

Stories of a God's ascension from mortality

Chapter 1 – James's Childhood

Hidden in the rifts between worlds are memories, imprinted from events of the past. Most people can't see these, most people don't even realise there are multiple worlds. Those that have can't even begin to imagine the large hierarchy that the worlds are a part of. Of course, not everyone belongs to the class “most people”. Some people are exceptional, the truly exceptional can see rifts, read the memory of the past, and travel through them. They take this for granted of course, much the same way “most people” take simple common goods like water for granted.

The world not known by “most people” is a competitive one, and having the ability for someone else to read your entire life is not an ability you welcome them to have. So it is not a small task that I am undertaking, to read you this character's history. You do want to hear it don't you? It is a perfect example of the rise from ordinary to exceptional. It is my hope to inspire you, although I doubt it will work. The person whose rise we are following has a name. His name is not important, as a name does not define who you are, but for simplicity's sake and the avoidance of confusion, his name is James.

It wasn't a particularly special feeling day when James first began to develop some exceptional talents. He was merely eight years old, and his father had rather annoyingly forced him to learn to write with both hands from a very early age. James never saw the point in this, and among other things would point out how unfair it was that he had to do this when none of the other kids in his school did. James was the only child in his family, and his mother had died giving birth to him, so his dad was all he had. James' dad was a flower child of the seventies, he had long grubby hair, liked to experiment with all kinds of drugs, and didn't earn enough money to afford any other luxuries.

As a result of this, James had spent his entire school life in clothes that didn't fit him, or weren't particularly well washed. At the moment he was in some clothes that were slightly too small. The green of the t-shirt he was wearing had a quite noticeable brown stain on it when its previous owner had played in the mud too vigorously, and the holes in the black trousers had grown so large that they were in danger of turning them into shorts.

The only positive benefit he had seen from his dad's ambidextrous training, was his top score in penmanship, the only class he felt he was any good at. He didn't find the other material in the class extremely hard, but he really didn't see the point in doing it and felt very demotivated. However doing penmanship worked so easily for him he didn't even have to bother, he just copied every letter the teacher wrote on the board exactly. It hadn't taken long at all for the teacher to give James his pen license, and let him play games whenever the other children were practicing. However James didn't really like playing most of the games they had in there, especially when there was no-one else to play with, so he just hung around generally annoying the teacher.

It was on this fateful day that the teacher, getting so annoyed at James incessant need for attention, came up with a new task to keep James busy.

“Not right now James! I'm helping Mindy with her writing at the moment. Do you think you're the only child in this class who deserves attention do you?”

“No”, said James, feeling a bit guilty.

“Then please just play games in the corner in peace, the other pupil's would love to be able to do

that.”

“But they're boring, and there's no-one to play with”

His teacher sighed, usually letting the kids play with the games was all you needed to do to get some peace from them, but this obviously wasn't working. “Very well, I'll make some advanced penmanship problems for you to work on, will that work okay?”

James wasn't really sure, but the teacher did it anyway. After some quick work on the computer and searching on the internet, there was a new task sheet for him to work on.

James was good at penmanship, but he wasn't particularly good at reading. There was quite a few large words on this sheet that he had trouble understanding. There was one however, that had something particularly curious on it. Below the word signatures (which James read as “sig nayturees”) were a bunch of scribbles. These seemed to defeat the purpose of writing, where you couldn't even understand what was put down. He didn't treat them any differently though, he had to visualise how the pen would have to move to in his hand to generate the curves on the paper. These definitely took more time to get used to than the simple writing he had already been taught, but by the end of the session he had them all done exactly.

After this incident, that sheet got lost in the mess that was his desk drawer, and the teacher gave up on giving him anymore penmanship work. It was a pity because it was only several years later that he realised what a signature actually was, and what it could do.

At the age of ten, James was still at the same school. Not much had gone on in his life over the last two years. He had grown much taller, and at the moment his replaced second hand clothes were too baggy for him. Baggy clothes were in style at the time though, all the other kids had them too so he didn't look ridiculous at all. His brown hair had grown quite long, and the fringe would often get in the way of the eyes.

“Get yer hair out of yer eyes boy!”, his father would often tell him in a way he uncharacteristically never talked like to anyone else. “You need to let the world see those beautiful eyes you got from yer mother”

James would of course brush it to the side, showing his father a glimpse of his green eyes, but gravity would sweep it back in front of his eyes. It irritated both of them to no end. James' teacher was sympathetic to his family's financial plight, and didn't make a big deal of his hair to James, despite the school's regulations on the subject.

His father was usually working when James finished school. They couldn't afford a babysitter to look after him, so he did extra curricular activities as school every day. On monday it was music, which was alright. He played the guitar, and he found it a lot easier to play the chords than the other kids, the problem was getting used to the orders of the notes you were supposed to play. Tuesday was karate class, which he was hopeless at, just like everyone else there. Wednesday was computer club. This was supposed to be teaching you about the basics of using computers, but James just played games there all the time. This was his favourite time. His favourite games were the role playing games, where you could cast spells and fight monsters. There were no activities on Thursdays, so he would go to the park adjacent to his school and pretend he was one of the avatars in his role playing game. His dad didn't work on Fridays, so he was able to pick him up on time and take him home.

James was quite a recluse as a child, he hadn't made a lot of friends, and was often teased by the other kids for being so poor. He didn't let it get to him, he wasn't particularly smart or good at sport so he just thought they were right. This is how he managed to get to be ten years old before he discovered how unique his dexterity actually was. It was one day in assembly, when the school was giving out some autograph books for an unimportant event. The day was baking, and the kids in the assembly hall were restless to get outside and play in the fresh air. So once they were outside, there was a large crowd of excitement with people signing each other's books in case anyone became famous. Some of the kinder kids asked him for a signature, but he was too ashamed to ask what that was. What he saw them doing cast his mind back to a time he could barely remember, complex patterns that didn't make any sense. This time Tom came up to him. Tom also went to the computer classes on Wednesday, and they both played the same computer game. This meant he was one of the few people James was actually comfortable talking to. So when Tom asked for his signature, he actually took the step to asking what a signature was.

“Um.. What actually is a signature?” he said rather meekly.

“You don't know what a signature is?”

“No-one's ever told me, how was I supposed to know?”

