

# 1

The bookstore was quiet, and just as he had left it. Bastion wasn't sure what he had expected, but for some reason he had thought something might be different. And, perhaps it wouldn't be here at all, proving that things were just a product of a fevered mind losing touch with reality.

But, everything was exactly where he had left it, the books sitting quietly on the shelves as though waiting for him.

He didn't turn the lights on, not wanting to attract visitors so he used the light on his phone to guide him to the back room where he pushed the filing cabinet aside to reveal the hidden door. Again, for some reason he was surprised to find it there.

He inserted the key and felt the now familiar warming of the ring on his finger as he turned the knob.

He shut the door behind him before turning on the lights. The stair well was revealed and he went down and opened the second door.

The lights came to life revealing the same space he had fled two days earlier. Nothing had changed.

Shelves receded from him in their concentric circles, leading to the circular space in the centre where the desk and chair waited. And the mirror.

Hesitantly he walked to the centre of the room. He thought he might feel freaked out, but he felt strangely comfortable here. As though he was home, a feeling that was unexpected. Yeah, he felt at home, and feeling he hadn't really had in a long time.

When he got to the desk he turned slowly to look at the mirror. It motionless, and looked nothing more than an ornate mirror.

"Dad?" He called, not sure how this worked.

Perhaps he needed to recite the same spell each time.

He walked around the desk to where the envelope lay where he had dropped it. He was just reaching to pick it up, when his father spoke behind him.

“Son.”

Bastion gave a yell and jumped back.

“Damnit. You need to stop doing that!”

“Sorry, I forget that this is all new to you.”

Bastion picked the envelope up and placed it on the desk. “I thought I might need to say this again.”

From the mirror his father shook his head. “No, now that you’ve said it I can come and go. I thought I’d wait around, hoping that you’d come back. Look about earlier son, I’m sorry that this is all a shock-“

“It’s fine. I’m sorry that I rushed out. I just needed time to think.”

His father gave a sad smile. “I understand.”

They stood looking at each other for a moment. Bastion marvelled again at how familiar his father looked. Despite not seeing him for over ten years, he looked the same as when he was younger.

“So, do you, ummm, just hang around in the mirror or something? Where are you exactly?”

His father scratched his head. “Yeah, that’s a tough one. I’m not actually *in* the mirror per se, more looking through it and out to you, kinda like you looking out a window.”

“So, where are you?”

“I guess the easiest way to explain it is that I’m in a version of the afterlife. Not fully passed through. A kind of in-between world between the world of the living and the world of the dead. I cast the spell before I died, in preparation, so that I would be able to come back to you. It’s not really *allowed*, but I wanted to make sure I could be there for you when the Lumination happened for you.”

Bastion nodded, trying to take all of this in, and it was a lot to come to terms with.

“Right. So, you can only look through this mirror?”

His father smiled, and then disappeared. “Actually, no, I can appear in any reflective surface that is sufficiently clear.”

Bastion spun around and saw his father’s face, smiling at him from the reflective surface of the large magnifying glass. He walked over, eyes wide. “So, like anything reflective?”

“No not anything. Wood, stone, etc., won’t work. They’re too tied to your living world to be good conductors. But water and glass, things

that reflect the light well and that are more tied to the spiritual realm allow me to see and communicate through. Water has always been a good spiritual medium, and glass is transparent so it's more a conduit for light rather than a barrier.

"Gotcha." Bastion thought for a moment. "So anything like that, glass and water, you can communicate through. Anywhere?"

His father's image nodded. "Anywhere. But, because of the connection to you, I can most easily find you wherever you are."

"Like anywhere?"

His father nodded. "Space works differently here, so I can pretty much go anywhere you go."

"So, did you follow me when I left the other day?"

His father looked uncomfortable for a moment. "Well, not everywhere. But, I wanted to make sure you were all right."

Bastion didn't feel angry at this, but he also wasn't so sure about his father being able to follow him anywhere he wanted.

"Did you follow me to mum?"

A pained expression crossed his father's face. "I saw you go there, but I didn't go inside with you." He paused. Then, "How is she?"

Bastion sat down in the chair, wondering what to say. "She's... the same as she's always been. I went wondering if she might be able to explain any of this but... she didn't say anything. She never does. She hasn't spoken in years."

Grief flitted over his father's features, and they sat in silence for a moment, considering their own feelings and the mixture of emotions they felt. They were two familiar strangers, but strangers nonetheless. Strangers that shared a history and blood, but still were not quite sure how to talk so openly about such things with each other.

Bastion changed the subject. "So, tell me a bit more about this Lumination thing and what Solarii is and what's this power you talked about."

His father looked relieved at the change of subject.

"Where to begin. Normally I'd explain all of this slowly to you over years. But, now's better than never I suppose. Lumination is what we call the awakening of the Light within you. All creatures have this light as part of them. It is what gives light. However some of us have an added measure of this Light, that allows us to perceive things differently, and do things that other humans cannot do. Call it power. Call it magic. It's really the harnessing of the Light that comes from The All Light - the creator. Or God, if you will.

