

# The Silicon Angel

An Ihy Saga Short Story

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*This short story, originally written for Folkspaper as part of their #FebruaryContest , takes place in 'The Ihy Saga' universe. For more information, visit the author's website at:*

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# Chapter 1

“Tell me the *good* story.”

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Tyrell gave his little sister an irritated look. It had no impact whatsoever.

“You’re thirteen now. Bit too old for bedtime stories, aren’t ya?”

The raven haired girl shook her head. She explained, “No. Oral tradition is an important part of the folk process. It’s how we perfect our own narrative and better express the paradigms of our times.”

Tyrell’s head started swimming, as it often did when he was speaking to his sister. He scrubbed at his face with calloused fingers as he asked, “Where’d you learn this stuff?”

Hanna offered him the brightest of smiles. “Books. And PBS.”

He murmured, “Stick to those, Hanna. You shouldn’t mess your head up with all my craziness.”

She said, “It’s just for fun though. Right? Come on Ty. *Please!*”

She used **that** tone with him. The ‘big brother is hardly ever around’ tone. The ‘you owe me for covering your ass a dozen times over’ tone.

He relented. He always relented.

“If I tell you again, I can go?”

“Of course, big bro!”

He stared down at her, buried under the covers... already wearing a victory smile. Even with the five year age gap, he knew she was smarter than him. Probably smarter than their mother and father too. He sometimes wished that they were born closer together; she could have been a *real* help in high school.

But mom joined the Army to fund her nursing education. She found out she was pregnant after her enlistment, but before active duty. As was Army policy, they delayed her term of service until Ty was born. So it was just him and Dad in those early years. Which meant planning for Hanna had to wait until Momma was back from her tour of duty. That much, at least, went off like clockwork. Almost nine months to the day after she returned, he was no longer an only child. He was no longer alone.

He felt a little poke to the ribs as his sister brought his mind back to the present. He shook his head and muttered, "Yer gonna be the death of me, girl."

Her eager brown eyes glimmered in the night light's pale azure radiance.

"Back in the real old days, before any of the huge empires or navies, there was Egypt. It had a big river, and that meant life. Everyone wanted a piece of the Nile, cuz that's where stuff grew. That's where the animals could drink. So all the old gods, they turned their eyes there."

Hanna was silent. But Tyrell could tell that she was hanging on his every word. Her hands were balled up into fists, clutching the covers in anticipation of the next bit.

"One of them gods was named Ihy. And Ihy was the god of music."

She blurted, "And sex!"

He frowned and snapped, "Hey, who's telling the story here?"

She just smirked up at him and waited for the next part.

He sighed, then admitted, "But yer right. He had seventy-two kids, so the sex part's clear enough. But the music... that's where he had power. All them other gods, they were distant from the people. They used the mortals. Scared them. Ihy walked among the humans. Played his songs fer 'em. Inspired every tribe and nation. Then, taught his kids to do the same."

He looked away from his sister, fixing his gaze on the bird-shaped night light instead. He fell into a familiar rhythm, and it felt like home. It felt like one of the Max Roach drum solos that he practiced until his fingers bled. Every word was on time; a click of the unforgiving metronome.

"The seventy-two god-sons and god-daughters of Ihy spread from Egypt. All 'cross the African continent. They were great warriors, miracle workers, healers... but also musicians. Musicians, every damn one."

"Like you."

He paused for a second. Hanna's words carried a tone of... accusation? Hope? He decided to ignore her input and just press on.

"When they died, they didn't *stay* dead. Not their ghosts. They spent seven years in Duat. Duat was their Heaven. Or Hell. When they was done there, they came back. To take a new body. But the human they took had to be willing. Willing to share. If they said yes, they became one of the Hosts."

He shifted his gaze back to his sister. Her eyes were filled with wonder. Maybe a bit of fear. She never liked ghost stories, except for this one.

Tyrell murmured, "The Host got blessed by Ihy. They could do the same miracles and tricks as the first seventy-two. But there was a catch, see? They had ta hear the right music playing. So lots of the stuff we can't explain from old books... crazy battles, impossible disasters, that stuff... that was them. The Hosts. But they disappeared a few hundred years after Jesus. Because people stopped believing."

