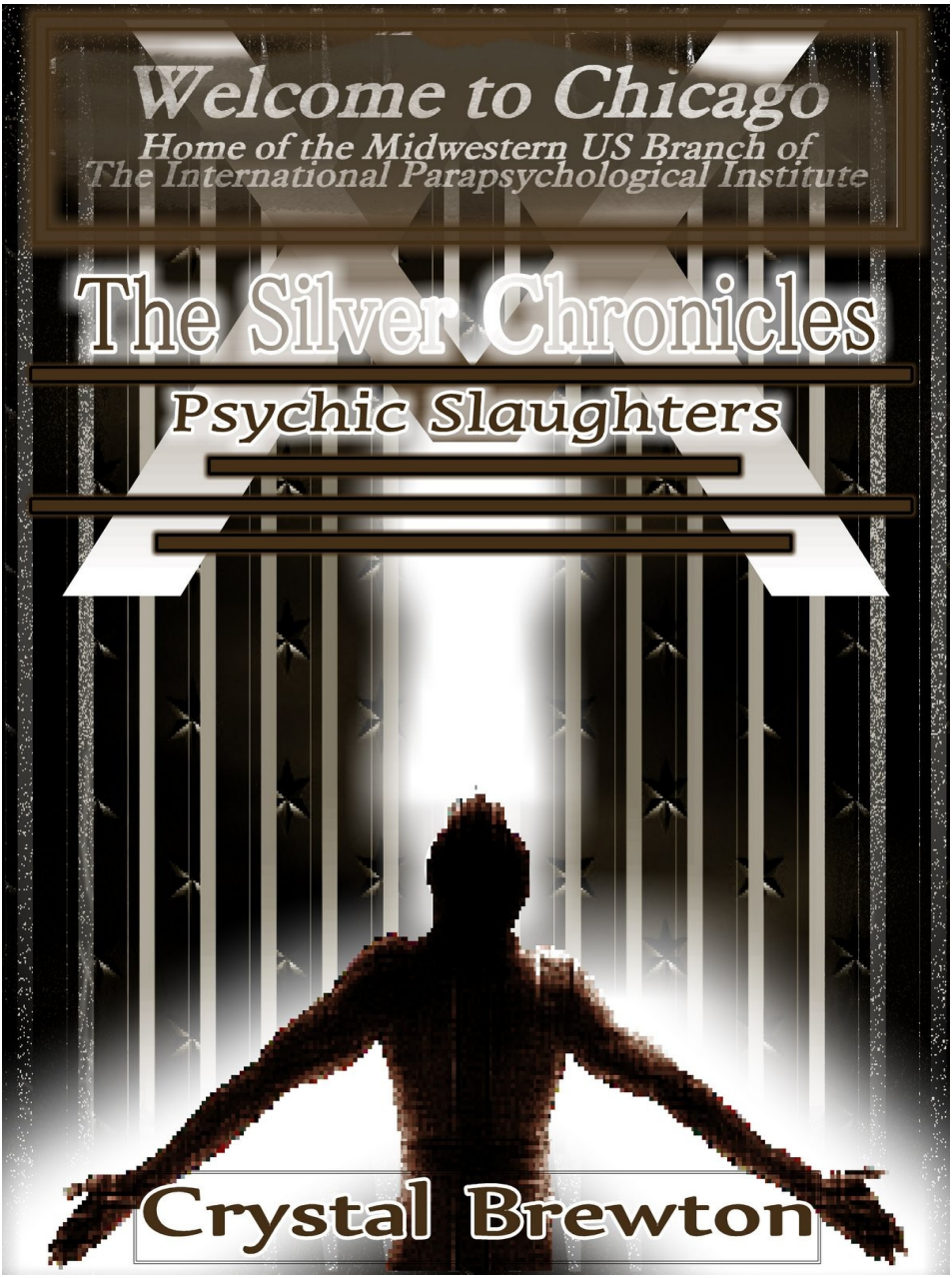

Welcome to Chicago
Home of the Midwestern US Branch of
The International Parapsychological Institute
The Silver Chronicles
Psychic Slaughters
Crystal Brewton

The Silver Chronicles: Psychic Slaughters

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

The Silver Chronicles: Psychic Slaughters

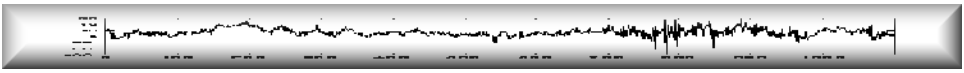
All rights reserved

Copyright © 2006 by Crystal Brewton

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form without written permission by the author. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Table of Contents

Prologue
1 The Schola Scientia
2 Home Sweet Home
3 Dinner and Conversation
4 The Stainless Steel Box
5 Mary Ann Watson
6 The Psychic Slaughters
7 Weddings and ...
8 ... Reunions
9 Clark Parkenson
10 The Curse of the Black Cat
11 Another Clue
12 Relocated
13 Surprise
14 Killing Time
15 Quies
16 Lincoln Anderson and the Truth
17 The Funeral and Memorial
18 The Castigators
19 Confrontation
20 A New Start



Prologue

When her husband opened the door, she felt a measure of hope. Together. They would take care of this intruder together. He froze when he saw the intruder and she could literally feel his anger surge. The door that her husband had just walked through now slammed closed as if pushed by hurricane winds.

She watched as the men stared each other down for countless minutes. Their faces were identical masks of hatred and she wondered when the fight would begin.

Suddenly the intruder smiled. "I am glad you're home," he all but purred. "We have something to tell you." He looked at her and took a step closer to her, putting his arm around her shoulders and pulling her into a one-armed embrace. He kissed the top of her head, tenderly. "Don't we, my love?"

She pushed him away with a physical force she was not aware she possessed. "No, we don't!" she snapped.

The intruder raised a single eyebrow. "We don't?" He sounded surprised. Then he shrugged nonchalantly. "I can tell him, lover." He looked at the husband. "She has made her decision. She has decided to be with the man she loves," he smiled in sympathy. "Sorry old friend, but in the end, you just aren't as good a man as I am. You never have been."

She watched as her husband looked at the intruder evenly. "I know who she loves," he explained in measured tones. "And that's not all I know. I know who the Psychic Slaughter Murder is, as well..." his voice took on an edge. "It's over."

The intruder threw his head back and laughed as if he'd never heard anything so wonderful. "Well it's about damn time!" he humored. "But it's not over. There is still the fifth murder to concern yourself with Detective."

She looked between the two men as they stared tryingly at each other. The intruder was the Psychic Slaughter murderer? Of course, she thought. It made perfect sense. Shuddering, she realized that would make the fifth murder victim ...

"You are under arrest," her husband announced calmly, taking a step toward their uninvited and unwelcomed guest. "You have the right to remain silent."

The intruder lifted his eyebrows and the woman screamed again as her

husband flew through the air and slammed against the now closed front door of the house. Her husband's eyes were wide opened and she saw in them a raw and pure anger. But he didn't move. Didn't blink. He just hung there and stared.

The intruder walked calmly up to him. "I choose not to exercise my right to remain silent!" he hissed. "I came here in good faith knowing that she would finally make a wise decision," he looked back at her and she shrank away, only to find herself unable to move.

She watched as the intruder, the only free person in the house, continued to speak to her husband. "You stole my woman!" he suddenly raged. "You stole her and you convinced her to make the worse decision of her life... to cross me!"

