

## **NEANDERTHAL EINSTEINS**

by

MJ Politis, Ph.D., D.V.M., H.B.A.R.P.

[mjpolitis@yahoo.com](mailto:mjpolitis@yahoo.com)

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## CHAPTER 1

For Grim and Dral it was another day in the forest, foraging for what the band of other humans in their extended family who had to leave the caves two winters ago needed while living under the sun and stars. And hides they learned to put over their heads when there wasn't enough natural brush to keep out the drenching rain and wet snow. A decision made by the bats and sabre-toothed tigers who reclaimed the inside of the caves, then the mountain that decided to close up the entrance with an unexpected avalanche. Or perhaps the imagined creatures who lived above the clouds that who, at their whim, they provided protection or pain for those below them. But, each species and each mountain had to look after itself. And a species of evolving primates that isn't challenged did, after all, not get any stronger or smarter.

As for getting stronger and smarter, Grim and Dral, twin brothers who had just two winters ago recently had sprouted enough pubic hair on their testicals and contents within them to impregnate the women or girls of the band, were less than mediocre at best. At least relative to the other members of their band of now thirty who spoke the same language and believed in the same creatures above the clouds, sort of in the same way. Most everyone in the band learned very quickly and/or painfully, that the easiest way to make enemies of family and friends was to reveal your own real opinion about who those gods really were, and who should be their representative chief on earth.

But Grim and Dral weren't able to learn very much else, particularly when it came to being better at anything than anyone else. Rightly or wrongly they accepted each other's failings at being under-average at hunting game that roamed on the ground, pulling out what lived underwater, skinning or scaling what came in to the 'village' (as it was now called), finding stationary eatable wild berries, making impliments to cut down wood and pierce living animal flesh, fighting anyone other than their own villagers who came to their cave or camp uninvited, and, of course, finding women to have pleasure with now and spawn their babies nearly a year later. So much so that Grim and Dral felt like they were members of their own tribe within a tribe, who were kept around, for now anyway, only because they were pitied by their father, Prim, the current chief in most matters.

Prim was a still strong and, most importantly, clever man who had, according been born 34 winters ago (60 winters, according to him, when he had eaten too many rotten berries) who blamed Grim and Dral's mother for giving him such defective sons, while the other five women who he had pleased produced strong, strapping and superior thinking sons and daughters.

But there were two things that Grim and Dral were good at, other than losing their way in the woods and wandering farther away from home than anyone else had. Or being unable to easily find the camp they were sent away from on a 'special mission' to get food while the camp moved its location without its cool and strong hunting boss, Thel, telling them about the relocation (as he was reluctantly instructed to do so by the "loser lads'" father, Prim).

“I think I can hear these berries talking to us,” Grim said to his brother as he reached for a group of three large red balls on a branch hidden by leaves and protected by thorns, feeling very lightheaded and different headed after he sampled one of them.

“Something different than what these roots are saying,” Dral enquired, spotting wild onions that he stumbled upon with his awkward, mismatched feet, that on a good day, decided to work together rather than separately. “But they are saying that...” hmm.. Dral looked at and, as he perceived it anyway, into a cluster of trees down the valley, in the direction where the sun was about to set soon. “These roots are saying...”

“...That if we get bigger berries than everyone else at home, while they get more berries where they went to find them, they will give us more meat to eat?” Grim proposed. “Or not take our hides off us when we’re sleeping? Or laugh at us when we take a piss in the woods because they have bigger sticks between their legs than we do? And more hair on their faces and balls?”

“Maybe,” Dral countered. “But if we offer these bigger berries to the women, Lolila and Riha. And the others who I don’t think are our sisters, because they don’t look like I remember our mother did. Then maybe they will invite us to share their hides and themselves. We tricked wild dogs to be our friends by offering them food. Why not train women to do the same?”

“That will take more than big berries,” Grim related, recalling his own experience with the two women. “Or different kinds of wild onions. But...” Grim was distracted from his next thought by a strange sound in the depths of the valley. The song of a bird, perhaps. But it felt like something else. And someone else. A two legged creature sitting on a moving four legged large dog with rabbit-like ears, singing like a bird. ‘It’ worked its way up the mountain, showing itself to be a bird that walked, with a man’s head. It carried things on its back in a sac that didn’t look like it was animal hides, but something that reflected the sunlight. Like a smooth lake with no wind blowing on it.

Grim and Dral both picked up their sticks, hoping the sharp stones they put on the tips would not break off this time. The smaller two legged creature atop the larger four legged beast approached, revealing a face that was a man’s but lacking any hair on it. And long, yellow hair, bearing a texture and symmetrical arrangement that neither Grim nor Dral had never seen, as well as skin that was whiter than any they had ever seen on a human being. There were skins on his body which were not made of animal hide which were white and bright red, two colors that were only seen in nature when it snowed, or when someone or something bled. The strange sounding ‘song’, which now was being made by some birds and some other creatures Grim and Dral had never heard, came out of the large sac on his back, got louder as he approached. The man added his own voice to it with words that changed loudness in a rhythmic manner, each chain of words having some that sounded like they came from a young boy’s throat and some from a big old man’s. It seemed to bring pleasure to the brother’s ears and troubled minds, even though they didn’t understand the words in the voice that was singing it.

“Are you scared?” Grim asked Dral, clenching desperately to his hunting stick with its naked and perhaps still sharp enough end poised to pierce into the chest of the big dog, its rider, or the sac behind him.

“Yes, but we’re not supposed to be, according to our father, and leader, Prim, who says he’s never scared,” Dral replied, picking up his spear with the miraculously still attached to a sharpened rock at its end to it, which wobbled as much as the shaking hand he tried to hide from the singing bird man.. “Our father isn’t afraid of anything, right?”

“Except growing older, weaker and being told to leave the tribe because he is useless,” Grim said. “Something I heard him say when he was half asleep, talking to people who weren’t there.”

“Dreaming, you mean,” Grim said, taking on the top position in their tribe of two, though not abusing the member on the bottom.

“No, it’s us who do the dreaming, and during the day,” Dral said, repeating the words that had been tossed at and into him and his brother so many times by those who could do anything better than the twins could, which was everyone, including Prim. “Dreaming of a better tribe. A better world. A better father. A better...everything for everyone. Something that..” Dral continued, looking up at the blue sky that was about to turn black soon.

“Dreaming during the day...Something we’re not supposed to do, because we’re lazy and stupid,” Grim said through a self-defeating sigh.

“And weak,” masochist for abuse Dral noted, reluctantly coming back to the world he could see rather than feel.

“And about to be told to leave the tribe if our father gets weaker,” Grim pointed out. “Which he is. He shits more than he eats. Though he covers his face with mud, his cheeks are getting paler by the day. And when it comes to lifting anything, he’s better at making others do the work than doing it himself. And the shakes he has, which he says is because the creatures above the clouds are talking to him, and only him...”

“Yes, I know...A dishonest man who told us to never lie, Grim,” Dral related.

“Or was never able to teach us how to, Dral.”

“Something I never wanted to learn!” Dral asserted.

“Because you were bad at it?” Grim inquired, inviting his brother to come up with an honest answer.

“As bad as you are now,” Dral replied, putting the lake mirror in front of his beloved and fellow accursed sibling. “Particularly when you say that you aren’t scared of that man bird approaching us.

“Who is...” Dral said, noting the bird-man-god stopping. He got off the big dog, leaving it to eat grass which the large but somehow gentle beast seemed to enjoy. He then walked to a pile of wood on the ground, and motioned with a kind smile for the brothers to follow him. “Who is...” Dral repeated lowering his spear, which lost its sharp tip, yet again.

“Inviting us to spend the night with him?” Grim speculated.

The man-bird who seemed more feminine than most men somehow, but in a strong way, placed three piles of food around him. He/she stopped singing, then pulled out what was in the sac that held the strange sounding birds as those captured animals were still singing. The melodic sounds of that ‘song’ came not from winged creatures but a small strange blue stone with sharp sides on it that he placed on the center of a slab of wood and something shiny that was elevated from the ground, by sticks on all four sides. He then walked to the pile of collection wood on the ground and set ablaze with a flick of something in his magic fingers. Then, he set out three piles of food at opposite ends of the elevated platform, placing straight cut logs in front of them.

“He’s maybe inviting us to dinner?” Grim speculated.

“Or as dinner?” Dral suggested, recalling what happened to the animals and patches of the forest when the bright light that emitted smoke that got warm when you got close to it and painfully hot when you tried to touch it. He pointed to sharp, flat blades that reflected the setting sun which the now on foot bird man used to cut open two blankets he put on the ground in the manner women did for men back ‘home’ when they wanted to go to ‘sleep’ with them. Retrieved from the back of the big dog, with big ears and a long tail of flowing hair. “That man-bird has intense eyes.”

“And the big dog with the blanket over its back that he’s sitting on seems to have kind eyes,” Grim noted as birdman patting it as a friend rather than something to be killed or skinned. “I say we talk to him.”

“Or her?” Dral advanced. “We don’t know if this grown man who had even less hair on his face than most of the women in our tribe bird with the long yellow hair is hiding breasts or balls behind those skins. Or...he/she is maybe both a man and a woman?”

The man-bird got on top of the big dog, kicked him gently with his legs, and proceeded to ride up to Dral and Grim. The brothers each put up their spears, trying to act like the men they were supposed to be. Prepared to kill what and who they didn’t understand, like real men. But they couldn’t, somehow. The man-bird on the big dog stopped, smiled at them, then uninvited them to his camp down the valley with a wave of his hand, a smile on his lips, and utterance of the word ‘welcome’ in Grim and Dral’s language.

“We ...can’t...” Dral said. “And shouldn’t!”

“We have to get...home,” Grim added. “To our people. And you have to get back to your home and your eh...”

“People, yes, I know,” the man-bird said, again in Grim and Dral’s language. “But, destiny calls you both. IF you are man enough to answer it. Besides, it is getting late,” he said, looking up at the sky. “You can go back to your people when the sun rises a few more times with a lot more than berries and onions. Or if you want things to continue as they are, you can go ‘home’ now...”

Dral and Grim, for reasons they did not understand but had to in the intensity of the moment accept, were not so concerned with why this stranger who looked like no other member of their upright, two legged species could speak their language. Of more concern was what was waiting for them at home. A steady decline in the quality of their lives which would plummet into a dark hole, or the place where those who stop breathing go, which would happen soon enough. Particularly if their father Prim’s coughing, shitting, and shaking got any worse.

Grim found himself looked at by the bird man’s big dog. He was normally afraid of dogs, but this one seemed to like him, and walked up to him, seeking a bite of the berries Grim had collected. After consenting to give the largest berry to the beast, he imagined in yet another day dream, that it, be it he or a she, was inviting him to jump onto his back, as he picked up the long, straight and smooth leather twine that was connected to more twine wrapped around his head.

Meanwhile, Dral’s eyes were fixed upon the small ground-connected sun which emitted more light than smoke which remained in a small place. Grim then found himself hypnotized by the smell of something in his nostrils coming the food set upon slabs containing meat, herbs and berries around that ever moving source of light which was warm, or hot, depending on how close you were to it.

“It’s called fire,” the bird man said by way of explanation. “Good for cooking food, scaring away unfriendly animals, and other purposes which one or both of you will discover, or spread, very soon. According to this dream I was assigned by Life, and others, to finish, so it could become reality,” he said. He then looked up to one part of the sky with fear, and another with defiance. A crow landed next to him, cawing at his belly. “I will finish what has to be started no matter what you say you want to eat, or were instructed to do!” the thus far calm and collected bird man grunted with more rage and determination than they had ever seen in one of their own people to the crow with a shaking second finger, that merged into a clenched fist. But the crow who still seemed to hunger for something in the bird man’s belly held its ground. The bird man then yelled it away in a language Grim and Dral didn’t understand, but felt was very, very intense, sending it away up to a branch above him, then with a fiercer yell, up to and into a cloud.

“So,” bird man continued, after finally calming down, with warmth in his eyes again.  
“Where were we, gentlemen?”

## CHAPTER 2

With every answer they got from this bird man who rode big dogs with big ears and kind eyes, Grim and Dral were challenged with, and scared by, more questions. But there was one thing they were sure of. If they stayed close to the fire, but didn't touch it, they felt warm. Just like it was summer, even though it was now the season for cool white flakes to come down from the sky rather than warm raindrops. And the food they were eating felt hot to the mouth, but warm to the stomach. And pleasant to the tongue, in ways that raw berries, onions and meat didn't. And there was plenty of it. Enough to make them feel full in the belly, a sensation which, so it seemed, everyone else in the village back home experienced more than they did, even after a good hunt or better berry gathering.

"Who are you?" Grim asked this man who spoke words in his language that he could understand but not put together.

"And what are you?" Dral put forward, as a question which would required a scarier answer.

The bird man smiled, then laughed. But not in the way the others in Grim and Dral's 'village' did when the two twins accidently slipped on the ground, or were made to fall into the mud after being tripped by someone bigger or more clever than they were.

"Someone who is as different from my people as you are, and will be, from yours," he finally said after a long delay that scared and fascinated both brothers, to more or less equal extents.

"But," Grim said. "Our father said that when we do something stupid or badly, others make fun of us. That's the only thing we do that is of use to anyone else. We make them laugh."

"After you learn what I have to teach you, and teach yourself," the bird man said. "You, and your brother, will not be the butt of anyone's jokes anymore, but the creators of them."

"But who will the others in the village laugh at then?" Dral inquired.

Again, the bird man who rode on big dogs who seemed to want to take him where he wanted to go turned his stare toward something behind his eyes, pulling in his lips. Then, after scratching his hairless chin, he the outer margins of his lips turned upward. "They will learn to laugh at themselves, or if they aren't brave or smart enough to do that, they will laugh at others, who are not you. Hopefully those who can take being laughed at, or deserve to be."

Again, the brothers who were dumb enough to nearly get lost in the woods finding berries, and brave enough to not go home while they could, scratched their heads. Grim with his right hand, Dral with his left.



“So, this confirms which one of you is right or left brained, and not a measurement of your skulls,” the bird man noted.

“Huh?” Dral and Grim replied, in unison, as they so often did when confounded by life, others, or themselves.