She very nearly stepped on his last words so that she could blurt out, "Until now!"

He hesitated. Then he admitted, "Yeah. Til now. The Church of Ihy came back, bit before I was born. But lots of people hated them. And when the Hosts started poppin' up, folks went nuts. Said they were devils. Hunted them. On The Day of Red Claws, some crazy bitch used her private armies and psycho cults to kill most of 'em. Maybe twenty survived."

Hanna's voice was soft. Scared. "Then the Night of Dragons."

Seeing how this was affecting her, Tyrell moved to stand. "Yeah, that's 'nuff for now."

A small hand flashed out to grab his wrist. It was an anchor, as far as he was concerned.

She said, "No. I'm okay. Tell me."

He slowly resettled his weight on the edge of the bed. After a moment, he said, "You remember it. It was only a couple months back. We dunno what really happened. It was on the East coast somewhere. The earth moved. There were flashes in the sky. Some say the evil people got what came to 'em. But the people of Ihy went mostly quiet. Except..."

Hanna whispered, "The man in the black mask."

"Hey. You don't say none of this foolishness to Mom and Pop. Right?"

"Right."

"Alright. Well. It's said that if yer brave. If you *love* music. The man in the black mask might come visit you. Then... you got a choice. You can help one of the ghosts come back. Or he steals your memory of him comin' around. You just remember a shadow."

Tonight was the night. Hanna had put it all together in her clockwork mind, and she needed to know that she was right. She asked, "He came to you, didn't he?"

**'She knows.'**

Tyrell scowled. Not at his beloved sister, but at the voice in his head. At the god-son who shared his mind and his body: Asar.

He answered the mortal question and the immortal statement with a single question, "If that's true, what of it?"

***'I think we can trust her.'***

Even as Asar was giving his mental blessing, Hanna was going off. "And you said 'yes' didn't you? Jesus, Tyrell."

"Don't blaspheme."

His instinctive rejoinder made the young teen laugh, particularly given her brother's situation. He swatted her with one of the two big stuffed teddy bears that were always present atop her blankets.

She managed to contain herself. Then she whispered, "You can tell me, big bro. I swear I won't blab. I'll even pinky swear."

Asar thought, curiously, ***'If she breaks her oath, we remove her pinky?'***

Tyrell thought, *'No Asar! What the hell, man?!'*

***'I'm just not familiar with the custom. My last Host never performed this ritual.'***

The older brother took a deep breath to calm himself. He knew that he was only Asar's second Host in the modern age, coming after a sixteen hundred year gap. Everyone involved was pretty new to all this.

Aloud, he said, "You'll go to sleep if I tell you?"

She had one condition. "I'll go to sleep if the spirit tells me."

He didn't have to consider it for very long. He loved and trusted Hanna. And he *needed* to share this with someone.

"Pinky swear."

They went through the little ritual, entwining their little fingers and staring into each other's eyes. They swore to keep each other's secrets. As they always had.

"One sec."

Tyrell reached into his pocket, for the wire attached to his phone. He popped the worn white buds into his ears. Blue Bossa started to play. It was drummed by one of his heroes, the late

great Pete La Roca. The jazz standard put him into an immediate trance. His mind and body relaxed. This allowed the god-son inside of him to gently push his will to the front of their shared brainspace.

Asar's eyes glowed like liquid ruby, casting vibrant red shadows on a trembling Hanna. He offered her a kind smile. His voice was ever-so-similar to his Host's, but more smooth. Seasoned, sophisticated... ancient. "Be not afraid, little one. As your brother loves you, I too love you. I am called Asar. May I call you Princess Hanna?"

Her reply was breathless. "I'm not a princess."

He tilted his head off to one side. "Aren't you?"

A shy smile came to her lips.

Sequestered in the back of his own mind, Tyrell heaved a sigh of relief. He thought, *'You're a real charmer, brother.'*

***'She's brave. More brave than either of us at her age.'***

Hanna asked, "How old are you?"

