

It is a wonderful thing to enter into something that has the potential to be great. With all moral and complete faculty it is the greatest pleasure to feel as though you have accomplished something of great value to others. To this I am grateful, and to all that will come in the future to read my thoughts.

To all those who were there in times of distress and in times of need, and in times of helplessness I am truly grateful. Thank you Jason my good friend and brother for all the strength that had been given to me by you and your precious family. You are a good father and a loyal friend.

To those who have laughed and cried at my words and shown your love for me in your words and loving displays of affection with pats on the back and hugs. I will always confront you with loving affection myself.

To the one that had the faith in someone so far away, something that could be considered a leap, I do thank you my Publisher who has worked all this long time.

To my faithful cat Corgono who has now fallen asleep in death.

To all of you I say,

Thank You.

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Era Prologue

*T*ime Lore takes place in a time millions of years before our common era. Humans have been around for eons, but it has been a well-kept secret by the Ministry, the government at the time. Not all secrets can be kept completely in the dark, however. They live in a society of a technology between our medieval and the 1800's, however, with a great knowledge of the planetary bodies and galaxies, including a great knowledge of time and its applications. Not originating from the parallel universe that they now occupy gives them this knowledge and a way to combat the lies of the Ministry and other foes that appear from the darkness.

Prologue

Remember—I must remember, Sypris thought to herself as she sculpted the water into the figure of a face hovering in the air. It was the face of her father right before he had died, the last moment that she had seen him alive. Not too many people could remember that far into their past; but for Sypris Yayls, she lived in the past, present, and future. The water formed and flowed continually while she held the thought of her dead father locked in the forces of the universe and, with an outstretched hand, his memory. Her room was cold and expressionless. She was not an impractical woman, as she would view other girls her age; she had been through too much turmoil. A young woman of twenty and yet she had seen so much. She had experienced pain that only the strongest could describe, and she was not about to back down now. She would push forward as she always did, and she would triumph. The closed lids of her eyes twitched, and her eyes roamed about behind them as she formed the picture in her mind. Suddenly her concentration was interrupted with the door of her room being opened.

“It’s time,” said Galen as he entered the room.

The water splashed to the floor, and Sypris gasped and swung her arm across the table, knocking the empty goblet against the stone of the raging fireplace. Sypris was prone to anger when she was in demanding situations, and she was about to be subjected to one. Galen looked at her sorrowfully as he opened the door to her room wider, gesturing for her to do what she knew she must do.

It is rather common for young ones to have to bear the troubles of others, but that didn’t make the task any easier for anyone who could be considered an adult with the heart of a child. Sypris was a perfect balance between the two though, and she was tired of accomplishing the accomplishments of an adult and being treated like a sniveling little girl. Galen, however, was the only one that didn’t treat her that way. He saw a young scarred individual with the heart of a lion and the finesse of a very beautiful woman. He often took pity on her as though she were his own offspring.

Sypris had long red hair that reached to her shoulders, and she was very tall and mildly skinny but one of the more beautiful females of her time. She stood in the middle of the room, staring at the pool of water that lay on the floor, and was breathing heavily when Galen asked if there was anything that he could do for her, knowing that she would be too proud to answer him truthfully; and he was surprised to see her beginning to calm down more rapidly than usual. What looked like a tear from her eye had begun to emerge, and she answered him with a sharp tongue,

“Perhaps if you were no longer an old man, I would not have to accomplish your missions for you.”

She was, however, unable to anger Galen as she so often tried, and she knew he would be too softhearted to entertain such foolish actions as an ill-spoken word. The thought of this allowed her to vent at times. Galen knew of this need in Sypris and considered it a necessary step in her mental development, paying it no superficial attention.

