

The Watching Eyes of Iris

Jason Constantine Ford

Sepalli reached the gates of the ruined city of Tarisius with her baby on her back. Her boy friend Indaliron promised to leave her a written note at this location on what kind of information he gained on the inhabitability of Tarisius. The gate was open but there was no note nor any sign of Indaliron. She wondered why no message was left. Indaliron had a reputation for always keeping his promises. Sepalli contemplated the possibility that he could have died during the weather of the previous week. A violent storm had been raging for over a week in the plains region of Galomatek. Indaliron was game enough to travel through Galomatek during this period against the wishes of Sepalli. She recommended to him that the two of them come together to Tarisius after the storm would have subsided but Indaliron insisted that he visit his father's grave on the day of the first anniversary of his death. The plan was that Indaliron would reach Tarisius in the latter part of the stormy week and by the time of the arrival of Sepalli and her baby, food would have already been gathered from the bushes on the outskirts of Tarisius by Indaliron for them. The only thing that Sepalli knew was that she and her baby would go hungry on their first day in Tarisius. Indaliron's plan was a great failure. Sepalli started to think about the possibility that a curse which was known as the curse of Ushron could be true. She always rejected any claims that this curse was true because the tribe of Ushron was her own tribe. For many years, she firmly believed that this curse was invented by the enemies of her tribe to discredit them. She started to think about the events which led many people into believing in this alleged curse.

One year ago, Paros, a Prince of the tribe of Gandocar, who ruled the royal city of Tarisius, was engaged to Yumamel, a Princess of the tribe of Ushron, as a marriage of reconciliation between the two tribes. The agreement between the two tribes was that Yumamel would move to Tarisius and marry Paros in a bond that would solidify the both of them as rulers of Tarisius and representatives of traditionally rival tribes which only ceased being at war with each other five years previously. Although Tarisius was independent from the other Gandocari cities and the rule of the governing parliament of the tribe of Gandocar, the proposed marriage was looked upon by all members of the tribes of Ushron and Gandocar as a positive move that would heal wounds between the two tribes which lasted for more than a century. In the months of engagement leading up to marriage, a mysterious black monolith appeared outside of Tarisius. This monolith was interpreted by members of the tribes of Gandocar and Ushron as a sign of favour from the gods for the proposed marriage between Paros and Yumamel. On the day before the marriage was to take place, Paros sent a representative called Varomillo to King Chamosaro of the tribe of Ushron in the key Ushroni city of Olamaron to give his signature of approval prior to attending the marriage on the following day. A few hours after Varomillo arrived in Olamaron, a mysterious fog came upon Tarisius. It instantly killed off all the inhabitants of the city without any survivors being left alive. On the following day after the fog disappeared, King Chamosaro, his representatives and Varomillo arrived at Tarisius to discover the whole city to be depopulated with corpses and ravaged buildings. All the inhabitants were dead including Paros and Yumamel who were found inside the main palace chamber. Scientists from King Chamosaro's court collected samples from parts broken off from buildings as well as residue and corpses from the city. They did scientific tests on what they collected. These tests determined that a fog killed off the population of Tarisius. It was discovered that the fog had different effects on humans in comparison to buildings.

Corpses were determined to have been killed by a gas which suffocated their throats, while the buildings had been damaged by a form of acid, inherent within the gas, that only attacked solid inanimate substances, but not human flesh. It was determined that the gas originated from the fog. That same day, King Chamosaro sent representatives to all the cities of the tribe of Gandocar to inform them of what happened. That week scientists from all the cities of the tribe of Gandocar, investigated the ruins of Tarisius. They conducted scientific tests on the corpses and ruins of the city and brought their results to the key Gandocari city of Yuritanak. Their tests came out with the same conclusion of a poisonous gas destroying the city and its inhabitants. However, the parliament of the tribe of Gandocar in Yuritanak were not satisfied with a scenario where the results of a scientific investigation by members of their tribe reached the same conclusion as that of scientists from the tribe of Ushron. They were also seeking a divine explanation for what happened. Ledalloy Imarek, the Prime Minister of Gandocar and his ruling Nationalist Party eventually came out with the conclusion that the gods of Gandocar punished the inhabitants of Tarisius with death for sanctioning the proposed marriage between royal members of rival tribes. Upon receiving news of the Gandocari parliament's decision, King Chamosaro's representatives in Yuritanak responded by accusing the governing body of Gandocar of blasphemy and then left Yuritanak. From that time onwards, diplomatic relations between the tribes of Ushron and Gandocar ceased to exist. To this day, the tribe of Gandocar has blamed the fate of Tarisius on the tribe of Ushron.

