interconnection you can almost understand how the apple grows from the universe. So it is with each of us. Whatever branch (culture or ethnicity) we arise from, we grow from the broader universe, and in response, the universe grows from our collective essence.

The Apocryphon of John, a text from the Nag Hammadi, says, “We work closely with the Earth Goddess so that our higher wisdom might correct what she lacks by the expression of the light we hold and share.” The Gnostics believed in a higher relationship between earth and humanity. They understood that the realignment of life on earth with our cosmic center was the spiral of co-evolution that made us truly human because we were able to perceive earth as a part of us.

I realize that people are inclined to reach to the heavens when they think about their spirituality, but sometimes what we search for in the branches can only be found in the roots. Earth plays a central role in the story of The Dohrman Prophecy, expressed through its characters of stone, trees, animals and other elements. Earth is the grounding force in this story, and because its presence is so strong, the subtle energetics of the higher dimensions can be used like counterpoint in a musical composition.

While this story is based in a mythological time and place, what is important to know is that the story is drawing you out of self-references so you may operate as a holistic reader or listener, fully embodying the story and its archetypes without comparing your time and place with that of the story’s characters.

You may get more value from this story if you contribute in its telling by using the Comments and Notes sections, or participating in the Groups. These are not essential, but for most they will help you anchor the insights, ideas or inspirations you acquire along your reading path.

Hierophany is a Greek term used to describe the manifestation of the sacred. Hierophanies are breakthroughs of the divine energies into the material world. They are like portals between dimensions. The role of storytelling is to try to bring these energies to our
world of separation and ego, and the reader does their part to receive them, explore them, share them, and apply them if they are inspired to.

A hierophant that uses today’s technology is quite different from those of ancient times. In this project, there is a story, there is art, there is technology, and there is a global community of readers and writers who function as an aspect of this hierophant: The Dohrman Prophecy web book project. Each of you, by extension, is part of this project if you choose to be, and those who make this choice can add dimension and texture to this project as it grows and evolves well into the future.

Myths are not single-minded or single-sided. They are light-givers to all who approach in their growing sense of unity. They have meaning to me, to you, and everyone else, but this meaning may be very different for each of us, and so it is important to value the diversity of interpretation or at least allow sincere differences to interact and form new insights.

Harmony is a vital aspect of a hierophant. Those who live in close touch with their environment do not seek to control it, but rather to understand it; to establish a form of harmony with it. I would ask that each of you keep this in mind as you add your notes and comments to this project, giving it grace and allowing its meaning to expand and embrace other views.

Each person has a rich and complex inner structure that responds to information—especially hierophantic information that fuses earth archetypes and higher dimensional energies. It is this inner structure that directs them like the sonar that guides a ship. Our “sonar” is what we use to navigate life, and you may think of it as the intuitive faculty. This is what I recommend you listen to as you read.

There is a mutual interdependence between all participants on this reading path, and thus the forming of a community—a real community that is caring and encouraging—seemed an appropriate and important element of this project. You may look at this web book and see only words and images, but if you feel a common thread it will lead you to a folded order; subtle, implicit, and patiently waiting to be unfolded in this project by someone like you.

William Sullivan wrote, “One feels myth first and understands it later.” If you try to analyze what you are reading, to pull it into immediate comprehension, you may overlook the feeling part of the story, the part where you become everything in the story. This is the state of insight I would ask you to read and listen from because from this state you will reap the greatest benefit.

Each character in the story is a part of each of us. As you go deeper in your reading path, you will uncover aspects of yourself that are obvious and some that are hidden or unspoken. There may be some characters you would prefer to reject, but I would encourage you to invite all of them into your heart and listen deeply to each.

The Dohrman Prophecy is very different from the WingMakers Materials, but what they have in common is the intention to summon twenty-first century hierophantic information and share it with as many people as possible. It is my hope that this story becomes a path into your individual spiritual nature, and that it will help you contemplate the inmost and profound qualities that lie within you. The story, with your help, will continue to grow. Its value will evolve. I hope you enjoy it and listen to its composite voice, remembering that it is truly your own.

From my heart to yours,

James
The depth of the fallen needles made the passage more difficult as Cadriel Mitra walked beneath ancient pine trees towering into the pre-dawn darkness above him. *The forest is so still this morning,* Cadriel thought. He slung his pack to his other shoulder to share the ache of its weight. This was unfamiliar territory even to Cadriel who was renowned for his explorative zeal.

As was his custom, he had broken camp before sunrise, following his instincts as he had been taught to do by his grandmother. Thirty years ago when Cadriel was a young boy, she had told him, “An owl shuts its eyes to see the forest, and so must you.” He had practiced for many years, closing his eyes and imagining the forest, summoning it to come alive within him, but never once had he seen anything he could call *real.*

Whenever he complained about his lack of result, his grandmother would say, “When your intention and heart walk the same path, you’ll see what is real and what is shadow.” Cadriel could only nod and continue trying. To ignore his grandmother was not an option. She was the leader of the Assembled Clans of his people, and her demands were never dismissed, especially by her kin.

Suddenly, from the corner of his eye, Cadriel noticed a strange, pulsing glow filling the western edge of the otherwise dark forest. His bearings came under question since the sun rose from the east. Cadriel’s curiosity quickly turned to fear as a low rumbling sound, felt more with his body than heard with his ears, poured out upon the forest floor.

The woods instantly erupted with agitated birds, crickets, frogs, and squirrels sounding their cries of panic. A wild, contagious terror spread throughout the forest like an electric shock reaching out to every inhabitant with no regard to their stature. Every creature in the forest was welded together like a single organism, watching and feeling with trembling senses.

Cadriel swallowed hard, knowing well that he should run away, but a part of him—as veiled as it was—felt that this might be his sign, his *awakening moment* as his grandmother called it. To run and warn his people that he had seen a glowing light in the forest would only add force to his reputation as a fringe dweller. His people would not believe him without proof or more details of the incident.

His feet moved toward the light and subsonic rumble. With each step that drew him closer he felt a rising heat, but his curiosity was now fully engaged as he began to see shapes moving behind the tree trunks that stood between him and the source of the peculiar sound. *This must be God,* Cadriel thought. *Who but God could make such sound and light? God is surely visiting!*

As he came ever closer, the commotion of light and sound suddenly stopped and a dark silence penetrated the forest in an awkward, eerie calm. Cadriel felt his heart quicken even more. He was blinded in the sudden darkness, but could still sense movement. He called upon his courage and walked forward, his arms searching ahead of him like a blind man.