“Er.. I dunno I guess, I just assumed you would have found out somehow. Well its like this see. A signature is like a way you write your own name, but all fancy like so that it doesn't look like normal writing, and nobody can copy it.”

“But if you can see it can't you just copy it?”

Tom giggled at this question, “well you can try. I once tried tracing my dad's signature but it still came out looking all wrong. Its a bit like when you're writing in class, and your handwriting looks different to somebody else's, and you can't copy that.”

“Oh, ok, well how should I do my signature then?”

“Oh, well its kinda just like drawing your name, but really fancy with big curly letters, here give it a try” said Tom, handing him the autograph book. James looked at the six signatures he already had in there, they were very messy looking and quite unrefined. One person had tried to do his signature several times on the paper, and it had come out looking quite different each time. James thought about it for a bit, then with a few quick whirls on the paper drew something on it.

“How's this?” he asked.

“God, thats really fancy, should I do yours now?”

At the end of the day, James had upwards of 20 signatures in his book. By the next day, each signature had been repeated several times, near perfect for most of them. He had even experimented with putting quirks into each different one to make it look like what that person would do if they tried to write it again. The biggest part of this for James though, was that he now knew he could do something that no-one else he knew could. He would keep this as his little secret, how he wasn't useless after all.

It wasn't a long time after that the next step in James' ascension started. He had already been playing around with what he could do with a pen, and found it wasn't just with respect to pens. It was any

task that required complex use of his hands. He now considered himself to be a very gifted hands person. It was on a Tuesday after school, during his least liked extra curricular activity, karate. He was performing poorly as usual, and his mind was so caught up in what else he could try seeing that he could do with his hands. The instructor was being particularly mean to him, he would keep yelling at him until he was paying attention. *I wish I was as good with the rest of my body as I was with my hands, then maybe he'd leave me alone* James thought, and as he had this thought an epiphany struck him. Almost literally, because the idea surprised him so much that he actually fell over in practice, much to his instructor's annoyance. *But I could be, it was that constant training that my dad forced on me that made me so good at hands stuff, perhaps if I constantly train the rest of my body that will be good too.*

Probably the most amazing thing about this, isn't that he had the idea, but that he stuck with it. He related it back to the RPG he played with Tom. This was a very simple RPG, the three main attributes that his character could increase was strength, agility, and intelligence. He decided he was going to be awesome like his character, and get really good at all three of those. He thought of strength simply as the act of being strong, which while useful in its own right, wasn't that great on its own. It was the other two that interested him, agility was like what he did with his hands, but over his whole body. Although he wasn't fully aware of how true it was then, school had always drilled into him how important it was to be smart, and now that he felt he could become smart to, he was very excited.

He first started by spending a lot of time maintaining still poses exactly how he wanted. It didn't work like he wanted at first, but he remained persistent by doing this every recess, lunch and after school. He would get up early in the morning to go for runs before school. These gave him a stitch in the side, and he always showed up at school feeling quite gross and sweaty, but he persisted none the less. During his computer sessions, he stopped playing his RPG game, much to Tom's disappoint, and began searching the internet for ways to get smarter. He found some puzzle type games that ways to improve your cognitive abilities and other things. He wasn't entirely sure what that meant but they kept mentioning increases in intelligence during parts of it, so he started playing them. Tom just thought he was playing some boring games with squares popping up everywhere and stuff like that. Although James didn't get any better at the game in the first week, he noticed improvements in his ability at school, although he tried not to show it too much.

After playing the intelligence games at his school, he found he was finding music class a lot easier. When he first started playing around with the music, he played some notes that he thought sounded interesting and the music teacher immediately stopped what she was doing.

“Why James that sounds beautiful, what is that song?”

“Um.. I was kinda just playing around with an idea in my head,” James said rather embarrassedly

“Oh..” she said, a bit perplexed that her seemingly unmotivated pupil she had always just considered extra luggage, was suddenly making up something so nice on his own. James was careful after that, playing all the tunes that came to him in his head first. After a while he stopped going to music practice entirely. On Mondays he would instead go on to the park adjacent to his skill and continue his agility training. He had started doing multiple things at once in his training. He would form new melodies in his head and imagine going through the guitar chords for playing them, while also attempting to move his body in a way exact to what he wants.

Fast forward four years. James is 14 years old, he is in the second year of high school, and still hasn't had his growth spurts yet. The school uniform had just been changed the year before he went

to the school, so his father actually had to find the money to buy a brand new uniform, which still fit him quite well. He has stuck rigorously to his training, and the girls in the class had taken a liking to him because of it. His body had become very well toned, not excessively, but for a class filled with boys who hadn't reached puberty yet, he easily stood out. His face was somewhat chiseled, and he had a few scars on his cheek from falling over into bad places. One of the things the girls loved was his green eyes, which had become very keen, always aware of everything. While pretty much all of the girls in the class had a crush for him, he was still very asocial towards other people. This meant that although some of the girls had tried flirting with him, they were left with hard stares and almost got a bit afraid.

James now had to work almost equally as hard at keeping his exceptional talents a secret as he did on improving them now. He stopped going to his karate class, pretending he was sick of not being any good, but mostly because he was improving to the point where it was impossible for the instructor not to notice. Instead he continued to go over the motions himself, often looking at videos of black belts on the internet and trying to mimic the other fighter's moves. Tasks like this helped him keep his memory fresh and alert, and he found he knew the answers to everything in class, but just wrote down other things a lot of the time to maintain an average score. His body was now able to follow exactly what his mind wanted to do, although for some of the harder tasks it took him a bit too long to do it. That was what he spent a lot of his time practicing now. He had started taking up some other complicated body oriented arts, such as acrobatic free running. His morning runs are now resembling obstacle courses more than a running track, but he is still maintaining a very fast running time. He has developed several very small movements that can be used discretely when sitting down, or even asleep, to help build up muscle. This was a measure he did to generate effectively no down-time.

He was still finding some problems on the intelligence front. Even though he was still ahead of the rest of his class, comparatively he wasn't nearly as advanced in that area. His limited time on the computers at his school was really affecting how quickly he could progress. What he wanted to do was get his own laptop and internet connection at home. He knew his dad couldn't afford this however, it was a miracle his dad managed to find the money to buy him a guitar. He wanted to get an after school job to work at, to get the money to afford not just the laptop, but the internet connection afterwards as well. So far his attempts at getting a job were really not working well, pretty much everywhere was ignoring him because he was too young.