After King Chamosaro's former representatives of Yuritanak informed him of the decision of the Gandocari parliament, King Chamosaro and his governing council made a counter claim that the destruction of Tarisius was due to the sins of the tribe of Gandocar. King Chamosaro also declared that the gods of Ushron would punish the tribe of Gandocar for the sin of blasphemy. Despite all that happened, there was an event apparently ignored by both sides. After the fog destroyed Tarisius and its population, the monolith that lingered outside Tarisius disappeared. The members of both tribe who previously regarded the monolith as a sign of good will from the gods, became silent about its disappearance after the time of destruction had passed, as generational superstition prevented anyone from offering an explanation for the unexpected disappearance of the monolith. It was a commonly held myth among both tribes that any belief or insinuation that a good omen could later onwards be looked at in a negative manner was equivalent to an act of blasphemy. From that day onwards, members of both tribes were plagued with the contradiction of having regarded the engagement between Paros and Yumamel as being divinely sanctioned before the coming of the fog and then changing their positions to the claim that the fog was divinely sanctioned punishment.

As Sepalli started to think more clearly about the positions of both tribes on the fate of Tarisius, she doubted the claims of both tribes that the fate of Tarisius was divinely sanctioned. She refused to believe that a higher power or powers outside of the material world would be so unjust as to kill off a whole city. This kind of skepticism previously transformed Indaliron and Sepalli into rebels who consistently broke the established laws of Ushron in secret. Acts of rebellion ranged from daily neglect of prayers to the gods of Ushron, eating forbidden foods and not even offering any sacrifices to their gods. Their rebellious attitude eventually resulted in their expulsion from the tribe. Five months ago, Indaliron and Sepalli were ostracised for being discovered as the father and mother of a baby born out of wedlock. As soon as the authorities of the Ushroni city of Galed, where they lived, gained evidence by a whistleblower that Indaliron and Sepalli were guilty of fornication, they were given one of the worst forms of punishment within the tribe of Ushron outside of imprisonment. They were stripped of their citizenship and given two days notice to take all

their belongings and leave Galed. Sepalli missed her family and friends in Galed very badly but she knew there was nothing she could do about them. She had strong doubts that she would ever see them again. Since that time, Indaliron and Sepalli were living in an underground cavern in the mountain region known as Iparisi. It was a dark home that Sepalli did not like. Her only present form of consolation was being away from Iparisi. Sepalli passed through the entrance gates into Tarisius. All the buildings and infrastructure of the city were either severely damaged with large holes or were in complete ruins with the exception of a few structures which were made of steel and glass. The structure of these objects consisted of glass orbs on top of steel poles. The orbs were heavily tinted in such a way that Sepalli could not see inside of them. She could feel something inside of her jacket moving. The amparo crystal inside one pocket of her jacket was rubbing against her stomach on account of a unique force that only it could possess. She removed the crystal. It was glowing with a green aura flowing around its outer surface. *This is strange. How can this possible?*

A green aura being emitted from an amparo crystal was a sign of the existence of non human life. From all of her previous experiences of steel or glass objects, they were simply tools to be used by people to perform their daily tasks. All the activity she had seen from tools were a result of people moving them to perform a particular duty such as the use of a rake to till soil. Sepalli reached one of the glass orbs and stared into it. She moved closer to it as she attempted to see what was inside of it. There was an object inside the orb but she could not see it clearly because the orb was so heavily tinted. Sepalli placed the amparo crystal between herself and the orb. The green aura surrounding the orb was twice as strong as before. This activity indicated that there was some kind of life inside the orb. Sepalli was perplexed as to how anything could live inside an object cut off from any form of air. She never heard of a creature who could live an existence without breathing oxygen. Suddenly the colour of the aura around the crystal changed from green to red. This colour indicated that danger was approaching her. Her fascination with the orb disappeared completely. It was time to run from danger. As Sepalli ran through the deserted streets, the instinct to survive and protect her baby was preventing her from looking back or stopping. Despite intense pain in both her legs from half a day of constant trekking through harsh terrain, she kept on running. She could hear the sound of wild animals behind her. What she heard sounded like hounds from the palace of Finandarl. Finandarl was the tyrant who ruled the vast majority of land on the planet of Miradia. He was the king of the tribe of Irahkhan and the hated enemy of all the other tribes including the tribe of Ushron.

