

Tav wasn't expecting it, when the sight first came. In fact, at first he thought little of the strange, slight figure peeking out from behind one of the temple's doorways. It was only when the person noticed him staring and walked back out of view that the little boy became curious.

“Mommy?” Tav said, beginning to tug on his mother's pants while she talked with a priest. “Can I go to the toy room?”

“Again?” Vili cocked her head, eyes looking on in discernment toward her son. “Err, sorry sir, but could Tav make use of your care center for a little while longer?” she asked, looking back towards the blue-robed man before her.

“It would not be a problem at all.” the man's voice flowed like water. “He should be fine.”

It was with kisses and a pat or two that Tav was released from his mother's grip and left to toddle on toward the playroom. His eyes meandered past the shrines and gilt etchings of the central hall to focus closer on the door that he had gone through before. It was still open, and now held a new person through its portal. With some intimation, Tav waited until he had entered the little playroom that had been set aside before he began to speak.

“Mister?” Tav blinked a little at the strange, man? “Who are you?”

Tav felt the air go dead silent for a moment. In another second it was gone, and a certain mental sursurrus encapsulated his perceptions. Tav felt his eyes tighten closer on the figure in some odd instinct. The features were sharper, yes, but they weren't exactly man-like. The person had eyes, golden like the sun, and they appeared strangely, rounded. Like a toy or a little clay statue left out to bake in the heat. A harsh olive pigmentation and skin pattern vaguely held the appearance of people, but they had no proper leaves anywhere on their head. Curious, Tav drew closer.

“Are you...?”

“Kolin.” a word entered Tav's mind though no lips spoke it.

“Ooh...oh! You had a shrine outside! Does that mean you live here?” Tav spoke excitedly after a moment in recall.

“Yes indeed. Though I must say the place has been quiet as of late.” Kolin looked off, gold-eyes dimming yet smoldering with a strange inner ember.

“That's weird, Mommy said people come here sometimes.” Tav replied, edging his body closer to peek at Kolin's face.

“The living, perhaps. But not too many of my kind.” the being looked up from reflection. Vague etchings formed on their face as they focused on Tav, as if in some new assessment.

“Sorry about that, mister. Why's no one here?” the little sprout asked.

“Territorial disputes.” Kolin rolled their eyes, though not at Tav. “A few moon gods have looked to claim part of this city for their own. Most of my peers have simply elected to give them a wide berth until they get bored with the claim.” they sighed. “I wish they'd just let the conflict die. A couple

millenia ago and it would have been no problem at all. Now the disputes are petty games. Man pays neither of us attention. Yet you still don't have the decency to grow up and join us already..."

"Maybe I can help you?" Tav responded once Kolin trailed off.

"...In what capacity? I would enjoy it if you *did* finally grow out of your little childhood, but I somehow doubt you will be the one to do that at the momen-"

"I can tell the moon ghosts to give you your home back!" Tav nearly chirped. His eyes were fixed shinningly on the spirit.

Kolin paused, and looked on at Tav tighter. The boy could see their eyes glow brighter, and the silence was certainly apparent, but little else was. Then they just returned to normal and turned back to staring towards the distance.

"T'would be a decent plan in any other scenario, but the odds are stacked against it at the current time. If they won't listen to me, then they won't listen to a little meddling wisp, no matter how neutral he is." Kolin spoke, shaking their head a little.

The room went quiet again. Tav was the one to break it.

"I can do it mister!" he spoke with a straight stare.

"Confident for one who incarnated into a malformed husk of reality. Your seer's sight came on so young too. I'm not sure if I'll ever quite understand you mortals." Kolin said. Their mind-voice had a strange tinge to it, and for the first time in the meeting, Tav got a sense of trepidation. But he held fast regardless.

"I think I can tell the other ghosts to stop being mean. If you tell me where they live, I can try." Tav nodded.

"...Fair enough." Kolin spoke and then suddenly they were back to how they were before. "My old lunar friends should be down by what is now a...playground I believe? The one right by your house. Yes, your mind is an easy mine to pick through. If your plan works, I'll be eager to see the results."

"Okay, I'm gonna ask Mommy to go there. Don't worry mister!" Tav spoke and smiled and laughed to himself in a certain giddiness, beginning to make his way to the playroom door.