"Our blessing and curse is that our maturity tends to be static, no matter how many lives we've lived. I'm thousands of years old. But I *feel* like a fairly young man. Not much older than Ty."

She snorted quietly. "Ty was born old."

The Host objected in the silence of his own head, *'Hey!'*

The ancient Egyptian spirit murmured, "It is unwise to disagree with a princess, so I will defer to your superior knowledge. Now, this seals our pact, does it not? You will sleep?"

She could hardly breathe, nevermind sleep. "How can I sleep after this?! I have a thousand questions!"

He reached forward with his left hand. His forefinger and thumb rested on her temples, feather-light. "And I will answer them, I swear. But you must sleep tonight, and Tyrell needs to get us to work. Come find us when you wake, and I'll tell you everything I can."

His touch made her eyes droop. She protested halfheartedly, even while she was snuggling into her worn pillows. She was already drifting off when she asked, "What will I dream of?"

Asar considered. He remembered some of the earliest times with his own sisters, and their trek to the great North sea. The god-son murmured, "You should dream of the fastest horses, Hanna. Your golden mare thundering across the warm sands, carrying you to the

royal barge. It awaits you, with your friends and collaborators, the greatest minds of your time. There you shall all sing, and dine, and thank the gods. And when you're ready, all of us will set off towards the rising sun. And I will protect you. Always."

She was asleep before his final whispered word reached her ears.

Asar swallowed hard, then bowed his head. His eyes faded from ruby to brown.

Tyrell found himself thrust back into control of their shared body. He thought, *'Beware of horses.'*

For some reason, that phrase evoked a mental chuckle. ***'Yes, well. As much as I'd like to hear that track, we should get going.'***

He absently stroked his sister's bangs out of her eyes, then pulled her blankets right up over her shoulders. As gently as possible, he slid off the edge of her bed and made his way out into the hallway of their small apartment.

***'She is a treasure.'***

The Host tapped the 'Stop' button on his phone's MP3 player and took out the earbuds. He thought, *'Yeah. Yeah, she is.'*

***'Remember it. Now, let's get some breakfast. The smell of those sausages is driving me mad.'***

## Chapter 2

“You best sit your butt down, Ty. You try to skip breakfast again, Momma’s gonna throw a skillet.”

Tyrell rolled his eyes at his father’s words. Nevertheless, he took a seat in one of the rickety wooden chairs tucked under a little fold out dining table sitting on the living room carpet. He had been known for skipping the first meal of the day... until Asar came along. The god-son *loved* breakfast food. Greasy meat was the spirit’s siren call, and his Host found himself unable to resist either.

Shaundra, already in her nurse’s uniform, eyed her two men as she approached with the final dish. Square sausage patties and buttered toast were waiting for them in the middle of the card table, swiftly joined by fresh corn fritters.

Tyrell started to reach as his mom took her seat, only to receive a little slap on the back on back of the hand. His father held the rubber spatula, waving it around in a vaguely menacing manner.

Laflyn said to his son, pointedly, “Let us pray.”

Heads were bowed. Asar’s chuckle rolled through his Host’s mind.

Shaundra said, “Lord, I’m not sure you’re paying attention. But I’m out there helpin’ the sick. And Pappa’s out there givin’ to Caesar what is Caesar’s. Even Ty’s getting his lazy ass out there, night in and night out. So fer Hanna’s sake, and fer all our sakes... we humans could use a little more help down here.”

There was a chorus of Amen’s all around. Then Laflyn deftly filled all three plates using his spatula, and everybody dug in.

Ty said, “Got about twenty minutes ‘fore I gotta be out the door, Pops. Midnight to eight. You wanted to talk?”

It wasn’t a coincidence that all three of the adults in the Washington clan had night jobs. If one was willing to sacrifice daylight and a little bit of sanity, shift work paid more than the same day job. And, importantly in Tyrell’s case, the need for staff often outweighed a strict experience requirement.

Laflyn swallowed his forkful of crisp fritter. Then he said, “Yeah, boy. Gap year’s gonna be over soon ‘nuff. You need to get schools in line.”