Out of fear, she decided to take a look back. A pack of hounds could be seen on the hills on the outskirts of the city and above its gates. They were gaining ground. From a long distance away, they seemed to be less than a kilometre outside of the city. Sepalli turned right into a street where there were no buildings which had not been either partially or completely destroyed. The whole city appeared to be a mess with the exception of several orbs stationed around various buildings. Sepalli was hoping that the life forms inside the orbs could come out and rescue her but she could not give much thought to them as she feared for her baby's life. She shouted out for help but there was nobody in sight. Desire to hear a human voice was drowned by an increase in volume of the cries of the hounds from a distance away. Only seconds seemed to separate Sepalli and her baby from death. Her eyes were searching desperately for a solution until she saw something different. There was a tree in the middle of a street she had just turned into. This was her only hope. Sepalli used her hands to climb up the tree. As she began her ascent, the sounds of the hounds were becoming even louder. Sepalli turned around to see the hounds in the distance. When she made it to the first branch, the hounds were barking ferociously at the bottom of the tree as her baby was hanging from an outer pocket of her pack. The hounds would never leave Sepalli and her baby while

they were on the tree. As the hounds were barking savagely, Sepalli made up her mind that if she and her baby were to die, they would die on the tree and not be eaten by the hounds. She took out a safety strap from her back pack and placed her baby onto her lap as she was crying. She wrapped the strap around her baby and herself before fastening it to the branch on which she was perched. The two of them were secured on the branch. Although they were safe from falling down, Sepalli resigned herself to the belief that she and her baby would die on the tree. Throughout the night, she heard the howls of the hounds. As her baby was crying on her lap, she closed her eyes waiting for death to come.

As Sepalli opened her eyes, she saw the light of another morning. Everything was quiet. She could not understand what was going on. The hounds were nowhere in sight. *Is this real or is this a dream?* That was the only thought going through her mind. She stared at the baby on her lap. She was asleep with her eyes closed. She touched her baby. The touch of her face indicated to Sepalli that human life was tangible. If all of this were a dream, the baby would not have felt as real as she did. Despite the comfort of knowing that her baby was still alive, Sepalli was not satisfied with her situation. She was perplexed as to how the world around her could change so dramatically in such a short period of time. Sepalli could not understand how she could be in a situation where death was imminent on one night and then wake up the next day to see herself as apparently safe from danger. As she started to gaze around the area surrounding the tree on which her baby and herself were perched, she noticed something that she never saw on the previous day. There was a ladder directly below the branch on which she was perched. At the foot of the ladder, there was a piece of paper with writing on it. *How could there be a ladder in this place? I can't understand this.* After having firmly believed that there was no human life in Tarisius, Sepalli contemplated the possibility that there could be a survivor from the disaster which occurred.

She ripped a piece of bark off one of the branches above her. She threw it away to a distance of about thirty metres. It made a thudding sound onto the dusty ground. The thud echoed. She shouted out the word 'help' and it echoed. On the previous day when the hounds chased her, their cries did not echo. This was also the same with her cry before she discovered the tree. Sepalli was wondering what was going on. Tarisus was a city that never echoed before it was reduced to ruins. She had no idea how the capacity for an echo could have been generated. After having experienced an echo without any evidence of other human life in Tarisius, she entertained doubts regarding the possibility that another human was in the city. If there was another human, that person would most likely have spoken to her. One question came to her mind as she contemplated the possibility of other human life in the ruined city. *Is magic being used in this place?* On the previous day, Sepalli did not contemplate the possibility of magic being used in a city of ruins as any thoughts about magic were repugnant to her. This repugnance to magic developed from her disdain for Finandarl and his use of magic against his enemies. She started to think outside of her usual way of think. She even considered the possibility that magic could be used for a good purpose. She eventually inclined herself towards the view that the life forms inside the orbs could only have been able to help her through magic. That was the conclusion she reluctantly reached. Sepalli took out an amparo crystal which she placed between her eyes and the morning sun. The crystal glittered green.