"Indeed, strange friend." Kolin cocked their head oddly. And then in a moment they were gone.

Tav just skipped on over through the main hall and waited patiently by his mother's side. Soon enough she had finished speaking with the priest person, and had scooped him up once more. The man gave him a few strange signs and words, and now Tav was really beginning to wonder what they meant, but he had little time to reflect before his mother started to walk back toward the towering oak doors at the front of the shrine. As the two left the building and the gentle chirping of flyers above began to reach his head, Tav started to speak.

"You got a thing?" Tav tilted his head looking towards his mother.

For a moment, the creases on his mother's face left, and she chuckled in that strange way that grown-ups sometimes do.

“You could say that. Something rather special, dear.” she said warmly.

Satisfied, Tav just stared at the sky as they walked through the gardens that hid the parking lot from sight. Eventually the two reached the small groundcar that filled the otherwise empty space. On approach, the doors unlocked, and Vili set down her son to buckle him into the raised seat in the back. After only a little bit of clinginess, he was all secured and Vili took her place in the driver's seat. The console woke to life a moment later and the woman let it cycle through before beginning to steer.

As they left the parking lot and Tav watched the trees pass on the side of the little highway just out of town, Tav remembered something.

“Mommy? Can we go to the park?” Tav asked, bouncing in his seat a little.

“I, hmm...well I suppose the patient boy can get a little something for his troubles. We can go, but not for too long, alright?” she responded, eyes still caught on the road. Tav heard regardless and squealed a little.

“Uhuh! Thank you thank you thank you...” Tav hummed along to himself, bouncing more.

Vili sighed, then smiled.

The woman flicked a few of the driving plans illuminated on the console in adjustment, and then concentrated on doing so in her mind. They reached mortal civilization quickly, and the park not too long after. Vili parked the car by the sidewalk and took out her son from his harnessed position in short order. The boy eagerly began to walk towards the greenery and playstructures just along the path, but Vili took his hand.

“Patience, Tavie.” she said, staring him in the eyes. Then he laughed and she did too. Tav bridled his enthusiasm as he walked toward the playground, especially when he saw others his age already on the slide. But soon enough they had reached the benches, and his mother sent him off with a kiss and a solid stare until he had reached the playground proper. He walked around a little then, trying to look for anything out of the ordinary. As chance would have it, he did find a little glow coming from some bushes behind the benches, and as luck would have it, his mother had just started up conversation with a man sitting nearby...

Taking the opportunity, Tav gingerly rounded the bend on the side where his mother wasn't looking. After a little while of tip-toeing, the sprout began to waddle as fast as he was able to. Quickly, he reached the area behind the bushes. The second sight was admittedly more than he was anticipating.

Before him, in a world much like the world but not quite like it, a silver mask stood attached to a naked deep green man. It glew, even brighter than Kolin's eyes had, yet that only served to disorient the toddler more. Behind the mask's eye holes was pure black, and they did not move.

“A youth with sight. Interesting.” Tav heard a voice right by his auditory membranes, though none stood there.

“Err, mister?” Tav spoke a little shakily. “Why...”

Tav thought for a moment.

“Why're you naked?”

The man stood still for a few seconds more before speaking.

“Unlike men, or you, I have no form that needs swaddling.” the voice rang out again, clear. “Enough pleasantries, child of Man. Why do you approach me?”

“Oh, umm...” Tav's voice trailed off. He felt a strange twinge and then suddenly noticed that he was peeing himself, but finished the thought regardless. “... 'cause you made all the ghosts at the big wood house go away! Now Kolin's lonely.” Tav remarked, staring off towards the rest of the park for a moment as his voice became tinged with a rare despondency.

“This is war, not play. And I would not expect the living to involve themselves so.” the moon god's voice came through again. Tav saw a strange gleam, but oddly enough did not feel fear.

“It looks like you're playing though. You didn't even try to hurt them. They just gave up, prolly 'cause they're bored.” Tav tilted his head a little. The god flared the lunar nimbus more, but the sapling's expression didn't change.

“Are you alright mister?” Tav asked, furrows beginning to form on his normally spotless brow.