“We work with our strengths first, then integrate them with our weaknesses,” their new friend who had provided food to feed their bellies and now something...more said with a warm smile. One that Grim and Dral recalled from their mother, who died when they were young, and small, kids. Happy kids, as they both recalled, for different reasons. “And you each have different strengths. Different abilities. Different destinies. You, Grim are right brained, and Dral, you are left brained.”

“But,” Dral said as he pulled his left hand away from that same side of his head. He somehow understood more words the bird man was saying than his brother did. “We are both alike. When I look into the lake on a clear windless day, I see my brother.”

“And when I look into the lake, I see him,” Grim added.

“Which you, Dral, intuited first from your mind, and you, Grim, replied to so...musically. With the ability to make the music. Food for the soul,” the bird man replied.

“Music, what is music?” Dral asked with a growl, determined to define the answer.

“Is music an animal in the woods that if we find it, tastes better than anything else we ate?” Grim speculated recalling the ‘song’ the bird man and the magic box had both given voice to, willing to follow and add to both of them even though he had no idea what they were. Even though he knew it was possible that his words coming from perhaps something in the food he was eating, which had been cooked on the fire. “And is music something that doesn’t make me belch, shit or barf afterwards?” he speculated from a place inside of him he had never felt and trusted before.

Dral chuckled, scratching his chin like he saw bird man do, thinking that maybe he would be just as smart as him if he acted like him.

Birdman laughed. “Very clever, and smart, and funny,”.

“Why aren’t you laughing like birdman did?” Grim asked Dral.

“He’s thinking about the humor instead of being it,” bird man replied. “A blessing and a curse.”

“What’s a blessing?” Dral asked.

“And a curse?” Grim added, with a musical rhythm to his voice that he self observed.

“Something you both, and I, are required to be,” bird man said, again hiding his eyes and the real meaning of what he was saying. “But first,” he said, pulling out a strange tools from the bags made of something softer than leather but harder than fur. “This can help the voice make music.”

With that, the bird man who rode big dogs plucked the twines attached to either end of a wooden plate. He called a lute. Then a rod with holes in the middle which he blew in with his mouth, which made different sounds each time he moved his fingers over the holes. He called it a flute. Then he, with reverence, picked up a stack of leather which contained thin pieces of something in the middle that had scratches on it, which he called a book. He looked at the scratches, moved his fingers along them, and said something in a strange language which sounded boring, then said the same thing with a voice that went up and down, loud and soft, and with breaks in the middle of something, all of which made the words somehow sound alive and important. He called it singing, apologizing for being ‘off tune’ and ‘off key’.

All of this was pleasing to Grim’s ear, and made him feel sensations going up and down his spine, while his feet and body moved in to its rhythm. Then when the ‘instruments’ were played again, Grim closed his eyes and sang, better than the bird man did.

Dral scratched his chin again, trying to figure out why his brother was moved by this ‘music’ so much. And why, after he plucked the twines on the lute like bird man did, and blew into the flute like this other misfit from another place did, it sounded the same but didn’t feel as ‘alive’ as it was when someone else played them. Most particularly his brother Grim.

Dral felt jealous of his brother, but less dumb than he usually did. Then curious and brave enough to look at the ‘book’ the bird man had read from, somehow feeling that the marks repeated themselves row upon row had meaning, and importance..

“It’s called reading,” the bird man said. “Something I can, and am blessed and cursed, teach you. But in your own language, for now. Each mark is a sound, and each collection of marks is a word. And each collection of words is a sentence.”

“What is a word?” Dral asked, while hearing his lost in another daydream brother make music with the lute, flute and his own voice, his envy turning into admiration. Particularly when the ‘music’ he was playing and the ‘lyrics’ he added to the song made him laugh, at himself, and life. “And what is a sentence?” he pressed, impatient for an answer.

“Something you will better understand if I give you this,” bird man said, after which he hugged Dral, like his mother did. Then he pulled away, leaving the caveman turned something else with a strange feeling in the back of his neck.

It felt like a mosquito bite that was under the skin to Dral. A bump that he tried to scratch that itched a bit.

“An implant, which, future me says does help,” the bird man explained. “Delivers electrical signals to the brain that makes more connections inside of them. A good thing.”

“And if it’s a good thing, I want my brother to have one too,” Dral insisted.

“Already in the plan, along with how to musically formulate jokes that work, after he’s finished with the song which he will sing, and you will write down with other kinds of marks on these leaflets so others who will be born after you die, and perhaps reincarnate at, will see how it all started,” bird man commanded, in a non-musical rhythm.

“And so others will know WHO started it?” Dral asked, sensing that bird man was as much of an outcast in the village he came from as he and his brother were in theirs.

“Others who---”

“---Will keep you, and your brother, alive, and not banished, as long as you keep them entertained or have a technological skill that they need,” bird man interjected, looking at and into Dral in a way that he never felt talked to, or at. “A curse and a blessing.”

Though still not sure what a curse or blessing was, and sensing from his newly activated left side of his head that bird man would not give answer to what either of them were, Dral was determined to find out one thing from this visitor to what he thought was his world. “What is your name?” he asked birdman. “And what do your fellow bird men and women call you?”

“Promethius,” birdman replied, with a very human voice that sounded, somehow, more powerful than human. And more vulnerable. And more scared of something that would go wrong if he, Dral and Grim didn’t do everything very Right, and fast.

### CHAPTER 3

Several settings of the sun later, Grim and Dral finally found their way back home, even though the camp had moved, without their having been told, as part passenger and part rider of the large dogs which they now called horses. Grim strummed the lute with his left hand, his right holding onto ropes which kept the horse going where the rider wanted him to go, most of the time anyway. He sang a story in Promethius' language which he had memorized, being both amazed that he could sing as well as memorize anything. It seemed to please most of the members of the band, particularly the women. And, most importantly, Lolila, the young woman whose legs had less hair than anyone else, and whose breasts wiggled as she walked, then seemed to dance as she worked towards him. This time with a smile of welcome on her face to share with him instead of a lump of manure in her hand to smear into his face so he would stop staring into her coral green eyes, or gawking enviously any other part of any other part of her. Grim put down his lute, then extended his hand to Lolila, offering her a seat on his horse behind him. She accepted and, with some effort, and a lot of fear, was able to find her way to the 'seat' behind Grim, holding onto his torso for dear life when the horse moved, as Grim, for the first time, valued rather than lamented his life.

Dral's horse carried him and pulled something he called a cart, which he built on his own with some shiny metal impliments Promethius provided for him, and others which he made himself from stones, rocks and wood. It rolled on the ground on something Promethius called wheels. They were connected by a strong, hard carved stick that Dral had figured could keep them moving together rather than apart which he called an axel. On top of the cart were boards to make 'portable caves' which Dral saw in his head after drawing likenesses of them onto the ground, made fast and smooth because of the thin yet harder than rock and sharp Promethius gave him that Dral figured out how to use, enabling him to chop down big trees, turn them into planks, and put together with small thorns he called nails. Also present were flints to make fire that would keep the houses warm but not hot enough to burn down, and cook wild game that had been cornered by portable fires called torches. Then dried over the smoke the fire made into something that was enjoyable rather than tolerable to the tongue, thanks to Dral's knowledge of wild herbs. Also present on the cart were three large baskets of what Promethius called 'medicine', each with a specific use that Dral at first memorized, then, so he wouldn't forget, 'wrote' down on slabs of stones with a mixture of pictures and symbols that you could read as 'phrases', something Promethius said as a 'prelude' to sentences.

Most of the men in camp were startled at how well behaved the horses were, yet seemed scared of the beasts, holding their spears upward at them while retreating backwards with each step the horses took. But they were all most shocked at seeing Dral, one of the shortest men in the village, now three feet higher than they stood, with his chin proudly upward, an arch in his back. Rihi, Lolila's smarter but still not too bad looking sister, worked her way through the terrified men, offering Dral a piece of raw meat. He accepted with a smile. Then offered her a stick of meat that had been cooked, with his own special spices, and, according to Promethius, something that would ease the pain in her prematurely aching legs and hands. Which it did.

But there was one man who was more angered than fascinated, or scared. Thel was born with the kind of body that every man wanted. And a man who every woman sought for protection from being cold, lonely, eaten by wild animals or taken captive by other band 'people'. His muscles were both massive and effective. He stood at least two hands taller than any other man in the village most of the time, and when those men tried to put an arch into their back to challenge him face to face, at least one hand higher. Aside from his ability to defeat any two legged adversary with his muscle, Thel had the kind of eyes that would warn any man who dared challenge, or look into them, to back down. Or pay the most severe consequences, as he was just as good at slicing and dicing a man, or upstart woman, with his tongue as with his hand, flint-knife or, as rumor had it, teeth. The latter had been used on someone who dared to make a joke during a hunt about Thel's nose being more able to breathe out shit than smell it, something which had cost the fellow band member his life in an accident, his body parts mixed in with the meat of the mammoth's the villagers ate voraciously, some knowing the source of the meat, some not. Two girls who had condescendingly rolled their eyebrows at Thel's clever witticisms as a boy wound up with black eyes in another accident. Still, it was 'cool to be cruel' and liked by the coolest hunter, fighter and fornicator in the village. Who, to be fair, never let the villagers starve, or be taken captive. But this time, for the first time in his charmed life, Thel felt both insulted, and threatened as Dral and Grim rode these beasts into the middle of the this most recent campground. Causing everyone in the band to focus their admiration, and fear, on someone other than him, most notably, his two favorite breeding partners.

"What are you doing with these losers?" Thel yelled out to Rihi and Lolila, the two most pleasing to look at and fornicate with young women in the village who, because of such, were, by natural law, his. "These defective pieces of meat who are only around because the old Chief, who is privately ashamed of his sons more than any father could be, hasn't died yet," he said, noting that Prim was nowhere to be seen, and therefore within hearing range either.

"Grim and Dral aren't defective pieces of meat," Lilila said, struggling to find the words that made Grim seem so lovable, and Dral so smart. "They are...hmmm."

"Interesting," Rihi interjected.

"And someone to be proud of...Speaking of which...where's our father?" Grim asked Thel, gently rather than, as what was done to him so often, pushing Lolila away.

"And what's that smell in the air?" Dral added, detecting something unusual entering his nostrils. Turning his now, for the first time in public, non bowed head to the source, he noted a trail of brown stain with a reddish tinge covering portions of the ground. It led to his father's distantly located place of sleeping, private eating and, if he was able to still do it at the unprecedented old age of 34, fornicating

“That’s Shit,” Thel grunted out. “Big shits. That you little shits should have known about and told us about before you got yourself lost in the woods. Or you shits made deals with other people or ghosts from----”

“----Hmm....shit,” Grim interjected, walking around the camp in small circles that got progressively bigger as he poetically waxed on. “What’s up with shit anyway? We put green and red things that aren’t stinky into our mouths and it comes out brown and stinky at the other end? We eat hard things, and the shit comes out soft, and we eat soft things and it comes out hard. And when we smell the shit, everyone else’s smells stinky and ours smells sort of ok. But not ok. Maybe if we exchanged noses, we would not mind other people’s shit but be sort of ok with our own. What’s up with that?”

Some of the men behind Thel chuckled, then quickly put on serious faces when he turned around to look at them. A few of the women laughed a little. Lilila and Rihi laughed a lot, though some of it seemed strained, as if it was to please the deliverer of the joke and his serious, really smart for some reason now, brother.

“But you know why I hate shit?” Grim went on, naturally delivering the line just as the group laugh subsided, while feeling a buzz under the left side of his skull. “Because it never comes out exactly how you want it to. Sometimes you want an easy flow from the mouth between your ass, and sometimes you want to work for it, and it comes out hard. And if you’re a woman watching a guy taking a shit that’s real hard, you tell him that it’s a whole lot harder and more painful for a woman to push out a baby, who, you hope doesn’t turn out to be a shit.”

This time, all of the women laughed, from a very natural place. The men scratched their heads. Perhaps thinking about the last hard shit they had or the last shitty kid they had to take responsibility for.

“And ya know what’s scary about shit?” Grim went on. “Everybody has to do it. And it’s something we can’t control. And we all sort of like. And, to be honest, there’s nothing more overrated that we bullshit about than an ok fuck, and nothing more underrated than a great shit.”

“No shit,” Dral added, with the voice of a wise man far older than his years.

Thel’s ears were pounding with laughter, from everyone. Even, as he perceived it, the wild dogs who had decided to train the villagers to feed them and protect them from wilder wolves. Thel clenched his fist in anger, and frustration, at seeing the two villagers who had been the butt of his jokes for as long as he could remember now become the originators of them.

“But, as we all know,” Grim said, seeming to look at every villagers, except Thel, as if they were a herd of animals with one mind, or at least one agenda. “It’s hard to be a shit,” he continued, speaking to the band that had become a crowd, while looking at, and into, Thel. But with...understanding, even forgiveness. “Because even though shit floats

to the top. It's hard to stay on top, and keep the world from turning upside down so that you and everything you built and value doesn't fall to the bottom. Like shit from your back end that you usually fed to others, and now you have to eat yourselves. And constantly having to look behind your back, which hurts your back. Or having to put eyes behind your head, being careful that the holes you carve into your skull don't make the white stuff inside fall out if you turn around too fast."

This time, even though there was a chuckle here and there, the band members thought, each one for themselves, rather than laughing as a herd following an alpha bull with the biggest horns or a dog with the sharpest teeth. Thel did everything he could to avoid looking into the mirror the short, deformed, big nosed and under-muscled Grim had pushed into his face. But instead of reaching for his spear to slay this, to him anyway, most dangerous beast that had entered the band campground, Thel used a more powerful weapon. "Your father is dying," he said, in all seriousness. "And if you stayed here instead of letting yourself get 'lost'----"

"—They wouldn't have been able to do anything," Rihi interjected. "We all go to the place where we don't breath anymore."

"Or shit anymore," Grim added, trying to make a joke, then realizing that the laugh about to come out of the himself and those around him turned to tears of grief. Having realized that he had overstepped a line, he took in a deep breath, hoping that something in the 'magic' he had put out into the air that would transform the situation. "But, wherever we go after that time, we don't have to eat anyone else's shit. And if we do, maybe it doesn't taste so bad. And if you ask anyone who has died, if there is anything they need, they never say that they---"

"---Your leaving, and staying lost, was responsible for Prim getting sick," Thel, who had I reality not (as Prim expected him to do) told the two brothers the campground would change its location in their absence, blasted out at Grim. "You and your brother have the job to clean up shit in this village. And eat it. And the last time one of us got the shit disease, soon afterward, half of everyone else did. And they died. So, what are you going to do about---"

"---taking responsibility for fixing something we didn't break?" Dral said as he grabbed hold of a pouch inside deep inside a strange sac made of something that was not leather nor fur. "This medicine can save our father from going to the place where those who don't breath go. And the father and mother of everyone here went after they got sick. And prevent any one of you from getting sick, or sicker."