The Cellar Door

“OUR PEACE is reaching a climax, and there is no hiding from it. Are you prepared to face the consequences of your own inaction? I will not stand by and allow the human race to be extinguished. All of our culture, all of our history will be trampled on. It will all be just a dream to a vicious race that will pass on through the ages as a lie, a tale of that once-forgotten age when the worthless men roamed the earth. What is it that we expect from ourselves? Where is the will to fight not with one another but with the growing threat that is coming? Men once spoke of the times in which we live. Peaceful times where there was very little wrong in the world. However, these times are ending, and if we do not act now, we will be destroyed. Do we expect ourselves to lie down where we have stood? Or do we raise our countenance and become strong against an enemy that we, in the near future, will face? We can no longer think that the wax will sustain the flame at high winds of darkness. And when it becomes the time to die for what we believe in, will we? If we aren't willing, we will wallow like a dead man, scattered throughout the land and hiding against a foe that has overtaken us. If we prepare now, we will have a chance against them. I look down at my sword that has been through many battles that I have not seen. I too have regrets for what I have seen and what I have been required to accomplish. However, these things were necessary. We do not lust for blood, but are we to betray ourselves at the sudden smell of our own blood being poured out? Are we to drink of our own cup of wrath? Is our righteous indignation so righteous that it demands the blood of our children and our children's children? When are we to learn from the failings of our fathers and our brothers? Possibly, our children will live to see the times that we have created for them. However, we need to act, and we need to act now!

“I do not wish to explain my purpose here with you today. You already know what must be done. I have simply come to remind you of your obligations.”

Sypris paused for a moment to pass a slow, long, piercing glare to

each man and woman in the court hall. Slowly the faces of the council's members turned from confused scowls to softer and more respectful acknowledgment. Some of the members pushed themselves away from the large table that sat between the speaker and the council as if to evade her striking words of wisdom. One of the men stood up to reveal himself in the light of the moon coming from a window. The light flickered on his face as small particles of dust passed through it. His name was Sol. He stood there weak in his stature, as a man that had sat for too long a time in a chair. His gaunt face was frightening and he stared at Sypris with sad eyes. He could recall a time when he once had long black hair, but that time had long since passed by only to be replaced with gray-headedness.

"I see nothing that concerns us, my dear," the man said softly and gently. "And quite frankly, it sounds as though you're speaking of things that couldn't possibly pertain to the times in which I live. I look around, and I see no danger except for the lies that are coming out of your mouth. I am in no spirit to entertain such things as danger, and the extinction of the human race. These things are in the past. It is best that we do not concern ourselves with things that we cannot control. I am a tired old man, and the things you speak of are of a different time and place. There is absolutely no reason to create an army of men at this time. I'm afraid you have miscalculated, my dear, for there are not enough men on the earth to accomplish such an astronomical thing."

He paused for a response from Sypris, her expression filled with anger as she responded,

"If you cannot see past your own life and time, then you truly are a fool, but you are not a fool, for I know you well. Why do you choose to not look past your own hand? Why do you continually choose to hide yourself in the fog?"

"It is none of your concern how far I can or cannot see, Yayls," said the old man. "It is that there is no survival now or in our future. I do believe that the time of man has now ended, and that the parallels can sense our destruction. That it is a useless battle. The race of man would survive as slaves, and we would be alive. That is as good as it can come for us."

Sypris shook her head in disbelief of his words.

“So I do see. It is not foolishness that I sensed in you, it is fear,” she said in a loud and forceful voice as she slowly revealed her hand from beneath her cloak. “And is it that you would wish for man to fight against man also? I doubt that you would even protect yourself for fear that you would destroy your masters when they come. Then who would hold out their hand to feed you?” she said as she held out her hand in front of her.

The old man’s face grew angry as the light that once shone on it disappeared, cloaking him in darkness. But the old man said nothing and slowly returned himself to his chair.

Two men emerged from hidden places in the room, but before they could seize her, the old man lifted his hand and gestured for the men to halt.

“What would you have me do, lead a revolt against an office that I occupy?”

The old man was sitting relaxed in his chair, not even looking at her.