In a sudden moment, Tav felt the being's light recede a little. It would not have otherwise been noticeable except in how it affected the environment. The contours of the bush's shadows became clearer, and he could notice again how sunlight filtered through the canopy above to reach them here below. The mask was still there, as well as the aura that these ghosts held about themselves, but the man just looked...different, somehow.

“Are you...I could have sworn...gah, I guess everyone's soul knows one another before we come to this shadowed world. Just, felt familiar for a moment.” the voice kept coming through. “Regardless, even for a wise little wisp you know little of our politics. Truth be told I care little for our conflict anymore, but if I do not continue it I would be insulting the times when it did matter. Before men got wrapped up in their own ends and left us alone.” the moon god spoke to himself, mask tilted upwards towards the trees.

“I dunno, we got lots of powers now! Maybe it'll be good soon. You can do stuff without your friends. They always come eventually.” Tav spoke, smiling towards the spirit. Though his mask didn't change, the glow did.

“Hmph. I would have more optimism for your sciences if they hadn't been researching the mental realm for a millenium now and still remained blind to us. Even with all of your expanded abilities, you remain as children in the shallows.” the spirit shook his head, gaze returning to earth. “I can only hope your sight is an indication of things to come.”

“You guys are so silly, everyone can see! That's why we got eyes. Or why big brother has his inner one...” Tav's mind briefly trailed off to a university-bound cousin. “But you should let all the other

ghosts go back home. You don't need to play pretend anymore.”

A brief humming manifested before Tav's membranes, a gentle rolling sound.

“Alright, alright, child. I'll call off our little conflict. With luck my brothers will understand the reasoning, I just pray that they don't dismiss it for coming from such a wisp.” the god's voice returned as the god himself began to walk away from the canopy, towards the light. “Be cautious, one still bound by flesh. Your mortal mother will seek you soon.”

“Oh thank you! Kinda forgot...” Tav talked, only partially to himself.

Tav watched as the moon-man reached sunlight, and melded perfectly with its radiance. He hung there for a little while longer in wonder before he remembered the advice. The boy carefully rounded past the edge of the bushes once more, this time towards the playground. He was able to get to one of the main structure's platforms before his mother's gaze turned back toward the structure for the first time since sending him off. He beamed at her and she smiled back none the wiser.

After she looked off, Tav giggled to himself and got to work playing.

It was rather fun being on the playground, all things considered, but a lot of the kids were older and his mind yet hung on the mystical events that had occurred thus far. These ghosts were really fun to talk with, but Tav didn't know when he'd get the chance to see Kolin again to make sure everything was alright, or if everything *would* be alright given the comment from that person who didn't say his name. So mostly the boy just walked by the structures by himself, thinking.

“Tavie! It's time to go!” Vili's voice suddenly hit the boy's auditory centers. Surprising himself in his eagerness, the little one carefully toddled away from the playground and into his mother's open arms. Once he was safely secure in her grasp, he felt something cold briefly, near his shorts.

“Ah, goodness, we'd do best to get the baby boy changed before heading home...” Vili just chuckled to herself, heading towards the park's restroom.

They reached the little building in short order, Vili depressing one of the wall-buttons and waiting for a light synth changing platform to fold out. It did so quickly and Vili soon set her son down, Tav an easy target for changing while he remained lost in thought. The boy acquiesced mostly quietly while his mother got the correct supplies out of the diaper bag and removed his old, sodden garment. He proved most of a fuss when she started to thoroughly wipe his bottom with cold wipes, but soon that part was done and a fresh diaper was snug around his bum. The cleanness and kisses afterward more than made up for it.

Tav enjoyed the cradling all the way back to the car, and his mother's attention a little while more while she buckled him up. The ride back home wasn't too long either, and Tav knew he'd be getting a lot more now that errands and fun was done. With his mother pulling the car up into the driveway, Tav just kicked his feet in the carseat.

“Alright, alright, someone's finally starting to get impatient again...” Vili just smirked to herself, getting a brief glimpse in the rear-view camera. She parked the car and let the interface die down before getting out and unbuckling her son from his bonds. He latched onto her almost immediately after, but she was able to take him out and get to the front door decently enough.