The glittering meant that activity was taking place in the city. Sepalli untied the strap around herself and her baby. She placed her baby on her back pack and climbed down the ladder. Upon reaching the ground, she picked up the note that lay there and read it.

Sepalli,

I've left this note for you as a warning about remaining where you are. Don't be afraid of the hounds. They won't come back. Pockets of residue from the gas which destroyed this city are still floating around as invisible residue. This residue is weakening your immune system and that of our baby without you realising it. You have to go to where I am as soon as possible. Find a glass orb on top of a steel pole with a gold chain at the bottom of it. I'm located at a cavern underneath the orb. As soon as I see you there, I'll let you into the underground cavern. Hurry. Be quick.

Indaliron

Sepalli began to run as soon as she finished reading the note. When she found the orb mentioned in the note, a door opened up in the ground in front of it. There was a flight of stairs under the door leading down into a cavern. Sepalli wondered how Indaliron was able to perform the magical trick which he just did. He had never been known to have an interest in the magical arts and now he appeared to have the skill to make magic. For a few seconds, Sepalli was reluctant to come down.

'Come on, Sepalli. You've got to come here now. The remaining residue is dangerous.'

Sepalli immediately knew the voice. It was that of Indaliron. She walked down the flight of stairs. After her head was a good distance below ground level, the door closed behind her. Indaliron was at the bottom of the stairs in an airtight suit and helmet. After making contact with the ground, she tried to come forward with her hand but was stopped. A glass wall was preventing her from reaching Indaliron. Sepalli could not understand what was going on. She missed Indaliron so much and now he was placing a barrier between himself and her. The only thing she could do was place her hands on the glass surface and stare at Indaliron.

'What are you doing? Don't you love me?'

'Yes, of course I love. I can't let you through in your current state. You and our baby still have residue of the fog on your skin. You need to be decontaminated before I let you through.'

'How can you remove the residue from us?'

'A ray of blue light from the ceiling will come down on you and our baby. The light contains anti bacteria energy which destroys all forms of unnatural germs and bacteria. After you've been cured of the residue, I'll let you through.'

A door on the ceiling opened up. A mechanical shower head with an extendable neck was lowering itself down. It released a ray of blue light down upon Sepalli and her baby. In the

space of a few seconds, the chamber was immersed in a strong form of light with a brightness similar to that of a bonfire. As Sepalli and her baby were immersed in this brightness, yellow foam was peeling off their skin and out through their clothes onto the floor. As soon as all the foam was on the ground, Sepalli walked a few steps away from it in disgust. The shower head was now directed at the yellow foam. Rays of blue light drove the foam away from Sepalli and her baby until all of the foam ran down into a drain in the corner of the room. The blue light was gone and the shower head disappeared into the ceiling. Sepalli was unable to speak as she stood motionless. The glass wall descended down into the floor and Andaliron approached Sepalli as he took his helmet off. The two of them embraced.

‘I thought you were dead. I thought I would never see you again.’

‘You have to believe in me.’ Andaliron said. ‘I always make it through. You know what I’m like.’

‘I used to think that I knew you but now I’m not sure.’

‘I don’t understand what you’re saying.’

‘I never thought you were into magic.’

‘Those tricks you saw weren’t magic. I used a mechanism that is secretly known as technology. Technology is when steel parts and instruments are formed into a unit to bring about motion.’

Sepalli was not moved by this argument. She shook her head in disagreement. ‘Yesterday when I had my first encounter with one of those orbs, my amparo crystal was glowing green. This glow indicates the presence of life. Those things inside the orbs are living beings. An amparo crystal never lies.’

‘I’ll be introducing you to the man who invented technology. He’ll explain everything to you. He’ll reveal to you how you were rescued from the hounds. He’ll also explain how there is activity inside those orbs.’

‘If he’s a man of truth, I’ll believe him. If he’s a liar, I won’t believe a word he says.’

‘How’s our baby?’

‘She’s doing fine.’

Andaliron turned around to the back of Sepalli to gain his first glimpse of his first born child in the space of a week and a half. The child was sleeping. Suddenly, she opened her eyes and stared into those of her father. She smiled at Andaliron. He put his index finger out to touch her face. She took hold of his finger with both of her hands before letting go.

‘The two of you are going to be very hungry. I’ll take you for a meal before you meet the man responsible for the invention of technology.’