He slowly turned to face her and try as she might, she could not move a single muscle to free herself. "Now is your time to redeem yourself" he whispered in her direction. "I know you love me. Tell him," he motioned to her husband, his rival, "and I will free both of you."

She felt suddenly that she would be able to use her mouth to speak. "Go to hell!" she spat.

The intruder raised his eyebrows at her. "You are a stubborn cunt, aren't you?" he snapped, although his voice was soft. He began to walk towards her. "I don't remember you being quite as stupid as this." He slapped her sharply across the face when he reached her. "You will tell him that you love me," he explained as he grabbed her by the hair on the back of her head. "That you belong to me..." Then. he forced his lips against hers

She shook her head back and forth, until finally she was able to break the non-consensual kiss. "Never!" she spat in his face.

Rage filled the intruder's face and she felt herself flying through the air. She felt her back connect with her living room wall and she dropped quickly to the couch below.

The intruder walked towards her and she found herself floating in the middle of the room. She could see her husband had also moved. He now floated several inches off of the floor. It was obvious that he was still incapable of movement on his own. It was also plain that his rage had not abated one whit.

The intruder looked at him. "It is so cliché to say that if I can't have her, no one can," he shrugged. "But it is true." He stood facing her with his feet planted firmly apart and his hands folded casually across his chest. He looked at her. "Do you love me?" he asked, as if the answer was obvious.

"No!" she screamed, struggling to move, even though she knew it was useless.

She could hear and feel as the clothes were ripped from her body by

invisible forces.

"Shame..." the intruder whispered. "You were so beautiful. Once...!"

She felt as the small but shallow cuts began to appear on her legs. They stung, as if they were paper cuts. She hissed, more in annoyance than in pain. But her heart was throbbing in her chest and she was afraid.

The intruder walked beside her naked, floating form. He grabbed a breast and pinched her nipple, hard. He watched as she bit her lip, and he chuckled. He moved his hand along her body and paused at her thigh. He pinched again, still watching for her reaction. He ran his hands along her legs, smearing the blood that was welling from the cuts he'd made appear there.

He shook his head. "Blood does not look pretty on your beautiful skin, my love," he whispered loudly enough for both his victim and her husband to hear him. He ran his hands over the cuts again and they vanished.

For a moment she felt relief wash over her. She could handle a few cuts, and now even they were gone. She did not like the way the intruder was looking at her, but she did not let her unease show on her face. She felt her body lower to the floor and saw her husband's eyes follow it, unwillingly.

She felt herself settle onto the floor gently, as if she had been placed there by her husband before a gentle bout of lovemaking. But her husband was floating paralyzed, unable to do anything to her. Or for her...

The first kick came suddenly to her unprotected ribs and the cry of pain came from her so quickly that she could not have stopped it if she tried. The second came almost immediately after and the pain caused tears to come from her eyes. She was a kind and gentle woman who had never known a word of anger from anyone and had never had a hand raised to her in anger... or a foot thrust into her rib cage.

"Mine!" the intruder screamed with each kick. He moved around her unmoving body, kicking his way down her side. She felt her ankle break as he moved from her right side to her left and delivered a swift, hard and sure kick there. For the first time she screamed loudly and it was then she realized that not only could she move her vocal cords, but the rest of her body as well.

Of course, she still could not very well get up and run away with a broken ankle. She tried to curl up and protect her body as best she could. She knew she was sobbing now, but she could not help herself. The pain was too great.

The intruder dropped to his knees in front of her face and looked at her. She realized that he had compassion in his eyes and it sickened her.

"My love..." he begged, softly. "Don't make me hurt you anymore. Give yourself to me now and I will fix all the damage you have made me do to you."

She was panting with the pain in her ribs, legs and broken ankle. She did not respond to him using words. She simply glared at him through the tears of pain in her eyes.

She felt her body moving and soon found herself looking at her husband. She sobbed at the look of horror in his eyes and face. He was helpless to do anything for her and all three of them knew it.

"Look at him, my love. You have caused him pain, as well. Do you want him to keep watching me hurt you? Tell him now who you love, and this will all be over. We will leave here and get on with our life together. Just tell him who you love."

She looked at the intruder who had beaten her so badly, and then with an effort, she turned her head and eyes towards her husband.

"I love you..." she said in as strong a voice as she could muster.

The intruder stared at her for a full minute before he got slowly to his feet. "I see..." he said, almost to himself.

She felt the ability to move her own body taken away from her again. As if she could have moved in the first place...

An hour later, she wanted to be dead. She wanted the pain to stop. Anyone else would have lost consciousness long ago, but the intruder knew more than most humans. He kept her awake and aware for every last well-placed kick he delivered to her before he bored and set his psychic mind elsewhere. One by one, he tore her fingernails from her fingers, then moved his attention to each of her toes. He picked up each nail and flung it at the man who remained floating nearby, watching as tears streamed down his face as he watched his wife being tortured.

Her tormentor then took a step back and looked at her prone body, now a coffee colored brown spotted all over with black and purple bruises, except for the tips of her fingers, which were raw and bleeding.

Suddenly, she felt a pain enter her body that made the last hour or so of torture seem almost pleasant by comparison. She felt her mind try to snap and give her at least some peace, but the intruder kept her mind together. He did not let her go insane.

The intruder made the woman rise into the air until she was at his waist height. "I know you are in pain," he informed her, quietly. "Tell me who you love... and mean it... and I will make it stop." His voice was gentle. "You know what to say to me to make the pain go away."

She once again looked at her husband. "I'm so sorry..." she sobbed, softly. She made sure their eyes and minds were connected. *'I love you. You. Only*

you...' she said, knowing the intruder would not hear her private words to her husband.

But he sensed what she had said. His face colored with anger, but all he did was nod.

She knew what he was planning to do and could only whimper as his clothes simply vanished into thin air, leaving him naked before her. She turned to look at her husband and saw even more tears falling down his face.

She bit the intruders tongue when he tried to force it into her mouth and he punched her so hard she saw stars before her eyes. But he didn't try to kiss her again. That wasn't really what he wanted her body for, anyway.

"You want to look at him, then look at him!" the intruder screamed as he roughly spread her legs as far apart as he could without dislocating her hips.

Try as she might, she could not close her eyes. That would not have kept her from feeling the pain when he entered her so roughly. She could not even turn her head or move her eyes from her husband as the intruder slammed himself roughly into her over and over again.

Tears fell down her eyes as she communicated with her husband.

'I love you...' she whispered into his mind.

'I love you, too...' he mentally replied from his helpless position.

The intruder took hold of her head as he continued to thrust into her harder and faster. "Why... Couldn't... You... Just... Love... Me...!" he demanded to know.

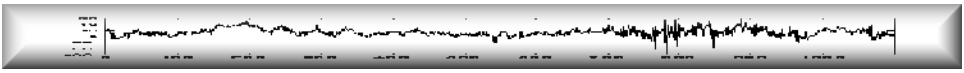
She never replied, and he broke her neck as he climaxed, finally ending her pain.

Her husband was still staring into her eyes when the life left her. Suddenly, he dropped to the floor with a solid thud.

The Psychic Slaughter Murderer vanished into thin air.

The husband scrambled over to his dead wife and gathered her into his arms. She was his life... his inspiration. Without her, he felt completely alone.

Even though he wasn't...



1 The Schola Scientia

With a small smile on his lips, he took a final look at the island where he had lived for the last eight years. He was leaving today. There was no graduation ceremony. He would simply move on to his first assignment.