The lights entered their low, homely cycle as soon as the pair entered, and Vili had only just set the diaper bag down in the living room when the locus A.I. came online.

“Welcome home, Vili. Would you lik-” the notably normal gentleman's voice was cut off.

“I would like to get my bearings, Zin.” the woman's voice came out wearily and quickly.

“Of course, master.” the voice retreated from speech back into the invisible networks of the house.

Sighing in relief, Vili languidly walked down the halls of the home, past synth walls with inset wood panels. Eventually, Vili and Tav reached the nursery. The lights came on at the perfect brightness as soon as the sky-blue door was opened. All around were items familiar to Tav; his crib, colorful images on the walls, a plastic toychest, a few plushes scattered along the floor, a changing table, one of the ubiquitous A.I. terminals beneath an unassuming panel, and a window to a whole world outside, among other things. A place where he could sleep, play with friends, talk with the spirit of the house. Of course, all of these features were decidedly unimpressive to those with more years under their belt, but for Tav they were just fine.

Tav felt his mother grip him a bit longer, and he hung there for a little while more in the strange-feeling, hearing the rhythmic sound of her heartbeat.

“Alright. Mommy has some work to do now. Zin will keep an eye on you, and if you need anything you just have to ask for me. Alright?” Vili asked. She was talking in a strange tone, Tav realized, but he still nodded.

“Uhuh Mommy!”

Tav saw his mother look at him for a few seconds longer, caught in some emotion. Then she smiled brightly, rubbed her eyes a little, kissed him, set him down, and walked out of the room.

Tav blinked to himself as she gently shut the door, but began to take in the room soon enough. After a few moments of looking, the boy elected to crawl on over to the chest. It was after he had opened it and just began to retrieve some blocks that he felt the staring. Slowly, he turned around.

Standing there in the corner of the room was a small figure. They were hunched and dry, but didn't look particularly like a person, and thus were not scary. Tav thought this odd, as his special dolls that could stand up were currently at the bottom of his toy chest.

“You can see me now.” a voice suddenly entered Tav's mind in a way that was becoming familiar. “Huh.”

Tav thought for a moment, and in some instinct, did not speak.

“You a ghost too?” Tav cocked his head, brow lightly furrowed.

“Mmm. I guess I should have expected you've been seeing others. I must say I didn't expect you to know we can read minds, but then again, even children can often meet living telepaths.” the figure mentally spoke, beginning to approach Tav. The boy didn't move an inch as the figure paused in front

of him and plopped down on the ground. They looked like a branch-golem or a waterless husk in bipedal form.

“Yea, big brother did a little tele-pee before he found out he's better at seeing things far away.” Tav thought, beginning to sit down on his bum much like the figure. “You have a name?”

The person looked askance for a second. Tav felt bad briefly, because they looked hurt and ended up staring at him for a long time, but eventually he could hear their mind-voice again.

“Resh.”

“Ooh. That's a nice name.” Tav nodded, little fangs shining brightly in his smile.

The weird line-mouth of the being went a little upwards too.

“What do you do here Resh?” Tav asked in his head.

“Well, 'live' I suppose. Though I mostly just check back on it every once in a while.” Resh shrugged.

“You live here? But there's only one bed...have you been in my crib?” Tav's head tilted.

“Eh, no, kid. It's, well I used to live here. Before you moved in. It.” Resh's mental speech briefly paused. Even in their hard to read face, Tav could see a certain far-away look. “It's hard to explain. And I used to be angry. But I don't mind you living here now.”

“Oooh...okay then! You can still live here if you wanna, but I don't know if Mommy would like that, just make sure to hide.” Tav nodded.

Resh's line mouth curved a little more. It was all very brief, but Tav thought he could see Resh examining his face closer now.

“Heh, thanks. I'm sure that'll be no problem, kid.” Resh messaged.

After holding still for a few seconds, Resh began to stand up on dry little stump legs. They looked toward the chest briefly, sighing, before looking back at Tav.

“I'd say we should do something, but that fake little house spirit might notice something's amiss.” Resh shook his head, words choking up a bit towards the middle. “Maybe we can do stuff in your dreams though, if you're okay with that. I wouldn't try to take up all of your sleep, mind you...” Resh trailed off, gaze falling into Tav.