Andaliron led Sepalli and the baby through several passage ways and corridors before they entered a room with a table filled with food. Sepalli was amazed by what she saw. There were many plates of food with a diverse variety of fruits and cakes.

‘The inventor of technology will explain everything to you when you meet him. It’s time to eat. I’ll be the one doing the serving while you sit down.’

Andaliron collected an empty plate of food and made his way around the table, selecting the cakes which he considered to be the most suitable for his family as Sepalli was seated. Andaliron put the plate of food in front of Sepalli and she placed her baby on her lap. They began to eat as Andaliron watched them. Sepalli enjoyed the meal but the baby did not show any signs of approval regarding the food she ate. Sepalli bent down to stare at her baby.

‘Didn’t you like the meal?’

The baby shook her head in disapproval. After that, she pointed to a piece of cylindrical yellow that had not yet been tasted. Andaliron reached out and gave it to the baby. The baby took a bite off the fruit and smiled.

‘Yummy. Yummy.’

Those were only one of a handful of words that the baby was able to speak. She had not used those words in several weeks. Sepalli took a bite off the fruit and liked it also.

‘Why didn’t you give this to us the first time?’

‘I didn’t think you’d like it. There are other people who live in these underground caverns. I’ve seen them eating the kind of food that you have. They never took an interest in that fruit. You were the first ones to really like it.’

‘You’re telling me that there are other people who live here?’

‘Yes, there are other inhabitants in these caverns.’

‘How can that be possible? The forensic tests that were conducted on Tariusus concluded that the whole population of Tariusus died as a result of the fog.’

‘All of the Gandocari as well as Princess Yumamel died in the fog. The only ones who survived were the outcasts of Palokapan. All of them lived underground before and after the fog.’

‘I didn’t know that there were Palokapani living in Tariusus.’

‘I didn’t know it either until I was rescued a few days ago.’

‘How did you get rescued?’

‘A man called Chamonei rescued me the same way I rescued you. He’s the one who invented technology.’

‘I look forward to meeting him.’

‘After you’ve finished your meal, you’ll see things you’ve never seen before.’

An hour ago, Andaliron, Sepalli and their baby met Chamonei, the ruler of Panoralon, the city under Tariusus. He supplied them with maps of underground labyrinths which were significantly more advanced than any kind of underground constructions which they knew of

during their time in Galed. In the first half hour of Sepalli's first meeting with Chamonei, both Andalliron and herself were shown the activities of workers who gathered and planted crops from underground fields that were lighted with amparo crystals of the highest calibre. They travelled in an electric vehicle with mirrors that were heavily tinted in such a way that observers from outside would not be able to recognise those inside the vehicle from a long distance. Every stage of activity could be seen at the fields from the tilling of soil to the sowing of plants and seeds to the gathering of crops. After observing the activity of workers gathering supplies of crops into a large building for storage, they left the electric vehicle and walked into another section. Above them on their right was a large tower which had numerous pipes attached to the middle of it. Sepalli looked at the tower and the pipes with fascination.

'What happens here?'

'We're at a network of pipes which supply water to the whole of Panoralon. All of the water from the pipes goes into the control tower. From there, the workers at the tower distribute water to all of the homes and fields in Panoralon.' Chamonei answered.

Sepalli and Andaliron continued to walk without asking any more questions. They admired the craftsmanship of the members of the Palokapani tribe who had lived underground for more than two centuries. Unlike the water pipes which they were used at Ushroni cities, these pipes were made of transparent glass which enabled all the supplies of water to be visible to the human eye. Chamonei previously explained to Andaliron and Sepalli that over the past two centuries, the rulers of Tarisius agreed to allow a group of over fifty Palokapani who were austracised from the tribe to take residence under Tarisius on the condition that they would not interact with Gandocari and only travel to the surface to gather food and water. The rulers of Tarisius supplied the first generation of Palokapani with Amparo Crystals for light and heating. The third and fourth generations of Palokapani managed to dig underground all the way to a section underneath a spring in Galomatek. This discovery resulted in plans to build a pipeline from Galomatek to Panoralon. The pipeline was eventually finished by the seventh generation of Palokapani. As they were walking along, Andaliron and Sepalli saw a few Palokapani walking in the opposite direction. Chamonei greeted the other Palokapani who in turn greeted him but upon seeing Andaliron and Sepalli, they cast their heads down to avoid eye contact. Sepalli looked at Chamonei with curiosity.

