

# ✕CIRCADIAN DREAMS✕

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## PROLOGUE

*There was no way for me to know that things would come to this, yet I always had an inkling of the events to come. Standing in the cold, still air of that winter eve, looking down on my city from the highest point on Barter Hill, the lingering stench of burning gasoline entered my nose in waves that grew progressively more violent as I walked closer to the source. As I approached the Fertine Health Center, I felt a presence looming closer to me. Then, I whipped my head around and, to my astonishment, saw him.*

*How we got to this moment, and how we got to all our moments afterward starts with a story.*

### **Nesplosia: A Short History**

In a galaxy similar to the Milky Way exists Nesplosia. Nesplosia is a fantastical planet, its atmosphere a milky pink hue, with splotches of greens and splatters of blues all across the planet's surface. Its most unique feature, however, is the peculiar purple hue that it emitted into the atmosphere. It had many countries and held a diverse population in its lands. All the inhabitants of Nesplosia, despite their differences, could agree that the planet was beautiful, spending their days basking in the glow of its

brightest moon under the flamingo pink sky during the day and sleeping under its dimmest star under the seafoam green sky during the night.

One of the wealthiest nations in Nesplosia was Avar. Throughout the history of Avar, it had participated in many wars, but it always won and conquered the other nations. Due to its military power and wealth, no other country dared to challenge it. Over time, it became the ruler of all of the other nations.

*The End*

*(IMPORTANT NOTE: I'm Avarian, though this has never been something I was proud of. You will come to know why later in my story.)*

*You couldn't encounter one Avarian that didn't know the story of how Nesplosia and its nations came to be. You also couldn't find one that didn't conform to the expectations that following the fate laid out for you was the best plan and not doing so would result in a cruel end.*

*Though there was a part of the story that always escaped me, and it wasn't until I was in my 20s and had met Mesni that I finally discovered what was missing; the ending. The aftermath of the other nations that Avar ruled over was something that no one talked about much. While growing up, I asked my parents about other nations, curiosity was overflowing in me because I grew bored of Avarian customs and conversations. When I asked, they redirected me to another topic, sometimes outright ignoring me and walking away. Looking*

back, it was obvious that they were hiding something, and I only just recently figured out what. But we'll get back to that later.

The first time I locked eyes with my mother was a week after I was born. I had gone through all the processes every Avarian went through when they were born. As soon as I popped out, I was carried away to the Prophecy Unit of the LDR Ward. I was dipped in this bright pink mist with a silver film that resided in a large bronze basin. I don't remember much about that moment, but the cool sting of the liquid and the now-faded marks it left on my undeveloped arms will always stay with me.

When the nurse brought me back to my mother's room, I was carefully placed into her arms. My mother stared at me and told me "Jellion, my heart. I knew from the moment I found out I was having you that you would change the world. Now it's confirmed. My baby is gonna bring on a new era in Avar" I was always closest to her, mostly because my father wasn't around much. He was busy working for his Fulfillment Company. There was just something about our deep connection and the features I shared with her. The only thing that caused a hitch in our relationship was my opinions on destiny.

From a young age, everyone around me has told me that it was my destiny to change the world. They told me I was special and that I should aspire to be great and do great

things. As I grew up, I noticed that everyone around me said they were destined for greatness too. This never made sense to me. If everyone is exceptional, then isn't exceptional the new normal? Funnily enough, greatness being normal made me not want to be great. I wanted to live a normal life, not save the world.

While other kids bragged about their dreams of them riding dragons, saving princesses, and stopping deadly explosions from destroying Nesplosia, I chimed in with dreams about working a 9-to-5 job or working minimum wage jobs to put myself through college. They wanted to cure all known diseases and world hunger, I wanted to be worked to the bone and never receive any credit.

Simplicity and the joy it could bring was a concept my parents couldn't understand. When my mother was only 13, she saved the life of a foreign diplomat who had come to Avar to renew peace treaties from decades ago. (She didn't like to talk about this story, though. The diplomat's son almost became my father.) My father, on the other hand, would constantly brag about solving one of the hardest math problems known to mankind, though he can never explain how he arrived at his answer. He only spoke of the accolades and fame solving it brought him.



## SIXTEEN YEARS OLD

As I grew up, I started to keep my opinions secret. It didn't matter much when I was a kid, but the impression it gave my parents' friends caused them to receive strange looks when they came to our house for dinner parties. Even though I kept my thoughts to myself, only existing as countless rants in my journal, I still thought being destined to do something was ignorant. Not being able to path out your own life, having to fulfill your destiny to live the life you wanted, why did we have to put up with that?

Soon, I got tired of the repetitive nature of life and dreamed of breaking free and doing something different, something more meaningful, something mundane. But I was held back by my parent's expectations of me. According to the law, I couldn't leave my parents' sight until I had accomplished great things. Everyone else seemed to be lucky enough to have no trouble doing so, but the same couldn't be said for me. I never had the desire to fulfill my destiny, but I always secretly hoped I could stumble onto an opportunity like my parents did, just to get it out of the way.

I had high hopes that my break in monotony lay outside of Avarian territory. The affluence that exuded off of every building and store in Terin screamed "exceptional", which was the opposite of what I wanted. Time passed, more years went by, and then it was my

16th birthday. Another year of my parents chiding me about fulfilling my destiny. Another year of walking through Terin aimlessly, unconsciously looking for an opportunity, to find freedom or the change I've been dreaming about, dreadfully unlucky on both parts.