"So, you can save Prim now, and the rest of us later?" Thel demanded, folding his muscular arms.

"I can and WILL!" Dral blasted back, moved to anger yet again by Thel's manipulative stare. "Or eh...I'll...try."

“And if you fail, or things become worse,” Thel declared with the authority of the chief he always expected to be. “It will be no laughing matter.”

With that, Thel retreated into his own private sleeping, eating and fornicating tent, and closed the entrance to that portable cave. Feeling the coldness in the air outside. And smelling the shit about to come out of his own ass. Which emanated a trace of the odor that was just as bloody and shitty as the trail leading to Prim’s place of final resting. But, as Thel was strong, he knew he would survive this visitation from the disease causing ghosts who moved into the bellies of the living. Which would decimate the weak soon enough, leaving the strong alive, and in the place they were meant to be.



## CHAPTER 4

The battle between the many small creatures who could only be seen by a microscope and the two legged progressively less hairy species that had yet to discover that tool was won by the latter after the people, out of fear or desperation, or curiosity, took the powder that Dral had offered them. The ground under their feet was once again wet green rather than blood red and fecal brown. Dral had no idea how the herbs Promethius gave him and instructed him how to find worked. Such, the time traveler related, would take more time, and require belief in several medical fairy tales (otherwise called mechanisms of action) till the right one was stumbled upon. The one which when considered correct resulted in the healer saving 95% of his or her patients and doing no or little harm to the rest.

The people now listened to what Dral said, even his father Prim, who was still the official ruler of the village, as his shits were well formed and he didn't take shit from anyone else, including Thel. Prim now called his 'accident born' son Runl Dral, Runl being the term for miracle worker of the body. The people followed Runl Dral's suggestions for other ills as well, believing him to be right rather than mistaken about everything one could touch, see, smell, taste and hear. Belief in the power of the medicines helped make them work. As well as, of course luck, or the master of luck, Fate.

Three biological miracles later, the villagers decided to accept Dral's suggestions as a builder. Such resulted in a series of trenches built around the camp to drain everyone's shit, not only what came out of the people who almost died. And those people now lived in tents made of wood rather than leaves and hides, transported from the forest by carts made from more wheels. Seeds from wild plants were put into groves carved into the ground, with the promise that one day they would produce more food than the wild bushes did, as long as of course no one pissed or shit on them. Such gave the wandering people, now stationary villagers, more of what they needed.

As for Grim, he became very good at giving the villagers with (all things considered) healthy bodies what they wanted. But Grim based himself in the worlds he saw in his head behind his eyes far more than those that could be seen by 'real' eyes in the 'real' world, like his brother Dral. Feet made stronger and less painful when walking, jogging and running after game, thanks to Dral, now, with Grim's intervention, danced, both during the hunt and at the village afterwards when he sang songs. The most popular subjects of them were things he knew nothing about---love, lust, longings and affections between men and women. The lyrics were taken after things men, women and two villagers who felt like they were something in between, would tell Dral when he was in 'secret' session with them for their medical ills. Naturally, Grim was able to hide their stories of 'pain and glory' in matters of the heart by using fictional names and, interestingly, changing the gender of the person going through such things. They always had happy endings, Grim thinking of course that whatever stories he imagined had to come true. Such songs were very popular, as well as jokes he would tell between songs. Grim also attempted to tell stories and write songs about his own struggles before

growing into whatever he had become now, and his brother's. To tell the truth in song and music-less joke-story about how things were and how they should was harder to do, but more rewarding, for Grim anyway. Yet such got less laughs and cheers of delight than telling people stories they wanted to hear. The only ones who really seemed to 'get' and like the truth based jokes and witticisms were his horse, particularly the lament that 'You try to give drowning people a lifeboat, but all they want is for you to sell them more water.' And that contradiction which seemed to be so true so often, 'act like an asshole and they treat you like a saint'. Such of course were observations that Grim would have to work harder at 'packaging', as 'sugar coating around the medicine'.

Prim, of course, approved of Grim's ability to give his subjects what they wanted rather than what they needed between their ears as it made them happier, less able to think about how to change things and more easy to rule. He gave Grim title as well...Ewit. 'Pleaser of overworried minds'. Grim wished it could be healer of suffering souls, but, in an age when you didn't have a whole lot of choices, if you couldn't have the sabre tooth tiger stew for dinner and had to settle for fish, you contended yourself with fish.

All things considered, the tribe needed the transformed Grim and Dral, as much as the twin brother who now seemed to be so different between the ears needed, or perhaps maybe wanted, the tribe. But, as the two brothers gave their word (the only thing they were really ever good at) to Promethius to not say anything about him to the villagers, or anyone else. Grim and Dral wouldn't and couldn't reveal the source of their increased intelligence and escalating usefulness to their fellow villager,. Even, and especially, their former most vicious ridiculers and now their pathologically obedient wives, Rihi and Lolila.

"The purpose of making these two more kind heart than clever cavemen into geniuses was so they would breed, and enhance the genetic pool," the time traveller's currently four legged companion said to Promethius from behind heavy bushes atop a cliff that no one dared to climb. "It's only a matter of time till they, as future generations would say, spill the beans to Rihi and Lilola, or their children," she continued, pointing to Rihi and Lilola, now the best clothed women in the village, being served food by the campfire by both men and women who were clad in patches of furs rather than full length ones. Half of them missing patches of hair, noses or ears, taken with knives Grim and Dral gave them as cooking utensils for having looked at the two new 'wondermen' with any kind of affection, respect or concern. "Or the children of all of the women in the village who they will make pregnant, and haven't yet."

"Grim and Dral are loyal husbands, Athena," Promethius replied in defense of the two candidates who had sojourned into the outskirts of the forest 'the people' had previously never left. "Kind and caring men."

"Who are now owned and manipulated by selfish, jealous bitches in training," replied the goddess currently taking form as a female squirrel, so as not to be detected from her bosses above the cliff, or the forefathers and mothers of her future worshippers on the ground. "We should have chosen two men of higher intelligence for this Mission."

“There is intelligence of strength and heart,” Prometheus said. “These two men, Grim and Dral, who left the forest that protected them---”

“---because they were lost!” Athena chirped back in squirrel talk, her eyes enlarged, her tail upward, her teeth about ready to take a real bite out of Prometheus’ overactive tongue, shaking cheeks and determined eyes. “They have NO idea of what they are getting into!”

“Something we all share when we do something Right, and needed, that makes us...uncomfortable and less secure,” Prometheus replied. “Which means...hmm.” The human from another time and place who would be, by accident or intent, called a god in future times, put his very human hand over his mouth, scratching his hairless chin.

“‘Which means hmm’ what!” Athena demanded, lowering her tail. And edging her way in towards Prometheus. “What other plans did you set in motion, without asking our boss and his boss about the species we are assigned to take care of.”

“So that they can become better than we ever were, or maybe are?” Prometheus said. “Which meant that...for them to be saving US from ourselves one day, they, Grim and Dral anyway, have to become less uncomfortable and less secure.”

“And...challenged,” Athena said. “Challenge being the thing that expanding and creative souls need most of all.”

“True enough.”

“But not for me,” Athena chirped back in a voice more like a lioness than furry tailed rodent that could be easily eaten by the former. She leaped up to a higher branch, curling up, helping herself to nuts and berries that were not spiked with anything other than mind-non-altering carbohydrates, proteins and fats. “I am still a god. And don’t want any more challenges. Neither do the other collaborators we came this wretched planet with who, hmmm are just’ ”

“Hmm just’ what?” Prometheus asked.

“Just left the project,” Athena chirped out. “But of course will join it when and IF it succeeds,” she smiled on the way out as she ran up the tree, then with a flip of her material squirrel wings bolted up into the sky, after which she jet propelled into and as a beam of light that disappeared behind the clouds. This time not leaving behind a piece of material plane shit on her former lover’s, and current explorer partner’s, head.

## CHAPTER 5

The collection of cave dwellers who had been forced to live into the open, then succeeded at doing so, grew into a bigger village. Due to newcomers to it, who noticed from their still intact caves fellow members of their progressively hairless upright bipedal species prospering under the sunlight. Some came willingly, offering meat, furs, different kinds of spears, or a breedable daughter as a gift to the 'settlement'. Prim of course, got the lion's share of those gifts, along with a bowed head during the giving of such.

Some of the newcomers were 'encouraged' to join as second class 'citizens' after Thel, sometimes with and sometimes without Prim's authority, and more often than not without his knowledge, went out on raids which involved killing the settlement's most dangerous enemies and capturing those who chose to become servants rather than food for the vultures or stew for the conquerors. A fair exchange of security, comfort and food to avoid the terrorizing phenomenon some called freedom.

Tales and legends about Prim of course grew, many put into song by his son, Grim. But mostly by Grim's students, who wanted to rise up above the social status of their teacher. Indeed, tales of Prim remaining a strong, smart and, all things considered, not unattractive to look at old man of the unprecedented age of 34, then 44, then 54 grew faster than the seeds planted in the ground that bore edible fruit and vegetables for the settlement, as well as the ineditable weeds around them. Sickness seldom led to death. The most common cause of death now was by the hand of humans against other humans rather than Mother Nature culling out or challenging the species with the opposable thumb that dared to change rather than work with her. According to fact, and fable, there was no place more prosperous and happy than the settlement, and no ruler who triumphed over death by any cause than Prim. Until a lone hunter from another valley, far beyond the current borders of the settlement and its hunting grounds, walked proudly into the settlement. Just as it was about to officially call itself 'Primton' at a celebration feast where everyone attended with varying degrees of willingness to do so.

The lone hunter was traveling alone. An independent soul who saw no need to conquer someone else to avoid being conquered. And, most alarming to every male 'citizen' in Primton, and fascinating to every un-owned female, a woman. With a single spear with a shiny sharp blade accompanied by an artistic multi-imaged down design on its shaft in her right hand, a slain animal the size of a deer over her back, coverings on her feet which were hard wood rather than soft leather.

"An interesting village you have here," commented the physically fit but not overly muscled 22 year old female humanoid with long, untangled brown hair, and a clean scarless face while being stared down by thirty spear, club and now knife holding men twice her size. She strolled into the settlement like she owned it, laying down her spear and game, sure that no one would take either of them. "And interesting people in it," she continued as she smiled at still small framed, unarmed and comfortably clad Dral and Grim.

Just as Grim and Dral's upper lips turned as upward as their faces could put them, they were brought back into a serious, expressionless 'profound' position by Rihi and Lolila. The former reminded Dral of his honored position as the settlement's healer by putting her arm around his elbow. The latter discretely stepped on Grim's foot before it was about to tap out a song he no doubt was composing about this strange, strong and alluring female huntress, who combined the best elements of being male and female.

"And you have very interesting animals," the lone huntress said as she approached the horses Grim and Dral rode into the settlement when it was merely a mobile campground. She blew into their noses, petted them, and then noted an enlarged abdomen on the one who didn't have a penis. "Two animals who are smarter than we ever are, with one more on the way," she noted.

"I... eh...knew that they were pregnant!" Dral blurted out. "I was going to save it for a surprise for all of you!" he announced to his congregation. "Once I was sure that there was no complications with the birth."

"And for that birth, and for the mother so she stays healthy, I composed a song, which, maybe on this great day in this good village which has become a great settlement, I can sing now," Grim interjected, as quickly as he could. But before he could improvise the first lyric from his every creative mouth, and pluck the first multi-stringed sound from the lute, which his fingers somehow knew how to put into 'chords', the Huntress spoke up.

"A great song, I am sure, but our songs are better, have more notes, more chords, more thought provoking and emotionally-moving lyrics, and serve as well as please the listener, even those who don't understand the music or the lyrics," the Huntress interjected as she wandered around the camp with more bold confidence than any man, and more musical grace than any woman. "Our citizens are freer," she said of the slaves and their new owners. "Our wagons are faster, and more durable," she commented regarding the three carts that were functional, and two in need of repair. "Our houses are bigger, and warmer," she went on, looking with pity on the dwellings which the 'Primians', as they now called themselves, thought were the best living places imaginable or buildable under the sun. "Our bodies are healthier," she continued, taking note of the sick who Dral was able to save from death but not coughs, limps, pains in their hands or limitations in the ability to see and hear the world as it is. "Our elders are...older in both legend and fact," she continued with complete ease, yet with intensity of voice and thought as she gazed at and into Prim. "And..." she concluded, turning around to the congregation after walking through them, eying with a condescending grin the weaponry Thel and his men were poised to insert into her. "Our spears, clubs and what you will soon call small swords are not only better than yours, but are used to kill animals, not people."

Thel grunted, growled, then grabbed hold of the upstart Huntress, putting a choke hold around her neck. "You say untrue things! You are a witch! Who brings bad magic into this place! Who I will kill!"

“Maybe, or maybe not,” she said, without a trace of fear in her eyes or drop of sweat on her brow. After which she proceeded to grab hold of Thel by his enlarged, and still (because of Dral and Grim’s interest in their work rather than women, and their wives not wanting above all for other women to be interested in them as people) overused, testicles.

After a moment of shock, Thel found himself flipped around, hitting the ground with his back, then head. “I can’t move my feet!” he whimpered, like one of the helpless slaves he had conquered.

“The first fall you have in life is always the hardest, but you’ll live” the woman said. “As Rhul Dral can attest to.”

Dral rushed over, pin pricked Thel’s feet, then arms, then gave him a potion that made him feel better, breathe easier anyway. “You will walk again,” he pledged to Thel.

“And dance again,” Grim added.

“But not on anyone else’s back while they are alive, or their belly while they are dead,” the woman said to Thel. “You promise me that and I will see that the magic these two men you still hate, fear and do not even try to understand will make you better.” She turned to Dral and Grim, winking at both of them at once, making each of them feel like the connection was for both of them, collectively and individually. “Right?” she said.

“Of course,” Dral said as he reached into his bag of ‘magic tricks’, pulling out an elixir, He sticking it under Thel’s tongue.

