

The Tree Farm

Scriptor Paul Hathcoat



Chapter 10 ~ Porta In Infinitum

Brilliant white LED landing lights cut through the inky dark like soft gold butter.

Sparkling dust lifts and swirls around Ryan as we settle onto the empty terrace. Her rotors wind down with a gentle sigh, and then... silence.

Not the lonely silence of abandonment.

The sound of silence in a place that has been forgotten but waits to be remembered.

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No guards. No tourists. No bold banners. No requirements. No expectations. Only tumbled stone and shadows.

I glance toward the ruins. The ancient temple of Dawn crouches in the half-light, its shape broken by time but not defeated by it. A partially hidden, faint golden glow flickers in the ruins of time. The glow is not bright or demanding. It's just alive enough to be noticed.

Then, glancing to my right. Beyond the long black shadows, I see a thin pink seam glowing on the horizon. My beloved, Summer, and her Sisters are waiting beyond the horizon.

"Where is everybody?" Sara whispers.

"Ee'sha sa'ta," Motta rejoices.

"Wut?" I ask.

"She is here," Eleni translates.

Motta points to the temple.

Sara smiles and agrees, "Youp, Motta."

"Ee'na kesh," Motta breathes a sigh of relief.

"Youp, Motta, we are home," Sara reassures.

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“Home,” I say softly. Ancient of days. “Summer Solstice. Fleet day. Everyone is back at Sybaris, preparing a happy but tearful goodbye for the sailing Fleet.”

Motta presses her face to the glass. “Sa’ree na oo?” Motta enthusiastically asks.

“What did she say?” I ask.

“Robert, she respectfully asks your permission to get out,” Sara says.

I smile. “Youp,” I respond. “Ok.”

I unlatch the canopy, and it whooshes open with a cool, soft alpine breath carrying quartz dust, wildflower scent, and something older. I detect musty primordial stone that has been waiting to be touched.

“Ok.” Motta steps out first. Not carefully. Not cautiously. She steps like a child skipping into a promise.

Her boots hit the stone, and she spins once, arms wide.

“Ee’la so’rae!” Motta tries to say it Atlantian. “Hap-pee,” she laughs.

Her voice echoes gently across the terrace, then fades into the open sky.

A sober, solemn Sara follows more quietly, eyes scanning the star-spangled horizon for hope.

I jump out. Eleni pauses me.

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“Robert, it’s cold outside. Can I wait in the T-pod?”

“Nope, you may not. Get on your windbreaker and let’s go. Now,” I insist.

I gather my fluffy flock and parade them up the short trail to the temple. Dawn is waiting for us. Motta jumps into the golden light, followed by Sara. Eleni hesitates. “Get in, it’s what you need.” I follow.

I am instantly bathed in cool, refreshing, golden white joy. I remember the feeling that I have known from the beginning of time.

“Welcome, my Son,” says the soft, sweet, reassuring, comforting musical voice of Dawn.

“Thank you, my Goddess, my heart, soul, and my Queen.”

“You have been a naughty little Robot, but we can talk about that later.”

“I know, right, the Nyx Triplets thing, but...”

“Robert. I did not bring you here to talk about Nyx and your daughter.”

“My daughter?” I’m surprised. “What daughter. Did I knock up one of my horney Sasquatch cousins?” I ask.

“Null, the goddess of Unbeing.”

“I, ah, Null?” I stutter.

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"I will tell you more about your beautiful, bright daughter. You will meet me at the Queens Bath. I will introduce you to Null, and the two can discuss her future, and her mother, Nyt."

"Can I meet her now?"

"No."

"Ok," I sulk.

"Robert, you were brought here to gather your sisters. In answer to your prayers, they are now healed. They know my love. They are blessed, you too, my Son."

"Umm, I humbly thank you, my Queen, I sob.

My mothers?" I wipe away my tears.

"They are with me. They are joyous. They watch over you. They sing. They play with their beautiful granddaughter, Null."