His life had been like this for a while, applying for jobs, and not getting any. He knew it wasn't impossible to get a job at his age, as several people in his year at school had some after school jobs. There must be something they had that he didn't, so they would get jobs. A few of them had gotten jobs with their family, he ruled that out straight away because that wouldn't help him find a job. The ones who were left didn't seem very exceptional, they weren't great at their courses, nor were they particularly strong or skilled in any way. James struggled with this concept for several days before a new idea came to him. Perhaps there were characteristics other than the ones he'd been working on. Ones that are still important for self improvement. As soon as he thought this, he realised that all of the other employed kids who he had been looking at, were all very friendly people. They generally got on well with anyone, and had a natural charismatic talent.

It was after this that James started to add the ability to socially react and manipulate people as a goal of his training. His time on the computers at school was spent almost entirely on reading psychology web sites. He made an effort to actually engage with other people, and found that a smile would get you a far way. Within a month he had found an after school job.

Chapter 2 – The giant demon in the land of fire

Well well, still here are you? I can't say that story was terribly intriguing. Of course, what he managed to achieve then was only the beginning. I know, how about a story of a battle, something epic to get your blood pumping. Hmmm.. lets see, something early on in his life, I wouldn't want to confuse you too much my dear. Ah yes, this should do fine. Probably his most worthy of conquests in the early stages of his life.

This is quite a bit later in James' life. Other things have happened that I'm not going to go into depth with now, so just play along will you? Don't be that annoying person who always asks me to explain whats going on as I tell you this story, it will all become clear as you read further on. Thats a good thing to, will keep you wanting for more.

James was standing on the edge of a cliff, looking over the thick swamp riddled forest beyond him. The trees' branches wound around each other in tight coils, so “most people” would not have been able to see where they started or ended. James at this point was already beyond being a normal person. He stood confidently on the large drop below him. He was wearing entirely a suit made of a dark leather, which helped disguise him in the night. The arm bands were lined with metal blades, infused with nanites to keep them sharp. At numerous places on his suit, nanite enhanced daggers were sliced into the leather. Strung across his back was a sharp looking long sword. Unseen nanites gleamed across its edge, and rune marks shimmered softly along the flat edge of the blade. James stood a good six feet tall now, his keen eyes glanced down over his hawk like nose, and his hair was cut short for battle.

This world was a lot worse off than James'. The sky was red, just like flesh, with the obscure ripples that look like capillaries and everything. A sign of demons. Far beyond the forest was the fortress village that he had been chased out of when he was last in this world. Even at this distance James could see they were defending against a demon attack. To the right was a large mountain, James could tell there were large caverns inside it, and suspected it was the source of the demons.

Behind James stood thousands of his mechanoids, mechanical robots he had designed for battle. Each carried a nanite enhanced blade, had guns that could shoot through 2 metres of thick lead, and had an advanced energy propulsion for movement. When James jumped off the cliff, they all followed him in the way that no band of lower world people ever could.

Once inside the forest, James was only overseeing and commanding the battle. The computerised contact lenses he was wearing displayed information to his eyes, and broadcast any orders he made to his army of mechanoids. So far nothing needed his immediate attention. The mechanoids were tearing their way through the horde of demons like they were butter. As each demon was cut down, a disturbing wail pierced through the air. Their bodies immediately decomposed into a red stream of ether, which then flew into the sky. For each stream of ether flying into the sky, a small spot of blue would open up in the sky. A useful sign, James thought, but it was definitely happening far too slow.

A loud roar suddenly burst through the night. James reflexively encircled himself in a protective barrier, and it was a good thing he did. All of his robots exploded into pieces, releasing small scale nuclear explosions everywhere. Even the swamp water had caught fire in the aftermath. Remaining calm, James drew his blade. Infusing it with the powers of earth and ice, he used it to jump through the forest above. Towering quite visibly over the night, was the source of the roar, a 60 metre tall demon. The demon made the entire night glow, its muscles were ripped over its red skin, and large purple veins were strung down its sides. Its eyes were pupil-less, and the irises were bright yellow. On its gaunt head were four horns, two pointing sideways out of its chin, one in the center of its three eyes, and one sticking out the back of its head. It had the same two arms, and two legs that

humans do, except with large talon like claws for hands. It had four tails whipping around violently removing chunks from the mountain behind it.

“Get reinforcements lined up and prepared for entry on my command,” James said to his eyepiece, “and bring something along that can put out fires.”

Another of the demon's roars burst through the night, but James was prepared for it this time and had the protective barrier up in advance. The demon felt the resistance in the air this time, and noticing James sitting there calmly, charged at him. At this same moment, James activated the hidden energy thrusters in his suit, and charged as well. In seconds they were within the demon's arm length range. Its arm thrust out like a spear, so fast that if you were to blink you would miss it. But before it was even half way to James, he had started a barrel roll to curve around it. Being adjacent to the arm, he sliced deep into his arm and powered his sword with ice. White shards spurted out of a long wound all the way up his arm, before James released from the arm and went for the face.

And then there was another explosion. James was sent flying back in shock, quite hurt as well. He was merely 20 metres from the ground moving at an alarming rate before the propulsion in his suit kicked into gear and slowed him down into a survivable impact. CRUNCH! James fell to the ground with his legs flailing out in malformed directions. *Crap broken legs, several fractures in each leg. Crap!* It was around this point that James started to feel less calm. He began to regulate the impulses of his nerves and his brain, nulling out any pain his legs were feeling, and turned off his lower thrusters. Next he brandished his sword high into the air, pointing upwards. An arc of lightning flew from the sky into it, and James rode the lightning into the sky. Next wings of fire and wind spiraled out from his back. “*Wisps of Fury*” James muttered, and the wings turned themselves into long tendril like columns of flame, burying themselves into the earth. The earth began to shake, and the tendrils pulled a giant magma golem out of the ground, easily the same size as the demon. The tendrils pulled the golem up tall, until James was sitting on its shoulder, the molten magma burning away at the flesh in his legs.

“Send in mechanoid unit two, equip fully spherical anti force fields, Go!”

“Get me a small rescue unit of five, I've broken both of my legs in several places.”