Shaundra added, "And unless Harvard's giving you a full drumming scholarship... keep it real. You know the budget."

Mom's voice still carried the authority of a soldier, even though she'd been out of the military for over a decade. As a nurse manager at one of San Jose's biggest hospitals, her tone of gruff command proved to be a relevant and transferable skill.

Tyrell found himself sitting up straighter, "Yeah Pops, yeah Momma. I, uh... I got a short list somewhere. Some local. Anything distant, I'm only lookin' at a full ride. Um. If it's local, can I stay he-"

He didn't even get to finish. Shaundra said, "Of **course** you can stay. Lord have mercy boy, ya barely take up any room as it is."

Without being asked, he'd given up his room a couple of years back, wanting Hanna to have a space of her own without sharing. The couch was his bedroom these days, and the gaming shelf held most of his worldly possessions.

Laflyn added, "I lived at home 'til I was twenty. There's no shame. Once we get you and yer sister through school, it'll be our turn to help out our folks. Some day, you may help us. Life's a circle, son."

***'It's the wheel of fortune...'***

Tyrell nearly choked as Asar invoked imagery from a popular children's animation. He thought, *'Stop that.'*

The god-son thought, ***'As you wish, little brother.'***

Even while the Host was having his internal mental exchange, the topic of conversation moved on. Shaundra said, "Service director position opened up again."

Laflyn paused in his chewing. He fixed a hopeful gaze on his wife. "Yeah, baby? You in the running this ti-"

She mercifully ended that pipe dream before it could start. "No. Passed over. Third year running. Might need ta find a new facility and try there." Her voice didn't convey a lot of enthusiasm at the prospect.

Tyrell muttered, "Sorry, Momma."

But Dad wasn't going to let them lose hope. He said, "Hey. I'm more'n half done with those online classes. When I get that degree, I'll ask fer a raise. Less than a year now, I figure."

Tyrell let out a loud snort. Immediately, he knew he'd screwed up.

Asar was first. ***'Foolish, Ty. We've been working on self control, and this is the best you can do? You really want to embark on this path?'***

After throwing her fork down into a nearly empty dish, Shaundra berated her son, "Boy, you best get that chip off your shoulder. Your daddy works for th' biggest search engine in the world."

Tyrell tried to restrain himself. And yet, he couldn't help but poke the bear. He flatly noted, "As a janitor."

Laflyn pointed a fork at his son. He shot back, "Sanitational conservator, son."

The young Host held up his hands in surrender. He tried to put his earbuds in to avoid the rest of the conversation, but his mother stopped him.

"Yer in the real world now, Ty. Time to grow up. Not everyone's a superstar, or a basketball player, or a God damned jazz drummer. So you best *thank* your hard workin' papa, who'll be putting your ass through school. 'Less you plan to go it alone on a part-time night watchman's salary."

Mechanically, Tyrell said, "Sorry Pops. Thank you."

But the other voice in his mind asked, ***'So are we ever telling them our REAL plans?'***

*'Well we sure as Hell ain't tellin' them now, big bro. I don't wanna go to work with bruises.'*

***'They wouldn't do that.'***

*'No. But... next week. Okay?'*

The god-son didn't reply. Tyrell couldn't help but think about the disapproval of his parents; their broken hearts when he finally got up enough courage to tell them that he's planning to be a roadie. He'd find a band or a promoter. Then he'd hit the road and try not to look back.

It made sense: His folks could save for Hanna's schooling instead; someone who could **really** make use of an education. But more importantly, as a Host, he couldn't be tied to one place. Not if the vultures kept circling. Not if people started to suspect who he really was. *What* he really was.

Asar thought, ***'Come on, let's finish up. We can discuss a more detailed timeline on the way to work. It's not like there's much else to do on the All Nighter.'***

## Chapter 3

“What ‘bout these guys? ‘*The Scarlet Narwhals*’?”

Asar peered at their smartphone’s dingy little screen, through the eyes of his Host. He thought, ***‘The drummer uses a ‘unique’ combination of bedpans, old garbage cans, and rotting burgundy wine casks to achieve his legendary sound.’***

Tyrell gagged a little bit.