"What should I do now, my Queen?"

"Gather, guard, and love your sisters. Go..."

Her light fades, and her voice is now distant. Looking around, the girls are just standing there with me. Speechless, they look blissed out.

"Girls, you ok?"

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"Imok," Motta responds. "Ima good, ok. Hap-pee!"

"Sara?" I question. "Did you hear her voice?"

"Robert, I didn't hear her voice. I just feel good, I feel free. I'm happy again."

"Eleni?" I wait for her response.

"Little brother, I'm not mad at Mimi and Magnus. I'm not worried about Daddy. I'm relieved. And I feel a thousand happy things that I can't tell you about now."

"Good job, Queenie," I mutter.

Maybe the world woke up for us.

The eastern edge of the sky begins to pale.

Gold creeps into blue.

And somewhere beneath the stone, I feel something begin to breathe.

Follow me, girls, I have something more to show you."

I gather up my eager girl army and march them over to the edge of the Flat Irons.

Girls gathered at the cliff's edge, the Temple behind us, the world opens wide in front of us. The rocky land drops away into a rolling ocean of stone, mist, and sleeping desert prairie. The river below is only a silver thread of dust this time of year, whispering instead of singing.

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The horizon begins to breathe.

I lift my open arms to the sky.

“Fornax, the goddess of Summer,” I say softly. Then, louder, with reverence, “Behold
Three sunrises.”

Light spills upward in layers. Gold. Rose. Pale fire. The sky doesn’t ignite all at once. It
unfolds.

Eleni squints. “I only see one.”

Motta tilts her head, eyes wide, unblinking. “Three,” she says gently and holds up
three fingers. Not arguing. Not boasting. Just stating.

Sara studies the horizon again, slower now. “I think, I see Her and Her Sisters.”

I smile.

“Sybaris doesn’t belong to one star,” I say. “She belongs to Fornax, a triplet star
system. Three sisters bound in gravity, dancing around one heart.”

The first light brightens.

“That brightest one is Summer,” I continue. “The star we feel the most. She gives
warmth, courage, and growth. She is the sun, plebs think it is the sun.”

A second glow becomes visible, faint but undeniable.

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“That is Spring. She is gentler. She brings beginnings, curiosity, forgiveness.”

A third shimmer, almost unpreceptible, softer still, like a memory. “And Autumn. She carries beautiful but sad endings. She teaches us how to let go.”

Motta’s hand slips into mine. She understands what I’m saying. Good girl.

“And Winter?” Sara asks quietly.

I nod.

Winter is the fourth Sister. A cool brown star. Far away. Her orbit is so wide that she only visits us across ages. She lives beyond the distant cold Mare Tenebrae, the Sea of Shadows, where even comets hesitate. She is not gone. She is waiting. We do not experience the rage of Winter here on Sybaris, except for a few cooler months at high altitude.

The sky continues to bloom.

“These stars aren’t just astronomy,” I say. “They are the bodies of the goddesses. Or maybe the goddesses are the souls of the stars. Depends on which language you believe in.”

Motta whispers, almost to herself, “Ee’la so’rae. My, heart, bright,” she stutters and covers her chest.

I turn to Motta eye to eye. “Fornax rules Sybaris. Our tides. Our calendars. Our myths. Our children. We are born under three lights, even when we only remember one.”

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"Ima nope, Robot. Ima ok."

The desert prairie below us stirs as the first warmth touches it.

I clap my hands softly. "Alright, explorers. You have time. Meadow. River. Gems. Gold nuggets. Flowers. Doink responsibly."

Motta laughs and runs first.

Sara follows, already scanning the ground for treasures.

Eleni hesitates, then smiles and trails after them, shaking her head like she pretends she's too grown for this. She isn't, she's a child.

I remain on the cliff, watching the goddess's dance of the spheres.

And because Dawn is still with me.

And there are things a King does not say out loud. Even when the sky is listening.