“I have been here too long. I have dealt with too much in this lifetime to not have any place to rest my head. Is that what you wish of me, Yayls? Do you wish for me to go into hiding with you and to live the life that a vibrant young man could hardly withstand? Any judgment that I make today is judged by someone higher than me. I have no place in this world or the next, and I am content with that reality. You must understand that it did not come easy for me, however. It was not easy for me to grow old and see my friends and family die. They too died for the cause of the Ministry. What would you have me do, Yayls?” the old man asked.

“I only ask that you listen to my plea and respect the decision that Galen has made, concerning what we are about to do. This involves you signing a law of noninterference.”

The old man stood still in the dark room of tile and stone, the room of the Ministry court hall. This was a place that all dreaded to enter, for the tales of the Ministry’s judicial decisions were that of legendary cruelty. However, it was not Sypris that was being judged; it was the Ministry and its actions that were being put to the question. There was nothing that the man could say or do to refute the argument of Sypris, and he was facing imminent defeat. The man was beginning to regret his ever allowing her to have an audience; it was he who

would suffer for her words, not her. Sol looked at her with sad eyes and continued to speak.

“I did not know that I could be so fearful. I assume that it is in my old age that a man can be so consumed with the emotions that we could or could not have had if only we would have controlled ourselves with more urgency. Often we say this to ourselves with sudden and swift deliberation. Do we always weigh the consequences of our actions? Or do we leap into the fire, hoping not to be scorched? We all of us are ready to die for what we believe to be the truth. Or is it simply the most advantageous interpretation of fact, distorted, mutilated, burned, hidden—for what purpose? Do you really think that we deserve the life that we have been given, the life of man? In the times of greed, lust, and happiness of man, yes, in the darkest day of man created by man, there lays in the depths of his mind his morals that are trained to be pushed aside for bloodlust and other beastly things. But in times of hardship and love, these things become paramount in our lives. The love that we did not have for other men’s loved ones has created a labyrinth of bloodshed between us all. The round stone of revenge has, in the hardship of man, ceased. We, even as a scattered nation, come together now only in love and the pursuit of a more meaningful future that we will probably never look upon. You have made me realize that this life is worth the fight, though it may claim our lives. It is the cause of man to become more than what he really is. I will need some time to think about the position that you are putting me in. I suppose that you do not have a choice.”

The old man got up out of his chair into the light again.

“We will send to you our decision in two days’ time, Yayls. This meeting is adjourned.” The minister turned to the two men in the darkness and said, “Could you please show the professor out of the hall?”

The two men acknowledged and quickly walked over to Yayls as the old minister exited through a door toward the back of the hall of the Ministry. Light rained through the stained glass windows of the castle, casting shadows of light on the stone floor and tables. At this point, Sypris could see that the defeat of the Ministry was very clear; however, whether they would choose to accept that defeat or not was not in her power to see. She and the others would have to wait.

“Please come with us, Professor,” said one of the men in black.

The men led her through the Ministry hallway to the Ministry exit. There were two guards at the entrance. Sypris exposed her hand from beneath her cloak, and the doors opened with a loud crash. There was a storm outside the Ministry. As she stepped through the doorway, she clenched the hood of her cloak. The cold wind blew hard against her face. She could feel the pain growing from the cold as the wind pushed against her when she walked.

Sypris was a very beautiful woman. Her eyes were the color of a green sea; and her face, white porcelain. She never looked as though she were sick because it wasn't a very often occurrence. But it was her personality that everyone loved the most. They would often say that she was equally beautiful on the outside as she was on the inside. But Sypris didn't really care about other people's opinions of her. She was who she was, and if anyone didn't like her at first, they would grow to like her eventually.

Sypris lived in a time when there was much peace for the human race. However, she could recall a time when there was no peace at all, when there was no goodness, a time when man fought against the beast and when men fought against themselves. She knew that the peacefulness humans were enjoying was not going to last much longer, and she wasn't the only one.