Just as the body goes through a change taking a child's body into adulthood, so too does the Light within you change and awaken. You become Luminated with this light."

"And this normally happens when you're a teenager right?"

"Correct," his father said. "Normally this would have happened for you around the time of puberty."

"And so, what does this light-power thing do?"

"For everyone it is slightly different. Just as other skills and talents, Luminated humans have different strengths and skills with the light."

"Like what?"

His father smiled at Bastion's curiosity. "Well, some can channel their light to create illusions. Some can create heat and fire. Some can even use the light to see into the future, though that is a rare gift. All families differ in the talents and skills they manifest."

"And what about our family? What were our strengths?"

"Well, we had a few gifts that made us special. One of our greatest talents was the ability to see into others minds, to use the light to perceive thoughts and emotions of others, to understand their motivations."

"What? Mind-reading?"

"Well, it's a little more complicated than that, but yes, basically."

"And I can do it?"

"It would take some training, but as my son, you most likely could."

"What else?" Bastion felt himself feeling a little excited about all of this, as crazy as it sounded.

"Well, I'm not sure of everything you'd be able to do. That would show up over time and through training. But, I was particularly good at creating heat."

"What, like making fire?"

His father laughed. "Yeah, something like that."

Bastion ran his hands through his hair, and gave a small laugh of his own. "This is... crazy. I mean amazing, but... crazy."

"Yes, I can imagine it would take a bit of getting used to as an adult. Normally this is explained as children so it's easier to accept and comprehend."

Bastion toyed with the envelope on the table for a moment, pushing it around as he thought.

"So, could you show me"" he asked quietly.

His father gave a sad shake of his head. "Sorry son. I'm unable to do anything from where I am."

Bastion's face fell.

"But, I could try help you do something."

Bastion looked up at his father, unable to hide the excitement.

"Sure. You are Solarii."

"Which means Child of the Sun or something?"

"Correct."

"So, what can I do? Could you teach me how to make fire or read people's minds?"

His father laughed. "Easy there. That takes a little bit of practise. Let's just start with something a bit more manageable for now. We'll start where all Solarii children start - learning to open the Lumis."

"Lumis?"

"Some people have referred to it as the third eye. Many humans have the ability, but with Solarii and Lunarii it is something that must be done in order to work the Light into the forms that you want."

"Like some kind of magical sight?"

"Yes. Something like that."

"Alright. Let's do it."

"Okay, first I want you to get comfortable and just relax. Have you ever meditated before?"

Bastion nodded. "I've dabbled in it, but never really stuck with it."

"Well, I want you to get into a bit of a meditative state. Just relax and breathe and just become aware of your body."

Bastion followed his fathers instructions. He closed his eyes and relaxed, breathing steadily and from his gut as he remembered doing when Myra had been trying to teach him how to meditate. He had never been very good at it however as his mind always wandered, and he always became aware of how itchy his nose could get. But, now, with his father watching him from the spirit world, he felt a newfound motivation to learn.

Steadily he worked through his muscles one by one, starting at his head and working his way down his body, breathing as he progressively relaxed each part. After some time his father spoke again.

"Do you feel like your body is relaxed?"

Bastion nodded.

"Good. In this state I want you to continue breathing but as you breathe I want you to imagine that instead of air, you are breathing light into you body, gathering it from around you and bringing it into yourself. Imagine it flowing into you freely and filling your body."

Bastion tried to do as his father suggested. It took a few moments, but he eventually got the hang of it. In his mind he picture strands of light coming from around him and being breathed into his body, running through his limbs filling him. In his mind her pictured it gathering in his forehead, for some reason, where it began to gather in a growing pool.

“Good. Good. Continue doing this for a few minutes.”

Bastion followed his fathers directions, and the more he breathed the more the light filled him and gathered in a calm swirling pool in his mind, a pool that he knew had always been there, but now he was connecting it to more light around him. The image soothed him, and he felt his body relaxing more and more, the aches and tiredness of earlier starting to fade away. There was another pool, centred around his navel, but it was the one in his head that drew his attention.

“Now, tell me how do you see the light in you, and where is it?”

“I see it in like a pool... a swirling pool and for some reason it is gathered in my head, like a deep swirling pool of light just above my eyes.”

“Perfect!” His father’s voice was soft, and sounded impressed, which made Bastion feel good. “That is exactly where it should be. You’ve taken to this naturally.”

Bastion smiled at his father’s praise.

Which was when he felt the faint thrum of a headache at the back of his head. The swirling pool of light in his mind rippled as though disturbed.

*Not now*, he thought to himself, and refocused on the breath and the light in his mind.

“Now, just continue focusing on that pool. Let it grow, and when feel like it is at a stage where it might flow out of your mind, I want you to open your eyes, and with the light, I want you to see it emanating from where it sits in your mind.”

Bastion sat and breathed, ignoring the slow awakening beat of the headache. Instead he focused on the flow of light into his body, the gathering of it in his mind towards the top of his head. He focused on the pool, the way it pulsed with life and energy, a vibrant but steady energy. With each force the pool grew, until he felt like it wanted some release, wanted to overflow his mind from where it had gathered.

