

Chapter One, Zosimos

Story told in the present moment by King Zosimos.

@@@@3

Meanwhile, I join them on the lustrous high gloss polished limestone tiled floor. Take a seat on top of one of a dozen thick, soft, white meditation pillows. Then I snap my fingers to signal the housekeeper to bring me tea.

“Do you want tea, or do you two kids need to sleep?”

“Sleep? Who can sleep? Yes, tea would be boin,” says Habin.

“Tea is good for me,” Terrence agrees.

After giving instructions to the palace housekeeper to bring my guests tea, I tell my two loyal foot soldiers the story.

“Of course, Visákhá, my loving mother, disagreed with me. She told me it was a great honor to be selected to inherit her family neurolink. Her family is number one of the original forty-four that were sent here by the cyborgs. The most important of all those chosen, they are a family of agricultural scientists. And I could not care less about agriculture. It’s about as interesting to me as feeding dead bodies to the cliff birds. Anyway, I told her I wanted Mahá’s neurolink. His legacy of family and science is more valuable to me.

“She was stunned. I could see it on her expressionless face as her eyes betrayed her. She could not respond or move for several breaths. She walked away when she gained control of her emotions, leaving me alone in my bed.”

The tea arrives, and the aroma of camomile and mint fills the room. I watch while Terrence and Habin, like children, heap sweet honey into their mugs. As they stir, the tea sloshes over the brim and drips over, staining the white pillow. The sounds make me want to cut open their throats as they slurp at the still-too-hot-to-drink infusion. Terrence set his cup on the pillow beside him, transferring the tea from the bottom of the mug to further stain the fabric.

I snap my fingers to get a housekeeper's attention, and as I do, I then point to the mess and stains. In less than ten seconds, the housekeeper was handing the two slob napkins, and another housekeeper began treating the stains. They gave metallic trays to my guests for them to set their mugs on. I took several anger-control deep breaths and then continued telling the story.

"Mother kept after me. Every time I was in earshot, she would mention how exciting it was going to be for me to receive her family inheritance. She told me how happy her entire family was to know it would be mine. After two days of trying to avoid her, I went to Mahá and pleaded my case to him. I don't want the fucking thing! I told him."

Now Habin, is reaching for his tea mug, so I say through my gritted teeth and stabbing stare, "If one of you bastards spills another drop on my pillows, I'll feed you to the birds, alive so you can watch as they peck out your eyes."

Awareness is a powerful incantation. It's a spell you cast with a few harsh words that can transform another person's behavior and perception. After casting this verbal spell, I'm confident neither of them will ever spill a drop of anything in my palace again. So, I continue telling them.

"Mahá didn't listen to me. Just like his wife, he tried to persuade me of the great endowment from the, quote quote -- great first family of Ziran. You should have seen his eyes and the expression on his face when I told him I want his neurolink in my body. Besides, I asked him, what do I need with biomechanics as outdated as these eight-hundred-year-old relics?

"The antiques would be an impediment to my already superior mind and strength. Even with this understanding, I wanted to have his neurolink because there might be a chance of something to gain. Especially if I could learn his charisma. People clamor and cling to his every move and word. That's what I want to possess."

"So, how did you figure out what to do?" Habin asks. Neither has touched their tea.

Talking about this makes me feel anxious and stirs up an aggressive emotion. An odd and haunting sensation comes from knowing I'm the first person born on this planet to experience anger. Then I settle back and decide there is a comforting feeling in talking about it. Telling the story is reassuring and cleansing. If anger gives me the upper hand in addition to my superior mind and strength, then I need to learn to embrace this emotion.

I finish drinking my tea, demonstrating how to hold the cup so nothing spills. As I drink, the bitter flavor of leaves and plant stems in the last swallow isn't as satisfying as remembering the taste of anger from my story. After a minute of quiet contemplation, I answer Habin.

"Tathagata told me how to solve the problem. After I explained the history of the population of Ziran and the cyborg's serum. Tathagata told me what I had to do to solve my problem.

"The next day, just after dad left home to head down the mountain. He told me he was going to the orchards. But I knew it was his day to spend with his other wife, Vallena. I was outside, watching and waiting for him to leave. Because I knew soon after he leaves, mom goes to bed. She always takes her requisite periods of sleep while the neutron star cycles through its death-ray-emitting quakes.

"I can remember every conversation she and I ever had from the day I was born."

Before continuing, I move to sit on the pillow opposite them, looking at Terrence and Habin while I wait for Mahá's memory to recall through my neurolink. I look straight through the two of them, feeling like I am almost in a trance state. I continue telling the story.