With a wave of a hand, the golem began to charge after the demon. The red tendrils retreated and turned into wings again, and James flew off back towards the portal between the two worlds. Already he could see his second mechanoid unit shooting out of the portal in small waves. A group of five flew up to him, two carrying a large stretcher for him to rest on. Without a word he sat on it and surveyed the damage to his legs. His right leg had a fracture in the upper Femur bone, as well as two fractures in the Fibula bone. His left leg had two fractures in the Tibia bone, and one in the Fibula. Altogether not a very good result. On top of that, the lava golem he had summoned had cost a lot of energy, and at the time he didn't have enough left to protect himself from the lava it spewed. That meant that the flesh on the underside of both of his legs, all the way up to the buttocks, had been completely singed off, bone was visible underneath it all. Focusing his eyes on the right areas, James realigned all the bones in his body, and began to concentrate on reattaching all of the pieces to each other again.

Over on the battlefield, the lava golem and the demon were trading blows. The demon was missing the horn on its left chin, and although James hadn't worked this out at the time, it was used as a sacrifice for the explosion that propelled him away. To the sides of the fight small blips of light were flying around like flies, shooting holes into the demon, too small to do any serious damage, but large enough to annoy it none the less. Every now and then, a tail would manage to fling out and

hit one of the mechanoids, but overall there were enough of them for this not to matter. The demon's blows seemed to be having more of an effect on the lava golem than the other way around. Each blow the demon made singed the skin on its claws, and each blow the golem made singed the skin where it landed. However, the demon was mostly ignoring these hits, while the golem was slowly starting to lose its heat, becoming more of a rock golem. As hits were struck, the claws started tearing away more than just small amounts of liquid, large chunks of rock were falling off with the blows.

James had now repaired his legs fully, and had already regulated feeling back into his legs. Unspent pain blared through him like a knife, but he ignored it.

“I'm gonna sneak in there underneath the forest and catch it unsurprised. Stay here in case something goes wrong.”

“Squad alpha, use your swords, see if you can take out its eyes.”

By now the golem was pretty much half crumbled apart. James closed his eyes and began to concentrate on the first spell he ever learnt to use, invisibility. A loud explosion sounded on the battlefield yet again, and this time the horn between the demon's eyes was gone. *Oh, so those horns can be sacrificed for the explosions, interesting.*

“Squad bravo, use your swords too, aim for its eyes.”

Fully invisible now, James skulked into the forest. Quickly jumping between branches, he found himself underneath the demon in less than a minute. A survey of the battle through his computerised contact lenses showed that the golems was only just intact. James took a deep breath, mentally preparing himself for the quick succession of moves he was going to have to perform next.

He brandished his sword into the air, facing upwards yet again. Eight different arcs of lightning bolted into the sword, seven of which going through the demon itself. James rode the one arc that wasn't going through the demon, right until he was in front of the demon's face. Its eyes had been gouged out by the bravo squadron, and it was flailing wildly at the nearly dead rock golem before it. James pulsed wind energy into his arm, and ice into the sword, and began to attack rapidly. The following flurry of attacks was faster than “most people” would ever be able to see. In fact, what they would have seen, was a pile of thin ice flakes suddenly start to spurt out of the place where the demon's head was. The demon disintegrated with the loudest wail of them all, it was so loud that it pierced through dimensions to the world where James had come from. The stream of red ether looked like an eruption from a volcano itself, and when it was over, a mere 10% of the sky remained a flesh like red.

“Alright Unit two, that was the big one, all the demon's left should be well within your abilities, move out!”

The snow from the ice attack was still falling, over the forest and beyond. It wasn't strong enough to put out the fires that were still raging below. James cast an eye over the shambles that remained of his lava golem.

“You did me well, you fought with valour against a stronger enemy, sacrificing your own body to defeat him, now I shall renew your strength, and split you into many smaller golems, to help rebuild this forest we have destroyed.”

He made sure to amplify his voice to loud proportions, there was no way the people in the fortress

to the north hadn't seen parts of this battle, and an impressive speech would help him win them over. The golem suddenly stood tall, with renewed vigor, and smaller golems started appearing out of his skin and walking off, until he was just a small golem himself. The hundred golems left over began to work on putting out the fires, piling dirt over the top of them to suffocate the oxygen required to keep them going.

“Send out the fire fighters”

Many large mechanoids flew into view, and started spraying water over the forest. The fire was starting to get under control, and with each passing minute the amount of red in the sky shrunk to less and less. James flew over to the fortress city to begin his victory speech.

“People of this world, I am here to request your unconditional surrender to our benevolent rule. As you have seen, the sky above you becomes less red by the minute, as our mechanoid army eradicates the last of the demon infestation of this land. This was an act that we did for free, as part of our benevolence for you. I would advise against you standing against an army that destroyed the demons that you never could. If you choose to follow our government, you will receive the following benefits:..”

Now I'm not going to bore you with all the details of his rule, its unimportant for the moment, and will like bore you to tears. Needless to say, they surrendered themselves to his government, and lived very prosperously as a result of it. So was that a more interesting story? Hmm.. I guess silence means assent, good. Well too bad, now we're back to his original rise, none of that gory action stuff, but this will help answer any questions you may have had from the previous story.

Chapter 3 – The chosen one

This story is about James' first encounter with another exceptional individual. James was quite lucky in meeting another one so young, well you could say maybe lucky, because there is a great risk involved in such a task. This is probably where things start to get interesting, so stay on board.

At this point in the story, James has just turned 18 years old. His social progression had made very good progress. He was the most popular kid at school, although he took care not to become too close to any of the other students. Once he had saved up enough for his laptop, and the first few months of internet service, he quit his after school job. He was able to learn some programming and design skills very quickly that helped him make small amounts of money as a pseudonymed freelancer. James had perfect control over everyone all of the students in his year. He had formed couples, made enemies, and started cliques. The greatest part was that nobody even knew it was him, and he could completely change it all around within a week.

One time, James had accidentally driven one of the kids in his year to suicide. It was after his first ever night of drinking, and not being totally in control of his loss of inhibitions, he started to engineer some quite nasty situations. When he woke up the next day, he had a splitting headache, and was in some girl's bed. He tried to recall exactly what had happened the night before. *Oh shit* he thought as he immediately evaluated the consequences of his actions. The night before he had engineered a situation which would end with Fred killing himself. He didn't want that guilt in his hands. He immediately got up, got dressed, and raced out of the house.