Following his father’s instructions, he slowly opened his eyes, imagining the light in his mind was also opening with him, the glow releasing slightly from his mind and shining *through* his own eyes.

"Holy crap!" Bastion said, as he opened his eyes.

His father laughed. "It's quite special isn't it."

Bastion couldn't speak. What he saw before him was not the same room he had seen before. Instead he was seeing it differently. He could still see everything as normal, bookshelves and a desk and books, but it was all brighter, the colours richer, the light in the ceiling were alive, not just bulbs anymore. He could feel the life in each of the sources of light. But, it was the other things that pulled his attention. In the far corner of the room he could see a spider, but not just the spider, he could see its *essence*. He could feel its life. There was a cockroach crawling along the rafter. This too glowed with its own source of life, and little beacon of life working its way along the rafter. There was life all around Bastion, life he had not noticed before.

"What am I seeing?"

"You're seeing life son. The Light that is all living creatures."

Bastion was amazed. Then he noticed the thin strands of light flowing towards him from all the other sources of light. There was even one coming to him from down the stairs. He lifted his hands and that was when he saw the he was glowing too, a golden hue emanating from his skin. He waved them in front of his face, waving them through the strands of light that flowed towards him, little beams that connected to him from all sources of light.

"I see, like light strings or something." He said quietly, running his hands through them. He could feel each one in his mind, individual strands connecting him to the sources around them. And in the distance, beyond the boundaries of the room and building he was in, he could sense a much greater source of light, and immense almost immeasurable lake that pulsed with light beyond his sight.

"We call those the strands. Your connections to the light around you. Wherever there is light, it will sustain you. From those you can create the things I was telling you before."

Bastion looked at his father, and his eyes widened. The mirror shone light, but it was dimmed. He could see the glowing figure of his father, and pulsing great light in the mirror, yet there was something covering his light, as though seen through some kind of gauze.

"I can see you. You're bright, but it's like something's covering you."

"Yes," his father said with a hint of sadness. "I'm beyond the veil of the living so you will be seeing my light which will appear muted to you."

Bastion nodded, and also felt a bit of sadness. He would have liked

to be experiencing this with his father in the same room, physically as well as spiritually.

The headache at the back of his head thrummed a little bit more, and the pool of light in his mind faltered. Bastion frowned at the same time as his father.

“What was that?” His father asked.

“Oh nothing. Just a little bit of a headache.”

As if in response to his acknowledgement, the headache suddenly surged, sending a sharp spike into his mind right where he imagined the pool of light to be, and the light winked out, as did his ability to see the light around him. Suddenly the room appeared dim and less beautiful. He couldn’t see the insects in the corners, and his father was just another image in a mirror now.

And the headache thrummed through his brain.

Bastion squinted his eyes closed and leaned over holding his head. “Damn it!”

“Son, what is it?”

Bastion waved him off. “Nothing, nothing. It’s just his damn headache.”

Bastion leaned back in the chair and breathed and slowly the thump of the headache receded to sit at the back of his head once more. Slowly he opened his eyes, and smiled. “So, how’d I do?”

Bastion’s smile faded when he saw his father’s expression. His father stared at his son, with a frown and concern on his face.

“Tell me about this headache son.”

“I said it’s nothing. Just a headache. I don’t think I’ve been getting enough sleep lately.”

“When did it start?”

Bastion frowned and shrugged. “I dunno, maybe a few days ago.”

His father’s frown deepened.

“Your acting like you’ve never heard of a headache before.”

His father looked at him, and Bastion was reminded of how intense his father’s gaze could be. “Bastion, tell me about when your Lumination occurred. Has anything weird happened?”

Confused Bastion thought back to the day the Lumination was supposed to have occurred, the day the headache first arrived. It had been his birthday. He had just come back from visiting his mother. The night of the first vision.

Bastion wanted to kick himself. The visions rushed back to him, and horror of the previous night. In his excitement to understand more, he

had forgotten to tell his father.

“Well, actually there has been something I’ve been wanting to talk to you about.”

His father just stared at him and said “Tell me.”

So Bastion did.

He explained the spasms on the night of his birthday. He explained how he lost control of his body. He explained how the room had opened and how he had been looking down onto another room. And, he explained the horrors of what he had seen next. The boy, the girl, the creature, the blood, the cauldron and the living darkness that oozed within. He told him how he had awoken and found out that those two children were not just dreams, that they were real and that they were missing. He told him about last night, and how a strand of light had reached out and touched the girl and her pain had passed to Bastion. And he told him how the creature had turned to look at him, just before the vision closed.

All the while, his father’s face took on a more horrified expression, and Bastion began to become increasingly worried.

When he finished his account, his father was shaking his head.

“I take it this is not normal?”

“Bastion, you should have told me this earlier.”

“Why? What’s wrong.”

“This is not good Bastion. I’ve never heard of something like this happening with someone’s Lumination. And, what you saw...” his father stopped talking in horror.

“What did I see?” Bastion, fear turning in his gut looked at his father.

“Evil Bastion. That’s what you saw. Evil. And we’re going to need to get some help. Right now.”