'Why are they avoiding us?'

'The custom of the Palokapani of Panoralon is to avoid eye contact with people who don't wear the standard clothing of this city.'

Sepalli shook her head in disapproval. Although Andaliron and Sepalli were dressed in ordinary grey and brown pants and shirts while the Palokapani were wearing cream robes made of expensive material, Sepalli was not used to the experience of people being judgemental according to the way that other people dress. In Ushroni culture, the only distinction between high standards of clothing and lower standards of dress were between the monarchy, those in government and religious leaders, on the one hand, and the ordinary Ushroni people, on the other hand.

'Why would the others be concerned about the way we dress?' Sepalli asked.

'There is a major rule in this city. The rule is that only those who have a comprehensive knowledge of the standards and regulations of the city are entitled to wear the official

clothing of our people. I'm in the process of teaching you the ways of our people. After you have studied our ways and learnt them to an acceptable standard, you will be allowed to wear the clothes that we wear.'

At the end of the network of pipes, they encountered a large building made of glass windows and a steel infrastructure. The building appeared to be about twenty stories high. Passing through the foyer, they entered a lift which took them to the top floor. From there, they passed through a few corridors before entering a large room which was filled with electronic equipment. Upon entering the room, Sepalli's amparo crystal was beeping inside her bag. The strength of the force that it was emitting, indicated that it was beeping green. Sepallia looked around the room for any strange forms of life. In the far right hand corner of the room, there were several of those glass orbs which were mounted on top of steel poles. Sepalli turned her attention to Chamonei.

'You're using magic, aren't you?'

'I'm doing no such thing.'

'Explain to me the situation with my amparo crystal.' Sepalli handed her baby to Andaliron. She took out an amparo crystal and held out it before the eyes of Chamonei. 'The crystals only beeps green when non human life forms are present.'

'I'll prove to you that those object are not living beings.'

'How can you do that?'

'I'll return one of them to its original condition.'

Andaliron, Sepalli and their baby followed Chamonei to the end of the room. Chamonei removed one of the glass orbs from its steel pole and placed it on a table. He opened its glass structure and took out a mechanical device. He disconnected all of the parts of the devices such as a screen, circuits and other hardware until all of the parts of the device were on the table as separate parts. Sepalli's amparo crystal was no longer beeping. She could not understand what was going on.

'You killed it.'

'No that isn't possible.' Chamonei shook his head in strong disagreement. 'It can't be killed. It never lived in the first place. I'll reassemble it. You'll see how it works.'

Chamonei joined all of the parts together and returned the electronic device to its glass orb before inserting the orb back onto the steel pole where it was located. He opened a power board on one of the walls and pressed a few switches. All of the orbs were now glowing with a yellowish light which made the room so much brighter. After Sepalli's amparo crystal gradually returned to emitting a green aura, it's light became much more intense. This was especially the case after the orbs were inundated with a yellowish light. Sepallia was now convinced that what Chamonei was using was technology and not the form of magic which she attributed to the operation of the orbs. A large screen at the end of the room was now illuminated as Chamonei held an electronic control pad in his hand.

'The screen that you see in front of you is connected to all of the mysterious orbs which exist throughout Panoralon and Tarisius. These orbs are an invention of mine which I have decided to name as watching eyes. I call them watching eyes because they see everything that is

around them in the same way that a human eye sees the things around it. As the human eye can switch from one perspective to another, so can the watching eyes see events from different angles and perspectives. I'll give you a demonstration.' A computer generated image appeared on the screen of a watching eye without the casing of its glass orb. It was situated in Tarisius. It was swivelling from left to right. Another image appeared on the screen of the scenery of Tarisius. The ruins of this city could be seen in a panning motion from left to right. 'What you've just seen are two perspectives of a watching eye. The first perspective is an external perception of what it is capable of doing. The second perspective is a glimpse of its internal capabilities. As each watching eye is connected to this screen and this control room, I can see everything that it sees from this screen. With this control pad that I'm holding, I can make a watching eye move from left to right and see what it sees.'

'Can a watching eye go back in time and see things from the past?' Andaliron asked.

'Yes, I have the technology to make a watching eye backtrack to what it has previously seen.'

'Do you have watching eye footage of the black monolith that existed outside of Tarisius before the coming of the fog?'