James was able to quite quickly evaluate a person's personality, and use this to easily predict the types of actions they would take. He knew that Fred would hang himself, but he wouldn't get around to it until probably about midday, due to being unable to decide what to put in a suicide note. James' internal body clock told him it was quarter past eleven, giving him approximately 45 minutes. He knew the perfect person to help fix this situation, and already had a strategy in mind to get this to work. He would need to get Richard to basically go and stop Fred's suicide attempt, and reaffirm his belief in living. Richard had himself gone through many times in depression, and his ability to get through it definitely meant he would try to help Fred. They would probably become best friend's after this as well, but that was alright with James. James went to a cell-phone shop, and immediately bought a prepaid cellphone. He then sent a text message to Richard, basically telling him to go to the building where Fred was going to try and kill himself, but worded in a way that Richard wouldn't ignore. The next step was to sneak into the abandoned warehouse where Fred was going to do the deed, and remain in the shadows as a back-up, in the case that Richard doesn't make it in time.

Fortunately Richard did manage to make it in time, crisis avoided. After this problem, James started making it part of his routine to practice his abilities under conditions where they would be impaired, such as drinking alcohol, with his eyes closed, or other things.

This was James' last year in high school, and his school didn't require a uniform for last year students. James wore a very basic attire of Jeans and a t-shirt. After school, he would often go out into town. Every time he did this, he managed to get himself invited to parties with people he didn't know. He would make it a challenge to be able to control all of their actions within the night. Usually this was a complete success, with people eventually doing exactly what he planned for them to do. This night was different. It was a fancy dress party, and he was in a suit. Most of the people in the room had easy to diagnose personalities, but there was one person whose personality would subtly change with every person he talked to. He was getting on well with everyone, and was steering the ways they were all thinking.

The party had gone on for a few hours. James had made some attempts to change the other party goers in certain directions, but he always seemed to get undone by the other man. They all seemed to be uninterested in James. He could maintain a small group of people around him but after that they all scattered in ways he wasn't planning. After the strange guest had made his rounds, he came to talk to James. James was leaning his back on the balcony, enjoying the night air. When the stranger was up to James, he had dropped the wide smile he was giving everyone and looked dead serious.

“Can I help you?” James said, trying to act unannoyed.

“You are an abomination. You have to go.” The stranger's voice was monotonic.

He reached into the insides of his jacket, and pulled out some throwing knives. He was then throwing these knives directly at James. After eight knives were thrown, he pulled out two pistols and shot them at James. Six shots were fired from each gun, until they were both out of ammo. James was surprised by this. The two throwing knives in each of his hands were heavily dented from blocking the bullets. He dropped these and picked up another two knives that he had scattered onto the ground. With a sharp knife in each hand, he back-flipped off of the balcony.

This was the largest jump he'd ever done before, everything else had been two stories at most, usually one. This fancy dress party was on the top floor of a twenty story building. Time seemed to be moving slow for James, he opened his jacket outwards like a mini parachute, and directed his way to the edge of the building. He tried to stab one of the knives into the wall of the building to slow him down, but the speed of the impact flung it out of his hand. It was then caught by the stranger, who had jumped off the building after him. *Son of a.. who the hell is this guy?* James thought to himself, suddenly some other thoughts intruded into his head. *I am the chosen one, and you are the one most likely to cause me trouble.* The strange man's guns were now reloaded. He at James again, who only had one throwing knife to block with. As a result he could only block one of the guns, and took a bullet in his lower abdomen. *Chosen one, what the hell are you on about?* He then took one in his left foot. *I was prophecised by the mages of the crystal kingdom. They chose me as the one most likely to achieve greatness, by leading their world into the future..* Another bullet in his right leg. *Mages? Like magic? And the crystal kingdom? Stop making stuff up. Magic isn't real.* James was blocking the bullets that were in the important places, and the strange man realised this. One gun was aimed at James' head, the other at his heart. *Then how do you suppose that I'm talking to you through your mind.* James could see his opponent grinning wryly. He pulled a twisting manoeuvre. The bullet that was for his head got blocked by the remaining dagger, and the other one went into his left arm.

At this point they were mere metres from the ground. The strange man stopped in mid-air, floating with the aid of nothing. James saw this just before he fell to the ground as a crumpled mess. Satisfied the strange man flew away.

The doctor's proclaimed James' recovery miraculous. As a victim of four gun shots and a four story building, they said he was lucky to be in such incredible physical health. Even so, the doctor's worked very hard to fix his body. James couldn't see much, as his lower body was entirely in a cast. The doctor's said he had broken his both of his legs in several places. The entire rest of his body was bandaged up after all of the gun shot wounds. He looked like a mummy.

At this point James had been recovering for several days. One of the nurses came into the room with a man in his mid forties. He had a large bushy moustache, which was started to gray from its natural blond colour. His skin was leathery and wrinkled. To James though, the most important part

of his appearance was his uniform. The uniform of a police officer.

“James,” said the nurse warmly, “We have someone here from the police, he's been assigned to look into your case. Are you up for speaking with him?”

“Go ahead” James said, although it didn't matter much, the police man had already begun setting up a tape recorder for their conversation before checking for permission. The acceptance was implied.

“Hello James. My name is inspector Karl.” He held out his hand to shake him, and then realised the stupidity of that. “Whoops.. I guess you can't shake that then.” He grinned widely to try and relieve the tension. “Okay, I've talked to all the other people at the party you were at that night. I'm going to tell you everything that I've learnt so far, and you can let me know of any extra information I might need, does that sound okay? Alright then. They say that both you and the unknown assailant were people they'd never met before the party. You were both being friendly to most people, but when you both met on the balcony, he shot you. Everyone said they heard six gunshots, but after this there's a debate. Some people say you fell off the balcony, and others say you jumped off the building. The falling off seems more likely to me, but the people who said you jumped off were pretty adamant about it. Haha, alright next they say this unknown assailant jumped off the balcony after you. They couldn't see what happened next but they heard four more gun shots. You were found in a bloody mess on the street, only four gun shot wounds, even though there were a total of ten bullets fired. Not a single trace of the assailant anywhere. No witnesses saw you land. Alright is there anything you would like to add?”