His first assignment... He looked at the manila envelope in his hand. He hadn't seen many envelopes in his time on the island. Almost all the communication at the Schola Scientia was done through telepathy. The only time he wrote was when he'd visited home, and he hadn't done that in almost a year now. He missed Chicago. And he hoped that his first assignment would allow him to go back there, if only for a little while.

"Silver!"

He turned at the sound of his name. Four men were running towards him... his former schoolmates. He smiled and lifted his envelope to them in greeting. They all carried one just like it.

The four men stopped when they reached Silver. "We were wondering where you'd got to, Brewton," Christopher MacFinlay almost chided in his thick Scottish accent.

"Just off by myself a bit," Silver replied, grinning.

"You haven't opened your assignment sheet yet," the clipped British accent of Satya Zala commented.

"Don't you want to know where you're going to wind up, amici?" Vincent Sulli teased, in almost perfect English.

Christopher scoffed, his bright blue eyes snapping. "He probably already knows. No telepath can block Silver."

"He'll go to Chicago," Vincent said with surety. "You don't have to *read* to know that."

"Then you'd be with me," Satya grinned. "Good thing. I'm too small to protect myself in the big bad city." And he pulled himself up to his full height, which was only five foot two inches tall.

Silver walked up to Satya, his best friend at the Schola Scientia. Silver was the tallest person in their class, standing at six foot nine. "Like you need protecting," he scoffed, looking down at Satya. "You're the strongest

Psychoportationist this school has ever trained, I'll bet." He handed him the envelope. "You read it."

All of the men fell silent as Satya took the envelope from Silver. "You should read this you know," Satya suggested. "It is yours..." But he opened it as he spoke. He looked at it for a moment before he began to read it silently.

Christopher and Vincent grinned as they Read the tiny Hindu. Silver was also grinning, giving in to temptation at last as Satya read. Silver heard each word from Satya's mind half a second before the Hindu read it out loud:

To: Silver Brewton, Magna Cum Laude, Schola Scientia, Class of 3020

From: Zareb Lannamann, Magister, Schola Scientia and Apsara Zala, IPI, Chicago

Re: First assignment

Dear Mister Brewton,

Your assistance has been requested at the Midwestern United States branch of the International Parapsychological Institute, located in Chicago, Illinois. You will report to Stone Brewton and Apsara Zala, who head that particular branch. Please report to her on June the 15th at 8:00 am.

Zareb Lannamann

Silver threw his head back and breathed a sigh of relief. Chris slapped Silver on the back. "You couldn't possibly have thought they would send you someplace else, could you?" he asked laughing. "You were born to find psycho Polleo. Like your father and his father... Brewtons are born Protectors. Everyone knows that."

Vincent came closer to shake Silver's hand. "You can celebrate now!" he assured his friend, and they all began to walk across the island towards the docks. Their class had decided long ago that they would ferry to the mainland when they finished school.

Chris glanced down at Vincent. "You aren't planning on celebrating?"

Vincent snorted. "I am going to Moscow," he almost growled. "I wanted Venice. I have little reason to celebrate."

His friends all laughed at him. They were approaching the dock and saw a group of three women congregated.

"You might just get to say good-bye properly to Atia, if you play your cards

right," Chris grinned, rather wolfishly.

"Where have you been?" Silver asked with a mock disbelieving tone. "We haven't been seeing each other in a long time. Years... I have who I want, thanks."

Chris raised his eyebrows as he swaggered towards the girls. "Betters my own chances, is all!" he grinned.

"You don't get much oxygen up there, do you?" Vincent laughed. He often teased Silver and Chris about their height. Chris had stopped growing at an even six feet tall. Vincent was in between him and Satya at five foot six. "I think I might try my hand at those ladies."

"I wasn't talking about Atia and Seia," Christopher grinned. "I was talking about Finlay."

Finlay O'Dwyer was a lovely, tall blond who leaned slightly to whisper into the ears of her female companions, Atia and Seia de la Greca. The three of them began to giggle as the four men approached.

Christopher swept Finlay into his arms and kissed her. Vincent turned red as Seia began flirting with him. Atia turned to Satya and Silver. Satya took her hand and kissed it chastely. She flushed and smiled down at him.

Silver watched as his class boarded the ferry to the mainland. The seven of them all sat together and chatted as the ferry left the island.

The girls were very chatty, which gave Silver the time he needed to watch the ocean go by without being bothered. He got what he wanted... he was going back to Chicago. For so long, he'd hardly dared to assume he would be. His father worked there, and would have requested him, but if it weren't for his grades, he wouldn't have his choice of Institutes.

Finlay called to him, from under Christopher's arm, "I don't believe you are going back to Chicago, Silver," she chastised. "You could go anywhere. Everyone wants you. The talented Polleo and drop dead gorgeous son of the talented Polleo and drop dead gorgeous Stone Brewton!"

Silver ripped his attention from the ocean face. "We are just plain Polleo. And you make us sound like a couple of sex fiends. What does being cute have to do with anything?"

Atia laughed and moved to Silver's side. "No," she corrected, her Latin accent thick. "Vincent is cute." And she giggled as Vincent blushed. "Satya is extremely cute." Satya turned two shades darker. "Christopher is one hell of a beautiful specimen," and Christopher raised his eyebrows at Atia's brashness, although he was used to it after eight years. "But you..." she leaned even closer to Silver and put her hand on his hard chest. "You, with your beautiful brown

eyes and that sexy hair..." He leaned down so she could run her fingers through his hair, hooking her hands behind his neck as her voice got deeper. "You have skin like Adonis."

Silver found himself now flanked on either side by the de la Greca twins. Seia leaned into his left side. "Golden brown, tanned all the time it seems," she said, running a hand on his chest, matching her sisters movements. "And so tall..."

Silver looked imploringly at Finlay who stood under Chris's arm laughing. "Don't look at me. I can't save you," she insisted.

The girls were gently moved to the side about a foot, and their contact with Silver was broken. "Hey!" Atia protested. "Who did that?" she asked, glaring at Silver.

"I did it," Satya confessed, softly. "I must do what I can to get the attention of the sex kittens of the class, don't I?" He cocked his head to the side and grinned a winning smile.

The ploy worked. Atia pounced on Satya, almost knocking him into the water.

"Take me Satya!" she screeched, laughing at least as hard as Satya was.

Seia put her arm around Vincent's neck and hopped up. He stuck out his arms and she landed in them.

Silver was left alone as flirtation reigned all around him. He returned to his thoughts, chuckling to himself a little.

He would be working with his father, or at least in the same building. Silver's father was Stone Brewton. He too had graduated top of his class at the Schola Scientia. He had gone to Chicago and married his mother, Rose, who had graduated Suma Cum Laude. His mother had given birth to him a year later, at the age of twenty-two. He was told he looked a lot like his mother, but he could not remember her. She had died when he was only two years old.

Stone Brewton had not begun dating again until Silver was ten years old. Not even Silver could deny that his father was, as Atia had so bluntly put it, drop dead gorgeous. Women were fawning over him all the time. But Stone had never remarried.

Silver had lived with his father until he was thirteen years old and had taken the entrance exams for the Schola Scientia, which he had passed with ease. He had then moved, with six others like him, to the island he was watching decrease in size as the ferry progressed. There he spent almost eight years studying and sharpening his mental skills. His specialization was the Kinetics. Pyro, Hydro and Psycho. His second specialty was Psychoportation. And he had now

graduated top of his class and was now returning to Chicago.

'To my father, also.' Silver corrected himself mentally.