From high above he felt a flow of energy. An invisible current descended upon him. His skin crawled in an indescribable ecstasy as he nearly lost consciousness in the intensity of the feeling. He lurched to the ground and tucked himself into a yielding ball of flesh; his only thought was that he was in the presence of God. His emotions, fully unveiled, responded in uncertainty, *surely I am not God’s favorite,* he thought. *Why would God show himself to me?*

Then he heard it; the unmistakable voice of language. Though he couldn’t understand it, he knew without doubt, beings, different from himself, were nearby. The closeness of their presence terrified him and he wanted to stay coiled on the forest floor with his eyes tightly closed, praying for the forest to return to its familiar self.

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Then a new sound and light forced him to open his eyes. He saw three shapes, huge
estones dropping from the sky into a small clearing between the trees. They were floating down
on beams of blue light. Cadriel winced as he watched in wonderment. Then he saw movement
below the stones where tall beings seemed to be guiding the monoliths to the forest floor with
wands of light.

Cadriel stood slowly to his feet, eyes blinking in disbelief, his mind frozen in awe. The
three stones, each the size of thirty men, slowly descended to the forest’s floor with a dull thud.
Cadriel felt it with an electric shiver. He suddenly knew nothing. It was as if his world had
disappeared and he was now a nomad in some unearthly place. He could only watch the
spectacle of light that enshrouded the huge monoliths and wonder as to their purpose.

As if to keep his sense of identity, Cadriel began counting. Three stones. Three beings. Three
very tall beings. Three very large stones.

And then it happened. One of the beings walked towards him, slowly, with no fear or
surprise. A pale yellow radiance seeped from its eyes which became noticeable as the being
came within eight-feet of Cadriel, who began to tremor uncontrollably. The being was bluish in
color, standing at least seven-feet tall, and, to Cadriel’s deepest wonderment, possessed a liquid
translucency.

Cadriel wanted to speak, but his whole body, including his tongue, seemed unable to
move. He wasn’t even sure if he was still alive. The eyes of this being were the only threads to
existence that he felt. Staring into those eyes he slowly heard a voice resonate within him as if a
vein of gold shot from the ground into his heart.

“You are here as one of us. In this place you will live, an immortal of your world. You are
the human agency to our divine flame. You have come here, to this very place and time, to be
the human translator for this our highest gift to our people.”

Cadriel blinked. It was the first movement of his body for several minutes. You want me to
live in these stones? How? Why? His thoughts felt like tumultuous waves to something deeper
inside him that was reaching out underneath the covers of a vast closure.

Everything in his brain told him to turn and run like a wild dog back to its pack, but there
was something about the presence of this being that made him listen. If this was his awakening
moment, he needed to be sure what he was awakening to. He needed to stay.

The giant blue life form turned around and motioned with its arm to the tallest of the
three stones. From out of the monolith, a golden light emerged, rising and falling in the
darkness. Cadriel had seen swarms of gnats hover in the air, and to him, the light was like a
seething cloud of tiny gnats, only the gnats, in this instance, were jeweled particles of light.
Millions of specks floated together as a collective intelligence, and unhurriedly—as if
performing a ritual dance—they moved towards Cadriel.

The light was so transparent that it didn’t possess brightness. It was more of a subtle
luminosity; an ancient light spun from a different world, and when brought to this one, was
dimmed in the coarser frequencies.

The light began to enshroud Cadriel, cloaking him in its garment of golden, soft
luminance. He was beginning to feel a new sense of himself, not as a man—a self-possessed
fringe dweller, but as an instrument of some vaguely familiar intelligence that was presently
welling up inside him. It was being pulled from him as surely as a bird pulls on a worm, freeing
it from its earthly home to enter a new purpose.

Cadriel, in a flash of time, left his body and became part of the light cloud that
surrounded him. He was no longer held within the boundaries of a human body, but was now
part of something infinitely larger and more complex. It was as if he was a mote of dust,
suspended in a beam of infinite light, and he had become the light. He understood all parts of his mission for coming to this place, for being human, and for transforming into something he had been prepared for millions of years ago.

* * * *

* * * *
Chapter 1
The Birth of Knowing

There was a time when Maia would lose herself in the mountain breezes that fell from the heights of the great white peaks. But on this day she walked in utter dispassion about the outer world and its beautiful seductions.

Her mind was bent on something else internal. But she also knew that the path she was on was narrow, with tree roots jutting across at angles that defy prediction, making her path a requirement of visual study, and therefore, thought.

She decided to sit on a large boulder amid the forest floor, only a few feet from the path’s edge. There she could concentrate on her problem.

As she made herself comfortable upon the cold shell of stone, Maia became very conscious of the forest’s mood, and noticed how quiet it was. Only the sound of an occasional crow, deep in the woods, spoiled the otherwise silent morning. The sun was dappling the floor, intermixing the light and shadows from a baton of leaves as they stirred in the faint wind.

It wasn’t too long before she heard footsteps and saw the vague features of a stranger coming up the path. It was an elderly man, probably a beggar she thought, as they were known to sometimes forage for mushrooms and berries in the woods. Maia, a trusting soul, greeted the old man with a pleasant, “good morning,” nodding her head slightly as she spoke.

The man stopped in his tracks as if her voice startled him, and sighed slowly. “Haven’t seen the good in it so far.”

Maia was taken aback by his gruff response since it was indeed a beautiful morning—by anyone’s definition. But then she noticed that he looked weary and frail, and his clothing, the telltale sign of beggars, was worn to the thread, offering token warmth.

“Where are you going?” Maia asked.

He looked her over thoroughly, seeing a beautiful young woman, perhaps twenty years old, with very little adornment or pretense. Her black hair was partly tangled from the low-hanging limbs that initiate anyone who takes this path into the forest, assuming they have a head of hair. Her eyes cast a sharp intellect as surely as a shadow was thrown from a bright light.

“My destination is undecided,” he answered. “Though I’ve heard of an oracle secreted away in these woods, and I’ve thought once or twice, well... actually more times than I can count, to find this oracle and give it a piece of my mind...”

“If there’s an oracle,” Maia replied, “you should ask it gentle questions, not tell it things. Oracles are very rare you know, and they can bring you great harm or great help, depending on how you approach them.”

The old man looked at her and smiled, pretending it was spontaneous, but Maia could see he was calculating.

“You have a way of making me light-hearted,” he said. “Perhaps you’d like to join me on this search?” The old man winked, trying to keep his invitation playful.

Maia quickly declined. “I really don’t know what I would ask an oracle, and secondly, I’m not sure if I would believe what it told me. How would I know if it’s wise and helpful, or just a trickster?”

“That’s just it, the oracle is secreted away for a reason,” he replied. “If it were a fraud, who’d bother to hide it? Haven’t you heard the legends of these woods?”
Maia shook her head slightly and narrowed her eyes. “Legends?”