“And for the medicine delivered into the ears, rather than the mouth,” Grim added, strumming a new tune on the lute, singing lyrics about healing of the soul in a language he invented in his head that he would translate later, if at all.

“Indeed, yes.” Prim added, as if emerging from nowhere.

Thel emerged from the ground with a painful leg, aching head, then arms that embraced Grim and Dral’s two boy-sized bodies with one man-sized hug. Thankful that he could feel his limbs, and that they were working.

“My sons carry powerful magic,” Prim announced, proudly. Seemingly as proud of his boys as he was glad to finally see super-strength Thel, his rival, who had never gotten so much as a single cut in battle with man or beast, brought down to being ‘mortal’. “Yes, my sons carry powerful magic in their hands and heads.”

“But...” the Huntress said, after which she purposely delayed. “Not as much magic as we do in our settlement,” she said. With that, the woman from the ‘better and more accomplished’ place she declined to name or locate picked up her admired but not touched spear, and uneaten game. Then left the village, disappearing into woods on the her shoes with wooden soles. Followed by no one and nothing, except the curious eyes

of the Grim and Dral, who were both determined to follow those footprints wherever they led, without of course telling anyone else.

Promethius admittedly was new to shape shifting, his penis tiny but still intact in front of the vaginal opening he had made for himself as the Huntress which, perhaps if he was better at this skill, could have led to a uterus capable of bearing children. But, experiencing life as a female humanoid was instructive to him, scientifically and artistically. Indeed, he considered the logical fact and expansive methodology that if 'healer of the body', Runl Dral would spend some time living as RunlA Dral, even in clothing and social status, he could experience what women go through biologically and otherwise, and therefore be a better healer of their bodies.

As for Ewit, pleaser-and-wanting-to-be-server of the soul Grim, that was another story. Grim, being more imaginative and artistic than the now technologically obsessed and, to a limited extent, super-skilled brother, seemed to enjoy wearing female attire when acting out female characters in song and non-musical theatrical presentations, keeping them on longer than the performance required and maintaining that attire when in his private music-writing room. A good thing, as long as he didn't become so 'different' than the men in the still 'men must be men and women must be women' that he would get raped up the ass by Thel et al. Or, worse, be scolded into not investigating and USING the female side of his Soul by his traditional, and psychologically powerful, 'every man's man' father, Prim.

But, such experiments would have to wait, as Promethius, while delaying his transformation from female Huntress into male explorer, noted lights in the sky from flying craft which were not from his planet, but the other 'advanced' civilization which was on a collision course with eventually destroying itself in a war those two worlds were engaged in. But even more importantly, other lessons had to be learned by evolving mortals and 'gods to be', against a time clock which Promethius had set into motion which didn't coincide with the timetables of his boss, and father, Zues, Mother Nature or Spirit, big S, within every being which ruled all gods, no matter what planet they came from. Spirit which perhaps would be discovered, and not misrepresented, by humans on this third planet from the sun.

But Promethius knew, first hand, that a mind which thinks it is smarter or wiser than anyone else's not only ceases to grow, but sprouts seeds of ignorance, which inevitably germinates into cruelty. And that a healthy dose of feeling second rate or inferior makes one become not only better than what circumstances require, but enables someone to be better than who and what they are. Assuming of course that such humility-infused intelligence evolved into effective compassion before it was subverted into depression, and learned helplessness at the hands of...less committed or less spiritually and mentally evolved humans. 'Lower' two legged creatures who, due to circumstances beyond Promethius' or even Athena's control, were still in over-whelming numbers with multiple tools to use against those seeking to be, needing to be, or forced to be.... enlightened.

## CHAPTER 6

It had just been another morning for Dral, giving the native Primtonians in the settlement and, when he could, the newly arrived or captured people, what they needed medically. Each case now seemed harder, even though he was a better healer. Supplies of medications Promethius had left him were dwindling, and the fields that were supposed to supply more raw materials for such were not as plentiful as before. The books left to him describing how the human body worked didn't go into as much detail as to what happens when things go wrong, requiring him to use more logic and intuition than normal. He was still not yet able to convert sick people into healthy ones, or sometimes even dying people into merely sick ones all of the time, as it most probably was in the Huntress' Settlement. But he was the best doctor in Primton. After medical duties were finished, he had set upon the tasks of repairing the houses and tools used inside of them, with mounting challenges, such as how to bring fire, and perhaps even water, safely into those dwellings in preparation for the upcoming winter. And devising better carts to bring in materials from the woods and cliffs around them. Still, every time he worked within or beat the laws of physics and nature, he felt that his accomplishments were second rate relative to the Huntress' home.

As for Grim, he dived deeper and deeper into himself to come up with stories, jokes and songs that would make people laugh, and think, seeing the importance of both. And of course passing on what he knew, or didn't know, to his students. Particularly the sons and daughters, and wives, of the most well off Primtonians who he was required to convert into musicians and singers. Even though for most of them, converting their blisterless fingers and obnoxious voice-boxes into conduits for music likeable by anyone except themselves was as hard as turning the manes on the horses into wings that would enable steed and rider to fly into the clouds, as was probably the case with people and horses in the Huntress' 'kingdom', or perhaps 'queendom'. Still, for the moment, he was able to give the people who came to him laughing, smiling and singing enough to not be thrown off a cliff as they chanted his death song.

When Grim and Dral were finally allowed their mid day lunch breaks, it was just another late afternoon. With enough light for the two overachievers who not thought of themselves as underachievers to pursue higher and more personal agendas.

As they had done more times than they remembered, Grim and Dral followed the footsteps of the Huntress into the woods. Easily followed of course as her footwear was something different than anything left by man, woman or beast. And on occasion, they found something else left along the side of the path that the Huntress left as gifts for them, or accidental droppings. Sometimes it was a parchment with mechanical drawings of something buildable by human bodies, sometimes drawings of what perhaps lay under the skin that made those bodies able to do the building which Dral did his damnest to make himself a better constructor of buildings and re-constructer of torn apart flesh once he got home. Or, perhaps another discarded and inferior, for her people anyway, musical instrument which Grim somehow was able to fix, sometimes with and sometimes without his brother's help, and make yet more sounds that, to Dral sounded like merely sound but



to Grim, and others, a different kind of music. All led, as it always had, to a circle of rocks in a holler hidden by thick bush, where the tracks of the elusive Huntress disappeared. "So, should we dig deeper to find out where she went to?" Dral asked Grim as they both gazed into the black hole they had dug so deep that they could not see the bottom, even when the sun shone directly into it.

Common dirt came out of the hole each time they dug, but Dral's now surgically instinctive fingers could sense some kind of 'buzz' to something inside the circle of common stones. Grim's feet and gut, which could feel vibrations of music played by anyone, even himself, sensed some kind of 'throb' to it. Both brothers felt those sensations more than normal. "Perhaps this has something to do with place that's always doing things better than ours does. And we do."

"Or can, unless we find this kingdom. Which..." Grim said as he turned around, walked on the ground around the circle of rocks with his bare feet, and used his imagination to allow him to feel some kind of 'music' or 'drumbeat' under the ground. This time it seemed to lead him to where the sun rose rather than set this time. "Maybe she went in this direction, with different feet," he speculated. "Or a really big jump that some would call flying, maybe propelled by a really big fart out of her beautiful ass," he mused.

"Which theoretically could enable her to fly, IF she was able to have wings that moved in a downward, back, then upward movement like that of a bird," Dral speculated with expressionless clarity, ignoring or, as Grim perceived, unable to pick up on the fact that the fart-flying remark was intended as a joke. Something that Grim was becoming better at making with each day, yet he was unable to laugh at any of his own jokes. Or for that matter, anyone else's. And as for the stories he devised, and music he composed, he was equally incapable of feeling emotion from, other than the 'sense' that the song, story or joke 'worked'. As the eye of the tornados of imagination he created, indeed, Grim was unable to feel or know what it actually did. Or were. Or able to reach out to Dral, who had become so good at things technical that he lost all connection with things artistic.

But there was another reason why Grim and Dral were so intent on finding the technological and artistic Paradise that the Huntress had to have come from. "You know, she was smiling at me, but only looking at you," Dral said. "There is some kind of connection between us which could advance our ability to combat the cruelest intentions of Nature to levels that---"

"---You are wrong, brother," Grim interjected. "She likes you, but she loves me. Someone who knows what love is, and could be."

"Love," Dral replied, scratching his chin in the same manner that Prometheus did upon their 'accidental' meeting with him, while remembering what he once felt for, or still felt, for his miraculously-obtained dream wife, Rihi. "A psychological phenomenon which requires better definition involving expectations between both parties and methods of delivery of such."

“Love is something you feel, and can’t understand,” Grim pointed out with open palms, and an open yet still hurting heart, recalling his own oscillating internal feelings for Lilila. “But, would you rather have a woman who understands your mind or connects to your heart?” he advanced, hoping that the real meaning of that inquiry would connect to Dral’s still hopefully Alive, big A, soul. A soul that could not lose himself in any fictional story or transformed by any song, at least that Grim could compose.

“A woman who understands your mind and connects to your heart,” Dral said.

“And who you are yourself around, your Real self,” Grim added.

“Who the Huntress probably is, for me,” Dral concluded.

“And me?” Grim proposed.. “If a man can love more than one woman, maybe a woman can love more than one man? A woman who lives, or fart flu, to her homeland closer to where the sun rises”?

“As long as that woman who...looks familiar,” Dral said as he proceeded walking to the East.

“Like all women do,” Grim said, trying to convert that very real remark into a joke but being ‘stuck’ at ‘profound’ and accurate, following his brother.

“Yes, as long as that women can love only two men and not three,” Dral added, with a smile, once again working with the third brain, and now Mind, that the brothers always shared and needed to rediscover. “That woman who---“

“---That woman who what?” the brothers heard from behind them in a familiar female voice.

“Who these idiot geniuses think they can measure up to,” a second woman with the first said.

Rihi and Lolila approached their husbands, anger in the former’s face, rage in the latter’s.

“We were...just, ya know,” Dral blurted out of the side of his mouth with quivering lips.

“Out looking for better medicine, technology, and...” Grim added. “And fresh jokes from the squirrels, new songs from the birds, and--- “

“Specimens to breed with?” Rihi interjected.

“While you BOTH have responsibilities to your own first?” Lolila added.

In unison, the two women opened up the furs covering their bellies, patting them.

“Who will be arriving, when?” Grim asked, unable to differentiate between an overfed belly in a woman and one that was soon to sprout yet another Primtonian.

“Soon enough, for you,” Dral said to his brother, assessing Lolila’s exposed body, which apparently, Grim had not seen nor felt in a long time. “And,” he went on with a forced smile as he tried to convert the fear in Rihi’s somehow ‘lighted up’ face into assurance. “A bit later for me.”

With that, Grim and Dral escorted their wives back to Primton. The former wondering who the real father was. And the latter hoping he never found out. While Dral began to prepare himself to see if his son or daughter would look like him, or someone else. Something that his father Prim, perhaps, had experienced as well several moons before he and his twin brother had crawled, or was pushed, out of the womb.

## CHAPTER 7

More time passed. Primton grew from a settlement to what they called a City, its existence known only to the dwellers in it. Very soon, there were more builders, farmers and hunters than warriors, as the latter were not needed as much. Prim remained the leader, but the people discovered, with Grim and Dral's help, a new form of government but though his sons did what they could to maintain their father's physical strength and ability to use charm to get others to do his bidding when he couldn't do it himself, the old man of 34 years was approaching forty, his hair becoming white then falling out of his head, and the ability to remember things falling out of his head as well. But, Prim did allow the new form of rule outlined by Dral and made popular in song by Grim to establish itself. They called it democracy. Rule of the people. Most of the time it served rather than subverted the people. As long as Grim and Dral were able, in ways that were not recognized, to serve rather than please them. And for everything they wanted, give them something they needed as well.

As for Grim and Dral, they kept futilely looking for the Huntress' ideal civilization as the borders of Primton expanded. The brothers, whose skills were sometimes complimentary and sometimes shared, were still convinced that, from what they saw of its 'garbage' left behind in the woods, and legends from other hunters who passed through Primton, that to be competitive with the Huntress' homeland, and to be worthy of being with her, they had to get their shit together at an escalating rate. If they did good today, they had to do great tomorrow, or felt like shit the next day. Such was an obsession which made them effective as advanced citizens of Primton, but strangers to the people they served, and those they wanted to love, most particularly their children. Who were told by their wives that their hard working fathers who built great homes for them but were seldom in them fathers cared more about everyone else's family than their own. Grim and Dral had given up trying to convince their wives that selective compassion for 'family', or ones' own, at the expense of everyone else's led to wars that destroyed everyone and everything. However, the brothers did make some progress, they hoped, and prayed (to Spirit they felt more connected to than people It made) teaching their sons and daughters the value and necessity for universal compassion is, caring for all equally, each giving according to their ability and taking according to their needs.

Such had been observed, and noted, by Prometheus and Athena who, on an unusually cold and damp winter day, did not shape shift into anything else, as they continued to do maintenance on the circle of 'common' rocks which for them was a porthole, thankfully not discovered by anyone other than Grim and Dral.

"Those books, drawings and musical instruments, and other tools that these 'accidently' less hairy and arrogant primates found along the trail to this place," Athena said as she moved the North stone into the correct position so as to coordinate with the vibrations emitted by the ones on the East, West and South aspects of the circle, using very human muscle this time, as she had used up all of her telekinetic powers for the month elsewhere. Her body smelled of sweat and feeling dry, her long blonde hair in tangles impregnated with dirt. Her face showed wrinkles which her make-up was unable to hide

this time. “It makes evolution too easy for them,” she said through a phlegm-filled cough which emitted a tinge of blood within it more so than normal. Remember what happened when you, or rather, in our naïve optimism, ‘we’ just gave them away?”

“Yes,” Prometheus, said, his body in better shape than Athena’s on the outside, but feeling a weak aching in his legs, congestion in his chest, as he retrieved from his satchel a manuscript with his prematurely or perhaps merely weather-caused arthritic hand, looking at it with his still focused bloodshot eyes. This one was in the language of words, which Dral was versant in, and mathematics, which Grim had become an expert in thinking with, in his hand, which they hopefully would read together. Which described some of the physical laws of matter as it could be touched and felt, and the inner workings of small particles that made up matter, which would enable one to transform matter into energy, and vice versa, and enable one to be independent of the restraints of linear time as well as discomforts of physical things in their own time. “These two misfits, and perhaps their students, are improving on what we left them. Using them to teach themselves to be....”