As I turned onto Gebber Road during the summer of my birthday, on my way to the local park, I crossed paths with a boy. The first thing I noticed was his tanned complexion. It struck me since every Avarian had a pale to stark white skin tone. From this, I could tell he was from another nation, though I had no clue which one. As I looked up at him, our eyes met and his expressionless face turned to one of disgust. I was struck by this, I couldn't understand why since we had only just met and I had never seen him before.

He kept walking, brushing past my arm and a strange feeling crept through me from the spot where our arms touched. As he continued on his way, I looked back at him. I remember the feeling of awe I had. He was very attractive, even when he looked like a jerk, at least that's what I thought he was at the time. That was our first encounter, but it wasn't our last.



## EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD

Between the two years from my 16th to 18th birthday, I had many other encounters with him. It was a few weeks after my 17th birthday that I learned his name was Mesni. I'll only talk about the important ones since we would be here for hours if I talked about them all.

The 3rd time we met was at a library in Terin. I was a senior in high school at that time and I was having a group-study session with some acquaintances. After an hour there, he and his friends sat at the table next to us. I don't know if he noticed me when he walked in, but I definitely noticed him. I couldn't help but let my eyes draw to him and give him glances every time he looked away from me. My group left first, but I stuck around until his group was getting ready to leave as well.

Our 19th meeting was the day I learned his name. I was riding my bike down the sidewalk of Parks Avenue with my earbuds in when I saw him cross the street. I slowly approached him and I could tell that he noticed me. I saw him roll his eyes and pretend he couldn't see me when, from behind him, someone called out a name. Mesni. He turned to the person and from there, I assumed that was his name. He walked toward them and I kept on

riding my bike a few feet away, only to turn back and watch as he left his friend and kept going the way he was taking. Only when I couldn't see him anymore did I leave.

Number 45 is one of my favorites. Long story short, we went on an "accidental" blind date that wasn't so accidental. I had asked around and found out that he was a friend of a friend of a friend (The 6 Degrees Of Separation has been at the root of most of our encounters). His friend was setting him up on a blind date and I told my friend to "casually" stress the fact that I was available. It worked and we went out to dinner, but the date lasted for about 15 minutes before he just paid and left. 10 of those minutes were spent by me asking him questions, which he responded to with non-answers.

The 387th was one of our final meetings. It was a meeting that left me confused but yearning for more, though the more never came. This meeting was our first kiss. I won't bore you with the details (I also want to keep some things for myself.) I will tell you that on the night we kissed, it was the first snow of winter. I initiated it, of course, but he did kiss back. For me, it lasted an eternity, with everything moving in slow motion, as if we were the only two people in the world. I was protected from the cold by the warmth of his lips and the body heat he exuded. In reality, it lasted a minute or two before he pulled back, pushed me away, and stomped off.



Fate was very predictable when it came to destiny, but from the amount of time I spent getting to know Mesni through our coincidental meetings, I would be a fool to say that there wasn't some higher power trying to draw us together. I also felt some inexplicable pull to learn more about him every time he looked at me like he couldn't stand me. His anger towards me attracted me, like opposite poles of a magnet. What that higher power had in store for us, I would come to find out in another couple of years.

And then after my 18th birthday, I wouldn't see him again for years. So with the thought of him still present, just pushed to the back of my mind, I moved on with my life, especially since there were more pressing matters than worrying about what Mesni was doing. For a long time, about a few months, there had been revolts going on against the concept of predetermined fates all over Nesplosia. Despite this, there had always been whispers about protests among the less affluent community in Terin, which I only learned about when I was a teenager. It was the biggest problem in Avar, probably because the secret to their wealth was Fate Fulfillment Companies. These companies gained their money from people who paid for a chance to do a great thing so they could complete their destiny and live how they pleased. I disliked them taking advantage of people when we could be fighting the whole construct of

destiny. Secretly, I idolized the bravery of these advocates and activists fighting for their freedom.

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## PRESENT

Two more years passed and I became a freedom fighter myself. This was one of my biggest secrets as I had yet to fulfill my destiny. Hiding my actions from my parents wasn't hard since I had always been a wanderer. The hardest part was when we had protests planned and I had to find an excuse to miss curfew by a few minutes or just not come home.

The most important protest against Fate Fulfillment Companies was that night, the night I met Mesni again. The protest started tame, but soon a riot occurred. Molotov cocktails were thrown into nearby buildings. I had run as far away as I could to escape the chaos. After a few hours, I made my way back into the city.

There we were again, standing outside the Fertine Health Center, Mesni's dark blue eyes, cold yet lively, boring into me. I couldn't believe what I heard. I looked at Mesni with disbelief. All this time, he hated me for my nationality. Just because Bavonia was conquered by Avar and he was Bavonese, he resented me and tried to deny our connection.

*I felt overwhelming sadness, but I also felt relief. I could tell from his expression that he didn't understand what was going through my head. Then I pulled him in and kissed him. It felt like fireworks, butterflies, the entirety of an African safari tramping around in my stomach. Minutes passed and eventually, we had to pull away for air. I stared into his eyes and he stared into mine. We could have been like that all day if not for the approaching sounds of yelling. I knew it had to be the police force, who would be searching every nook and cranny of Terin for anyone outside of their home due to recent curfews put in place to quell the rebellion.*

*All I could do was turn to him and wince. I closed my eyes and tried to shut out the sounds around me as I grabbed his hand and ran away. Trying to make my way back to the woods near Barter Hill. My pulse was racing, blood pumping, but I knew the way there like the back of my hand, the hidden paths to get there undetected carved into my mind.*

*The madness of it all blinded my sights, but Mesni's hand kept me grounded. But from my boots' contact with the slippery mud, I let go of Mesni's hand to try and stabilize myself, so I wouldn't bring him down with me, but I slipped.*

*Then I fell.*