'Yes, I have footage of it. I have footage of it only minutes prior to the outbreak of the gas that killed many people and destroyed Tarisus.'

'Can you show the footage to us?'

'You wouldn't want to see it. It's not good for the human eye to see what happened.'

'I'm willing to see anything. I don't back down on what I believe in.'

'What do you believe in?'

'I believe that the memory of those who died should never disappear regardless of what happened.'

'Are you willing to see widespread destruction?'

'Yes, I'll do whatever it takes to see the truth.' Andaliron turned to Sepalli. 'Would you be willing to do the same?'

'Yes, we need to know the truth.'

'I'll backtrack my technology to the day and time when the fog was unleashed onto Tarisius on one condition.' Chamonei started pressing buttons on his control pad.

'What condition are you imposing?' Andaliron asked

'My condition is that you prevent your child from what watching the footage that I'm going to show to you.'

'All right.' Andaliron nodded his head in agreement and turned to Sepalli who also nodded her head. Sepalli took out another chair, placed her baby on the chair and turned the chair around in such a way that it was directly facing her with its back to the screen. Chamonei handed Sepalli with the numbers for a code to lock a safety strap around a seat. Sepalli thanked him for the code, took hold of a strap that was attached to the chair and pressed the lock buttons that were needed to firmly lock a strap around the waste of her baby. Various

images of Tarisius began to appear on the screen until there was just one image outside of the city walls. It was an image of the black monolith that stood outside of Tarisius. Chamonei took a seat in front of Andaliron and looked upon what he saw with reluctance. A cloud of smoke appeared out of nowhere beside the monolith. In a matter of seconds, a man was immersing from out of the smoke. He was a tall man with a shaved head and was dressed in grey garments from head to foot. Without uttering a word, both Andaliron and Sepalli knew who it was. Discomfort was on the faces of both of them as they recognised the face of Finandarl. Without any warning, Sepalli's baby was able to take the strap off her waist and turn around to have a look at the screen. She saw the image of Finandarl and shook her head with disapproval.

'Yucky, yucky.' She said.

After she said these words, everyone looked at her in silence. Chamonei used the control pad to freeze the images on the screen before he returned his attention to the baby. He came over to where the baby was seated.

'I can't believe what I've just seen. I never thought that a baby would know how to release itself from a seat belt.'

'We're just as surprised as you are. I'll take her out of the room. You and Andaliron can watch what happened while I look after my baby.' Sepalli said.

Leaving the room, Sepalli kissed her baby on the cheek. She continued to look into the eyes of her baby as they passed through a corridor. A question was recurring in her mind. *How can my baby know what she knows?* Everything happened so suddenly without Sepalli being given the time to grasp what she saw. She could not understand how a baby could break off a seat belt with the kind of physical strength that she had. As her memory returned to the state of the safety belt, she realised that it was not broken. It was in exactly the same condition as it was before being strapped around her baby's waist. There was only one possible explanation for what happened. Her baby must have pressed the right set of numbers to release the belt. She found herself a seat and sat on it.

'How did you do it?' She said as she looked her baby in the eyes.

The baby did not answer her. She simply smiled. As she gazed into the eyes of her baby, Sepalli sensed something unique about her. Although she strongly felt that there was something mysterious about the baby who she was holding in her arms, she could not give an explanation of what it was. Sepalli looked into each iris. Each iris was a mirror image of herself. She recalled how her baby reacted to the moving images of Finandarl in the same way that she did. She realised that her baby's words of disapproval upon seeing the face of Finandarl were identical to the level of the disgust that she felt at the sight of him. From that moment onwards, everything became clear to her. Sepalli's baby had developed an innate disgust for black magic in exactly the same way as her. It was now clear that her baby could distinguish between right and wrong even before she knew the words that would be needed to properly express her feelings. An idea came to Sepalli's head. It would be wrong for such a unique baby to go around without a name. She needed to think up a name that could properly address her baby's capacity to perceive things that only intelligent adults were able to perceive. As she continued looking into the eyes of her baby, a name came to mind. She would call her baby Iris. The image of herself that Sepalli could see reflected in the eyes of Iris, convinced her that Iris would grow up to be like her but only much better. Sepalli could already see the signs. If unique gifts were present in Iris at such a tender age, these gifts

would become much greater in years to come. With patience and with love, Sepalli was committed to one goal. That goal would be the nurturing of the gifts of Iris to her full potential.