***‘I don’t think that’s the kind of kit that you’re qualified to handle.’***

The pair continued their search. It was six in the morning, the tail end of a fairly dead night at the warehouse. After reviewing the day shift’s reports, doing a few quiet patrols, and cleaning up their workspace, there wasn’t anything left to do other than browse the web.

Asar spotted something, ***‘There, Ty. It looks like ‘The Motivated Cockerels’ need someone to set up and maintain their kit. It seems fairly standard.’***

The young Host groaned. He said aloud, “Country music.”

***‘Everyone needs to start somewhere. Send them the electronic mail. And be nice.’***

Asar’s plan was a good one: Whenever possible, approach the band’s drummer. With luck, they would see a kindred spirit in Tyrell. By schmoozing the percussionists, it was possible that they could do extensive maintenance on the kit, which meant that they would have a good excuse to ‘test’ it from time to time.

Drums were Ty’s passion, and likely the reason that the masked man approached him to become a Host in the first place. He had an uncanny knack for timing, filling even the oddest of tempos with precision. It was one of the reasons he got along so well with his new ‘big brother’. Asar was a stickler for timeliness and accuracy.

After sending off yet another inquiry, he rubbed his tired eyes. He said aloud, “Alright, one more site we gotta check out. It’s called... hang on. Hang on.”

A tiny, blinking yellow light captured his attention. He unhooked the radio from his belt and made a call-in.

“Three-one-three. Darren, you seein’ this? Perimeter warning, way off to the SouthEast?”

After a pregnant pause, a Texas drawl answered his inquiry. “Yeah, that’s affirmative three-one-three. Nothing on the cameras yet?”

“No, sir.”

“Keep an eye out, wouldya partner? The little drone is recharging or I’d put an eye in the sky fer y’all. Might just be some dogs.”

Tyrell made a note in the log book. “Roger. Three-one-three out.”

Host and god-son watched the camera feeds in silence for a while. Then Asar noted, ***‘You know. Being on the road has other benefits too. As much as I like your family, a certain amount of privacy is required in our particular lifestyle.’***

He felt the heat rise to his cheeks and radiate from his ears. The human knew exactly what Asar was talking about. While the children of Ihy distributed his grace through the power of music, they ‘recharged’ by partaking in the god’s other major aspect: Sex. Being on the road also meant access to more ‘free spirits’ as Asar liked to call them.

He thought, *‘Honestly, would that have mattered before I met you? Not like I knew many women. Or guys.’*

***‘I know. Through no fault of your own, little brother. You’ve had more important things on your mind. We will work on your... what do you call it? Your ‘game’. And we’ll have help. Being on the road with a band is quite the aphrodisiac. Until then, we will consult with the appropriate professionals.’***

As upbeat and helpful as the god-son was trying to be, Tyrell was mortified. After several unsuccessful attempts at finding some intimacy, they ended up paying for it. He lost his virginity just last week; in an alley behind a twenty four hour pharmacy, while listening to Miles Davis.

Asar thought, ***‘Yes, well. The music was excellent.’***

The Host sighed softly. He had to admit, the music was excellent. And even under those strange circumstances, sex was better than anything he had ever imagined. If the road would provide better opportunities to take care of Asar’s needs and his own burgeoning desires, so be it.

A blinking orange light pulled the pair out of their musings. Immediately, Tyrell poked at the button that would bring up the right camera. He half expected a big dog, or a family of raccoons sniffing around one of the dumpsters.

Instead, what he saw made his blood run cold.

A terrified man dressed in dirty rags tore past the camera, right to left. His gait was uneven, as if one of his legs wasn’t as healthy as the other. A few seconds later, four relatively well dressed guys piled into the narrow alley. They were disabled in a different way,

semi-drunkenly staggering through the brick passageway that led towards the eastern warehouses.

***'They'll kill him.'***

Asar tried so hard to remain neutral. He wanted to leave the final decision up to his Host. But Tyrell felt him, prowling around in their mind like a caged lion. The Host threw his light tan cap on the countertop. His corporate badge and uniform jacket followed.