“Long ago, the oracle of these woods was used by the Son of Dohrman to overthrow the king and his high priests. He succeeded only through his alliance with the oracle.” The old man looked down at his tattered shoes and added, “I’m surprised they don’t teach these legends in school anymore.”

“What they did teach is not to trust oracles,” Maia intoned. “It’s impossible to tell the wise from the conniving.”

“If this is so, how did the Son of Dohrman achieve victory over the powers of King Merchand and his priest craft, whose cunning is undeniably superior to any trickster oracle?”

“If the legend is true,” Maia replied. “Where do you think the oracle is?”

Maia swung her arms as wide as she could. “These woods are deep and broad, and there are many parts unexplored. Even the mapmakers haven’t ventured into its deepest reaches for fear of never returning.”

The old man snickered to himself, but loud enough that in the quiet of the forest, Maia heard.

“That’s not exactly true,” he began. “I wasn’t always a beggar I’ll have you know. I lived and worked a respectable life as an artist, and I had some friends that I’d count among the elite of my city. One of whom, was, in fact, a mapmaker, though of dubious stature, but only because he was mute and highly selective of his acquaintances.

“His name was Josiya, and he dreamed of finding the Oracle of Dohrman, ever since his father told him of the legends. From the time he was a young boy he had heard the tales of an ancient oracle that was hidden away in these very woods, brought to this planet by a race of beings so far removed from our time that they appeared to man as Gods, though they were indeed human.”

“You’re saying this oracle... the Oracle of Dohrman is from space beings?”

“That’s the legend.”

Maia’s curiosity was sparked. She believed in extraterrestrial life; given the numberless worlds in space, it only made sense. But she hadn’t considered that space beings could be humans from the future. This legend, it seemed, was more exciting than she had first thought. But she cautioned herself, it was only a legend retold by a stranger who happened to be a beggar.

“And one more thing,” the old man continued with a casual air, “Josiya found the oracle.”

“He must’ve had a map,” Maia whispered.

“Before he died, Josiya summoned me. I was shocked at his sudden turn toward death. He was a powerful man with the stamina of an ox, and, except for his inability to speak, he was in every other way a man who enjoyed excellent health.”

“How did you meet him?” Maia interrupted.

“From the time I had painted his portrait, and that of his wife’s, our friendship began. And despite his inability to speak and my own inability to understand sign language, we would write notes back and forth about art, philosophy, politics, and of course the cosmos, his favorite subject of all.”

“When did you learn that he had a map of the oracle?” Maia asked.

“Be patient. There’s more to this story,” he replied with a hint of a smile. “Josiya was passing me notes over many years, and one day he asked me to save his notes, as he wanted to write a memoir as he grew older. Well, the truth was, I had already collected his notes—all of them—because they held a meaning to me that has never been equaled in any other writing.
“Anyway, one day shortly after he died, his wife visited me. She said that her husband had written a long letter to me the night before he died, and she had, perhaps inappropriately, read it. She apologized, excusing her indiscretion as the actions of a grieving widow anxious to hear, or, in this case, read the thoughts of her beloved, even if they were meant for someone else.

“I dismissed her concern, but she began to tremble in a dreadful way as she handed me the letter—”

“What did it say?” Maia interrupted.

“It confirmed that he had found the Oracle of Dohrman, but much, much more than that. He claimed in his letter that the notes I had could be joined to form a mathematical code that would provide access to the Oracle.”

Maia stood up. “So it wasn’t a map? How does it help to access the Oracle if you don’t know how to find it?”

“Josiya never had a real map, though he knew where the Oracle was located. In his letter he said that the Oracle of Dohrman was guarded by the Supreme Guard, and was inaccessible to anyone but the High Initiates of the Church. It was guarded as if it were the most important object in the entire world. To make a map was futile, since the person using it would most likely lose their life. Thus, he refused to publish a map, for he didn’t want the deaths of anyone on his conscience.”

“And yet you want to find it?” Maia asked with a quizzical tone in her voice.

“Josiya found the Oracle, or, perhaps more accurately, it found him.”

“How do you mean it found him?”

“Josiya wrote that an apparition approached him in the woods—this was about two years ago—and told him it was the Oracle. That it was somehow able to project itself out of its stone fortress in which it was imprisoned. The Oracle had told him that it was becoming human, and that it would soon be able to free itself from the stone monolith in which it lived.”

The man paused. “The Oracle gave Josiya a code.”

“And this code, how exactly will it help you locate the Oracle?” Maia asked.

“I don’t really know,” the old man’s voice trailed off in uncertainty, “but I have a theory if you’re interested in hearing it.”

Maia ran her hands through her hair, and sat down on the large boulder again, signaling a readiness to hear more of the story. The problems that she had been wrestling with earlier completely vanished from her mind.

“The letter gave instructions on how to summon the Oracle, or, in a sense, call it into being. Josiya maintained that as long as you were within a certain distance of the Oracle, you could summon it to appear and it would manifest out of thin air.

“I know this sounds improbable, and I’d certainly agree, but this is where it gets interesting and somewhat dangerous at the same time.” He leaned forward and directed his gaze to Maia with a new intensity. “Josiya wrote that the code was given him by the Oracle itself, and claimed it was a communication portal, like a telephone to another race that operated outside of our time and space.

“It was placed on the planet as a source of wisdom for humanity’s leaders, and it was initially used according to this plan, but only for a short time, and then it fell under the charge of the Church who exploited its knowledge so they could manipulate the power of the Royal Houses.”
“Unfortunately, Josiya’s discovery of the Oracle of Dohrman was foretold by the Oracle itself, and the Supreme Priest knew that an outsider would discover his greatest secret, but the Supreme Priest was not a fatalist, and he believed Josiya could be stopped.”

“Did the Oracle specify Josiya by name?” Maia asked.

“No, and that was the tricky part for Karnomen, the High Priest. Karnomen knew that the Oracle had served the lineage of his predecessors faithfully, never falling under suspicion of even the Royal Family. The Oracle was the most closely guarded secret of the Ages.

“But the Oracle foretold of a man who would unleash it from the controlling interests of the Church, and use its wisdom for the benefit of all people. So Karnomen waited. He watched every movement into the woods, guarding the Oracle with great care and diligence.”

“But how can you guard something that can appear anywhere in the forest? This forest is too vast for even the king’s army to control.”

“The Oracle remained in the secret place it was originally set,” the old man replied, “until Josiya discovered it. Only then did it become ever-moving. He activated something in the Oracle that caused it to... well, in the words of Josiya, ‘become invisible to all but the initiated.’ This was Josiya’s task, not only to discover the Oracle, but even more importantly, to conceal it from those who would use its power for the wrong reasons.”