He sighed. It was not just his father he wanted to go back to Chicago for.

The ferry approached land and his classmates all settled down and prepared to disembark. The bunch of them immediately headed for the nearest bar. Silver and Satya watched as their former classmates boozed it up. They were paired off within hours and soon began to leave the bar for points unknown. Silver watched them with half a smile on his face.

"You two better be careful," Vincent teased as he groped at Atia, who was feeling no pain. "Someone might think you're together."

It was a favorite joke among the four men as they grew up at school together. Neither Silver nor Satya had been involved in any sort of serious relationship. Satya swore he would not take a woman until he was married. Silver had other reasons.

"And what makes you think we're not?" Satya teased, grinning.

Vincent was too inebriated to really think about this statement much. He just shrugged and dragged Atia out of the bar.

They watched them go. Silver sighed and paid the tab for both himself and Satya. They would be sleeping in a nearby hotel before they flew to Chicago in the morning.

"You will see your lover soon," Satya whispered in Silver's ear when he bent down to grab his trunk. He opened the door for him. "And you'll find nothing has changed."

Silver grinned at his best friend, the only person in school who knew his secret.

"I hope so, Satya," he whispered back. From instinct, he ducked his head as he entered the room.

He sighed as he lay on the hotel bed, his legs hanging off the edge. He adjusted himself so that he was diagonal across the bed. He just was not comfortable. At his father's house and at school, he'd had a mattress specially designed for his tall frame. Here, there was no such luxury. He gave up and got off the bed and went to look out of the window. He pulled up a chair and sat staring out the window, thinking of his school years and his lover.

Silver loved school. He was finally with kids like himself, and it had been a dream come true for him. He'd made many friends while at this school. And, besides finding the Kinetics and Psychoportation, which he was a natural at, he also found all the normal things all teens find. Sex.

He'd lost his virginity to Atia while they were in their Third year. She had

had a crush on him since they first met and campaigned to get him to have sex with her. He finally gave in to her. He didn't know if fifteen was a good age or a bad age to get involved in sex. Silver was a very sought after conquest, as it turned out. He was tall and handsome and everyone knew his name because of his father. Eventually, he'd had sex with many of the girls in school. But that first time was the most difficult thing he ever went through. But he quickly figured out how to get over his impotence problems. Fantasy.

He did not fantasize about girls when he was with one. He fantasized about guys. And he found that his strong ability to block his mind from other telepaths came in very handy. It was also this ability that was one of the things that made him so attractive to the girls of the school. They never knew if he really wanted them or not.

His first experience with another male was with his best friend, Satya. Satya and Silver had shared a room from the beginning of school to the end and it was lucky for them that they had become such good friends. Satya had guessed at Silver's preferred sexuality by their second year of school and had offered himself to experimentation.

Satya was a very scientific type. His own specialties were Metamorphosis and Psychometabolism, although he never used these gifts on himself. He was fortunate to be very confident in himself. But he was very curious about sex and who had it with whom. He was fascinated by his roommate, so tall and broad and closed. That he could not break down Silver's barrier was truly fascinating to Satya. He had to work to get into his friends mind.

Satya and Silver experimented with sex together in their room at night. When Silver was taken by Atia, he told Satya about it. Satya took one look at his friend's face and said, "You are not meant to be with women, Silver," as if the idea of Silver having sex with a woman was ludicrous.

But Silver tried to fit in. Satya tried to help him by denying him sex and trying to get Silver to just accept that he was gay. Silver had one miserable relationship with the girls in his school after another. Then Silver met *the one*. It was at the beginning of his Fifth year. The first day of school, September the eighth... Silver's eighteenth birthday.

At Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth years, all advanced students took their specialties together. And he met Gabriel.

Gabriel Kinlan was in his Seventh year, transferred from the UK Schola Scientia. He was top in his class in the UK and there was no change with the transfer. Silver had dropped several books when he had first set eyes on Gabriel. He'd stopped dead in his tracks and stared.

Gabriel seemed to pick up on something, not unusual at the Schola Scientia, and glanced over at Silver. Their eyes locked for a moment before Silver's attention was diverted by Satya, who was chastising him for dropping his books.

One of the most attractive things to Silver about Gabriel was his height. Gabriel was the only student in the school, the only person on the entire island for that matter, who was taller than Silver.

They began hanging out together. Gabriel specialized in Farsensing and the Kinetics. They became fast friends, growing closer by the day. And then it happened. And it was Satya who brought it about.

Satya took Silver and Gabriel to a remote corner of the island that was uninhabitable enough that hardly no one ever went there. Satya sat them both down on a rocky cliff next to each other and faced them.

"Silver, I want you to let down that brick wall of yours," he ordered, frowning at Silver. "Then I want you," he looked at Gabriel, "to Read him."

Both Silver and Gabriel stared at him.

"Just do it," Satya demanded, a hint of menace in his voice. "Or I'll Move you into the ocean somewhere. You'll just appear at about ten thousand feet. Maybe I can even wrangle up a shark or two."

Neither of the young men needed to be told that Satya was a good enough Psychoportationist that he could probably do exactly as he threatened. Silver took a deep breath and stared into the water, freeing himself of the walls he'd built over the course of his life to keep other Polleos, those who were Able, from sensing him using either farsensing or telepathy. And he felt Gabriel as the older student gently probed his thoughts. And Gabriel discovered exactly how Silver felt.

After about a minute, Satya commanded, "Switch," and they did. Silver Read Gabriel. Gabriel opened his mind to Silver as he'd never opened his mind to anyone, and Silver learned exactly what Gabriel was feeling at that moment.

Satya nodded curtly, although neither Gabriel or Silver noticed. "There," he pronounced with finality. "Now you both know what I have known for three months. I hope you can deal with it." And he turned around and climbed off of the cliff, leaving Silver and Gabriel alone.

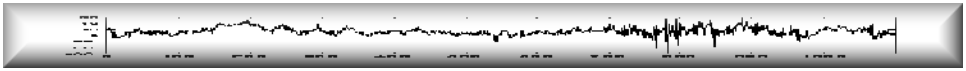
Gabriel spoke first. "I didn't think..." he began. They had both closed themselves again. "It seems you have been with every girl in this school."

Silver grimaced. "Not every one. But I've been with a lot of them." And they both laughed. "And most of them were dying to get you, too," he shrugged. "I can't say I blame them. You are the most magnificent creature I have ever seen."

Gabriel leaned over and kissed Silver for the first time. They did not have to

tell each other "I love you," but they did.

"Four and a half years now." Silver whispered to himself. He put his feet on the narrow window sill and went to sleep in the chair, looking forward to his flight back to Chicago.



2 Home Sweet Home

Silver closed the door to his new house and sighed with pleasure, surveying his new home. He nodded to himself as he thought his father had done it again. Large and spacious enough to accommodate a man of Silver's size without making him feel cramped.

Silver laughed to himself as he walked around the house. He had honestly believed his father was joking when he said he would build Silver a house if he graduated Magna Cum Laude. Silver was aware that his grandfather bought Stone a large house when he'd left school, but somehow he had not believed the same would happen to him.

The kitchen, living room, dining room and a library on the first floor were all spacious. Silver took the stairs from the kitchen two at a time to emerge at the second floor. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a second library were up here. Silver had not seen the attic or basement. Those could wait until later.

He went into his new bedroom, seeing it for the first time. The movers had arranged everything according to his specifications perfectly. His bed was a custom job. Seven feet three inches long and six and a half feet wide, it was made up with sheets and comforters made to his specifications.