“...better than we are, or are becoming?” Athena shot back.

Prometheus scratched his chin, then after a reflective pause replied with a wry smile. “Yes, we can only hope so.”

“They will ignore us and destroy us if they get too smart too fast!” Athena said.

“Or save us, if we help them become wise, and self sufficient. And...yes I know, use the tools we gave them to build rather than destroy.”

“But to build what?”

“A world better than the planet we came from, and are in the process of destroying ourselves, without the help of any other species,” recalling how mass and energy inter-conversion was something that had enabled small minds to become destructive ones. He looked at the sun, recalling how smaller fires on his home planet had converted so much of it to ashes, though, not all of it...yet. “Perhaps if we can show these advanced primates how to change their world, they can teach us how and why we should change ours. Or---”

“---Share their world with us,” Athena replied with her alluring yet thought executing trademark eye-roll. “Is that a dream or yours, or something that Grim dreamed up in the imaginary world between his ears?”

“He doesn’t know about who are what we are,” Prometheus said.

“Not yet,” Athena shot back. “And when they do find out most important secrets, you know what we are required to do to, and with them. According to the laws nature which neither Zeus, nor that Spirit which he and you seem to be looking to do the Will of, nor

even you can change. Or even Grim and Dral, if they find out that the ‘rush of discovery’ they feel inside their tiny Neanderthal heads are caused by electrical currents making their brains sprout new connections, and devise more powerful implants.”

“Yes,” Prometheus replied, looking downward with regret. After which he looked to the sky, feeling himself becoming, yet again, a channel for something bigger than himself as he mouth let out. “But, heaven watches, earth works. And once a wave of energy is created it is never destroyed.” As for what that energy was, Prometheus dared not share that with anyone, even Athena, who had as much to lose as he did, at the hands of their bosses, and the ultimate Boss of them all. As for entrusting Grim and Dral, that would have to wait. As the experiment had turned into a gamble now. Where the fate of many worlds was at stake. Grim and Dral being the most expendable chips on the gaming table, in a game Prometheus was responsible for setting in motion. An awesome burden for someone who sought to honor two agendas. Above all do no harm. And make as big a positive difference in the universe as you can while you can. Both HAD to work together, now more than ever.

## CHAPTER 8

It had to happen sometime. . The oldest man in Primton or any other campground-village of hunter-gatherers in the known world about to be a 'town', eventually was now gone, lying on a hard wooden plank made softer by a covering of furs and straw, a smile on his weather-beaten, wrinkle covered and battle scared face. At the ripe old age of 42, Prim finally became one of the humans who seized breathing air. No one was in his house-hut to hear what came out of his mouth with the last breath, but something significant did come out of his ass. "The hardest shit I ever grabbed hold of," Thel said regarding one of his most recent jobs of 'maintenance medicine' dispenser for the elderly and feces remover for everyone else. "But when I put the detritus in the fire or holes to ferment into fertilizer, it emanated the strangest fragrance into my nostrils that have experienced in a many pletheras of breaths," he noted as the first person who found Prim dead, followed by two others who voluntarily came in to check on him a hundred breaths of the living later.

"Interesting that he speaks like us, or is trying to," Grim whispered to his brother regarding the upgrade of verbiage from Thel's customary one syllable vocabulary, out of ear range.

"But Thel is not like us," Dral added.

"I was talking about Prim, our father," Grim reminded his brother. "Who---"

"---Will have to be replaced," Thel reminded Grim and Dral. "And as his two most popular sons, you both---"

"---Don't want to be part of any club that would have me as a member," the art loving and politics hating Grim self observed himself coming up with on the spot.

"Me either," Dral added, not quite understanding the illogic of that statement but knowing that his brothers non-linear mind somehow got from A to B in a circle that was very often faster than a straight line. And, of course, knowing, very logically, that to let the 'common citizens' know that there was discourse between the more 'developed' souls would result in killing the latter, and ultimate destruction of the former.

Indeed, Dral and Grim found themselves unable and unwilling to share most of their thoughts with any of the other villagers. And not only because the two brothers were faster and, they hoped anyway, deeper thinkers than anyone else. Having learned to proactively design a life where there was minimal conflict, the twin geniuses were able to convince their wives and children that they were loved. But the truth of the matter was that Dral and Grim tolerated, served and pitied the family members biology required them to be most responsible for. As well as the villagers that the moral code the two brothers had adopted, and created, were self-assigned to look after. With no two legged upright beings looking after them, most particularly now that Prim had passed away. To a dimension that Grim was forced to device stories about, and Dral found himself not

believing in at all as there was no proof for any of Grim, or anyone else's, description of such. They would miss, and now need, Prim to say something to make Grim and Dral feel ok about themselves when they did 'good', and good about themselves when they did 'great'. But with no Prim around, the only voices in their head were the 'you're a piece of inferior shit' which was silenced only by having done something miraculous, for a day or part of a day anyway.

There were many things that Dral, genius inventor-doctor who made biological life possible and comfortable, and Grim, 'magical' entertainer who gave people many tailor made reasons to live, didn't share with their fellow Primtonians, and the plethora of villagers who flocked to the campground they converted into a settlement, then a village-city in the hope of becoming Primtonians. When the sun went down, they knew it would come up the next day, and when the days got shorter as the weather got colder, they knew the day when the sun would begin to shine longer each day. When patients felt pain, they knew that it would subside, eventually, and be replaced by pleasure. They could measure how long it took between a man and woman 'sharing the same blanket' at night and the day when said female would pop out a newborn native born Primtonian. They knew that disputes between husbands and wives escalated between love and hate, and that indifference was the sign that the relationship had slipped into toxicity or its natural ending. They knew that Nature, even when 'she' was most vicious, never gave you a problem without a solution, and that Nature was not really a 'she' but an impersonal congregation of various biological experiments competing for superiority, with, for now, mankind on top, assuming that greed and fear would not overcome the species.

But they didn't know how to experience real human emotions, especially the happy ones. Dral began to feel 'just ok' when he miraculously rescued a patient from death or debilitating disease, having been so good at preserving life that he felt dead himself inside. Grim became a master at making people laugh, even at the saddest of times, but was unable to share a laugh with anyone, and he had come up with so many stories in words and song that the wonderment required to write new ones was gone. Their smiles amongst humans were now forced, their hugs mechanical. They bypassed happy at each opportunity, out of a sense of duty, habit or perhaps shame for letting their father get so sick. Yet discovered Bliss, experienced after each discovery in their very different areas of exploration and service, imbibing a meal of satisfaction alone, hearing the sound of Silence as loud as the thunder. And having to be satisfied with that Inner Applause, for periods that lasted less than the average rainfall.

"So, what do we do now?" Thel asked Grim and Dral, as terrified of not having a leader as the two brothers were afraid of being degraded by his tongue or clammed by his fist when they were all boys vying to see who would become men first. "Prim was our leader. The boss that the hunting, raiding, defending, farming, fishing and building bosses all answered to. Who will be our bosses now?"

"Ourselves," Grim suggested.



“And each other,” Dral added. “Everyone gives according to their needs, gives according to their abilities. And the one with the most abilities becomes---“

“---Someone more clever than you two masochistic, self-deluded idiots,” Grim and Dral heard from a voice of a stranger entering Prim’s private hut. The visitor clad in soft shiny furs which was a strange color that was a mixture of blue and red that no Primtonian had ever seen, which lacked leather and hair entered the ‘chamber’ as if she owned it. Nay, as if it was something that was beneath him ever owning, or living in. “You know that the peasants where I come from live far better than this king does. With holes in the walls that you can see through, and open and close as you want or need to. And floors that are so clean that you can eat off them without tasting any dirty, or sawdust. And old people where I live---”

“---we know, live longer than any elder here, by as many as ten winters,” Dral said to the visitor from the settlement they could never find.

“Twenty,” the visitor with no hair on her face, legs arms or back. And no blisters on her hands. And a face which was not that of the Huntress Grim and Dral fell in love with, and somehow recognized. But one which was...as mean and vicious as it was beautiful. “But this ugly and primitive ‘settlement’ has its charms, I suppose,” she said with an upward chin and condescending grin. And eyes that fired into Dral and Grim’s brain, blasting holes in their sense of self worth in perfect harmony with every comment she made regarding how far they had ‘advanced’ from ‘crude necessity’ to ‘common mediocrity’. “It’s time that someone other than your pride seeking and overly protective father, who is gone now, give you some criticism that isn’t coated with honey or anything. Follow me, if you deluded and idiotic cowards dare to, of course.” She walked outside of the hut towards the ‘common area’ of the settlement, drawing villagers out of every hut, house and hiding place in the bush to her.

It felt like an offer that couldn’t be refused. And if it was, would spell Grim and Dral’s end. As potential and unwilling political rulers of Primton, as specially valued citizens possessing ‘magic’ and, they feared now, as living beings. Besides, it was personal now. NO one had called them idiots or cowards since they came into camp riding Promethius’ big dogs, who perhaps would also shit on them if they didn’t stand up to this new blue-red clad visitor.

The visitor insulted every one of Dral’s inventions, as well as advancing medical procedures, then made fun of Grim’s jokes, music as well as his stories. Not like the Huntress, who merely said that things were better where she came from, showing respect for Grim, Dral and the others of their kind, biologically anyway. This intruder, with active disrespect, tore down every Vision Dral and Grim had made possible to be seen, heard and felt by the human eye, ear and hand. Particularly the one they valued most. The villagers seemed to agree with the Intruder. Looking at Grim and Dral like they were the losers they had been before meeting Promethius, and connecting to the Minds within their unused brains that he activated, somehow. Both brothers knew that three more insults from this intruder who was so more effective and colorful at criticizing than

they had ever been at doing, and they would be, once again, the ones cleaning up everyone else's shit and looked at as shit. A fate worse than becoming stew that would become shit. A stroke of genius arose out of desperation, as the Intruder, big I, moved towards Dral's best constructed cart, upon which were mounted musical instruments to make the work of transporting heavy objects feel like play.

"You see what we've done here, with nothing to start with," Dral pointed out before her luscious, alluring and fire breathing mouth could utter yet another criticism based in fiction, or face. "What have you done to improve the life of others?"

"With your own hands, head, and heart," Grim challenged. "On your own!"

"I...know important people," she said, looking downward, having been hit in the area of her brain where self esteem dwelled, as Dral observed in the field of 'light' around her head. And a place she had not considered unimportant, as Grim felt it. "And have worked with very important people," she insisted, with a defensive voice that his remark somehow was able to evoke. "And I am very accomplished! And effortless success is the best kind!"

Grim pulled himself back, scratched his chin, and put his back into a hunch back position of a commoner. "Well," he humbly offered as the lowest commoner in any settlement, village or campground, which he had grown up adopting and being pushed into. "I suppose that working under important people who have been given success rather than accomplishing it is better than actually...hmmm." He turned his brother Dral. "What did we insignificant, small and masochistic idiots on the bottom of the totem pole do?"

"We did things," Dral announced, proudly, humbly and accurately. "We accomplished things. On our own. Through struggle."

"Like every other commoner in this common settlement did, and is doing," Grim proclaimed, looking at and into the students he taught to be artists. Then those who became innovative builders and health care workers by working with, and not under, his brother Dral. And finally, his sons, daughter, nephews and nieces, in whom the seeds of struggle, wisdom and intelligence had been planted.

"And as we all know, or should know if we have any brains, balls or benevolent instincts to become better than we were created, or made," Dral added, somehow finding within himself the ability to use alliteration in a musical and accurate manner. "Effortless success is failure, not success."

"And there is no success like failure, which we turn into self-made accomplishment, which you, who are great because you are affiliated with great people, somewhere, will never know," Grim added. After which he came up with a song on the spot, describing the Intruder, big I, as a pathetic soul who should be shunned, stayed away from and pitied, accompanied by a new melody on the now triple octave lute, which, by the third verse, was backed up by other villagers playing the multitude of other instruments Grim

had invented, or improved. With the help of his brother, who now found a way to play the greatly enhanced flute, emitting music as well as merely notes.

The intruder left, in disgrace. Grim and Dral felt victorious, for the moment anyway. The people they were in charge of now seemed to be liberated from and educated about, for the moment, from this new invention that had come their way. The Critic who criticizes everything so well but never does anything on his, or her, own. Who, as Grim and Dral intuited, and realized, was what they did to prevent others from becoming better than he or she was, or putting a mirror into their unaccomplished 'affiliated with important people' faces.

"Me and my people are not finished with you two idiots, and the rest of you morons!" the well dressed critic who left feeling like she was a loser in rags blasted back at Grim and Dral as she stumbled back into the woods, slipping on her long robes, falling into the mud several times.

The warning was ignored by the now happy and perhaps Blissful masses. But was taken seriously by Grim and Dral. Both of whom found themselves worthy to be the son of any father. And, more importantly, the husband of the Huntress who they hoped, and prayed, they would see one day. For different and better reasons than they had in the beginning of this day.

"So," Promethius, as himself, said to the Intruder who had entered the village in a purple robe as a queen, and came out as a raggedly clad beggar, covered mud, and her own tears of regret. He put a mirror into her face, which he angled into the sun so that it would reveal the wrinkles developing around her eyes, the enlargement of her once blemish-free and uninjured small nose, thinning but still long hair and sagging breasts. "Take a look at yourself!" he said, to the tune that Grim had devised after standing up to her and exposing her. To the world of earthling mortals, and herself. "You were born with exceptional beauty, to the most powerful and, so far anyway, father imaginable, and now you are....ugly, and, alone."

"As are you!" Athena blasted to her collaborator on the scouting Mission to earth. And the man who now had her wrists tied in knots of unbreakable earth-made braided rope which the mortals on this planet had learned to make from fragile green vines, without his or her help, according to what she knew. But she did know that Promethous was just as ugly and alone as she was. With all of her might, nearly breaking her already painful arms, she pushed the mirror into his face. "Ugly and alone," she said as the solo expedition leader who had been her lover back on home planet had aged just as much as she did. With more deformation on his potted, disease speckled face as hers. But as Promethius looked at himself in the mirror, he didn't seem to mind.