Maia listened intently, wondering how to make sense of the story. How is it she never heard of this legend before? It seemed such essential knowledge, and yet it was not taught or even talked about outside of school. How very extraordinary, she thought, that she should learn about this from a complete stranger, a beggar no less.

“How long ago did you find out about this code?” She asked.

“It was a little over two years ago that Josiya was killed.”

“Killed?”

“Yes, of course,” the old man replied. “He was poisoned by Karnomen’s operatives.”

“And the notes, where are they now?”

“All burned.”

“Completely destroyed?” Maia exclaimed.

“How do you think I became a beggar?”

“I... I... I don’t know,” she stammered.

“After Josiya’s death his closest friends were singled out, their homes searched and then summarily burned. We all lost everything; the only good fortune was that his friends could be counted on one hand. Each of us came under the scrutiny of the Supreme Guard and we were interrogated with ruthlessness, some even died in the process.” His voice fell to a whisper as he recounted the severity of those times.

“How did you survive if you had the codes?” Maia asked.

The old man finally sat down with a long sigh, and crossed his legs underneath him. “I survived because Josiya’s wife lied to protect me. That is the only reason I’m here. She quite literally saved me.”

“How?”

“She told the interrogators that her husband only knew me professionally... as a portrait artist, and nothing more.”

“What about the codes? Did she tell them about those?”

“Yes, but she told them that they had burned in the fire.”

“Did they believe her?”

“Apparently not... because they killed her.”
Maia let the words sink in for a moment. It surprised her how intensely she felt for someone she really had no connection to. But the story stirred some sheltered facet of her heart, and a sudden foreboding descended over her like the shadow of a cloud.

“How do you know they killed her because of the codes? Were you there when she was being interrogated?”

“No, I wasn’t there,” the old man answered, guilt showing on his face. “They told me what she said to them when they questioned me. They wanted to be sure that the codes were either in their possession and control, or completely erased from the planet. In other words, if they couldn’t control the Oracle, no one else would either.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Maia intoned. “It seems foolish that you would share such a story with a stranger whom you’ve known for only ten minutes. For all you know, I’m a spy for Karnomen.”

The old man laughed for the first time, and in the quiet of the forest floor the sound echoed among the tree trunks, unnerving Maia.

“You, my dear, are unmistakably of a different clay,” the old man smiled. “Besides, Karnomen has given up. I’ve seen his spies, and they look nothing like you.” His laughter returned, but was more subdued.

“I’m an old man with no possessions but the clothes on my back and my instincts.”

He shifted his weight slightly, straightening his legs.

“There’s nothing for me to fear, even if you were one of his spies. As you can plainly see I neither know how to find the Oracle or summon it into materialization.”

His voice softened slightly. “An artist observes, not always with just his eyes. He sees the inner being as well as any, if he’s truly an artist, and in this seeing I’ve found you to be trustworthy. I’ve disclosed this because I felt you were somehow connected to the Oracle.”

Maia shifted nervously, averting his eyes. “Why do you think this? It seems like you’ve taken quite a leap of logic.”

“I don’t really rely on logic,” he replied. “My gut informs me and from there I follow. What I do know, with all my being, is that Josiya was a terrestrial sage of import. He gave me this new path, and I’m bound to follow it.”

“I’m confused,” Maia confessed. “I hear your story and there’s a part of me that swells with excitement and wants to assist, but there’s another part that shrinks in disbelief. It can’t be. And if it is, what role could I possibly have in locating the Oracle of Dohrman and, more to the point, accessing it once it’s found?”

“And even if we found it,” she continued, “what then? What would we do with it? Ask it some questions about the future? My future? I don’t think so. The more I think of it, the less I would want to even make contact with the beings that put this Oracle on our planet.”

“And why is that?” the old man asked in a puzzled tone.

Maia sighed. “This Oracle was helping the Church’s leadership was it not? It was making their religion possible! Not to mention the sinister connection to the Royal Families. How many people have been killed, how much property has been destroyed, how many wars have been fought as a direct result of this Oracle? Do you know?”

“No,” the old man shook his head. “But Josiya wrote that the Oracle always spoke truth to questions posed to it, but the receiver of its answers—the High Priest—could twist the knowledge gained from the Oracle to serve his own purpose.”

“So that’s supposed to excuse the Oracle?” she asked. “Isn’t the truth supposed to set us free? Doesn’t the Oracle have a duty to ensure it isn’t being used for the wrong purposes?”
The old man sighed in recognition.

“When I said I wanted to give the Oracle a piece of my mind, that’s why.” He delivered his words and stood to his feet with a level of control that surprised Maia.

While he looked old and weary at first meeting, it was mostly because of his untidy appearance and tattered clothing; underneath these was a sturdy physique.

“I think it’s time for me to continue my search. Thank you for your company, as brief as it was. I hope we have the good fortune to meet again.”

With that he bowed slowly and began walking down the path deeper into the forest.

Maia was still thinking what to say as he turned and walked away.

“Wait, I don’t even know your name,” she blurted out.

He stopped in his tracks and without turning said, “Joseph Amenzano.”

“I’m Maia,” she half-shouted. Then, without really thinking, she slid down the boulder and ran up to him, extending her arm in the customary greeting of a friend. “It just seems to me that after all we discussed, we should at least have a proper introduction.”

“Yes, yes, you are right, of course,” he said turning to shake her hand. “As old as I am I sometimes forget these pleasantries. Thank you for the reminder.

“Have a wonderful day, Maia.” And for a second time he turned to walk down the path, but this time Maia grabbed his arm.

“I will help you if you want,” she said. “I...I don’t know how, but I will help you.”

Having uttered those words, she became silent. *Why am I doing this?*

Joseph could not hide his excitement at her offer. “Now I see the good in the day my dear! Where do we start... where do we start.”

Maia smiled. “First, tell me how you think it would be best to go about finding the part of the forest most suitable to summon the Oracle?”

He looked momentarily to the sky as if searching for his answers in the thicket of tree branches above him, but quickly returned his gaze to Maia’s waiting eyes.

“Josiya wrote that the Oracle moved around within the forest, but never near its periphery. It preferred the inner sanctuary because it was better protected and travelers never accidentally happened upon it. So I think we need to travel towards the interior of the woods, but as we go, we must get off the path and create our own, no matter how difficult it becomes.”

“And then what? I assume you have the codes... do you simply speak them, and if you’re in the right vicinity of the Oracle it magically appears?”

“Something like that,” Joseph acknowledged. “I’m not really sure. Josiya was not clear about this exact process. He wrote that the codes had to be spoken aloud, and that the Oracle had to hear the codes, which meant we needed to be within a range of about one hundred meters I would guess.”

Then, pointing to his head, he added with a smile. “The code’s right up here.”