He fumbled for his radio. Tyrell already knew their course of action. He knew that he had to lie.

"Yo, Darren, it's three-one-three. Saw a flash past that camera. Prob'ly nothing. Gonna walk out there on my way to break, just in case."

The Texan responded, "Alright, roger three-one-three. Catch you in thirty."

His shaking hand almost failed to secure the little guard shack, solid brass key rattling around and scratching the lock before sliding home. He walked away as casually as possible, knowing that he'd still be on camera for a few seconds.

Asar's memory and precision paid off. He counted down the steps until they would be between cameras. ***'Four. Three. Two...'***

Tyrell slipped his earbuds in. Skin tightened around the rubber, locking the source of his music in place. He reached for the fanny pack that should have contained innocuous things like disinfectant spray and first aid materials. He pulled out and donned a silver balaclava, dirty and blood spattered from their last outing. Matching gloves followed.

***'Ty?'***

***'Yeah bro?'***

***'Beware of horses.'***

The Host nodded grimly. He found the right track and tapped 'Play' on his phone.

Run The Jewels poured into their shared mind. The opening of *'A Report To The Shareholders : Kill Your Masters'* set the tone: A reliable beat that allowed Asar to channel raw speed into his earthly body. That eerie, reverberating cry, cut up and keening like a prayer of pain.. it played up and down Ty's spine, rolling through his grit teeth. His vision blurred, but his awareness was intact as he moved faster than any Olympian ever had.

All the while, the god-son kept them on track. Knowing where every camera was placed meant that they could avoid detection on the way to the scene of the incident. They covered the third of a mile in a little over a minute, leaving only wind and shadow in their wake.

The pair caught up with the invaders... late but not too late. Between two massive metal shipping containers, pinned up against a pile of wooden pallets, the homeless man was curled into a fetal position. He absorbed the kicks of his attackers as best he could, but the pace and the power of the assault was ramping quickly. Legs swung freely, like it was soccer practice.

**“Hey, stop right there!”**

The foursome jumped at the sound of an unknown voice, instinctively guilty. They turned to regard this nameless, faceless hero... or possibly vigilante. The sun was just starting to peek up over the horizon, casting its first rays on the Host's bloody mask.

Tyrell prayed a silent prayer, *‘Come on, run. Give it up. Just run.’*

His prayers went unanswered. One of the men bent and snapped a piece of wood off of a disused pallet. Another found a crooked length of rebar. The four attackers approached as a single grim unit.

Asar's voice was calm inside his pounding head. ***‘Play defense. Puzzle it out.’***

Ty kept his footing and twisted, allowing the first rebar strike to whistle past his covered nose. He hopped back and sucked in his gut. The wooden plank barely missed his ribs. Then he was moving on the off-beats, letting his attackers get in the way of one another. He kicked off the side of one of the shipping containers, hanging in the air for a split second longer than physics would normally allow. The smallest attacker mistimed his tackle, ending up with a mouth full of dirt before the Host landed on his back and rolled deeper into the valley of steel and refuse.

All the while, Asar collected data. He ranked each attacker by speed, competency, inebriation level. He noted areas where their footing would be unsure. He suggested traps, avenues of advance, and escape routes. The god-son gathered power in a tight ball that rested in Ty's belly, ever-building as the pair waited for their moment.

Biding their time wasn't without cost. A stray kick caught Tyrell in the hip, spinning him and slamming his back against the unforgiving metal container. The makeshift club slammed into his masked cheek. He managed to twist away as it happened, but the blow still bloodied his gums and bruised his cheek under the dirty silver cotton. He rolled with the force of the blow, managing to get back to his feet before his attackers could overrun him.

Then, the song shifted. The tempo became militant. Asar let the stored power flow through every fiber of his Host's being. He fed Tyrell the memories of his past Hosts: Deadly hunters, pankration champions, gladiators, royal guards. Their experience was at his fingertips.

The devil wouldn't win today.