"Age is something nature created. And, Nature never gives you a problem without a solution," he noted, without a single breath of regret, nor tear of loss, nor fear-induced quiver of lips that bordered a mouth with more sores and lost teeth than hers.

“And the solution is?” Athena blasted out. “Back home! I fucking hope, soon!” she said looking up to the sky.

“Or the solution is here in the meantime,” he suggested, pointing Athena’s attention toward the celebratory settlement. “Which you almost destroyed,” he grunted. “Why?” he asked his fellow expedition member, and once trusted and beloved lover.

“Orders,” she blasted back, with tight lips and a closed heart.

“From your father? Zeus?” Promethius inquired. “Or...someone else I’m not supposed to know about.”

“Untie me from these ropes, and give me that transmitter you stole from me when I was sleeping, and I’ll tell you,” Athena replied. “Promise!” she pledged, putting her tied hands as upward as she could.

“Promise to what and who?” Promethius challenged. “Ourselves, as gods who have to find a new planet to live after we finish destroying our own?”

“There are worse options,” Athena answered. “Swearing to demons, or to nothing at all.”

“True enough,” Promethius replied. “But, I will let you go home, and get ‘better’ under one condition.”

“Which is?”

Promethius thought about the answer. He didn’t find one. At least that he revealed to Athena. For reasons he kept to himself, he cut the ropes keeping her confined, and gave her the transmitter, drained of most of its power due to climatic factors which Mother Nature provided without consulting with the Science Promethius et al. knew about. “Get out of here if you can,” he said. “Or if you dare to. You know what awaits you at home. And the possibilities for staying here.”

Athena didn’t answer. But Athena was not willing to leave to be resupplied with hopefully medicine on home planet that would restore her. Or not. Still she needed one answer to one question. “Those implants you put into the thick heads of those two idiots you turned in geniuses. What happens when they stop working?”

“They already have, a long time ago,” the once confident space traveler confessed and related.

“How long ago?” Athena asked. “You mean these more heart than brains humans on this primitive, uncomfortable planet are getting smarter by the day, on their own. Smarter than us?”

“And wiser than us, we hope, and pray.”

“Pray to who, what and why?”

“We’ll have to figure that out together,” Promethius replied. After which he looked at the watch on his prematurely arthritic wrist, with a fear-induce shake. “Very, very soon!”

Athena perhaps heard what he said, but Promethius knew she wasn’t listening as she retreated into the woods with the transmitter unit. “Better that she takes the last portal home to where she could be restored to what she had been, if still possible,” he thought to himself as his body felt another tooth fall out of his mouth, and his hand felt pain upon trying to flex it in a fist. Angered at himself for setting in motion something he had never fully told her about, nor understood himself. And letting the woman who he once love learn to hate him so much. Finally fulfilling his childhood wish to be a ‘hero’ who could perhaps save two worlds. Perhaps at the cost of everyone in both of them.

## CHAPTER 9

Dral didn't only think differently than his technologically less advanced fellow humans, he now looked differently. But did he now resemble the men, and perhaps some of the women, in the Huntress' advance settlement which he still could not find, or locate? Still he persisted, this time without his overworked and more popular brother, down new path through a recently formed valley after an unexpected avalanche following lights coming down from the sky. While washing his face and filling his dry throat in the lake where the latest debris from, he inadvertently helped himself to a view of himself, noting a glare coming off the top of his head, seeing in his hand the last batch of hair that had formerly taken root atop his overworked cranium. With active sensation that had started after meeting with Promethous on the right side and, after a time, shifted to some extent to his left. "So, no grass grows on busy streets," Dral said to himself, repeating the metaphorical remark that the still generously-follicled Grim somehow translated into a humanistic joke. "I suppose the lice will have to find someone else's head to move into," he said with a half smile on his left face. "And I can feel the thought waves from other beings and places coming into my head more easily than others," he continued, feeling both sides of his lips pulled upward.

His thirst for water quenched, and his required daily dose of self observation administered, he got up on his feet, looked up to the grey sky, and grabbed hold of a magnetic dial which on a sun-less day or moonless night could tell him which way North was. It was where it had been when the sun had shown such earlier than morning by means of where it cast shadows. An essential tool to avoid becoming lost like had happened so many other times when he went too far away from the settlement. And, he speculated, something that could allow one to find one's way across and back from the lake that contained salty water and no visible land on the other side.

"So, where do we go from here?" he asked his horse, who by now was just as old in horse years as he was in human age, so it seemed. "Do we collect the medical herbs from our secret mountain to the left before winter, animals or intruders we still haven't seen deplete whatever is still there. Or take the pass on the left to try, again, to find the Huntress' settlement where they have better medicines, or maybe, find the people who took the plants we found and we planted on the mountain that Promethius said would never be depleted as long as we..."

Dral's discourse to the horse who he shared more secrets with than any human, including his brother Grim, was interrupted by a rustle from the woods behind him. The steed's ears went forward, then his front hind-limbs went up, hitting the ground in a turn that set him into a gallop faster than anything he had done when a younger horse. "So, now you show me that you're not lame!" Dral yelled out to the horse. "All of that limping you did when I asked you to do more than a slow trot was an act?"

Dral's nose picked up an odor that scared him as much as the horse. The smell of rotting flesh which was moving now. Perhaps an injured wolf out for a last meal before he died, or, he found himself imagining as real, as it was not impossible, the 'walking dead'.

Dral braced his scientific mind for the latter by a quick review of the legends about such which were maybe based in fact, protecting himself from becoming one of them by picking up a long blade with a handle on it which could be used to cut thin branches of trees, the ribs of slain animals, or, in the wrong hands, the limbs of non-Primtonians who wanted to take over his homeland.

“I’m harmless, now,” the beast said as it emerged from the woods through the fog. It showed itself to be a crawling creature, that, with some effort, was able to walk on its two hind-limbs. With the second stride, it revealed itself to be covered with blood and purple rags stuck to flesh under it. With the third, it showed itself to be a woman of more advanced age than any Dral had seen. A very elderly one who, for reasons beyond her control, still had not surrendered to death. “Can you fix this?” she asked through a deformed mouth, spitting out as much desperate words as blood.

“I...eh...will try,” Dral said as he reached into his medical kit, thinking about, as he had to on rare occasions, putting her out of her biological misery with an overdose of sleeping medication.

“I was talking about this!” she continued, with forced words through quivering lips, pulling a devise out of what had been her ‘dress’ with two shaking, emaciated arms that she somehow made work together. It was coated with blood, the sharp wires sticking out of it coated with blood. “A beast got hold of it just as I was about to...eh...” she said with fear and regret in her voice as she became faint.

Dral reflexely broke her fall and assured her fearful soul with a bear like hug. He recognized the old woman’s eyes, but still held on to her. Indeed she was the once beautiful and arrogant intruder who introduced Primton to a skilled self-respect-demolishing critic, hopefully not encouraging any of his fellow citizens to become such. Yes, she was as toxic and the plague that had taken away her beauty and was about to take away her life. But, Dral had to help her. And, he thought, if he could keep her at least alive long enough, she could take her to the Huntress’ settlement. And, perhaps, if Fate was kind, to the Huntress.

“Lay down here, I can help you,” he said. “First we get rid of the pain, safely,” he said, as he reached into his saddlebag which he had, thankfully, taken off of the horse before it ran away. After administering what he thought, and calculated, as the right dose of elixir, he felt her skin at the diagnostic points which, in his experience, were soft and shallow when associated with specific maladies under the skin. “I think I can save you,” he said. “But I’m going to need you to believe that what I’m doing will work,” he said, having verified that 37 out of every hundred patients who merely believed that he was a brilliant healer did in some way become healed. Before he gave them medicines that he knew would work. “Yes,” he said after feeling her abdomen, chest, legs and aching head, envisioning what was happening under such. “I know that I can help you,” he said as he instructed her to open her mouth, placing a pinch of specially formulated powder under her tongue. Her pulse got stronger, her pale white face acquiring color again, her white gums becoming pink, her breath moving air in and out with a diminished death rattle.

“Yes, that’s a start,” he said. “And when that horse of mine comes back here, I can get you to a place where I can do a lot more...”

“Which you can do better if you fix this first,” she said, pointing to the metallic devise. “My hands are too mangled to move any of the wires, to put them in the right place. And my head...can’t remember where all of the wires are supposed to connect,” she related, demonstrating the truth of those observations. “Please, fix this, and you can fix me, you and many others,” she claimed.

It wasn’t brain surgery, putting the device back together. By application of simple of logic and mechanical intuition, and forcefulness of fingers, Dral was able to put the metallic tool he knew nothing about together again. Just as he was about to figure out how it worked, the old and not yet dead woman maneuvered her now non-shaking hands such that she could hold onto the devise. With a religious reverence, she pointed it at his head as he slapped extract from a plant he would name after his father, or brother, or perhaps the huntress on the bleeding wounds he could find, stopping the bleeding and, he hoped, killing whatever un-seeable bugs made them emit pus on the outside, and inside.

As the old woman chanted, Dral could feel something light up and vibrate his right brain. His recall of his on medical knowledge increased, somehow. He could feel the seeds of ideas yet to be understood planted and germinating, as he fingers knew exactly where to insert needles into the skin of the old woman and twist them, while he felt even more shocks going up his arm than when he normally did this manipulation. He interrupted his medical procedure with mechanical breaks, seeing how the device could work better, seeing advanced circuitry he could add, an implementing such between medical manipulations, applying he devise to ‘weak’ portions of the woman’s head, then key ‘energy’ points below it around the navel, and behind her neck, and locations his fingers picked up as ‘weak’ in between. Her voice became stronger, then after the old woman pointed the devise at her own head, younger.

Dral finally looked up from the body he was healing to the soul who owned it, by looking at the face of the woman. She became younger, and, even more alarming to a cowardly mind, thankful. “So, you think we can become partners,” the old dying an now middle aged alive, and not unattractive woman said while placing her now functional an non-bleeding, and non-purulent hand on his forearm, then face. “Yes, partners,” she said, as described in Grim’s legends and songs, an enchantress, healer or ‘goddess’.

“I...eh...have a wife who needs me,” Dral confessed, and related.

“But who doesn’t love or understand you,” replied the miraculously restored female critic who had to be from a place more advanced than Primton. Who showed Dral respect and, so it seemed, love. “I can give you what you need, and want, and can give to those who you give what they need, and want. Starting with...”

Dral took in a deep breath, preparing himself to be pleased between the legs in the way that his lesser evolved patients lived, fought and were willing to die for. Instead, he felt



the now repaired, upgraded an light-emitting devise pointed at the right side of his head. Whatever it fired out caused him to feel on fire inside his skull, and own his spine, then faint. After which he woke up from a strange dream he couldn't remember, by his horse. Hearing the old woman's chanting as a young one, whose voice seemed to come from the woods to the North, South, East and West, all at once.

But there was one voice that did come from one clear direction. With voice he knew very well. "Are you okay?" Grim said, one of his hands holding the reins of his and his brother's horse. The other on his Dral's shoulder.

"How did you find me?" Dral asked his brother.

"The question is WHY," Grim replied. "We're both needed, back home. You more than me."

With that, Dral and Grim rode back to their home camp, now, for better or worse, a town, at a full gallop.

## CHAPTER 10

The horses could smell the disease in Primton from a mile away, courtesy of a wind that blew its aroma into their nostrils, setting their ears forward and their legs into convoluted choppy gaits that would land their riders onto the ground with broken forelimbs and hindlimbs in the process. Thankfully Dral figured out what salve to put into their noses so that they thought they were returning home to fresh, springtime grass rather than the stench of liquid blood stained human feces and the fragrant aroma of vomit coming out of the anal orifice. Upon arrival, Grim's ears heard something even worse.

"Death rattles," he said of the people who when he left were merely uncomfortable in the belly, now sprawled on the ground awaiting exit to an existence which is kinder than the one they were born into. "I'm afraid we'll lose more than just the old and feeble with this one. Because Mother Nature this time----"

"---an irrational creature who is just as trainable as last time," Dral blurted out of his mouth, as he smelled the excretions lying around the sick and dying. After which he scratched his chin, then raised his index finger up into the air, "An interesting disease this time which requires an interesting remedy," he said with assuredly as he began concocting another combination of powders taken from 5 of the bags in his cart. "An interesting experiment which I am sure will work," he said an 'emotion' far more different than his usual tolerated and expected non-musical arrogance.

"Detachment," Grim said to his horse. "Detachment from the lower emotions that make him feel more than think. Detachment from letting empathy for his patient's pain interfere with figuring out how to stop it. Detachment from whatever musicality is implantable into his soul. And..." yes, Grim had to admit to himself, and share with the horses. "Detachment from me, and you as living beings rather than tools to do his self assigned duties, and Callings."

But that sacrifice of Soul seemed to be necessary for Dral to emerge from being a medical miracle worker to being a god who indeed had divine knowledge about the Natural World in his head, and magical fingers to administer that biological wisdom. Somehow, Dral was able to save ALL of the patients from dying that day, and converted all of the sick into being healthy within hours of his tailor made treatments. Through means that he didn't bother to share with any of the people he saved. And offered to his brother, but in medical language Grim did not understand. Dral was unwilling to, and, when pressed to do, unable to 'humanize' his technical explanations for his left brain artistic brother or any other art loving soul in Primton. Though he seemed to become a master of biological science relative to what he had been that morning, there was a deadness in his eyes. And a flatness in his voice, to a point that every word in each sentence was delivered with the same volume and intensity. Something that had a calming and sedating effect to anyone who listened to it long enough. Something that made the always needing to feel more Alive each moment artistically Grim feel....dull.

The next day, Dral had figured out what caused the shitting and barfing disease, an infestation of 'insect-like organisms smaller than any that can be seen by the human ocular senses' that found its way into the well from which the richest Primtonians drunk most and the poorest when they could. He then drew out in the sand, and onto sheets of paper, what had to be done to fix the well, which, in the process, made it fill up with water faster and easier. The day after that, Dral drew out a plan whereby the water from the well could go into each hut and into the fields of plants about to be harvested into food.

A week or two later, Primton had more water and food than its citizens needed. A month, as measured by the cycles of the moon, later, there wasn't a thin citizen in Primton. A month after that everyone in Primton was comfortable. Some more comfortable than others. Comfortable in their bodies, and...tragically...souls. And interpersonal interactions. But lacking humor. Grim knew, and informed, people that without a joke offending someone, somewhere, sometime, it was not funny. Emotionally offending (or challenging) others, past present or future, became a legal offense in Primton punishable by taking away comfort-conferring food, clothing, lodging and medicine. Punishable by taking away various comfort conferring things, inducing pain on the body, or, worse, the worse punishment of the soul imaginable for the lesser evolved citizens of Primton----banishment. Banishment in total or in stages. And banning of any art that offended.