The cold wind continued to toss her cloak back and forth as she took a path down the mountainside. She looked out past the hills and into the valley of Paradoxtom. She could see the flashes of lightning shooting across the night sky, and the rain clouds looked as though there was a large wall of water coming down into the valley. When she looked, she paused for a moment and stared at the beautiful sight. The wind whipped her cloak toward the storm. She felt at peace because of her subjection to the elements of nature. She imagined the experience of being swept away by them to a restful place free from all problems. Eventually, she pulled herself out of her fantasy to the reality that she was not the kind of person that would give up, even if she wanted to. It wasn't possible for her. No matter how hard she tried, she would push on to the end just as she would push on through the storm. It reminded her of the problems that she would be facing, and it made her uneasy.

She turned and headed toward the mountains, and it was not long when she could hear a carriage in the distance. She could hear the carriage master calling out to the horses, telling them to speed up. Just as the carriage began to pass, it came to a halt. The door opened, and a hand reached out from the cab. Sypris grabbed hold of the man's hand and got into the carriage. She could hear the wind whistling outside the cab. She pulled back her cloak hood, looked over to the man sitting beside her concealed by the darkness from the light, and thanked him.

"My name is Sypris Yayls."

"I know," said the man, and then there was a short silence.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" said Sypris.

"Very dangerous too," said the man. "So where should we drop you?" he asked bluntly.

"Do you know the mountain Pastel?" Sypris asked as she turned to take a look outside the window of the cab.

"As a matter of fact, I do indeed. However, first I must introduce myself, I am Talon Barrett." Sypris turned to him and faintly smiled.

Talon quickly grabbed his cane and tapped the roof of the cab and shouted, "Mountain Pastel."

The carriage quickly changed course.

"May I ask you why you are traveling to such a remote area? Wouldn't you rather come to Fable with me and rest the night?" asked Talon with a smile.

"I must see a friend about an important matter," Sypris said as she looked at him questioningly.

"So be it," he said begrudgingly.

Talon pulled out a small box of matches, struck one, and lit the candle in the front of the cab. There were flashes of lightning outside, and they had come under the rain. Sypris leaned her head against the cab window, trying to keep it steady from the violent shaking, and then realized that it was more advantageous to not sleep during the journey. She put her hand on the cold window, reaching out toward the sky in her mind.

"It is so beautiful, it won't be this way much longer."

"No, I suppose that it won't." Talon paused to look at her closer. "I'm on my way back to Fable. I have a house there. However, because

where I am taking you is so far out of my way, I may need a place to stay for the night if that's all right with you. I can pay."

"You won't have to pay. There is a place that you can stay for the night, but you must promise that you will be on your way in the morning," Sypris said in a forceful manner.

"I can do that; you were going to walk to the mountain?" he asked.

"No, I was admiring the storm."

"How were you going to get there?" asked Talon.

"Never mind that," said Sypris as she turned to ignore him.

Sypris looked out the window as if she was longing for something. She, surprisingly to herself, felt very calm and safe in the cab of the stranger. She had felt as if she had known him all her life. It may have been that he had a young and warm face, or possibly, it was the way in which he looked at her. The storm had affected her profoundly too. Life was influencing her in a very peculiar way. The cab was very comfortable; she could feel the soft velvet seats and enjoyed the deep maroon color. It was a gentle atmosphere. *Gentle in here, harsh out there*, she thought to herself.

Sypris turned toward Talon, ready to relinquish her thoughts to him, and she knew that he could see it in her. His eyes turned from a stranger's to an empathetic friend.

"Are you all right?" asked Talon. Sypris needed time to breathe before she answered him.