He grabbed a quick shower then threw himself naked onto the huge bed and thanked his stars for his father. He knew that Stone was doing it partly out of love and partly out of guilt, but Silver could live with it. Sinking into the mattress with a satisfied smile, he closed his eyes and let out a deep breath. The afternoon sun was just beginning to come through the western windows of the room. He thought how good it was to be home as he drifted off.

The phone startled him out of his light sleep. He grabbed the receiver.

"'Lo..." he grunted.

"Did I wake you?" The voice was British and very familiar.

Silver smiled up at the ceiling. "Yes," he grumbled with mock irritation. "I fell asleep thinking of you, wondering when you were going to call."

"I had to get your number first, didn't I?"

"I figured you'd have broken into my file before now. Or did you Read it

from someone?"

"You will find that Apsara is easier to Read than most," the voice informed him, cracking slightly with mirth. "I suppose I should let you sleep? You never could handle jet lag."

"Yes. Wake me when you get here. I sent you the keys before I left school."

"It'll take me a couple of hours in any event. I just needed to hear your voice." There was a pause. "I missed you."

Silver's smile broadened. "I missed you too. I'll see you when you get here."

They said their good-byes and Silver hung up. He placed his hands behind his head and drifted back to sleep thinking of seeing his love in a couple of hours.

Silver woke from a dream of oral sex to find it was only half dream. He raised his head and looked between his legs. Red hair covered the head that was sucking him. Silver moaned his pleasure as the redhead raised his head slightly and looked at him. Silver grinned, but found he could not speak. He fell back onto the mattress and lost himself in the sensation. He cried out with the orgasm and was just catching his breath when he felt his legs being lifted. Large hands planted themselves on either side of his shoulders.

His lover used the semen from Silver's orgasm to lubricate himself. Silver was so wonderfully relaxed that teasing his hole was not required. He felt his lover enter him and let out a breath. His legs were hooked over his lovers shoulders, and his lover slowly entered him completely.

Silver looked up into the grinning face of his long time lover.

"Gabriel..." he breathed, then could do little more than moan as Gabriel began to withdraw.

As Gabriel slowly entered and withdrew, he leaned into Silver and kissed him. "You said to wake you when I got here," he reminded his lover between his own moans of pleasure.

There was little conversation between the two. Their moans increased as Gabriel quickened his pace. Try as he might, he did not have the ability to last long this time. His orgasm rocked both of them. Gabriel withdrew and straightened Silver's legs so that he could lie on top of him. He then kissed Silver gently as he slid off of him to the right.

Silver rolled on his side and they were belly to belly. "It's been too long since you woke me like that," he purred between kisses.

Gabriel grinned as he caressed Silver's face. "I told you I missed you," he chuckled softly. "Then I come in here and you're laying on the bed. Naked. Excited. How was I supposed to resist you?"

Silver chuckled. "You weren't," he confessed, simply.

"I love you," Gabriel suddenly informed him, dead serious as he looked deep into Silver's brown eyes. "I missed you."

Silver stared back. "I love you," he returned. "I've missed looking into your eyes. So green... Like emeralds," he searched Gabriel's eyes as if looking for the emeralds hidden behind the eyes. He ran his fingers through the red hair. "And always on fire."

"Only for you, my love," Gabriel murmured, so softly Silver almost didn't catch it.

The phone rang. Silver did not take his eyes from Gabriel, but reached for the phone blindly.

"Hello," he paused and listened. "No, we're just laying here basking in the afterglow." Another pause and Silver chuckled. "You should pick it up again sometime. Hold on a sec." He rolled over, pushed a button on the phone, hung up and rolled onto his back.

"I put you on speaker, Satya," he announced.

Satya's voice came out only slightly muffled. "Gabriel Kinlan!"

"Satya, old chap!" Gabriel called, lying his head on Silver chest. Silver wrapped his arms around him. "It's been quite some time."

"Since last summer," Satya remembered. The differences in their British accents were obvious. "How are you?"

"Much better now, thanks," he answered, smiling and kissing the arms wrapped around him.

"I'll just bet!" Satya murmured, and there was the hint of a smile in his voice. "Now, on to business, shall we? I'm calling to invite you two to dinner. Good time to meet Violet."

Gabriel and Silver fished in their minds for the name, "Violet?" at the same time. Silver continued. "You are dating someone?"

"You obviously forgot," Satya chuckled. "Too busy daydreaming about tall redheads to pay me much mind."

Silver bit his lip. "Oops. Sorry!" he apologized, still trying to remember the name. "Violet. Yes, name sounds familiar. She's not Hindu. Couldn't be shorter if you dropped a house on her. I hope she's not like the last one. I wanted to drop a house on that one."

Satya laughed along with Gabriel. "She is shorter than I am, miracle of miracles," Satya told them when he stopped laughing. "And she is very open minded." And here he paused a moment. "She's Insciens. You know," Satya sighed. "Unknowing? Unaware? Not Polleo. Not Able."

"I know what an Insciens is, Satya," Silver breathed. "Your parents don't have a clue, do they?" he asked, beginning to chuckle.

"What are you laughing about?" Satya demanded. "It took you three years to tell your father about Gabriel."

Silver was still chuckling. "That was different and you know it," he protested. "My father is a laid back, open minded Westerner. He doesn't care if I'm gay. He only cares that I'm happy. And I had to tell him twice, in any event, remember? Now if Gabriel were Insciens. Well, Dad isn't that laid back..." He blew out a breath.

"I thought your parents were strict about that sort of thing," Gabriel remembered.

"They are," Satya replied. "But Mother has been working on Father and they have decided they will just let me realize on my own how useless the Insciens are."

"Does she know you are Polleo?" Silver asked, carefully.

"She knows. She wants to meet my best friend," Satya told them, sounding a bit exasperated.

Silver laughed again. "We'll meet her, but you better prepare her for us. She probably hasn't seen the likes of Gabe and I, Polleo or Insciens."

"Already taken care of," Satya announced. "Now meet us at Epulae at seven-thirty."

"We'll be there," Silver agreed. "See you then." And he cut the connection.

Gabriel leaned back into the bed. "I guess we'd better get dressed then?"

Silver glanced at the clock. "It's six-thirty now. I suppose we'd better." He leaned over Gabriel and kissed him hard. "Shower?"

"Sounds great," Gabriel purred. "But my suit is all rumpled now. Go figure..." he grinned.

"You still have clothes here. The movers probably sorted them with mine."

After a few minutes of rummaging through the closet, Gabriel found a pair of his jeans and a shirt. He scooped his tie off of the floor and tossed the whole bunch on the bed. He then joined Silver in the shower, where they washed each other thoroughly and had a great deal of fun doing it.

Silver found something to wear as Gabriel dressed. He put on underwear and socks and his jeans, grabbed a shirt and then found his sneakers. He felt Gabriel's arms snake around him as he stood.

"Pity to cover up a chest like that," Gabriel whispered in his ear, between nibbles.

Silver turned and kissed Gabriel full on the lips. "If I wasn't half starved, I would suggest we go back to bed and get reacquainted." He broke the kiss. They both put on their shirts. "However, it is Friday night. If you'd like to spend the weekend..." and he let the sentence hang.

"I would love to spend the weekend," Gabriel beamed, tucking in his shirt.

Silver nodded. "Good. I don't want to spend it alone," he admitted, jumping up and pulling Gabriel up by the hand. "Lets go."

They walked down the stairs together. "Who's car do we take?" Gabriel asked at the front door.