Grim was asked, then required, to write songs and stories that lacked any offensive material, most importantly the soul challenging and perspective biologically-unexplainable phenomenon called humor. Humor was always the hardest thing to put into singable song and performed story, and the first thing to come out when the story or song had to be given sufficient structure to be understandable and producible, even for Grim. His students learned all too well how to take it out of stories and songs. Which left Grim soon more alone than he had ever been. The only Primtonian non-afflicted with Dull Out Disease. The order-producing disorder which made people and what they produced lifeless, boring, procedural, safe and...comfortable.

Then, the inevitable happened, in stories that Grim saw in his still expanding head, the contents of which he hid with a closed mouth as well as heavy skull covering hats. Which materialized in the world he could see all too clearly with his biological eyes, or as Dral and the technologically advancing soul dead citizenry who considered him a god would term them, 'ocular portholes'.

## CHAPTER 11

Primton still kept its original name as the new rulers saw fit to honor the great old departed warrior Prim rather than diving with BOTH feet into wars with each other. No one with any real brains wanted the job of being king in a democracy where the king was replaced almost as often as there was a new full moon. And, to be truthful, anyone who wanted the job proved to not be trustable with it. But, no one did anything against Dral's, as he now called it, 'scientific' recommendations as they were afraid they would lose their heads, or worse, popularity, if they did. And of course, every ruler boasted about how he, or she, was Grim's best buddy and mentor before he became a genius artist. Grim allowed those fables to be accepted as fact because the rulers now had an army of muscle to back them up, unlike the 'band of three' headed by Thel in the legendary 'good old days' when Prim was the leader of a small band of hunter gatherers who somehow wound up surviving the perils of being killed by Mother Nature or eaten by wild animals, some of them fellow two legged humanoids from other valleys.

But things were 'looking upward', according to Klep, the newest good looking man-king who knew how to charm the crowd what they wanted to hear, rather than what they should know about. The population of Primton went up to numbers which shot it 'as many as the stars' due to increased birthrate amongst the native Primtonians, mostly those who endowed what was between their legs rather than between their ears, as it was only natural for one to work with one's strengths rather than weaknesses. And of course Primton was infiltrated by 'lesser' but still needed people from other regions. Some conquered by the spear, then arrow, then metal sword. Some put into submission by a weapon more powerful than an instrument designed to tear apart confidence one's future rather than human or animal flesh.

"So, who decided that this shell coated with red dust is more valuable than this pebble coated with silver muck?" a young boy eleven winters old asked his mother while sitting on an piece of wood that supported his back and ass inside his hut, now house.

"And who said that this dark yellow nugget is worth 100 red covered shells and only 20 silver muck coated pebbles?" his younger sister pressed, looking at the gifts her Uncle's assistants had delivered to the elevated board in front of them which they now knew as a table.

"And who said that a handful of five yellow nuggets is worth more than a herd of horses, or person from somewhere else we don't know, or somewhere?" the boy inquired of his father, dipping his not yet hairy hands into the basket in front of him filled with shiny objects that one couldn't eat, but were necessary now to obtain food, or most anything else.

"He or she who has the most yellow nuggets says how valuable they are," a very comfortably, moderately expensively and fashionably beautifully clad Lilila informed her children. "Which is us, because you both are----"

“Grim’s children?” the boy exclaimed.

“No,” the not-so-young-anymore mother Lilila informed the still young and still happy for the right reasons children. “We have more yellow nuggets than most anyone else because you are Dral’s nephews and nieces.”

“And who has the most yellow nuggets, and can buy anything or anyone?” the girl inquired.

“The king of course,” the boy informed his little sister.

“But the king is rich because of what our father Grim used to do a lot, and what our Uncle Dral is doing a lot now,” the girl noted, lamenting the former and proud of the latter.

Such aroused a suspicious eyeroll from her now jealous brother, more his father’s son than his mother’s. But a brother who was also angered at his father for, as his mother said was spending too much time taking care of other families in the ‘real’ world, and imaginary ones yet to be born in the world inside his head.

Lilila could smell another fight developing between her two children, the only two that Grim was able to produce for her. And now, the only two lives, other than her own, she really cared about. She pulled the soon to be sparring for superiority children into her with a big hug.

“Yes, the king and his family are fatter than us,” Lilila admitted with anger that she tried to hide. “They have a bigger house. And more comfortable warmer clothes. They are rich in gold nuggets and possessions. But not in Vision, according to your father Grim and more importantly, to your Uncle Dral.”

“Who you wish could be our father, and your husband?” Lilila’s daughter asked in an angelic voice.

“Which is what we both heard you prayed to the lighted ghosts above the clouds,” the boy informed her mother. “And if the ghosts give you what you want, and what you say we need, what would have to happen to Rihi?”

Lilila turned around to her boy, seeing in his not yet hair covered face the eyes of a young and soon to be cynical man. One who she hoped she would not have to silence with a slap across the face at home, or a spear into his heart on a walk out into the woods. Yes, to be the wife of the ‘down to earth scientist’ Dral, who was now more popular in Primton than his brother ‘head in the clouds artsie’ Grim ever was, would be good for her children, and for her. And, she told herself, perhaps better for Rihi’s four children she had by Dral. Or who she claimed were had by Dral anyway, despite the fact that only

one of them resembled their father. And one of them seemed to be the spitting image of Grim.

But feuds between sisters in law fought presumably for the welfare of their children would have to wait. A burst of 'wind' blew into Lilila's house, followed by rocks from other huts blowing in the window, then boulders, making a king sized hole in the wall. Revealing a full view of the large fields below of special crops developed by Dral that, he claimed anyway, would be sufficient food to enable every man and woman in Primton, be they owners of gold or property of owners of gold, to be as healthy, fat and comfortable in the belly as the king.

The wind blew most every stalk of remaining 'wonder plants' containing all the human body needed in sickness or health if eaten in the right proportions into the sky. Dral's latest and some say greatest invention. Which was now needed to replace the wild game now gone from anywhere within five days' walk or two day's wagon ride from the now overly populated 'kingdom', due to over-hunting as well as destruction of the forest to build houses for people in town. A wave of insects swooped in to demolish what they could of the previously harvestable abundant and now preciously needed crops in the fields guarded by heavily armed men who were helpless to fend off Mother Nature reclaiming what was hers. The wave of wonder plant eating insects was swiftly followed by a thunderbolts from above the clouds which set the fields ablaze.

Lilila grabbed hold of her children, cursing Grim for not being there to help her. She assured them that everything would be alright. Such registered as fact with her daughter, but a lie to her son. Who, if he had too much of his father's wit and will, would become an enemy she would have to silence, or a slab of meat she would perhaps have to eat.

But even more clever than wise, and smarter than intelligent, Lilila knew that 'wonder brothers' Grim and/or Dral would have work some heavy duty magic. Or, perhaps, it was their black magic under the control of demons that enabled his fellow Primtonians and others to become so comfortable and happy, only to now be set up to become painful, miserable and dead. In any case, the final trial to see if Grim and Dral were angels or demons would come very, very soon. With a congregation of commoners on hand to elevate Lilila and her sister Rihi to queens again. Or a mob that would burn them at the stake along with the two down-trodden losers who had cheated their way to becoming temporary 'winners' in the battle between mortals and Fate.

## CHAPTER 12

“Nature never gives you a problem that science can’t solve,” Dral insisted to the congregation of native and foreign born Primtonians when they found their way back to the settlement after the multiple storm that left no citizens, or slaves, without some loss of property, or bodily function. He strolled around the center square of the settlement, perusing what remained at the plateau under his feet, and the once forested valleys below. Then he looked at, but not into, the faces of the people who called it home. “Science enabled us to come out of the stone age before, and will enable us to do it again. All biological systems and civic experiments if maintained, always get better. And all communities can be resurrected from even the worse setback.” he proclaimed.

“As long as they are well motivated,” Grim pointed out, stepping into the speaker’s circle from the aloof log stump that had been the center of the once vibrant outdoor ‘stage’ which made real life bearable, understandable and transformable into something worth living for.

“And fed,” Lilila shouted out, disgusted and ashamed of her husband. “By something beyond just dreams.”

“For the moment, you are correct,” Grim conceded, feeling the grumbling in his own stomach while seeing the hunger for physiological as well as metaphysical sustenance in everyone, including his own beloved potentially multi-perspective son and his, on a good day, tolerated uni-dimensional ‘meat and potatoes’ (and once sought after above all others) wife. “Dral?” he said, turning to his contemplative follically challenged brother, while picking up a lute which miraculously had survived the unpredicted storms from sources unknown to any right or left brain genius. “No grass grows on busy streets, but there’s a fire in there that I’m sure you can use to pull something out of your ass, or fart out an answer to Mama Nature and Father Fate to make them send down apologetic milk, honey and bread from the sky instead of pissing rain and farting out more wind,” he sang, with admittedly lyrics that could have had more edge, but which somehow got some frowns turned into smiles. Most importantly, in Dral, who rose to his feet.

“The Fates have don’t want us to be alive, so...we will create life!” Dral promised the people and yelled up to the sky. “The sun is still here, and our friend,” he announced. He then took in a deep breath. “And the air we breathe in and out is still here. Even though some claim that the air coming out of overinflated nostrils from thick headed scientists makes breathing in less fun for others,” he continued, looking at his brother.

Grim smiled in delight, admiring his brother’s attempt to active the humor part of the left side of his head. A third brain seemed to be developing between them, but more importantly, a third heart.

“So, what do we ‘mortals’ who live in the real world do now?” Rihi asked her husband, speaking for the rest of the congregation who were at the mercy of hunger and, according to the thick coats on the horses and dogs about to be eaten soon, early winter.

“You think your are a god who can create life?” Lilila added.

“No, something more powerful than a god, a determined man,” Dral replied.

“And, man who, yes, has connected to the woman inside of him,” Grim added, finally admitting to whoever was curious or listening, one of the secrets behind his magical ability to create humor, song and story that related to both genders.

With that, Dral drew in the ash covered ground the plan for creating life. “A photosynthesis machine,” he said, feeling a concept from the future come yet again to the present. “Light comes into this portion of this box, we breath into the middle of it, and out the other end, a plant emerges. From the seeds we plant into this dirt.”

“When?” still King Klep asked, on behalf of the people who he was only marginally smarter than, the reason for him being their leader who would never transcend his position as such. “And who will pay for this one?” he pressed.

“Whoever wants to,” Dral announced.

“And needs to, which is now...everybody!” Grim reminded the congregation of haves and have nots, not knowing who now was in which category. “We are all in this together now,” he said, after which he strummed his lute again, the lyrics of yet another motivational song about to come out of his mouth. Which were halted by Klep’s yap.

“And if this photosynthesis machine fails?” Klep said.

“It won’t fail!” Dral blurted out, with assurance.

“Shouldn’t,” Grim added.

“And if it doesn’t, you can feast on OUR flesh first!” Dral added.

“Which we will,” Dral and Grim heard with their ears, and saw in Klep’s eyes. And, for the first time, in everyone else’s. Understanding that the gifts they possessed to serve people who they now outgrew being around, and with, was both a curse and a blessing.



## CHAPTER 13

“So, maybe these advancing primates will pull it off this time,” Promethius noted to Athena as he viewed the experiment on the lower plateau of the mountain now named ‘Primtonia’ from the rocky overlook above it created by Mother Nature on earth, or perhaps on purpose, by Zeus’ second expeditionary Starfleet. Or perhaps a collaboration between the ‘Earth Mother’ and the humanoids on his home planet, or its current enemy planet, that he did not know about. “Creating life, even plants, from inorganic sources, could be innovative.”

“And dangerous, and, for these mortals, at this stage, not allowed,” Athena said.

“By whose rules?” Promethius asked.

“The ones who will see that you will pay for what you’ve done here, in the service of your ego, and that book you want to write to advance your position in the Academy back home.”

“Which needs the help of these primitive mortals more than you, I or anyone else, especially them, realize. Particularly when we erroneously decided that it was cheaper to conquer our sister planet back in our own galaxy to get the raw materials and manufactured goods we want, and need, instead of paying retail prices for them,” the explorer from the planet where humanoids were three quarters brain and one quarter heart said of the planet where it was the other way around. “One look at either of us on the inside and outside verifies that,” he said, looking at his own still shriveled and weak hand infected by agents that could be maybe killed by the right herb, and Athena’s prematurely tired and yellow-tinged eyes which, despite or perhaps because of the beautiful young face around it, was not so easily cured. “You really should consider some medication for that liver disease which you acquired on this trip, from a sabatour at home, or a bug here. Which---“

“---yeah, I know,” Athena shot back. “Makes me feel depressed and angry.”

“And confused, if it gets too bad,” Promethius replied, after which he picked up a wooden earth mug filled with fermenting berry juice. “A bad design of Nature or whoever was here before us that ripe fruit keeps brains and bodies alive, and rotting fruit destroys both. Starting with the liver. Which...I’m told, can grow back even after it’s damaged by toxins or...” The crow, coming in from nowhere yet again, landed next to Promethius. He smiled, offering the bird a small drink of the berry juice, which was accepted. He then looked into the eyes of the crow, with the gut feeling that it was no coincidence that this bird from the lower altitudes below the clouds had flown up to him while talking about livers, destinies and prices to be paid for doing good, noble and experimentally expansive deeds. “But there is one thing I want, and need, for you to tell me, Athena,” old, on the outside anyway, Promethius asked his old on the inside and young on the outside fellow explorer. “Why did you give Dral an extra jolt of insight?”

“So he could cure me of my biological problems,” she replied, for the first time in a long time, honestly. “He’s the scientist in this experiment of ours, right? And there is no such thing as too much science. Right?”

“As long as there is enough art, which is a more effective channel for humility and humanity, compassion,” Promethius replied. “Effective compassion being the ultimate result of intelligence, and ignorance being the only cause for cruelty.” He waited for a response. Athena, after drinking a large portion of the berry juice in her mug, which was more fermented than what was in his, smiled, looked at Promethius, and slapped him in the face. Then kissed him. Then passed out in his arms. He felt her heart beating while it lay next to his. But beating even louder between his ears was the drum of Fate, with a rhythm of its own. To a song that would change the universe, about to be composed by the lowest humanoids dwelling within it. Which would, rightly or wrongly, alter the Fate of an advanced planet many light years away. And one which would, perhaps, not know what a light year was for a long, long time.