“Um..” James had to think about this for a bit. There were definitely many things he'd could add, such as: the “*chosen one*” throwing knives at him; that he did back-flip off of the building; that the assailant was using two guns, so that meant there was twenty bullets fired. He could add that he blocked the assailants shots with the knives that he caught himself; or that the assailant flew away afterwards. Of course, if he did that they'd think he was on insane. So instead he made a different story. “Yeah I just said hello to him, and he told me that I had to die. I don't know what was up with that, but he pulled out a gun and fired at me. I tried dodging his shots a bit, but its harder than it looks, so he got me four times our of six. The impact of the bullets made me fall off the balcony. I heard a few gun shots after that, but I was starting to fade out of consciousness as I fell so I couldn't tell. To be honest I'm surprised to still be alive.”

“Hmm.. Okay,” said the inspector. “So you did fall off the the balcony, not jump, as I suspected. Now none of the people we've interviewed could give me any information on what the assailant looked like. They all claimed it was foggy, and he just looked like a blur in their heads. Is there anything you can tell us about him for us to go on?”

“Well, he had a light coloured skin. If I had to guess I'd say a quarter Asian and three quarters Caucasian. He was of an average height, about five feet ten. His hair was black, short and spiked with gel. His eyes were brown. I could probably draw you a picture of him once my arms heal.”

“Yeah that'd be great if you could, although most pictures that victims don't end up looking anything like the real thing, so I won't hold out for it. So you don't know whether this person jumped off the edge after you or not? Because there's no trace of him doing so, apart from all the people there saying he did.”

“Yeah, I heard some gun shots, but lost consciousness before I hit the ground. I really can't say whether he did, although it seems unlikely, since you said there wasn't any trace of him where I landed. That's not something you can do if you've just jumped off a building.”

“Yeah exactly. Okay. Thanks for your help James, the information you've given me has been very

helpful. I only have one more question. Is there any motive for this person to attack you.”

“None that I can think of at all. Like I told you, I just said hello to him, and he told me I had to die. He seemed to get on very well with everyone at the party though, so maybe they were covering for him.” That last statement was a lie, but James was trying to retain his appearance to the world here. He didn't want anything of his true abilities to be let out. “Like, he could have just shot down into the darkness a few times, and then ran away, with the guests all agreeing on a story to cover him.”

“Hrmm, that is a likely prospect. Okay, thanks again for your time. I'll see you later James. Hopefully next time we'll have this guy behind bars.” With that last comment he gave a hearty chuckle before leaving the room.

The conversation they had had left James with a lot to think about. Who was the unknown assailant? What is the crystal kingdom? How did he talk in James' mind? Or fly away? He definitely had the time to think about these questions and more. His body was probably going to be out of commission for several weeks with these injuries.

It was early morning when Inspector Karl left the hospital James was staying at. It only took him twenty minutes to drive back to the police station.

“Hey Glenn! I got that cassette interview from the incident outside the Barlow building.”

“Oh yep.” Glenn said, stalling for a few seconds as he remembered which incident that actually was. “Was there anything useful on there?”

“Yeah, some big stuff. A lot of it should completely turn this case around, well only if its true though. I'm a bit suspicious about some of this stuff he said though. Here take a take a listen.”

Karl passed the recording over to Glenn, who went and listened to the whole thing.

“Well. What do you think?” asked Karl. “Does anything strike out to you as odd?”

“Nothing extremely so, this is some pretty big stuff though. I guess it is a bit weird that he didn't know any motive, but we've dealt with cases like that before, you know how it is.”

“What about his excuse about the killer being friends with the party people? As though they had worked out a story?”

“Yeah, well it did actually sound a bit like they had worked out a story. Not that that necessarily means they did, but its plausible.”

“You would think though, that if they had organised a story, they would have remained consistent. But there was a large discrepancy between whether he fell off the balcony or jumped off. If they had organised a story, then it would have been consistent. There is something wrong with this. I'm sure he's lying to us about what he knows. I can feel it.

“Calm down man. I think you're looking too deeply into this. Remember, we are not allowed to 'feel' it. We have to remain objective in everything we do. The guy was probably just hypothesizing about what could be done. “Never attribute to malice that which can be easily explained by stupidity”.”

Karl sighed, this was gonna be a hard case.

The castle of the crystal kingdom was not made out of crystals. This is not what you would expect, but its how it was. The entire building was made out of metal, and it just looked like a large metallic dome from the outside. There were several holes scattered around the outside of it, leaving and entering, or even just for a view. Scattered around the dome-like castle, were the houses of the peasantry. Our unknown assailant could see them tending to their fields as he flew past to the dome.

Now at this point, it becomes difficult to tell the story without knowing this assailant's name. Although like James, his name is not important. Having you know it very much helps with telling the story. So yeah, his name is Rayid.

The reason this land was called the crystal kingdom, was not because it was made out of crystals. But rather because of one large crystal, situated in the center of the dome-like castle. This was a great source of magical power. Its storage abilities were said to be limitless, and it would resonate any unused power to increase the energy it was currently storing. The crystal kingdom had strict usage guidelines for the crystal. To use a quantified unit of energy from the crystal, at least two units of energy must have been generated first. This allowed for it to add the extra unit to itself, and would thus grow faster and more in the future.

All of the inhabitants of the crystal kingdom were heavy users of magic. Their kingdom was moderately prosperous, but they were still no match for many of the other kingdoms in terms of raw man power. It was their largest fear that one day one of these kingdoms would invade. For weeks non-stop, a group of mages reached out into the rifts between the worlds, and worked out the probabilities of how to expand their kingdom's strength. One thing they found, was a young boy. A child of one of the peasants. It was uncommon for a peasant's child to ever shown any magical aptitude, but this boy was different. He would lead their kingdom into prosperity it had never experienced before. This boy was Rayid. The mages took Rayid in as one of their own, and gave him the training a peasant would never have otherwise gotten.

Rayid flew into one of the entry holes and landed gracefully. There was nobody to see him enter, which was just the way he liked it. He moved silently towards his room to retire for sleep.

A cough sounded through the hallway. Not an innocent cough. The kind of cough that you do to attract someone's attention.

“Rayid! Come! I've been meaning to speak to you.”

