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PRONUNCIATION

Aris - AIR/iss

Cleito - klee/ATE/o

Daria Caiden - DAR/ee/uh KY/den

Ennael - uh/NEEL

Eumelus - Yoo/mue/les

Kai-Dan - KY/dan

Kalli-Kan - KAL/ee/dan

Kyla - Ky/la

Marik - MAIR/ik

Na-Kai eva Evenor - na/KY ee/va ev/uh/nor

Ni-Cio evaw Azaes - NEE/shee/o ee/va UH/zays

Oia - EE/ya

Oomi - OO/me

Peltor - PEL/tor

Poseidon - PO/sy/den

Rogert - RO/jer

Travlor - TRAV/lor

Ylno - IL/no



I

*As children of Poseidon you are granted the paradise that is Atlantis
In the purity of your actions will it remain thus*

II

*The healing power descends through my lineage
Live that you flourish
Attend not and you will surely weaken*

III

*No matter the form
All life is held sacred*

IV

*Whether in the heavens or the earth
We are bound by the same essence that creates life
Hurt another and you ultimately hurt yourself*

V

*Behold the miracle that is You
Cherish this offering*

VI

*The sacrament of love is inviolate
Written in the heavens before your time
Heart, mind and soul will bring you into awareness of your life mate
Act not until they speak as one*

VII

*Love is manifested within the smallest detail
Living thus will your life be enriched*

VIII

*Let your essence be filled with the joy of life
And spread that joy to those you touch*



CHAPTER

1

Na-Kai eva Evenor entered her darkened chambers. Bent beneath the weight of her despair, she moistened her lips and tried to swallow, but her throat constricted so that she could hardly breathe. She lifted her arm seeking support and felt the cold of time-smoothed granite. Sagging against the wall, she tried to summon the voice command that would regulate the lighting, but her voice caught and nothing came.

A moment passed, she issued a telepathic thought-form and her quarters appeared bathed in subdued colors of gold and green. The lights continued to brighten until she could see her silhouette carved against the granite walls.

Beneath the soft fall of her warming robes, her body felt old. The abject horror of a truth she had never thought to face assaulted her once again. “If a new Healer is not found to take my place, my people will begin the inexorable slide toward extinction.”

Her head pounded. She lifted her hands to massage her temples and noticed that the normal pearlescent glow of her skin had faded to resemble dry parchment. She was alone in this. There was nowhere left to turn, and no one else with whom to share this terrible knowledge. Her arms fell to her sides and she bowed her head. “There is no one else. Not one of them exhibits the least sign of the healing power. Within me was our continuance; without me is our end. Our underwater sanctuary has become our tomb.”

Her hands shook. Her strength was gone. She gathered her robes and stumbled to the couch. She grasped the armrest, but her knees gave way and she slumped to the cushions. The plush seating adjusted, enfolding her form, but she found no comfort. Her thoughts spun. There had to be some way out of the morass, but all that she could envision was the hungry maw of a black void as it opened wide to devour her people.

She had no idea how to save them. Tears trickled over her cheeks and sobs crested in waves. She pulled her robes tighter, seeking warmth, and she sank further into the cushions.

How much time had passed before her shudders finally calmed, she didn't know. All was quiet. The only sound she heard was the ceaseless beat of her own heart. That steady rhythm brought her focus inward, and in the infinitesimal pause between each release, an idea glimmered on the periphery of her consciousness. Na-Kai examined that thought with horrified desperation. She tried to close her mind to such an act. To do this thing would be to go against everything she believed and had known to be true. However, the harder she argued against the idea, the more it dominated her. She lifted her gaze, swiped at her tears and pushed herself up.

She shivered with fear. Glancing at the door, she half expected someone to barge in to put a stop to her madness. She shook her head. Suddenly, flooded with energy, she began to pace. Her thoughts gathered speed, still she tried to banish the idea. Anything, any other idea than this would be acceptable. But the thought burrowed deeper and would not be denied.

Long ago, Poseidon had forbidden Healers to use their thought-forms for anything other than healing. Delving frantically through her memories, she tried to find a time when

anyone had breached this command and it was as she suspected. The law had never been broken. She didn't even know the consequences of transgression. Now, however, she was out of time and she was out of options. There was no other choice.