Silver locked the door behind them. "I want to drive the car Granddad gave me over Christmas break. Before he died. My inheritance. I've only driven it once."

So they walked across the lawn to the garage. Gabriel's Mercedes-Benz was parked on the right of the driveway. Silver opened the garage door and they both looked on his Christmas present, stored there since December.

It was a BMW. Silver came from a long line of tall men, and his father and grandfather both knew that he would need a roomy car.

The two men folded themselves into the Beamer. Gabriel smiled. "Almost as much room as the Mercedes," he noted, sounding impressed. "Must be nice having a rich Dad."

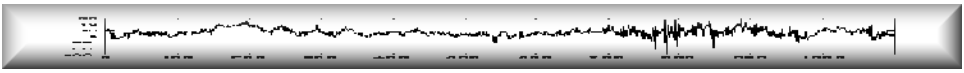
Silver laughed at him. "As opposed to having two rich ass parents? You have more money than I do and you know it."

Gabriel shrugged. "They didn't buy me a new house," he grinned devilishly.

"Lucky for me, or you would be in London," Silver chuckled, starting the car. "I would be spending the weekend in a custom made house all alone."

Silver hit the garage door opener as he pulled away from the house.

"Can't allow that now, can I?" Gabriel smiled, slipping a hand between Silver's legs.



3 Dinner and Conversation

The parking lot of the Epulae was full, as usual. Silver found himself driving to the nearest parking garage without even trying to find parking on the street. The attendant stared as the two men climbed out of the car.

Silver and Gabriel were so used to stares that they barely noticed them anymore. It was simply what came with being their height. They walked the four blocks to the restaurant holding hands, but not speaking.

They had to duck their heads to get into the front door of Epulae. They quickly spotted Satya and walked to the table, completely ignoring the hostess, who stared after them.

They shook hands with Satya and Violet before sitting. They sat next to each other and stretched out their long legs.

"I see you got one of my Dad's tables," Silver laughed, settling in.

"I thought it would be a good idea," Satya confessed. His legs were dangling, as the chair he and his girlfriend were in were higher than usual.

The waitress approached. "So this is what the new girl was talking about," she grinned at Silver and Gabriel. "She said there were giants back here!" She rolled her eyes. "She's one of those nervous enough about being around a bunch of psychics. She probably thought someone was messing with her eyesight."

"Hi Lisa," Silver greeted her. "How ya been?"

She shrugged. "I'm alive. That's nice." And she pulled out her pad. "I hear you graduated top of your class from that school of yours."

Silver turned half a shade darker. "Dad's been here," he moaned.

Lisa laughed. "Of course he's been here. The Institute owns this place. He's a regular. Talks about you all the time. He told me about that new house of yours too," she told him, sounding impressed. She looked at Gabriel. "And I'll bet you're glad he's back, too."

Gabriel turned red in his turn. Lisa chuckled as she leaned into Silver. "I've been keeping an eye on him for you."

Silver raised his eyebrows. "Good. He can be a slutty little bitch if you don't keep your eye on him," he whispered, loud enough for everyone at the table to hear.

Gabriel looked at Silver in mock outrage. "Humph!" he snorted. "You've been spying on me, have you? Well that's nice, isn't it? Some nerve."

Satya was snickering. Violet looked very anxious. Lisa stopped chuckling to say. "I think you're making your friend nervous."

Silver and Gabriel looked at Violet. "I'm sorry, love," Gabriel apologized. "We act like this all the time. Probably why Satya wanted us to come here, so we wouldn't embarrass him."

Violet smiled warily. Lisa tapped Silver on the shoulder with her pen. "How tall are you two again?" she asked and Gabriel noticed Violet perk up. Apparently this is something she also wanted to know.

Silver looked at Lisa, grinning. "I'm six foot nine and Gabriel is six foot eleven!" he laughed. "I'll never forget when I first saw him. I stopped dead in my tracks. Satya ran right into me."

Satya laughed, remembering. "Silver had never seen anyone taller than he was. He was the tallest in the school before Gabriel transferred from the UK."

Lisa sighed. "Shame..." she lamented. "I have a friend who just loves tall men. She would just about cream her pants to see you two."

Gabriel frowned slightly. "That is not an image I want to carry around with me all night, Lisa," he grumbled with a serious tone, but half a smile on his lips.

Lisa laughed. "Sorry, but it's true."

"Well, she can look, but that's it," Silver grinned, wrapping an arm around Lisa's shapely waist. "You are the only girl for me."

Lisa slapped his shoulder. "Please. You are as gay as a spring day. I can't do a thing for you."

Everyone at the table laughed at this, even Violet. "Well, you can get me one of those twenty ounce steaks and two baked potatoes."

Gabriel lit up. "Make that two," he spoke up, eagerly.

Lisa started writing. She looked over her pad at Satya. "Same for you?" she asked, her eyes twinkling.

Satya grinned. "I have never had an appetite to compete with these two," he sighed. "I think we'll stick to the salmon, thanks."

Lisa wrote, grinning. "A gentleman, ordering for the lady." She gave them one last smile and walked away.

Violet was watching Lisa walk away. She asked, "Is she," and she struggled a moment. "Polleo, right?"

Silver nodded, smiling. "Very good." he complimented. "But, no. Lisa is not Polleo; she's a Insciens, like you."

Gabriel lifted a single eyebrow. "But there is a difference..." he admonished

firmly.

Violet gasped and stared at Gabriel. "How did you...?" she asked.

Satya gave her half a grin. "All Polleo are telepathic, m'dear," he informed her. "We have to think about it among each other, sometimes. To keep them out of our head. Keep some privacy. And keep from being invaded by people we don't want reading our minds. But with Insciens it is different. We do not have to work on keeping their thoughts out. It is almost instinct. If not, we'd have the clatter of Insciens thoughts in our head all the time. Most of us learn how before we are three years old."

"You know Lisa is Insciens because she's a waitress. Don't get me wrong; Lisa is smart as a whip," Silver explained. "She's top of her own class at the University of Chicago. But she doesn't know the first thing about telepathy or farsensing or psychoportation." He shrugged. "At best, they are parlor tricks. At most, it is something she can admire, but not do."

"Polleos tend to be in business. The weakest of us illegally work the stock market or gamble in some shape, form or fashion," Gabriel's voice was slightly disapproving. "That's why we're all rich. Our hunches pay off!" he chuckled.

"The strongest of us..." continued Satya. "Silver and Gabriel. Myself. We wind up registered and at school. There are four schools around the world. I went to the US one. Gabriel went to the UK one, then transferred. They are rightfully called the Oceanic Institutes. They are Schola Scientia, the Schools of Knowledge, where we all graduated from, it's also known as the Pacific Institute. The school Gabriel went to is the Atlantic Institute. Also known as UK Schola Scientia. There are two others in the Indian Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. You know, the USOI, the UKOI, the IOI and the AOI."

Lisa reappeared with drinks for everyone. "I hear you are all legal now," she smiled, eying Satya and Silver. "Twenty-one and ready to take on the world."

"Just our corner of it," Silver demured, grinning.

Lisa touched him gently on the shoulder before walking off again.

"So what makes you so powerful?" Violet asked, baiting her boyfriend.

Satya looked at Silver and Gabriel. "Parlor tricks, gentlemen?" he asked. Both Silver and Gabriel shrugged. "Alright, then. Look at Gabriel. Watch his hair."

"Oh no, not the hair again...!" Gabriel moaned.