It was Elder Lumni, the ruler of the crystal kingdom. His tone was imperative. The kind of voice from someone who is used to giving orders.

“er.. what about?” asked Rayid, but the elder didn't respond. He knew he didn't have to answer that, so Rayid just followed him into his office.

The office was a dull looking place. It had the same metal coloured walls that the outside dome had. Elder Lumni had done nothing to personalise the room. There was a metal desk in the room, with several large books placed carelessly around on it. There were two metal chairs. Elder Lumni sat on the one behind the desk.

“Have a seat Rayid. Would you like a cup of tea?”

“No thanks,” said Rayid, sitting himself on the chair. It wasn't particularly comfortable, but he was

used to that after living in this castle for so long.

“Ok then. I'm not going to beat around the bush Rayid. I've been monitoring your activities recently. I see you've been reading the probabilities a lot recently, and have even taken a few out of world trips. I want to know exactly what you've been doing, so if necessary, I can put a stop to it.”

This wasn't a welcome jolt to Rayid, but he was hopeful the elder would understand.

“Well.. You know how I'm supposed to be the next leader of the crystal kingdom. The chosen one to lead us into the future.” The elder nodded, a silent motion to continue. “Well you always told me from the start that it wasn't a hundred percent certain. So I decided to check what could stop me from being your ruler.” Elder Lumni's mouth had turned into a frown at this point, but Rayid continued anyway. “Anyway, most of the stuff was fairly unlikely, or too small-fry to worry about. But there was one thing, a person in fact, whose existence was a threat to my rulership.”

“Well? What did you do then?” The elder seemed quite tense.

“I made sure that he wasn't around to bother me anymore.”

“You did what!?” The elder snapped. “This is serious Rayid. I think you'd better show me exactly what happened.”

Rayid sighed, he always hated having to share his mind with others. Elder Lumni touched his finger on to Rayid's forehead. Rayid could feel the thoughts in his mind twisting around, being tossed carelessly. Suddenly out of the twirling chaos, the scene with James arrived. After it flashed by in mere seconds, Elder Lumni released his hold of Rayid's mind. Rayid fell off his chair, and then threw up.

“Ugh.. I hate doing that”

“Quiet Rayid! I don't think you understand how serious this situation is.”

“I was just looking out for the future of the kingdom.”

“Fool! You were looking out for the future of yourself! It is unlikely, but you better pray like hell that he survived that fall.”

“Heh unlikely, don't you mean impossible?” Rayid's words were lost, as Elder Lumni had already entered a meditative trance. “Er.. Elder?”

The elder opened his eyes. “You're one lucky man, Rayid. The man you attacked is alive.”

“What!? No way.”

“Yes way, and you're going to go back to his world and heal him back to full health.”

“But..-”

“No buts Rayid. Your probabilities were right, but not in the way you thought. It is actually this act you just made that brought him into your world. And if you don't heal him, you won't become our leader because you'll be expelled. Do I make myself clear?”

Rayid sighed yet again. “Yes Elder Lumni.”

“Good, I can only hope that you actually know healing spells, your training has indicated nothing of it.”

The doctor's were claiming James' rehabilitation speed to be a miracle as well. The strain his body was used to taking seemed to have made it regenerate at an improved rate. His upper body was usable within a week, and he was already moving around carefully on crutches. When James was seated, he had been practicing movements of his upper body. One thing he had recently found curious was whether he could keep his arm perfectly still. He was having trouble with it at first, because he could still feel very very small vibrations going on within his arm. Currently though, he was getting to a good point with it, and noticed a very strange phenomenon. His skin and flesh was starting to become translucent, and all the blood in his capillaries, veins and arteries were visible underneath it.

“Thats a very intriguing start of an invisibility spell”

James looked up, and Rayid was standing in front of his bed.

“Relax, I'm not here to hurt you. In fact my master said I made a mistake, and I have to come here to heal you.” He sighed, and then flex his arms forward, palms facing James.

James felt the last of the gun-shot wounds on his upper body disappear. He couldn't fully feel what happened to his legs straight away, but then the casts burst open, and he could move them again.

“Ju-just who are you?” James stammered.

Rayid sighed. “I thought I had gone over this already. I am *the chosen one*.”

“Er.. yeah.. Do you have a name?”

“It is impolite to ask for a name without offering your own first.”

“Well if we're talking about impolite things. I think throwing knives at a person, then shooting them transcends impolite.”

Rayid sighed. “Fine, my name is Rayid. I have come here to atone for those actions I made. Your injuries are healed, now just let me remove any memories of the incident from other people and we'll call it a day huh?”

James peered at Rayid. “Not so fast, Rayid! Do you really think merely healing me makes up for what you did. I very nearly died back there. I was thinking, perhaps you could also teach me how to use magic like you do.”

“Ha! That will be the day. My healing you is gracious compared to what *I* was going to do.” The way he emphasised the *I* was unsettling to James. “There's no way I'd let you be in a position to be of that much danger to me, thats why I attacked you in the first place. No, I have healed you now, so I will be leaving.” He paused for a second. “I will tell you one thing though. What you were doing with your arm there was a good start. If you can expand into some of the extra feelings you had when doing that, you should be able to start learning magic on your own.”

And with that, he left. There was not a trace of James' hospitalisation left in the room. He was sitting on an already made bed. The plaster from the shattered cast had disappeared, and the room itself was generally very empty.

A nurse walked past the door, stopped, and looked to see James sitting on the bed. This was the same nurse who had been tending to James during his week-long stay.

“Um.. excuse me.” She said quite politely. “This room doesn't have any patients in it. Could I help you find whoever you're looking for?”

“Uh.. no, sorry. But thanks for the offer.” James gave her a warm smile to help remove any suspicion she might be feeling, and walked out of the hospital.

Elder Lumni was just casually reading another book he needed when Rayid knocked on his office door.

“Enter!”

“Ah. Rayid it is you. Tell me, were you able to heal the man you attacked?”

“Yes Elder Lumni. I also took the precaution to hide the memories away from the people who knew about this incident.”

Elder Lumni nodded approvingly. “I am glad that you were able to do it. From your exam results, I was unsure whether you even knew how to do such tasks.”

“With all due respect sir, I beat every single opponent I was examined against.”