Ty moved like greased lightning. He made an example out of the least skilled, most inebriated of his attackers. The man's sloppy front kick was intercepted. The thug's ankle twisted until his toes were pointing in entirely the wrong direction. His horrified scream was cut short as Tyrell's jab caught him flush on the jaw, relieving him of his consciousness.

The rebar-wielding drunk came in from the side, trying to take the Host's head off. But he caught only air. Ty dropped to one knee and launched a brutal uppercut right to the man's groin. He didn't even allow the stunned attacker to finish his fall, headbutting the other man in the ribs as he wrenched the heavy chunk of woven metal from the drunkard's hand.

Makeshift club met hardened steel as the most skilled attacker tried to impose his will. But Tyrell's supernatural strength turned the length of wood into hundreds of tiny shards. The rain of splinters skewered the once-confident attacker. He screamed as he became a human pincushion. With chunks of wood piercing his face, neck, and hands, the man ran off screaming. The last drunk swiftly followed suit, not wanting any part of a fair fight.

He rubbed his aching jaw, fingers coming away wet. The earlier clubbing must have broken the skin or split his lip somewhat. He sighed softly before turning to check on the homeless man.

"Hey, are you alr-"

But Ty cut himself off. The shabbily dressed man was gone.

***'Probably wise. Do you hear that?'***

It was a rhetorical question, of course. Anything Asar could hear, he could hear, though sometimes they were paying attention to different details. The sound of sirens grew by the second.

*'Some good samaritan probably. Musta saw 'em jump the first fence.'*

Asar plotted their escape route as he thought, ***'Let's not stick around and find out.'***

Back at the guard post, the pair had some time to recover. After all, Tyrell was still supposed to be on break. They made use of the green first aid kit stuck to the wall of their tiny office, cleaning up their nicked lip and using some of the cold spray to numb their bruised face.

Only when he could talk with relatively little pain did Tyrell pick up the radio and report in.

"Three-one-three back from break, Darren."

His boss sounded lost. "Howdy three-one-three... what in tarnation's goin' on out there? I just got the drone in the air. The cops are stomping around out by the old containers."

Ty did his best to sound surprised. "Huh. Didn't see nothin' when I walked out that way. Maybe I didn't get deep enough? Thought the sirens were just passin' by."

"No, there's... half a dozen officers poking around."

Somberly, he replied, "You should meet up with 'em, boss. They'll wanna talk to you."

The Texan cursed roundly for a few seconds. It brought a slight smile to Ty's lips.

"Right, right. Three-one-three, finish up what your doing, then you can clock out. I'll see what this bullcrap is all about."

"Okay, boss. Have a good morning."

On the bus ride home, they overheard a news report playing on another commuter's phone. The Silicon Angel had struck again. One of the street cameras caught part of the action at a distance. But mysteriously, the corporate cameras that should have captured more of the action didn't see a thing.

***'Damned viliantes. Ruining this country.'***

Tyrell laughed aloud, then groaned. He thought, *'Please big bro, hold off on the jokes 'til we get home and load up on painkillers.'*

Asar was immediately repentant. ***'Sorry, little brother. We'll listen to some jazz tonight and I'll start the healing process. We'll sleep in. Your job is to come up with a cover story that will explain the bruise.'***



## Chapter 4

“You joined a *what*, now?!”

Ty shushed his mother, only getting away with it because of their proximity to Hanna’s room. He murmured, “Didn’t join Momma. I’m lookin’ at a gym, doing a free trial.”

Shaundra threw her hands up in the air. She hissed, “You gonna start boxing now? What the Hell’s wrong with you?”

“No, no. It’s a normal gym. You know, bikes ‘n weights ‘n stuff. It just also had a boxing ring and... I was curious.”

She levelled a finger at her son’s dinged up face. “Get. Un-curious. Real damned quick, boy.”

He assured her, “Yeah Momma, yeah. Not gonna get in the ring again, don’t you worry.”

She pressed her lips together tightly. Her thumb brushed the perimeter of the bruise, as tender as any mother, but with the clinical curiosity of a nurse. “You sure you’re alright? Teeth, jaw, anything seem out of place?”

“I’m good. Gonna tuck Hanna in. Alright?”