She stopped and released her robes. Her spine stiffened like iron. Standing in open defiance of that ancient law, Na-Kai eva Evenor, Most Sovereign Healer of Atlantis, lifted her face toward the shrouded heavens. She raised her arms as though to challenge Poseidon himself. "I will not suffer this. It cannot be borne! I will do what I must. Whether you condone or condemn my actions, I do not care. I will enact the last and only rite that might somehow save your children! I will seek a Healer outside of the confines of our home!"

Na-Kai closed her eyes and forced her concentration inward. With the speed of thought, every atom within her consciousness coalesced, creating a powerful telekinetic form of incredible energy. Screaming with the effort, Na-Kai released it outward.

At a terrifying speed, the web of energy rocketed up and out of Atlantis. Through the very layers of rock and water that had become her home, it found its place in space and time and shimmered to a stop on the Greek island of Santorini. She knew that eons or minutes were as one, but for her people, time was of the essence. "We shall see what I have wrought."

Feeling as though her soul had been wrenched apart, she was unable to summon the strength to lift her robes. She reeled toward the couch. Dimly aware of the cushions that softened her fall, she plummeted toward oblivion.



CHAPTER

2

The woman's only been gone for one day." Slumped in his seat, elbows planted on the edge of his vast desk and both fists held against closed eyes, Evan Gaddes knew it was a bad sign to start mumbling out loud. So, rather than wait for a reply, he leaned back in his chair and ran his hands briskly, back and forth, through his sandy blonde hair.

The stiff tickle that brushed against his palms ignited his need for movement, and in a single motion he slammed his hands on the desk and rose to his full six-foot-three inches. His chair sailed backwards in a violent spin, and the noise of its four wheels rat-a-tat-tatting across the rug guard quieted when the chair clamored to an ungainly stop atop the thick pile carpeting.

Evan sideswiped a corner of his desk and paced. He felt the stretch in the backs of his legs and let his frustration carry him the lengthy span of the room. At the other end of his office, he paused long enough to run his gaze over the stunning Boston vista that opened below his top floor aerie. He turned around and thrust his suit jacket backwards. He shoved both hands into the pockets of his pants, hunched his shoulders, lowered his head and trekked back.

He passed the only painting he had purchased specifically for the space and halted. Evan glared at the Van Gogh in a silent demand for inspiration, but the artwork offered nothing, so he dismissed it from his attention.

His pace increased along with his anxiety, and the sumptuous trappings of his office faded from sight. He replayed their last night together.

Daria Caiden had pleaded with him to let the newness of their relationship settle, but he had refused to listen. He didn't think he was in love with her, but she had brought such color into his black-and-white, ordered existence that he had been captivated from their first meeting. He felt that if he could get her to forget reason, forget caution and forget that they had only known each other for three months and just, by God, marry him, he could at least keep her safe. He was wary of the schemes that Traylor kept hatching. Why the man needed to be rid of Daria, Evan had no clue. Traylor had not seen fit to fill him in as to the why of it.

What Evan had failed to realize was that Daria had fended for herself for thirty-two years, and she had developed a self-reliance that bordered on stubbornness. When she had informed him that she was “going away for a while to think,” he thought that his adamant resistance to her departure would make her change her mind, so he had never even bothered to ask where she was going. But now, plagued with worry, he had only himself to blame, because he had absolutely no idea where she had gone. “How is it that everything I've achieved, and the plans I've laid, pale in comparison to you?”

Disgusted, he shook his head to clear the memories and stopped at his desk. He grabbed his cell phone from an inside jacket pocket and depressed the unlock button. The crystal display lit up, and once again, he felt his blood pressure start to redline.

He thrust the cell back into his pocket, loosened his tie, flailed open the top button of his shirt and yanked one end of the tie from beneath his collar. He heaved it across the desk

and watched the beautiful slice of cloth glide gracefully through the air and fall to the floor in an expensive, colorful heap.

He leaned over the desk and punched the button on his speakerphone. He tried to sound composed, but the military bark that wound itself around his words assaulted his secretary's ears just as it did his own. "Has she called yet?"