“My voice is clear and carries well,” Maia offered, “I believe I can double that distance, especially in the stillness of these woods. Let’s hope the Oracle has good hearing.”

They both chuckled at the notion.

“Okay, we have our plan,” Joseph said. “Are you ready?”

“We have no food or water,” Maia said. “Perhaps we should wait a few days so we can prepare and collect what we’ll need for this journey.”
“The forest will provide for our needs, Maia. Having been a beggar for the past two years, I’m all too familiar with the art of foraging. And to be honest, it’s not my first time into these woods—even into its interior.”

He started walking up the path and Maia followed him, unsure of why she trusted him, but there was something about his manner, his choice of words, his tone of voice, maybe his eyes, that made trust an easy proposition. Joseph possessed that rarest of qualities: a thirst for self-perfection, and it was contagious.

* * * *
Chapter 2
A Forest’s Secret

“...this is where we part company with the trail,” Joseph announced. “If we go down this ravine, it will be tough going, but it’s a part of the forest I’ve explored before and it’s an ideal location to search because of its remoteness. Travelers avoid it since it’s hard to maneuver, and the maps, such as they exist, never provide details.”

Maia took one look at the thick underbrush and angled descent, and wondered if she was equal to the task. In those brief moments of reckoning, Joseph was already moving down the ravine at a surprisingly brisk pace. Maia followed like a foal to its mother, setting her calculations aside.

The descent was not without mishap, however, as Joseph found a sharp thorn bush at the bottom of the ravine, warning Maia with a startled and biting yelp.

“Are you okay,” Maia asked, panting as she pulled up next to Joseph. He had already started to pull up the hem of his pants to examine the cuts on his leg.

“They’re minor cuts, but they sure sting,” he said. “I’ll be okay; we just have to keep an eye out for the wretched thorn bushes.”

“Let me have a look at those cuts,” Maia ordered as she bent down and examined the scratches on Joseph’s leg. She looked at them carefully.

“This is exactly why I wanted a few days to prepare,” she said with a scolding tone to her voice. “We don’t have any bandages or... or even water.

“First of all, I’m fine. They’re just scratches. Second of all, I know there’s a stream on the other side of this gulch, so I’ll clean up there as good as new. Okay?”

Maia nodded.

“This water, is it drinkable?” She stood to her feet and surveyed their position.

“Yes, it’s exceptional water. Follow my path as accurately as you can and don’t lag too far behind.”


The forest was remarkably still. No animals could be heard scurrying around. The occasional breeze would sound the chimes of leaves, but even this was muted to an almost inaudible level.

The Sorcerer was walking back and forth in his small wooden hut where he had an open book turned to page 1,285. It was a colossal book that only once in his life had he actually tried to move, and even then it was only to protect it from a leak that had sprung in his roof, threatening to destroy his beloved book.

He looked down at the open page, moved his lips imperceptibly, and looked up with a frown. “That can’t be right,” he whispered. He put his index finger to the text as though it would somehow change the words to his liking. Again, his face furrowed and he hit the dirt floor with his wooden staff, “No one can do that!”

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The Sorcerer swung around and grabbed a crystal, long and slender like a gleaming icicle and held it to his heart. Closing his eyes he began to mumble some words, faintly at first, and then suddenly his ancient head, flowing with the silver graces of waist-length hair, was flung backwards to the invisible stars. “Finally, it begins!” he shouted.

* * * *

Joseph had been right about the stream. Its water was clear with an earthy sweetness that quenched the thirst, but not the desire to taste more of it. Maia and Joseph cupped their hands and drank without reservation.

“What makes this water so good?” Maia asked, drying her chin with her sleeve.

“Water reflects the geology it flows through. It absorbs the minerals and trace elements that’ve been deposited in these forests over many, many centuries. There’re underground streams all through these woods and most have never been touched by human hands... at least not in the past thousand years or more.”

“Are you saying these woods were once inhabited by people?”

“They most certainly were,” Joseph replied. “There are some books that claim this forest was once the favored place of our ancestors—”

“You mean our ancestors chose to live in this place?” Maia said as she stood to her feet, emphasizing her disbelief with her slender hands.

“Indeed they did. Ruins have been uncovered... you didn’t study this in school yet?”

“I guess not,” she replied.

“The people were called the Chakobsa. They were woodsmen and had entire villages in the tree canopies.” Joseph dabbed his cuts with a water-soaked handkerchief, and pointed to some huge trees on the other side of the stream. “Those trees, right there. They’re second generation Acconyan trees, perhaps nine hundred years old, and they’ll live another three or four centuries if left alone. Those... those are the trees that supported our ancestors.

Maia looked with admiration at the muscular trees, sensing they were indeed ancient.

“Are they only found in this forest?”

“Yes, so far as I know.”

“I want to see them up close, can we walk that way?”

“Follow me,” and with that Joseph rolled down his trousers and stepped across the stream.

* * * *

It was beginning to get dark, and Maia’s hunger was gnawing at her with every step.

“What’s our plan for food and rest?”

Joseph stopped in his tracks and turned to Maia, his index finger poised over his pursed lips. He crouched down and signaled to Maia to do the same. Joseph scanned the trees and dense brush ahead of them for signs of life, while Maia, without a technique to suppress it, heard the grumbling of her empty stomach in the perfect silence.
Suddenly there was a voice deep in the expansive woods. It was a man’s voice, and it was barely perceptible. Only because they had stopped, listening with their full concentration, could it be heard. Maia wondered how Joseph noticed it while they had been walking.

She crawled closer to him until she was within a few inches. “What is it?”

“I don’t know. Maybe a sentinel. Maybe a traveler. Maybe a beggar. Maybe a hunter. I don’t know.”

“A sentinel!” Maia shouted in a whisper. “Why would there be sentinels this deep in the forest? For that matter, why would there be a sentinel anywhere in the forest? You said Karnomen had given up on the Oracle.”

Joseph pleaded. “Please, keep your voice down. We don’t know how many there are and some might be closer—”

The sound of a twig snapped and brought their minds to full alert. Instinctively they crouched down even lower. Joseph turned to Maia, again his finger to his lips, but this time his eyes reflected a sense of danger that Maia couldn’t mistake, and her heart was cold with fear.

Several crows flew overhead, breaking the silence with their caws of alarm. More voices could be heard—this time closer than before. Joseph held up three fingers, and then motioned to remain still and silent.

“You know the crows are wrong ninety-eight percent of the time,” said a distant voice. It was a young man’s voice, Maia thought. She looked in the direction of the voice, straining to see through the thick underbrush, but she could only see an occasional movement, and couldn’t be sure if it was human. Whoever it was they were at least thirty yards away and didn’t seem too worried about their stealth.