She caressed her son’s cheek. Then she nodded and walked back up the hall towards the kitchen. “Breakfast in fifteen.”

He crept into his sister’s room, dark save for her blue canary night light. He made an effort to avoid sitting too heavily, but aching muscles gave out as he lowered himself. The bed frame made an alarming creaking noise.

“Work out too hard at the gym?” she taunted.

“Shut up.” was his retort.

A stuffed bear rebounded off of his shoulder.

“Hey, you best be nice to me. You broke your promise.”

Tyrell was bewildered. “Huh? What promise?”

“You said I should come find you when I woke up. Your friend was s’posed to answer **all** my questions. Remember?”

He groaned. "Right. Right. And you found us passed out."

She nodded. "Mmm hmmm. Dead to the world."

"I'll make it up to you, sis. We'll hang out this weekend. *All* weekend. Okay?"

"Sure. Though I couldn't help but note..."

"What?"

"The crazy guy they caught near your work? The one filled with splinters? He says that he really smacked his attacker good. Right in the face, with a two-by-four."

Asar thought, '**Smart.**'

Ty heaved a huge sigh. He murmured aloud, "Too smart."

Hanna jumped on the near-admission. "You're the Silicon Angel. Aren't you?"

He hushed her, glancing at the bedroom door to see if there were any shadows lingering outside. Satisfied that his parents weren't eavesdropping, he murmured, "Yes. But you *still* can't tell Mom and Pop. Cool?"

She bit her bottom lip, half looking like she was ready to explode from all of the secrets she was being asked to bottle up.

"You pinky swore."

She sighed in dramatic fashion. "*Fine*. But Asar needs to tell me a bedtime story."

Ty snorted. He didn't bother putting any music on, they weren't about to do anything flashy. Instead he simply bowed his head. His mental presence slipped into the background as the god-son took over.

"Hello, little princess."

Hanna bounced in her bed, energy beyond the point where it could be restrained. Still, her voice was shy as she said, "Hi Asar."

The god-son used Tyrell's lips to smile gently. He asked, "What sort of story would you like to hear?"

"Something about you. Something real."

The ancient spirit considered. Then, a slow nod.

“There was once a beautiful Nubian princess. She had talents that extended past the understanding of mortal man. Truth be told, I never fully understood her either. She knew the exact days that the Nile would flood. She knew the migration of every bird. She knew when the wind would shift, and when the rain would fall.”

Hanna’s breathing was shallow, as if this amazing creature would disappear if she exhaled too hard.

Asar’s voice softened. “She was blessed. And beloved by the people. And one day, she would be Queen.”

Ty started to see visions. Glimpses of the woman who Asar loved, from millennia ago. There was a haze around her, as if time had eroded some of the details.

“One day, a foreign nobleman took a fancy to the princess. He proposed an alliance, bridged by their union. His advances were unwanted, and she tried to let him down gently. But the man’s heart held nothing but rage. He hit her. Everyone was shocked. He raised a hand against her yet again... until I removed it at the wrist with my khopesh.”

Hanna winced.

Asar nodded slowly, “Exactly. Perhaps I was within my rights. After all, I was sworn to protect her. But those in power did not see it that way. Sometimes the *just* thing to do is not the *wise* thing to do. It was a harsh lesson to learn.”

She whispered, “What happened?”

“The only thing that could happen, little sister. The best way to protect my Nubian princess... the **only** way to protect her, was to leave. I made it clear that I acted of my own accord, and I went into a self-imposed exile. That way, were I to become hunted, she would remain safe. If there was blame to be placed, it would fall solidly on my shoulders.”

With his god-son in charge, Tyrell relaxed. He knew that the story was trying to prepare Hanna for his own departure. The Silicon Angel thing was getting too close. He would have to go sooner rather than later. But he would risk sticking around for just a couple more weeks. Because he couldn’t bear to leave his family just yet.

As the bedtime story continued, Ty allowed Asar’s voice to put him into a trance. He embraced this rare moment of inner peace. When the god-son was in charge, he felt safe.

Reality melted away. But that was fine. He trusted his new big brother to give him a nudge when the world needed him again.