“But Zin...fake?” Tav's head tilted.

“I, well he's currently based on wires and electricity and all of this physical stuff that you'll understand once you're older. Similar to all of you living folk, really, but I digress.” Resh's mind voice came back. “I'm probably being a bit mean, but our models never had all the features that yours do nowadays. I'm not sure how your mom will react if we get up to anything on Earth.” Resh shook their head. After a few seconds though, their mouth had curled up a little further. “Heh, you should see what an actual house spirit looks like though. Mortal souls are fine and all, but if Zin's spirit could break free of that

little database he's in...wew. Locii are quite the sight..." Resh mind-talked some more, beginning to walk back toward the corner they had come from.

"Wai, Resh, you said dreams? We can still play?" Tav thought fast.

"Oh, uhuh. I'll probably ask you in one of your normal dreams, but if you're cool with it, I'd like to...play." Resh's mental voice faded as they reached the shadows.

"Oh, okie! I want to play." Tav smiled eagerly.

"Cool! I'll see you..." the last of Resh's mental presence faded with their form in the gloom of the corner.

Nothing much else happened for a few seconds. After a little more time spent thinking, Tav began to look back toward his toy chest. Tav had only gotten a few blocks out before he heard the door open.

"Tavie? Is everything alright?" Vili spoke, quickly entering the nursery and scooping up her son.

"Huh?" Tav cocked his head as much as he could in her grasp. "Uhuh Mommy." he squirmed lightly, still looking towards the blocks.

"Are you sure?" Vili asked rather quickly, attempting to examine the features of Tav as much as his wriggling would allow. After a few seconds of such investigation, she paused, and her voice came back in a different tone.

"Zin? Do you have anymore information?" Vili said, face briefly focusing on a notable nearby wall panel. In almost an instant it had parted, revealing a simple graphic face on a small screen-terminal.

"None beyond the audiovisual data already provided. Biometrics could prove handy, but there is no means of collection and an isolated incident is not necessarily indicative of illness. If you really want his perceptual data, we could always consult a psychiatric telepath. I would not worry, master." Zin's gentlemanly voice escaped from nigh-invisible audio ports.

"...Alright." Vili spoke with some tension, eyes plastered on Zin's provisional visage until she had set down Tav and the panel slid back over the screen. Shaking her head, the woman looked back on her son for a little longer.

"Tav...if anything is happening, you know you can tell Mommy, alright?" Vili looked on into the boy's eyes with her own haggard ones.

"Uhuh." Tav nodded, but for once he was not sure.

Vili weakly smiled, nodding along to herself.

"Thank you, thank you, baby boy..." Vili drifted off in thought for a moment, before she began to head back toward the door.

"I'll be going back to work now, okay Tavie? Remember, if you need anything, Zin is always there." Vili's faint voice came through as she shut the door behind her.



Tav didn't do much in the room for a fair while. Then a little, unnerving new feeling of self-awareness came over him as he remembered the previous events and Zin's presence. Gingerly, Tav made his way to the familiar wall panel. It parted easily and Zin's face returned.

“Hello young master. Is there anything you need?” Zin said, smiling in their usual way. Tav's eyes narrowed at that this time.

“Nuh uh. Well, kinda. Did you tell Mommy something?” Tav asked.

Zin's face didn't change, but Tav could feel a flicker nonetheless.

“It was really nothing, young master. I am merely obligated to report back if anything unusual is to happen to you. Of course I think it's just a fluke, and I must say that I wish that your mother would not worry so.” Zin spoke along to themselves for a little while, before they somehow looked at Tav closer. “Say, you wouldn't happen to have a special friend, would you?”

Without knowing why, Tav immediately felt his mouth move.

“No.” Tav said. It felt really bad as he said it.

“Hehe, no need for such anxiousness, good master. Plenty of young children have certain 'friends' that only they interact with. If anything I was actually wondering if you might be farther along on the developmental scale than your peers. Now that would be a really good thing to suggest to your mother...goodness me, I'm rambling along to myself again.” Zin laughed to themselves lightly towards the end, and for once Tav thought the face was genuine. “In any case, I wouldn't worry yourself about it. If you're not here to play, then just come to me if you need something from your mother.”