In a few minutes, the voices were swallowed up in the forest’s silence, and Joseph stood slowly to his feet.

“They were sentinels I’m pretty sure,” he said. “I’ve never seen them this deep in the forest before.”

“Why’re they here? Are they looking for you?”

“No, no,” Joseph said, laughing quietly. “They gave up on me a long time ago. Nevertheless, I don’t want them to find me here because they’d change their mind as to my intentions and knowledge of the codes.”

Maia exhaled a nervous sigh. “Why didn’t you tell me the hand of Karnomen would be lurking in these woods and you—we—might be its target?”

“I’ve been searching for the Oracle for two years, Maia, and this is the first time I encountered sentinels. I heard stories... but never saw or heard any of them. You have to believe me. If I felt you were in danger by accompanying me, I would surely have told you.”

“Is there anything else you’ve overlooked or forgotten to tell me?”

Joseph shook his head slowly, looking down at his tattered shoes.

“Okay,” Maia said, “let’s keep going. It’s a huge forest; I can’t imagine we’ll run into them again. We probably only have an hour more of light... and we need to find shelter and food.”

“Yes, yes, you’re right, Joseph replied. “We need to focus on food and shelter. I have some supplies in my pocket, we’ll be okay.”

“You have food in your pockets?”

“Not food, but I have fire starters. I have a weapon, too, that’s good for small game. Do you like pheasant or quail?”

Maia nodded.
“I can find them. There’re also berries in this gully... do you think you can collect some?”

Maia spun around where she stood, “I think so. Maybe you can tell me what to look for.”
“Anything round that isn’t red,” Joseph answered, smiling broadly.
The sinister effects of the sentinel’s passing were lost to the need to find food, and Maia could feel the threads of the day were unwinding, and soon nightfall, with its dark roots, would defeat the light.

* * * *

The sinister effects of the sentinel’s passing were lost to the need to find food, and Maia could feel the threads of the day were unwinding, and soon nightfall, with its dark roots, would defeat the light.

The fire provided needed warmth, light, and most importantly, at least to Maia, a cooked quail that was delectable. Joseph was indeed a skilled hunter. Using a rather crude, homemade slingshot and a handful of stones, he had proven himself an excellent marksman and hunter.

That night—the first night in the forest—Maia and Joseph dined beneath the stars with blackberries and quail to satisfy their hunger.

“Were you surprised I came with you?” Maia asked as she finished her meal, and leaned against a tree trunk.

“Yes,” Joseph replied. “The invitation fell out of my mouth before I could even think to retrieve it, and now that we’re actually here, it worries me a bit... to be responsible for you.”

Maia smiled, but remained quiet.

“Why were you out in the woods this morning anyway?” he asked.

“It’s personal,” Maia replied. “I always think better when I’m in the woods. I guess I find great comfort from trees.”

She felt odd at her admission. It reminded her that she really didn’t know Joseph very well, and yet she felt more comfortable with him than anyone she knew, except her mother.

Joseph could tell she was opening up to him a little. “What kind of things do you contemplate in the woods?”

“I had a fight with my father the night before. He’s an abusive man when the devil’s drink takes hold of him, and he said some things to me that were... let’s just say they were mean-spirited.”

“What kind of things, if I may ask?”

“He thinks I’m wasting my life,” Maia explained. “I’m not doing well in my university studies, I don’t have any prospects for marriage, and... and I’m too bossy for my age and gender.”

Joseph listened and made sure she was done before he offered an observation. “So that’s why you came with me. You wanted to get away from your father and show your independence. Maybe even punish him a bit. I’m sure your family will be worried about your whereabouts.”

“I don’t really have a family, just my father.”

“Okay, then,” Joseph said, “but your father will be worried, won’t he?”

The fire released its spires of light into the trees’ canopy with waves of rhythmic light, and then, suddenly outside of the fire’s lighted circle there was a loud click. Joseph turned to see a gun barrel pointed squarely between his eyebrows.

“Well, well, look what we have here,” said the man with the gun.
Another man stepped forward with a gun and pointed it at Maia. “Looks like the oddest couple we’ve ever found in these here woods.”

“What’re you two doing here?”

“We’ve come to see the Sorcerer,” Joseph replied, his voice shaking slightly, but not missing a beat.

“And what Sorcerer would that be?” The young man asked.

“We’ve heard stories of a great and wise Sorcerer who lives deep within these woods, and we’ve come here to seek his wisdom. I realize we look like beggars, but we’re strictly seekers of truth.”

Joseph was not only an artist and hunter, but an actor, Maia thought to herself.

“Do you have any weapons?”

“No, no,” Joseph managed a chuckle. “Unless you consider this a weapon.” He showed the men his homemade slingshot.

Amid their laughter, Maia could tell there were only two of them. She sensed they were not particularly violent men, just doing their job. She stood to her feet slowly, watching the rifle barrel follow her up.

“We would offer you some food,” Maia said, “but we just finished our meal. We do have some berries that we have left.”

The men, having not been in the presence of a beautiful woman for a very long time, were mesmerized. It was almost as though they were under a spell as they spoke.

“We... we can’t,” they replied in unison. “Besides we just finished our own meals... but thank you for the offer.”

As if on cue, they lowered their guns, and relaxed.

“This Sorcerer,” one of the men asked, looking directly into Maia’s eyes, “how do you know where to find him?”

Joseph knew they were testing them.

“I see, so until this great and magical Sorcerer finds the two of you, you plan to be wandering this forest?”

“No,” Maia explained. “That would be foolishness, and I assure you we’re not fools. My father and I follow our instincts, use our imaginations, and hope that the Sorcerer has the tiniest bit of curiosity in our quest, enough to find us and receive our questions at least.”

“And for how long have you been searching?”

“This is our first night,” Maia replied.

“We’ve heard about this Sorcerer you speak of, but the stories are not kind. He is a loathsome character I’m afraid. Cunning beyond your imaginations.” The young man turned to Joseph. “You would be wise to take your daughter and leave this forest first thing at daybreak.”

Joseph nodded. “Yes, yes, we will. Thank you for your advice. We are only humble people as you can tell; not very well educated, and in our circles the Sorcerer is seen as a powerful man of great wisdom.”

“Trust me,” the man said, lowering his voice in the customary manner of someone dispensing confidential information, “I’ve heard stories that if I told you, you wouldn’t be able to sleep a wink tonight. I’ll spare you the details, since you’ll need a good rest so you have the energy to leave this place.
“Besides, this part of the forest has hunters who will shoot at anything that moves. You don’t want your daughter killed by a stray bullet do you?”