Athena went into a kinetic drunken slumber, ruled by the ‘goddess’ of sloth and sloppy loving, her possessed fingers caressing every erotic spot she knew about when they were younger, and secret ones she never knew about. Yes, Promethius’ penis did turn from flaccid to erect. He kept hitting it so make it behave, knowing the price of giving in to lower urges which would result in Zeus having grandchildren he would either torture, discard or, worse, turn into obedient copies of himself as enforcers of his will and promoters of his legacy. Finally, Promethius stopped feeling the urge to dive with smiling happy face into the abyss the demoness possessing Athena wanted them both to fall into. Athena’s alluring love moans turned into ugly snores, as she finally went to sleep. After being sure she did, Promethius reached under her robes, and retrieved what he wanted from her in the first place.

“Yes, interesting what this can do and can’t do now,” he said, examining the chronically breaking down multi-purpose transmitter which had been repaired by Dral. After Athena had zapped his brain with an extra jolt of bioelectric elixir that had enable the earth born caveman to become a technical genius with intelligence levels rivaling the even above average humanoids on Promethius’ own planet. He checked each of the functions, finding that the one that could send Promethius and Athena, and two other hair-bearing life forms, one way, using the last one-use-only portholes still connected to earth.

But the ability to turn a two digit IQ caveman into four digit genius, or a four digit IQ ET ‘alien’ such as himself into a five digit Sage was now neutralized, locked into dysfunctional mode. Restorable only by geniuses and devises on Promethius’ home planet. Which Zeus would of course would forbid being sent to a planet he intended to colonize to save what was left of his ‘superior’ humanoids. But, as for who was superior and what was inferior, Mother Earth sent a small reminder his way.

A cockroach made its way up Promethius arm, onto his hands and into the transmitter. It turned around, looked at him and seemed to smile, while lifting its back end and emitting a drop of excrement into a main connecting wire. Just enough to disable it so that there

was only room for two passengers to get back to home planet. Assuming it that said home planet had not destroyed itself yet. But, it was a philosophical moment and spiritual revelation of sorts. "So," Prometheus said the lone roach. "You haven't evolved in a million years and will probably not have to evolve for another million years to keep your place on the bottom. And, in your own time, like your other small pals who demolished the wonder crops. You lower life forms, some of which we see and some we can't or don't see, remind us that we higher life forms can be brought down by you at any time. But as for letting us go from dust to dust, and birth to being eaten by your progeny, we 'higher' life forms still have to try. Even if we have to create other life to do it."

With that, Prometheus smiled, looked away from the roach, then quickly made a swatting action with his hand towards its arrogant, smart assed compound eye bearing face. Such succeeded only in making his aching flesh even more painful, while the roach slithered away into the dirt. Leaving the rebel and too human for his own good god-in-training to hope, yes pray, that Dral could create plant life to feed the over-populated and now, (after a series of 'accidental' earth quakes, volcanos and other mountain moving geological events) geographically isolated kingdom Primton. And that the primitive humans he would save would evolve into a kind, Alive and albeit colorfully dysfunctional sub-species that would not destroy each other's bodies, minds or spirits, like Prometheus' did once, and was about to do again, if this experiment of his failed.

The time frame for what to do and how to do it intensified, particularly when Prometheus saw smelled than heard a flash in the sky that was something far worse than Zeus sending another 'follow my orders and no one else, or else' memo to his hopefully still favorite explorer. Indeed it was a craft from Prometheus friendly and now sinister sister planet which was about to send down their own explorers. Or, perhaps reinforce them.

## CHAPTER 14

Dral's photosynthesis machine was able to produce food that had all the essential ingredients, but when the human palate contacted it, even if it was connected to an empty stomach, it lacked all flavor. Dral also came up with an enzyme that enabled people to eat wild grass and instead of barfing it up, grow healthy muscle, bones and all organs in between like the horses and other grazing animals could, but the taste of grass to people who he worked so hard to serve didn't please anyone. The people, who had become used to being comfortable, and obsessed with becoming more comfortable than their neighbors, demanded something else from Dral. Particularly after he designed and helped them build winter dwelling that were all the same, lacking any style, or the comforts they had gotten used to, including rooms with heated seats where they could evacuate their bowels. Dral insisted that people other than himself come up with innovations to restore the now surrounded by strange new mountains Primton valley into a flatland kingdom again.

Grim defined, with Dral's help, the formula for making music that makes people think rather than decide it was more comfortable not to, and employed it. Theoretically, the music with ever changing tempos, keys and rhythms carrying stories with thought provoking twists and turns would give the people what they need to think their way into a better life rather than what they wanted to think they are already 'there'. But the people wanted something that calmed their terrified minds into passivity rather than challenge them into action. Something with a steady beat that never changed, and stories which told them lies which would comfort them rather than truths about how the world was and could be that would set them free from their self-limiting lives. His works, particularly when Grim was bold and bright enough to put humor in them, were accused of being 'jarring', 'offensive' and, finally, 'criminal'.

New weapons which Dral did not build with his hands and Grim did not envision in his stories found their way into the hands of the least intelligent, as well as least caring Primtonians. How and why, neither of the brothers could figure out. But they did know that something had been 'undone'. Particularly when they were both brought into the center of the village they had turned into a city, facing their new judge and new king, Who rose to power by acquiring more weapons, gold and followers than anyone else, though means that baffled both genius brothers.

"So, why should we keep you short, weak and head in the clouds losers around?" a seemingly taller and certainly royally clad Thel, asked Grim and Dral from the center of the stage which both brothers had used to address their former worshippers, with the same voice he had used before they had met Promethius. "You are useless to us now."

"And dangerous," Rihi added from the queen's stump to the left of Thel, directing fire from her fear-fueled eyes at her former husband, Dral. "With the mark of the demon on top of his head that caused the hair to fall out! Who is...dangerous!"

“And his brother,” ‘queen on the right side’ Lilila said with a condescending eyeroll to the now family-less Grim. “Someone to be laughed at rather than laughed with,” she continued with an all knowing smile and finger pointed at his functional but not fashionable attire, followed by a remark that Grim didn’t understand which evoked ridiculing laughter from everyone in the crowd directed at him. Everyone except for his son, who hid what he was feeling and planning with pulled in lips, and a face so expressionless that it had to belong to someone with conflicting emotions of the most intense kind. And three others who didn’t join into the laughter, whose faces he didn’t recognize as they put hoods over them, then slipped into the woods.

Rihi pointed to Dral, accusing him of being a word in some strange language that meant something to be hated more than ridiculed. Such evoked boos from the congregation which was now a mob. A wave of hurled shit and rotten artificially-produced ‘wonder plants’ added another coat of brown and red on the bruises inflicted upon them by the new ‘law and order enforcers’ who had pulled Dral out of his now destroyed laboratory, and Grim from his self-produced ‘library’ which was now burnt into ashes.

“What is our crime?” Dral demanded to know.

“Except for giving you people what you need instead of everything you want?” Grim yelled out.

“And trying to serve rather than please.” Dral declared.

“By struggling to be useful instead of just doing what’s easiest for us to do,” Grim added.

“There you go,” Thel said, with a voice indicating a cunning that was far in advance of his intelligence, or normal wit. “Accused from their own blasphemous mouths! Thinking themselves to be gods, when we know they aren’t. And the gods know they aren’t!” the all muscle, no brains and more handsome than ever Neanderthal leader said to his people with a royal presence and social intelligence which both brothers sensed were put there by someone else. Someone who Dral and Grim could sense being around the valley. Someones with sinister agendas far more deadly than anything the Critic Intruder ever intended. And too illogical to be initiated by Promethius. Theoretically anyway.

While being boo’d and ridiculed, Grim and Dral looked at each other, figuring out with the third Soul between them what to do. After reaching their conclusion, they metaphorically flipped what was now known as a coin. Grim won the toss.

“We consent to the worse punishment you can give us!” the left sided artsy brother proclaimed with the assuredly of a true scientist.

“As shits who should be treated like shit,” Dral said-sung, on key, to the tune of one of Grim’s earliest and now most hated compositions.

“To go far away from here,” Grim said as he grabbed hold of his horse, just as it was about to be turned into meat. “With these shitters, whose meat and excrements are toxic, and cursed!” he told Thel’s butchers with a spooky voice, scaring them into the woods.

“And never come back, to be at the mercy of the elements,” Dral added as his horse came up to him, now released from the handsomely clad bold ‘soldiers’ who deserted their posts. “And die an ugly death!” Dral proclaimed as he got on top of the horse.

“To be eaten by these beasts,” Grim said as he pulled himself on top of the horse. “And to die in the worse way imaginable.”

“Which is to die...alone,” Dral declared.

The two brothers rode past the pile of wood which was to be their final, painful resting place, and disappeared into the woods. What they were feeling, they didn’t know. As to what would happen to the families, friends and patients the mind, body and spirit doctors they were leaving behind, their minds didn’t care. But their hearts somehow did. But one thing was certain in lives that were not certain anymore. They had become a different species than what they used to be. The last of their kind. Or, perhaps, the first of their kind, if they could find the Huntress. Instead, they ran into someone even more loving, caring and intelligent.

## CHAPTER 15

“So,” Dral said to Prometheus after ‘accidently’ bumping into his one man campground, sharing a bite of well cooked, and badly-seasoned meat which tasted like rabbit, but he hoped was not human primate. “Tell me how you grew so...old?”

“The same reason why you got so bald, I suppose,” the now white haired, wrinkled-skin, pre-maturely arthritic but still vibrant and defiant behind the eyes space traveler said.

“Leave home, get on-the-road disease. Which can be reversed when you...eh.”

Prometheus held the rest of what he was about to say behind tight lips, and a contemplative stare directed behind his ocular portholes.

“Which can be reversed by some miracle medicine Dral can come up with here?” Grim advanced.

“Or we both can develop if you take us home with you, to where...the Huntress maybe still lives?” Dral asked, seeing something familiar in Prometheus’ eyes. “Who maybe is--”

“---The ideal woman we all envision so we can be disappointed with the real ones that life puts us together with,” Prometheus advanced. “Which, if we work those compromise relationships right, can be recreated for us now with our wives, or, if we’re good and intelligent fathers, are recreated in our progeny for future generations.”

“Right,” Dral said, allowing Prometheus to have his lie unchallenged.

“If you say so,” Grim added, seeming to know more truth about the Huntress, and Prometheus, than the ‘gods’ ever thought possible from a freshly evolved from apes humanoid species on a primitive planet so backwards that none of the beings on it knew how to transport themselves to other planets. But with an intelligence of heart that he envied, and saw as something that had to be valued. And respected.

“So, it would be interesting if you could tell us a fable from your homeland that had some truth to it,” Dral inquired, helping himself to more stew to feed his genuinely empty belly, but more hungry to feed his expanding mind.

“And it would be fun,” Grim, added, with a sardonic smile, after which he drank a swig of berry juice that Prometheus had boiled to eliminate the ‘firewater’ that sedates already lazy-addicted minds. “Something that all three of us used to be able to experience. Like...happiness.”

“Bliss is better,” Prometheus said to his now fellow Comrades. “As we all know, or should.”

“Suppose so,” Grim said

“Tis what it be,” Dral added.

Promethius rested his weary head on his palm, scratching his beard. He thought about his options, wondering what to do, thinking that sharing more common ground would lead him and his Comrades in a Cause bigger than they knew, or perhaps had figured out, could lead them all to how to fix multiple problems plaguing at least three planets. “You know, it’s better to understood than be understood,” he advanced regarding the fellow beings who were lab rats in this noble and necessary experiment. “And better to love than be loved,” he put forth, thinking about Athena, who had found her way back home to where she would find someone who would please as well as serve her, so he hoped. And lamented. “But...we have to be who we are,” he continued after getting up on his feet, looking up to the sky with fear and longing. “And be where we are supposed to be.”

“With our own kind?” Dral asked.

“Or the kind of people we have become?” Grim advanced.

“Which,” Promethius said, possessed by the possibility of the moment. “I could arrange something for...all of us,” he proposed. “But---“

“---If you did, you’d have to kill us afterwards?” Grim interjected.

“Which would be fine with us, me anyway,” Dral said, after which he rubbed the hairless crown of his head. “As long as ‘we’ can maybe develop some kind of medication that will grow grass over my busy streets. Something I want and, maybe, sort of need.”

“Needing and wanting, can be the same thing,” Grim said. “And should be. Like work and play. If we’re doing either one the way we should, then they are the same thing. Like...” he continued, feeling a future time and thought coming to him. “Pleasure and pain being the same thing.”

“A quote from Nikos Katzanakis’ last novel,” Promethius thought but didn’t say. “Nikos being....someone who well....one of you will reincarnated into, eventually, after serving so many people who need people as loners. Who plant seeds in children who are ours, and ones who were born to other fathers. Which will germinate.” Instead, Promethius remained silent. He pointed to a light in the sky that only he seemed to notice. A beam came down, laying its point on the other side of a hill. One that, according to what he was told in his training for this Mission, only he could see. He worked his way over the mound of dirt, his deteriorating feet barely able to hold himself up. “I’ve gotta go, and so do you.”

“Where?” Dral asked.

“We’ll find out when we get there, and will meet again,” Promethius said as he hobbled away, with hopeful eyes but ever hurting feet. “Take care of the horses. They’re doing all they can to take care of you. And know the way out of this valley, and, well, this---”



“----How will we recognize you?” Grim asked.

“And can we go where you’re going?” Dral asked.

Promethius stopped, thinking about spilling the beans, then was interrupted by the arrival of a crow perching on a thin tree branch which oscilated to the beat of his pounding heart. “Somewhere less evolved in ways that matter than this place is, could be and will be,” he said. “But if you can, try and figure out something that will make livers grow fast, or make crows prefer to eat anything but that.”

With that, Promethius left his present post, assured that he had done his job. And that his experiment was a success, by the measurements that mattered anyway. In the beginning of a war between ignorance vs intellect, cruelty vs kindness and existence vs Life which had a new set of players who, hopefully, would not fuck it up.