“...Kay.” Tav nodded, slowly crawling away from the terminal. Zin's screen dimmed before the panel returned to block it completely.

As Tav returned to his blocks, he thought he saw a certain hole with a black gleam on the wall. He only looked on at it for a second before he began to play.

Tav did a few things in his room before evening and the siren call of slumber came. He finished up his block tower, as well as a few treats that Zin's cheap scurrer bot frame had retrieved for him. He recalled pooping himself somewhere around midway through a wildlife lesson that Zin's screen had provided him, but he didn't really mind it too much and he did not want to disturb his mother. Once the program was over, Tav decided to toddle over to his chest and retrieve that old picture book that big brother had gotten for him. It was a lot more interesting to look at, now, not least of which because he could recognize Kolin.

Vili came into the room towards the end of the “reading.” By this point the toddler had already grown tired enough to stay on a single page, so there wasn't much of a struggle when she noticed the smell and carefully lifted her boy up onto the changing table. Tav liked how she held him, and how her visage was back to its normal, nice self. He quietly rested on the table while she untaped the old diaper, wiped him down, and disposed of it, with neither the energy nor the motivation to struggle. He especially liked when she powdered him down and taped up a nice new moon-diaper, or how she held him close to her chest while she walked closer to the crib. He had some strange intimation that things would not

always be this way, and so the feelings were savored all the more deeply.

Tav did not notice when his mother finally set him down in his crib, or when she tucked him in, or even when she kissed him goodnight. Instead he remembered a soft voice creeping its way into the room through the interstices of sleep.

When Tav finally arrived into his dreams, he recognized the green forest glen before him as such. Tav thought this odd, as he had never known that he was in a dream while dreaming before. Curious, the boy stepped further into the clearing, towards where a man that was not a man was manifesting from sunlight.

It only took Tav a few moments of observation to notice the appearance of Kolin taking shape, and it was only a few moments after the body had fully formed that some instinctive Sight told Tav that this person really was Kolin. Tav giggled, rushing over towards the spirit as fast as his legs would allow.

“Koliin! Did it work?” Tav finally reached the not-man, gripping one of their olive legs like a trunk.

“Easy there, young one...and yes, it did work. Surprisingly.” Kolin looked down on Tav with a smirk for once. It took the boy a moment of concentration to recognize, but he could see some renewed brightness, some light behind the light of their sun-eyes.

“Yay! That's really good! Now you can be at the shrine and people will be there and maybe we can pla-” Tav's giddy speech was interrupted as soon as his eyes fell upon some others who had suddenly appeared in the clearing. A couple figures that looked like burnt trees walked toward the two in some strange way, and Tav could see the moon god from before approaching from the opposite end of the clearing with a pair of ivory-masked friends. As Kolin gently pulled away from Tav's grasp while the boy stared in wonderment, each trio took formation in the clearing.

“Well good glory. You weren't kidding about that seer.” a moon spirit with glowing blue eyes gave one of those lunar laughs. It was only when Tav looked at himself and saw the moons of his diaper that he realized he didn't have his shorts in this dream.

“I'll admit this is almost as weird as the Armistice of Broken Palms.” a sun god with orange stars for eyes scratched a polished smooth head.

“Nevertheless, it *is* a treaty.” the moon god that Tav recognized spoke in a clear tone, stepping forth confidently towards Kolin.

“It's practically a miracle to be hearing those words from you, Lique, but they are certainly appreciated.” Kolin's smirk had now turned toward the complementary deity.

“Hmph. We probably would have come to this in another millenium anyway.” Lique shook his head, nonetheless taking Kolin's now outstretched hand and shaking it. Tav thought it interesting to look at each of their respective lights as they did so. After all, he'd never seen an eclipse before.

“Now then, I believe we have another little matter to discuss?” Lique turned toward Tav after the handshake, and everyone else's eyes followed soon after.

The boy blinked.

“Kolin...?” Tav's gaze now rested itself on the solar spirit.

“We've...been considering things, and we must be honest in that it is extremely unprecedented to see such a natural medium out of the blue.” Kolin spoke.