"I was only five when the Requiem entered the city Heris." She paused for a moment and looked out the window once more. "It was a great city that bordered upon the Fondland. It was the most beautiful city that I had ever seen, tall trees, magnificent gardens, a dream in a world where there had seemed to be no more beauty to dream, and even that was taken away. My father was killed when the Requiem invaded. They were men as tall as the trees and super strong. We didn't have a chance against them. My father barely had enough time to get me out of the house when one of the Requiem grabbed hold of him."

A tear had begun to fall down her face when before she could turn her head or wipe the tear, Talon's hand was already there to comfort her. She quickly pulled away.

"I'm sorry about your troubles. I do not enjoy watching a beautiful

woman cry. Please forgive me if I am being too friendly. It is my weakness, I suppose,” said Talon.

“A strength possibly but not a weakness,” said Sypris.

Talon smiled and returned his hand to the head of his cane.

“I know that life can be very hard for many people, I was raised by my mother. I saw the life that she led, the trials that she faced. She always managed to protect me from the effects of it. She was a very loving woman, and I will always remember her for that. There were times when I would cry on my pillow, many times for nothing that made any sense. I suppose that I was an easy child. I know, however, that it was not an easy job to protect me from the world that we were living in at that time. I see her face sometimes looking down on me as if I were her little boy again. Sometimes it is too much for me, and I begin to act, as some sorts would say, not that which is becoming of a man. After which I am forced to forcefully remind them that I was a boy only but a few years from the time that I am standing in now.

“Someone once told me that in order to show true pity, love, and compassion, it is a necessity that one must experience the pity, love, and compassion of another. I unreservedly believe that that is the truth. In my life in every turn, I experienced such things. It has made me into the person that I am today.”

Talon looked at Sypris, smiled, and then turned his attention to the storm that was raging outside the cab.

“I think I do understand how such events as this magnificent storm could stir up the intimate feelings in all of us,” said Talon.

Sypris looked at him and wondered what it was that would possess a stranger to reveal so much to her.

Perhaps it was her young gentle face or the way that she looked at him, he thought to himself.

The lights from the small city could be seen from the carriage window.

“We’re nearly there,” said Talon.

Sypris could see the smoke from the chimneys. The carriage ride smoothed as it came off the dirt road and onto the stone street leading to the city gate. They slowly passed a sign that said “City of Pastel” in three different languages. The gates were very large, and there were

guards. The carriage slowed to a stop, and a well-dressed man came to meet them.

“What is your business here in Pastel?” the young man asked as he covered his face from the wind and rain.

“We are here to meet a friend,” said Talon.

“What do you mean ‘we,’ sir?” the young man asked.

Talon looked at the boy questioningly and turned his head to look at Sypris. There was, however, no one sitting in the side seat where Sypris had been the whole trip to the city. Talon turned to the young man and said,

“Me and my carriage master.”

“Right, sir, in you go then,” said the young man. And the gates were opened.

Talon had wondered if he had been talking to a woman at all or if it was his imagination.

“She was quite beautiful,” he mumbled to himself out loud as the cab was sped through the large gate of the city of Pastel.

The city was not at all quiet. There were people in every alley and every street. The city spiraled up the mountain with long streets. Bars and taverns were hustling and bustling. People were dancing, and people were drinking the night away. The carriage passed a very old hotel and bar. Talon hit his cane against the roof of the cab, gesturing for the carriage master to stop for the night.

The rain from the storm had stopped by the time Talon was ready to get out of the carriage.

“Would you like for me to get your luggage, sir?” said a man that was standing at the entrance of the hotel bar.

“Yes, please do, and tell the clerk that my coach master and I will be staying for the night. I will meet you there shortly,” Talon said as he gracefully stepped out of the carriage and on to the stone street.

He took a deep breath of the brisk clean air and made his way to the bar. The door was already open when he reached it, and there was someone in the doorway, smoking a large pipe as Talon passed through it. The bar smelled of hard liquor and rosemary. There was a hint of cinnamon too. Talon mounted the chair and pushed his fancy overcoat behind him. The bartender was a woman, and she noticed him before he entered the bar.