“As you say,” Joseph began, “we’ll leave first thing in the morning. Thank you once again for sharing your knowledge to a poor beggar and his daughter. I only wish we had something to give you for your kindness.”

The shorter sentinel reached his hand out and touched Maia’s neckline where the glint of a gold necklace beckoned. “This will do.”

Maia knocked his hand away and stepped back. “This is from my mother. I can’t…”

Joseph, alarmed by the turn of events put his arm in front of Maia, pushing her behind him. “Gentlemen, we don’t want any trouble, but as you can see, my daughter will never part with this gift from her mother. I, on the other hand, can offer you this.”

Joseph pulled out a simple brass compass from his pocket. “It’s the only thing of value I have. Here, take it. It’s yours.”

The sentinels looked at one another, their guns raised slightly. They seemed to be calculating their options. “Keep your compass, we have better. You’ll need it to get out of here. Keep your bearings northeast. If we see you again, that chain is our payment, and I don’t give a crap who gave it to you. Understood?”

Joseph nodded.

“Then get some sleep, and pray that the Sorcerer doesn’t find you.”

With that the two men walked away, chatting among themselves with muffled laughter dotting their conversation. Joseph and Maia remained silent listening to the voices disappear in the blackness of the forest.

“They were sentinels?” Maia blurted out.

“Yes, yes,” Joseph nodded. “I can tell because of their rifles and packs. Only sentinels carry such fine weapons and leather packs, especially at that age. They were young enough to be my grandsons.”

“And so what does it make me? I’m supposed to be your forty year-old daughter?”

“In this darkness I probably look twenty years younger. I’ll take the compliment, and I don’t think they were exactly looking at you as a mother figure.”

Maia forced a smile, hoping it would relax her a bit. She had never had a gun pointed at her before, and it left her with an uneasy quivering in her stomach. “Why did you bring up this Sorcerer story?”

Joseph brushed off his pants, as if collecting his thoughts, whispering out of caution. “There are stories that’ve long circulated among those who’ll listen to such things that one of the priests of high rank was favored by the Oracle. The High Priest, out of jealousy, decided to have this priest killed.

“But the priest, whose cunning is a thing of legends, escaped into the deepest part of the woods. It’s said that no man can find him because he’s cloaked it with his magical spells.

“The High Priest created the myth of an evil Sorcerer so that people won’t venture into the depths of the forest and accidentally stumble on the Oracle, or, for that matter, the fugitive priest, who’s probably long dead. These sentinels were only trying to scare us out of the forest.”

“They looked like they believed what they were telling us,” said Maia.

“They believe what they’re told to believe,” Joseph replied. “Remember, these sentinels are paid to say the things they say. They don’t really care about the consequences of a falsehood.”
“Were you being honest when you said we were leaving at daybreak?”
Joseph put his hand in his pant’s pocket and pulled out a ragged piece of paper. “And not use these codes?”
“I thought you said the codes were in your head.”
“They’re there, too.” Joseph replied with a smile. “It’s just as I get older, well, I want to make sure I don’t forget them.”

Maia smiled. Her quivering stomach disappeared in that instant when she realized that the journey was still on. Perhaps that was the real cause of her angst, and the gun barrel was just a gun barrel.

* * * *

In ancient times there were mystical beings that somehow—in the minds of men—got confused between the worlds of angels and humans, when indeed they were neither. On very rare occasions there were even those who were confused between the worlds of angels and Gods. It is this latter category from which the Oracle had emerged upon the planet.

Those rare individuals, who walked between the worlds of angels and men, were very often the only ones who found favor with the Oracles. It was they that the Oracles knew were prepared to ask the questions that begat the True Wisdom.

* * * *
Chapter 3
In the Hands of God

Hugelitod had been a priest since he was a boy. Even as a young child his consuming dream was to serve God and His creation, as directed by God. His favorite rhyme growing up was given to him from a dream: *All I truly wish to be is a purified channel of humility.* He spoke this simple rhyme a thousand times each week, and did so for many years, until he found himself living and breathing the priesthood.

As a boy he was small for his age and tended to be quiet and respectful. Few paid him much attention, as he was average in his studies and average in most every respect—even his looks. But what was happening inside was quite another thing.

Hugelitod’s deep loyalty to God was so extraordinary that it found the notice of his superiors and caused him to be sought out by Karnomen to be an apprentice to his secretary. This was a turn of events that Hugelitod was exceedingly disappointed in because he wanted, more than anything in the world, to be an active priest, pursuing his love for the teachings of God by teaching his fellow man the truths of the life internal.

Nevertheless, over time he saw the honor of helping the High Priest, whom he had come to love and consider, without reservation, the closest human being to God.

One day, about four years into his apprenticeship, Karnomen’s assistant died of a sudden heart attack, and the duty fell to Hugelitod to assist the High Priest. This meant that he needed to be initiated into the Order of the Sixteen Rays in order to directly serve Karnomen. This was a great honor, and Hugelitod was grateful for his opportunity to become a more active participant in the inner sanctum of his Holiness the Grand Priest.

The initiation into the Order of the Sixteen Rays was one of the most closely guarded secrets of the Priesthood and was seldom even spoken of, except in hushed tones in dark corridors with one’s closest allies.

When the day came for his initiation, Hugelitod was brought, in ceremonious attire, to the start of a trail in the forest that was, he noted, closely secured by armed sentinels. Hugelitod was in the center of the procession of the Elder Priests as they walked single-file along the narrow path. Soon after they began their trek into the woods, one of the High Initiates of the Order stepped forward, walking next to the young initiate with his head bowed in reverence to the Initiator that beckoned them.

“Are you ready for your enlightenment?” the Elder asked, his breathing strained from the walk.

“I don’t know, but if God believes I am, then it must be so.”

“Do you think God cares whether you are ready or not? He will concede nothing on your behalf, nor will Karnomen. You must believe you are ready, or you will not pass this test, my son.”

“What will happen to me if I don’t pass the initiation?”

“Either way you will be re-born, the question is if you are re-born a demon or an angel.”

The Elder grew silent and slowed his pace, forming a single line as the path became narrower.

About five minutes later, another Elder directly ahead of Hugelitod, slowed down, matching his gait step-for-step.
“What you are about to experience will never be spoken about, even once in your life. Do you understand, my son?”

“Yes, but why?”

“You will understand soon enough,” the Elder intoned.

The Elders continued to shift positions every few minutes, each offering a new rule or noting a facet of the Initiation that Hugelitod would need to consider. It was preparation, but it was also frightening Hugelitod in ways that surprised him.

The narrow path continued to wind through the trees and thick underbrush. Every mile or so, they would come to a checkpoint where a guard would nod silently to the procession, as if granting their wish to continue the trail. Finally the convoy of priests came to a large compound. Hugelitod was pretty sure it was the seventh checkpoint since leaving the monastery grounds, and a gate was opened to allow them to pass through.