“Indeed, brother. In fact, I don't think I've ridden someone properly since the old Cult days! Ah, such feelings...” a sun god with white dwarfs for eyes interjected wistfully.

“Enthusiasm, later, brother.” Kolin gave the god a brief look before turning back towards Tav. “In any case, as I was saying, we were hoping to keep in contact with you. If not even for practical benefits, at least for the opportunity itself.” Kolin said.

“This could even be the key your mortal sciences need to penetrate our realm...” Lique nodded on to himself in thought.

“Perhaps. In any case, we would like to share our presence with you, and I get the feeling you would like the same with us.” Kolin spoke with a certain weight. All eyes eagerly looked on at Tav. The child himself looked up with a tilted head.

“Am not really sure what you mean by some of that stuff...” Tav played with the edges of his shirt a little bit. Some of the gazing eyes started to dim, before his voice rose again. “...but I do wanna play, and if I'm the only one who can see you, maybe I could help? It'd be fun if I could help other people see too...” Tav started to smile a little.

“Was, that a yes?” a purple-eyed moon spirit asked.

“Oh, uhuh!” Tav beamed.

“About as close to concise as you'll get at that mortal age.” the orange sun spirit sighed.

“Well then, it looks like things are settled.” Kolin spoke solidly, giving Tav a short bow. “We shall keep in touch with you, and if we do settle on the Promethean endeavour, perhaps we can also decide on who this can be revealed to in the interim. For now I suppose we'll...return to the shrine, and if your mother does not take you there often, we can always simply convene in your dreams as planned.”

“...It just hit you, didn't it?” Lique asked immediately after Kolin finished.

“Somewhat.” Kolin shook their head. “We can begin further training in around, a few decades, no? He should at least be capable within a century...”

“What of the interim? I mean, you can't just leave him to his own devices for all that time.” Lique crossed his arms.

“I'm sure we can get something figured out. Between all of our numbers, we can simply have someone assigned to watch him and make sure he doesn't get into trouble.” Kolin suggested.

“Ah yes, I'm sure you'll be the first to volunteer.” Lique scoffed.

“Seniority.” Kolin inclined their head, smiling. They then turned toward their white dwarf companion. “Good brother, would you mind going first?”

“What?! I'm no minder, sir...I'm not too skilled in how these mortals operate anyhow.” the spirit responded.

“It's not that difficult to puzzle out, just look at him.” Kolin commented, gesturing towards the little sapling caught in his own thoughts in the field. The white sun spirit cocked his head.

“Come on, I'm sure you've spent time with the newly-ascended before; think of this as an esoteric variant of that.” Kolin spoke while Tav slowly waddled up to the gods.

“Kolin? When am I gonna be up?” Tav tilted his head looking at the olive figure.

“In a good amount of time, I'd say. I can't exactly relate the precise figure given the peculiar perception of time in dreams for you mortals.” Kolin responded.

“Oh, kay. Just wanna know 'cause I peed.” Tav related without thought.

“...Understood.” Kolin spoke after a certain indefinable silence. “Here, Yan, let's take our leave, this is a good place to begin your wardenship.”

As Tav, Kolin and Yan walked toward the rim of the dream-glen, leaving the rest of the spirits to their chatter, the boy looked up to the one with golden sun-eyes. After a second, they looked down, and the two's gazes locked.

“Kolin...things change a lot, right?” Tav only partially asked.

“In these shadowed spheres, Tav, yes. That is true.” Kolin nodded.

“Alright. I guess you went through a lot.” Tav said, focusing now on the path ahead.

“One could say that.” Kolin replied.

As they entered the woods, Kolin felt the barest edges of the child's mind. There was a specific strand there that had congealed more, a hidden pseudo-sin that Kolin knew would taint every last experience Tav had until he died in the second way. The spirit knew that the boy must have felt something, because all of a sudden he looked at them, and there was such a knowing that no words needed to be said.

Both held there in communion. It took them a while to notice that Yan had stopped behind a bush that provided good coverage, and slowly Tav lowered himself onto the ground, remembering what they were there for. Doing so, he saw someone familiar behind the two spirits.

A little ways away, a tiny bramble-ghost stood awkwardly.

“...Is this a bad time?”