He anticipated the impatient hesitation before he caught the hurried intake of breath and the sigh that preceded the answer to his question. It wasn't hard to envision the involuntary shake of his secretary's gray head as she struggled to temper her reply. "No, Dr. Gaddes, she still hasn't called. The moment she does, I promise to put her through. I'm sure everything is fine."

Evan grabbed the receiver and banged it back into the cradle. He gripped the edges of his desk as though he could wring a confession of Daria's whereabouts from the inanimate beast. The weight of his bleak life started to press down around him. "Enough, I'm through!"

He scrambled to reach the door and startled his secretary when he burst through to the outer offices. "The only call I want is Daria's. When that happens, put her through to my cell immediately."

Not listening for a reply, Evan waded through the tangle of the rest of his offices and staff. Several employees approached him but he brusquely waved them away. He decided he'd rather not waste the minutes it would take to summon the elevator and he certainly didn't want to get trapped by anybody in an inane conversation. Pushing his athletic abilities into maximum drive, he pounded through a fire exit and raced down thirty-three flights of concrete stairs.

Barely out of breath, Evan reached the parking garage and fumbled for his car keys. He remembered watching Daria hide the spare entry key to her apartment. He stood still, and a flood of certainty pulsed through his veins. Somewhere, inside that apartment, was the clue he needed to find her.



Climbing the stairs to Daria's alcove, Evan was determined to find something that would indicate her destination. Once assured of her safety, he would be able to consider his next step.

The key was exactly where he thought it would be, but as he opened the front door, a feeling of unease settled over him. It was the first time he had ever been in Daria's home when she was not there. To Evan, her absence felt like an unfinished song.

He reached for a nearby lamp and switched on the light. The room was bathed in a soft glow. Although Evan considered the space small, the decor spoke of the artistic nature of its missing occupant. Watercolors by local artists hung on several walls, and her bookshelves bulged with everything from the latest paperbacks to the works of literary heavyweights. Her furniture was overstuffed, rich with texture and shaded in moss greens, deep scarlets, dark blues and golds. Tables of subtle earth tones held different varieties of flowering plants, and jewel-toned candles completed a picture of warmth, relaxation and serenity.

Evan didn't quite know where to start; a cursory glance told him nothing was out of place. Daria wasn't compulsive about neatness, but she had always kept her

surroundings clean and tidy. He remembered an inadvertent remark he had made. "Everything has a place, and every place has a thing." Daria had just laughed, thrown a pillow at him and initiated a wrestling match. The lovemaking that followed had been wondrous, at least for him.

He shook his head at the remembrance and the sudden pain it caused and jerked his thoughts to another tack. Evan crossed the living area and entered the study. He hoped to find something that would reveal her plans.

The room, too, was free of clutter. The antique desk she had been so excited to refinish was in order. No note pads by the phone with hastily scratched flight numbers, no crumpled papers in the trash, nothing. Even the light on the answering machine mocked him with its red, unblinking stare. Patience strung tighter than piano wire, Evan flexed his hands, momentarily overcome with the desire to destroy that mute machine. He turned to search the kitchen before he started tearing the place apart.

The kitchen yielded more of the same until he had no choice but to make his way to the bedroom, a room he had wanted to avoid. Too many memories of their nights together assaulted him as he entered.

Daria had designed a sanctuary that evoked her love of the tropics. She had draped netting in long, loose waves over and around a woven frame and she had piled the bed with pillows of every size and color imaginable. A ceiling fan stirred a gentle breeze, and plants of exotic beauty completed a scene of sensual delight. Evan could still smell the scent of her perfume and thought he would be unable to continue when he spotted an unusual book on her nightstand.

It was a World Atlas. He had not seen it before, and suspected that she had kept it in the bookcase by the living

room window, until now. He crossed the floor, and time shifted into slow motion. He inched the book from the side table and felt the strength leak from his body. Filled with a terrible lethargy, Evan lowered himself onto the bed. A marker hung from the pages, and by imperceptible degrees, his fingers crept over the cover. Foreboding such as he had never known flooded through him as the book fell open to the page she had marked.

Evan bent in half and covered his face with his hands. A groan escaped his lips. He intoned the one word that made his stomach clench.

“Santorini.”