Violet watched as Gabriel's hair went from red to jet black to blond. Satya stared at him unblinking. Gabriel's hair went from a dark blond to a blond as pale as his skin. Then it filled in with his natural color. Gabriel ran his fingers through his red locks.

"He lives for changing my hair color," he bemoaned. "Thinks redheads are unnatural or something, he does."

Violet's mouth was open in shock. Silver laughed. "A simple parlor trick, like Satya said. He likes me with blue eyes from time to time. He scared the life out of me one morning. He got bored and Morphed me while I was sleeping. I woke up looking like an old picture of my grandfather he found somewhere. Blue eyes and blond hair. Another morning I woke to find black eyes and an afro. My mixed heritage fascinates Satya. I got him to change me back then I hung him out a window."

"You can't..." Violet began and Silver shook his head.

"I can Morph. It's not my Specialty, but I can do it ok.... I can, however, hang somebody out a third floor window without laying a finger on him," he told her, grinning. "Psychokinesis. I can also have an influence on fire and water."

"Then why don't you...?" Violet began again.

Gabriel waved a dismissive hand. "We aren't witches. We don't cast spells or ride brooms or any of that rot. There is no such thing as magic. Only Nature and the power of the mind. We can't do everything. We each have something we're good at and develop it at school."

Lisa was coming through the crowd holding a large tray. The tray suddenly rose far above her head and drifted over to their table. Lisa was right behind it. "Thanks, whoever did that."

Gabriel grinned. "Wouldn't you like to know." And he winked at Lisa as the plates arranged themselves in front of their proper recipients.

"Show off!" Lisa grinned at Silver. He winked at her and she turned and walked away, chuckling to herself.

Dinner was a cheerful meal. They chatted and laughed and joked about perfectly normal things. Violet learned that Silver was a rabid Cub fan. Gabriel earned a friendly punch on the arm when he commented, "See, it's not just Insciens who are insane."

Lisa reappeared once the meal was over asking how they enjoyed it. Gabriel winked at her. "You are beautiful and you cook too. How very wonderful." Lisa cleared the table and reappeared five minutes later with a carafe of coffee and one of water. Gabriel smiled. "She remembers!" he chuckled, but his smile faded when she tossed tea bags in front of him. "Blimey!" he groaned.

Lisa and Silver laughed at him. Lisa reached into her apron pocket and pulled out a tea strainer and a small package of tea leaves. Gabriel sighed. "I knew you loved me, sweetheart."

Lisa also produced two cigars, which she offered to Silver and Gabriel who

first looked to Violet, who shrugged, then took them with wide grins. She handed Gabriel a guillotine type cutter and he snipped the cigars. She laid a black ashtray on the table between the two smokers.

"And an Onyx?" Silver commented, raising his eyebrows. He and Gabriel lit the others cigar with pyrokinetics. "What's the occasion?"

"You are my favorite customers," Lisa informed them. "Well, next to your father, that is." and she patted Silver on the back. "And I don't care if you do have the hots for each other, you are two of the best looking men that come in here. Someday we'll have to go someplace together, so I can watch you in a normal environment. Someplace where you have to use a match to light a cigar." and with that she gave them another winning smile and left.

"She must be sincere!" Gabriel chuckled. "We are a couple of the best looking men to come in here. Well, next to your father, of course, Silver." And he dodged the fist sent his way.

Puffing happily, Silver and Gabriel sat back and visibly relaxed. "So, you two gonna tell us how you got together or what?" Silver asked, grinning at Satya and Violet around the Onyx.

"Actually I have you to thank for it," Satya told Silver.

Silver raised his eyebrows but said nothing.

"Last Christmas break, remember? You and I were supposed to meet for lunch then go off to Marshall Fields? Violet was in the booth behind me, being stood up, too." And he held up his hand, cutting off Silver's words before he had a chance to form them, in his mind or with his voice. "I understand why you blew me off."

Silver took the Onyx out of his mouth. "I didn't blow you off. I completely forgot about it. That was the day after Gabriel and I told my father about our relationship... again. The three of us were up till dawn talking about it and I didn't wake up until something like four o'clock the next afternoon."

Satya was nodding. "I know all that, Silver. I wasn't mad then and I'm not mad now. But I got to talking to Violet and it was great. I didn't have to worry about shields or anything, for a change. We went out once before I went back to school and we wrote each other while I was away."

"Is that what you were doing all that writing for?" Silver marveled. He looked at Violet. "Polleo don't do a lot of writing. Especially when we're in school. Almost all communication is done through telepathy. So imagine my surprise when Satya suddenly starts getting mail and sending mail. Everyone wanted to know what the deal was. Receiving a letter at school is unheard of. He wouldn't tell me a damn thing." He flicked the ash off of the Onyx, stuck it back

in his mouth and grinned around it at Satya and Violet.

"I told her everything by spring." Satya explained, looking at Violet. "About being Polleo, about school, everything."

Gabriel was silent throughout, his eyebrows raised quizzically. He slowly removed the Onyx, gently flicked the ash into the ashtray. "Understanding," he finally murmured, his face obscured by the smoke of the Onyx.

Satya sighed. "I'm really happy, guys."

Both Gabriel and Silver nodded. "We know you are," Silver smiled. "And we are happy for you."

Silver paid the check when it was brought to them, leaving Lisa a very generous tip and the four of them left Epulae and began walking towards the garage where Silver had left the Beamer.

In front of the garage, they parted. Satya lived within walking distance. Again, the attendant stared when he returned the Beamer to Silver. Silver ignored him.

Driving north on Lake Shore Drive, Silver glanced at Gabriel. "I have missed you, my Angel."

Gabriel turned his head and smiled. "Well, there'll be no more going off to school with you. We'll probably be working together, if the rumors are true. You'll be a Protector, just like your Dad. You'll get sick of me soon enough."

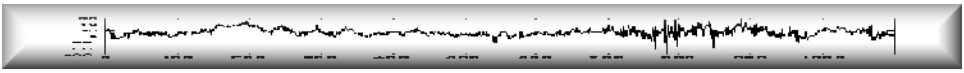
Silver kept half an eye on the road. "I don't think I could ever get sick of you."

Gabriel sighed. "There are plenty of guys in this city that would kill to have you. How ever can I compete?"

"There aren't plenty of guys that love me," Silver told him. He glanced at the tall redhead again. "Besides, I have a definite taste for very tall redheads. Ones from England in particular."

Gabriel chuckled. "Well, that narrows it down a bit, doesn't it?" He stretched a bit. "I am tired. You better get me back to your place and tuck me in right and proper now."

Silver nodded. "I can do that, I think."



4 The Stainless Steel Box

Stone Brewton looked up as his son entered his office. Silver walked to the huge desk and stood before it. For a long moment, father and son simply stared at each other. Stone stood and walked around his desk and faced him. Silver was two inches taller than Stone, so Stone did not have to look up much to address him. *'Business first.'* Stone reminded himself.

"There are more than seven billion people on this planet, Silver. Less than a million of those people are Polleo. That's less than one percent. Perhaps a percent of a percent. Of the million Polleo there are probably four hundred thousand who are Conscious. Aware that they are Polleo. Of those four hundred thousand, only half ever get into one of our schools. We remaining Polleo are known officially as Verus Polleo, the Truly Able," he began. He knew Silver already knew the numbers, but Stone was adjusting the same speech he used with all the new people at the International Parapsychological Institute.