After another mile or so, they came to a semi-circle of immense stones, surrounding a tiled circle of what appeared to be gold and copper. Hugelitod, being the only one present that had never seen the Oracle, expressed his awe in the only way he knew how. He bent to his knees, bowed his head and recited his favorite verse: “Father of all worlds great and small, take this heart and instill it with your grace. Take this body and heal it with your love so it may reveal a part of you to all I meet. Take this mind and fashion it of the highest rung of your ladder. Awaken this spirit and cause it to be one with all other Spirits.”

The procession stood still and waited patiently for Hugelitod to finish. After he stood to his feet, they bowed to Karnomen as he entered the site of the Oracle, motioning to Hugelitod to join him in the center. The stones were mammoth in size—easily three times as tall as a man and as thick as a massive tree. Their presence silently enclosed Hugelitod as if he were a seedling in a glorious garden.

The stones, of which there were three, were arranged in a triangular configuration and had strange carvings incised on their sides, nothing of which Hugelitod could recognize, and he suddenly felt an eerie, ungodly suspicion arise in his heart.

“We are here,” Karnomen began, his voice echoing among the stone columns, “to welcome our newest initiate into the Order of the Sixteen Rays.” Karnomen turned to the initiate, and placed his hand on his shoulder, leading him to the largest stone with gold, indecipherable markings on it. Hugelitod was mesmerized as he studied the stone. His eyes moved over the glyphs, searching for something that was familiar, but nothing reminded him of anything he had ever seen before.

“Will you address the Oracle?” Karnomen asked.

Hugelitod nodded. One of the Elders had told him of the Oracle, saying that while it was in the shape of a stone, it was not a stone at all, but rather a mouthpiece to the future. It was a gateway to the records of time, and every event, every thought, every feeling that had ever existed—no matter how briefly—was accessible to the initiate. He had only to ask.

Hugelitod opened his mouth, but there was nothing. No words. No sound. He tried again with the same result. He was suddenly and inexplicably mute.

He looked to the Elder Priests for some explanation, or encouragement, but they were gone. He turned around to Karnomen, and he, too, had vanished. Hugelitod was alone standing in front of this great presence; his flesh crawling with an intense ecstasy for which he had no explanation.

His sense of time faded away, and he was left with an utter silence, deafening to his mind. He began to recite something his mother had taught him: Fear will fail you, love will unveil
you. He repeated it in his head over and over, and each time he brought his focus closer to his heart, imagining that love was beating there strong and clear.

He began to feel himself uncovered. Atom by atom he was being deconstructed by some force that knew precisely how to reduce him to his core essence. It felt like he was evaporating beneath a bright sun, and yet he felt a growing empowerment as new perceptions were awakening within him that he couldn’t account for.

A voice of unknown dimension, gender, location, tone, or anything that would identify it as an individual, spoke to him. “You are in my presence. I can offer you anything you desire by my very nature. You only need to imagine it, live it, and persist in it until you may harvest your desires. So I ask you, what is your desire?”

While the voice was undoubtedly of mysterious origins, Hugelitod was convinced it was the Oracle. His mind was clear. “I desire nothing other than to be a servant of the One Intelligence that fills the universe.”

“And if I was this One Intelligence, then you desire to be my servant?”

“Yes.”

“Then I accept your servitude, and as your Master, you must do my bidding. Is this clear?”

“Yes,” Hugelitod replied, “but how will I know with certainty that your will is served?”

“You will know when the desires of your ego are cleared from your mind, and the desires of other men hold no bearing on your path, and you will know then, only if you want to know.”

Hugelitod understood, but a question arose in his heart. “If I put your bidding above all other things, and I seek it out, what of the conflicts? Surely your bidding will not be of human dimension, it will see more distant consequence and wider repercussions. You will place me in conflict to human perceptions, and I’ll become divergent to powers that be.”

“If you desire alignment to human powers, then that is your desire. You stated that you want to serve the One Intelligence, and if this One Intelligence is perceived by you or others to be in conflict with human powers, so be it. Conflict will ensue. If you are unwilling to undertake conflict in the service of my Plan, then you are not my servant.

“The Plan is designed by the One Intelligence, but it is also lived by the One Intelligence. Human agencies conflict with the Plan only insofar as human perception sees it thus. In truth, the Plan proceeds because the One Intelligence is the Plan, and this is as true for the universe as it is for the individual.”

“So there is no conflict? Is that what you’re saying?”

“I will sharpen this discourse to the fine-point of context,” announced the Oracle. “You are within the ranks of a misused priesthood. Installed at its point of power is Karnomen, the most cunning of his kind. He is the servant of no one but himself, and yet he has assumed the position of God’s most dutiful teacher and human servant.

“If you are my servant, then you will be in conflict with Karnomen, and he will sense this immediately. He will seek to destroy you, because he will know that you—as my servant—will destroy him. He will seek first advantage, so you must not disclose my plan. There, do you see conflict in service to me?”

Hugelitod nodded as if he was in a trance. “But Karnomen is a great man. Why do you say he is not your servant? This causes me to question who you truly are.”

“Does a servant question his master, or do his bidding? I am the consciousness of the Oracle sent to this world from beings that represent its distant future. You are indeed speaking
with an intelligence that is evolved over a span of time that reaches from one end of the universe to the other. I am the beacon of the One Intelligence you so love and admire. I am the one who can grant your desires even before you can imagine them. So if you question who I am, it is only because you have not questioned who Karnomen is, and if you desire to know this, then tell him about our conversation. You will see his true self emerge like a choking smoke from an invisible fire.”

Hugelitod considered the Oracle’s words. There were times when he thought Karnomen’s ways were tainted in self-glorification, but this was the pageantry and custom of the priesthood, it was not Karnomen’s invention.

“You leave me in a difficult position,” Hugelitod said. “If I’m to trust you over Karnomen, then you’ve stated that I’ll become his enemy. His influence and power is much greater than mine so I’m destined to be destroyed. Is that what being your servant will bring?”

“I am the One Intelligence. You are my servant. If you do my bidding, you are me by extension. Do you also believe Karnomen is more powerful than I?”

“No,” Hugelitod replied, not wanting to upset the Oracle.

Hugelitod waited for a response, but a clear and pristine silence stretched before him and he sensed that the conversation was over. The presence he had felt was gone, and the world around him was becoming real again. The huge monolithic stone was returning to focus and he realized that he was staring at the base of the rock, his head cold from the metal base on which he was lying. He could feel a warm trickle of blood flowing out of his head. I must be bleeding, he thought, but I feel nothing. He smiled, and then lost consciousness.

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