“Yes, but you did it without showcasing how much you have progressed. The enchantment you're applying to that wooden sword is excellently done, but its a very simple enchantment. The same goes for the speed boost you give yourself. If you can not showcase your abilities to the others, they will be reluctant in accepting you as a worthy leader.”

“Sir, then perhaps it would be better to find an opponent who can actually make me have to use the skills at my disposal?”

“Your arrogance will be the end of you Rayid. Or at least much more so than any foreign man ever could be.” Elder Lumni thought it over for a few seconds. “Very well. If you're up for it, we will have you fight against one of our senior students. How does that sound?”

“Like music to my ears. When and where?”

“It will take time to organise someone to fight you. How about in a week next Monday, two pm on the senior field outside the castle?”

“Thats fine by me. I'll see you then.”

It was a fine and sunny day that Monday. A large crowd had come to watch the fight between Rayid and whichever senior student he was pitted against. Rayid was the underdog in this match, and all

of the younger students were rallying behind him. The senior student chosen to fight him was named Torlo. He was a tall lanky boy with a fiery red hair. This suited him, as he was the most skilled fire magician the crystal kingdom had seen since Professor Neebu. It was said that his fire could turn flesh into bone in as little as two seconds. Rayid couldn't help get the feeling that Elder Lumni only agreed to this match to teach him a lesson in humility.

The senior field had long lost any grass from the high intensity battles that were used as assessment. And today would be no different. There was a magical square drawn on the ground, easily large enough for the two students to move around easily. This acted as a shield between the two users, ensuring that any of their attacks would not spill out on the audience. On two opposing corners of the square, a professor sat. Their role was to act as interventionists, constantly maintaining the spell that would rescue any student about to suffer a fatal attack.

The tension was starting to unnerve Rayid, who usually remained calm, completely confident of his abilities. Apart from his clothes, the only thing Rayid was bringing into this fight was a long wooden sword, mostly blunt. Torlo on the other hand, had quite an assortment of pre-enchanted items. Such as a deck of cards that stored additional energy, or a belt that could create a shield barrier.

“Gentleman, Ladies, I welcome you to this battle here today.” Elder Lumni's voice was being amplified by magic, and everyone had stopped what they were doing to listen to him. “Today, we are bending the rules slightly, to allow a tenth year student the chance to fight one of our fourteenth year senior students. As expected this has drawn quite a large crowd.” His chuckles to this remark resonated throughout the crowd. “So without further ado, I present to you the battle of Rayid vs. Torlo. Battlers, enter the battle-square.”

Rayid walked in via the corner closest to him. Torlo did the same.

“And let the match begin.” A roar erupted from the spectators.

Torlo wasted no time putting the pressure onto Rayid. He flung small balls of fire off the ends of his finger tips, right to where Rayid had entered. The fireballs were deceptively small, but Rayid could feel how much of a punch they packed. As an act of showmanship, he waited until a few split second before they were going to hit him, before jumping sideways with incredible speed.

The area where he had just left exploded. The result was much larger than even Rayid had expected. Large pieces of ground went in all directions, and Rayid had to use his best dodging skills to avoid being hit by them. He had also hoped to use the distraction by his late as possible avoidance to surprise his opponent. But Trolo had already filled his hands to the brim with large wisps of fire. *Dear god, if those small fireballs did that, what will this do.* Trolo punched his left arm towards Rayid, palm open. A wave of fire erupted. A good metre and a half above the ground. The emanating heat was already causing it to heat up into lava. Rayid was already on the other side of the square at this point, and he could feel the heat cracking his skin. With his other hand, Trolo did a similar motion as the other towards Rayid. A wave of fire erupted again.

This fight was going to actually force Rayid to use magic other than what he normally did, to his disappointment. He liked fueling the myth that he was a one-trick pony, but the whole point was moot if he refused to unexpectedly show another trick. Determined to keep it as a minimum. He held out his left hand, two main fingers out, and began fueling his body with the protective quality of ice. The two fingers started to glow a light blue. This was the time to start his own offensive. He added the sharp power of wind to his blade, turning it from a blunt piece of wood, into a sharp weapon.

What he needed to do now was find a path to Torlo that would minimise the heat he took from the waves of fire. He first went to a position that was equally as far away from each wave of fire. But as the first wave died out, he went down that to avoid the most heat. Torlo had already begun casting another spell, so he would have to be fast in reaching him. Rayid thrust forward. Torlo's spell erupted a wall of fire around him in a ring. This happened at precisely the same time that Rayid's sword reached him. He heard a loud "Argh" through the wall of fire. And a large burst of energy blasted outwards knocking him over, and dispelling the wall of fire. Rayid's sword had been incinerated in the blaze. All that remained was the handle.

"Urgh.. you hit me! I'll make you pay for that you bastard!" Torlo went into a frenzy. Balls of fire were being thrown all over the battlefield haphazardly. It was all Rayid could do to dodge them and cool himself off against their barrage. "I'll kill you! I'll fucking kill you!" The heat had caused the entire battlefield to turn into lava, and extra professors had been called to make sure it didn't leak outside of the battlefield. Rayid had to put ice magic into his feet to walk on it. This meant he had less for wind magic, which would result in him moving slower. This wasn't a particularly good situation to be in. On top of that, he had lost his sword, his primary means of damage. He was going to have to show another of his abilities to even be able to do some damage, let alone survive.

"Why.. won't.. you.. die.." Torlo was puffing strongly from the attacks. He was levitating in the air to avoid the lava, but was obviously having trouble with it. With a pained cough, he lost control and fell into the lava.

They were both then pulled to the corners outside of the battle-square. There was a large pause of bewilderment from everybody there.

"Uh.. Rayid wins!" Elder Lumni said, finally realising he was supposed to speak.

Nobody erupted into cheer, they were all disappointed at how anti-climatic the fight was. A few people congratulated him on winning, but they all felt a bit cheated.

"Rayid!" It was Elder Lumni. "I'm disappointed in you. I organised this fight especially so you could show case your abilities, and you went through the whole thing only showing one new spell. Is this really the limit of your spell casting?"

Rayid grinned wildly. "Perhaps you just need to send someone stronger"

Elder Lumni mostly ignored this remark, walking away and muttering under his breath.

It was three years later, and Inspector Karl had been recently promoted to a nicer office. As a result of this he was packing up all of his stuff, and looking at some of things that had accumulated as part of his mess.