"We are scattered throughout the world. A few of us on every continent. Those of us who do not work officially within the IPI hold positions of power among the Insciens. There are, of course, the Pene Polleo, the Nearly Able. They tend to be the ones who almost make it to a school. Almost, but not quite. Often they make their livings high within shadier occupations. The stock market. Gambling."

"Vultures..." growled a small voice from the door. "Every last one of them."

Silver turned to see Apsara Zala closing the door. She walked around Stone's desk, climbed into the chair and then onto the desk. On the desktop, she walked up to Silver and hugged him. She held him by the shoulders and looked at him. *'Your mother would be so proud of you.'* she communicated to him, telepathically.

Silver smiled at Apsara. From the desktop, she was about the perfect height. He looked at the petite Hindu woman before him and grinned. Apsara Zala was five foot nothing and weighed less than a hundred pounds. She was the smallest person Silver knew.

Apsara now turned to Stone. "I'm sorry I am late, Stone," she apologized.

Stone smiled. "It is an unusual day, Apsara. Even for us." And he turned

back to Silver.

"Throughout history, there have been 'psychics'." He made quotation marks with his hands around the word "psychics". "It was only a hundred and fifty years ago that technology found a way to prove which of us was real and which or us were snake oil salesmen. At first, they wanted to institutionalize us. Put us all together where we wouldn't hurt them. They called us witches and worse. It almost escalated into a war. Fortunately the International Chairman was one of us. He got the laws that govern us passed and worked to get us accepted. He died before his work was done, but the woman to replace him was also one of us," he grinned. "Of course, this was before we were banned from governmental positions."

Silver nodded slowly. He had lived all of his life under the Polleo Act and knew its history well. He had often wondered what it had been like for the first Polleo to be discovered. There weren't very many of them, but they were a powerful group. In the beginning they had been called sub-human. Then science proved that they were simply human beings like anyone else. Evolved humans. That had scared the Insciens more than anything.

It was almost impossible for an Insciens to kill a Polleo, but many tried. Thousands of the weakest Polleo were killed, which was what had prompted some of the strongest Polleo to gather secretly and elect two representatives. One had spoken for the Polleo and the other had broken the unwritten and unspoken rules that had governed them long before science had discovered them and put himself in the most powerful position on earth in order to prevent war. There he had simply begun to draft and get passed the very laws that Polleo had been following since they had evolved. His replacement simply followed in his footsteps until humanity was comfortable with the limitations placed upon the Polleo. The final law passed was the ban on holding political office and when it passed, the Polleo International Chairwoman had immediately resigned her position. Outrage was avoided simply because in the fifty years that two Polleo held the Chairmanship humanity had been educated. Stone continued. "Today we effectively govern ourselves. And you are here to be assigned. You will work in investigations. That means you will be working with me. Is that going to be a problem?"

Silver shook his head. He'd looked forward all of his life to working with his father. "No problem."

Stone nodded, with a grin on his face. Apsara beamed. "You will work with us as Servo Polleo."

Silver worked to keep his jaw from dropping. *'Protector of the Polleo.'* he

managed, mentally. He would be working with his father. He would also be working with Gabriel. He was being given the most difficult and dangerous job in the IPI. It was his dream.

His father nodded, smiling. He took a step closer to his son and they embraced. "I am proud, son," he whispered in Silver's ear. Silver did not miss the emphasis on 'am'.

The two men and one woman stood when Stone and Silver entered the large lounge. Silver took them in. He knew Gabriel, of course. The other two he did not know, although he had heard of them either from his father or from Gabriel.

The six-foot Swede was Danne Giertz. He approached Silver and held out his hand. Silver shook it while looking into eyes of palest blue. Danne's hair was so light it was almost transparent. "Good to see you again, Silver. You may not remember me."

Silver shook his head. "I remember. You graduated my third year. Magna."

Danne grinned. "Good memory," he nodded.

Silver was then introduced to Feruzi Jackson. Feruzi wore a beautiful full length skirt and blouse. Silver marveled at how dark she was. Like ebony.

Feruzi smiled while Silver shook her hand. "I am sorry to say we have never met," her tone was flirtatious. "I went to the Indian Oceanic Institute. Class of Eighteen. I'm actually new here myself. I transferred from the Cape Town IPI last week."

Silver smiled his winning smile. "Nice to meet you. Sort of nice knowing I'm not the only new one."

Danne sighed dramatically. "We could use a pretty face around here," he almost complained. "Too much testosterone for our own good around here."

"No one can argue that," Apsara appeared at the door, a quarter smile on her face. She surveyed the people in the room. As usual, she was the smallest. Even

Feruzi was a head taller than she was. She craned her neck to look at Stone. "You get to try your rookies out, Stone."

Stone raised his eyebrows. "Oh?"

"You've been requested at the coroners office," she announced, as she turned on her heel. "Josh said he hopes you haven't had breakfast, and don't stop for it!" And she was gone.

The Cook County Coroners office was only a few blocks from the lakeside offices of the IPI, so they walked. The basement was, somehow, much colder than even the air conditioned building it was in and all four men were glad of their suit jackets.

Stone spotted Josh Levin immediately. He met them halfway down the hall and Stone quickly introduced Silver and Feruzi, who Josh had never met before.

"It's in the lab..." Josh's voice was grim.

They followed him into the stark white and silver lab, where Josh led them even further, through a door to a back room. This was a special lab where cases which required special handling were kept.

There was a single stainless steel box on the table. It seemed filled to the rim with blood. "I don't know where the rest of the blood is," Josh confessed as Stone and his fellows gathered around the table.

"What is that floating in there?" Feruzi asked, her face wrinkled.

"A hand," Josh told them, simply. "The box is ten inches square. The police measured it at the scene."

Josh caught all five of the sharp looks thrown at him. Before he could speak, however, another voice sounded from the door.

"A Polleo did this."

It was Satya. He was in a white lab coat and looked green, to Silver.

"How do you know?" Stone asked him, as Satya approached the table.

Satya shrugged. "Because the whole body is in there. It's been Morphed."

"I wanted you to see this. I would have called you in any event, but Satya here told me the body was Morphed, or whatever you people call it." Josh sighed.

Stone looked at Gabriel and nodded. Gabriel sighed. "Sometimes I really hate this job..." he muttered as he took off his jacket and rolled up his left sleeve. Danne was doing the same.

They each placed a hand on a side of the box. Suddenly, they both snapped their heads back as if they had been shocked. Their facial muscles got tighter and tighter. Neither man lasted more than a minute before they both wrenched their hands up and away. Both men, already pale to begin with, seemed to be three shades paler.

Danne recovered first. "She was Morphed all right..." he ran his right hand through his white blond hair.

"Over and over, she was Morphed, from what I can tell..." Gabriel groaned, his voice shaking.

"It's too intense, Stone," Danne swallowed hard, his hand was clenched in his hair. "Whatever was done to her was so intense I can't hold on more than a few seconds."

"Me either," Gabriel rubbed at his temples, as if massaging away a bad headache. "She was female. I know that. She was also Insciens. But she was in so much pain, I can't lock on."

Danne looked at the box with something like fear in his eyes. "He, and I know it was a he. He..." and he ran his hand from the top of his head down his face.

"He Morphed her in a hundred different ways before he got her into the box," Gabriel finished for Danne, also looking at the box with fear and loathing. He looked at Josh. "You'll find her entire body in there. Everything. Shoved in there."

Josh's mouth had fallen open. "How?" he began, but Stone cut him off.

"Someone who knows how can fit the human body into a pop can," he sighed, quietly.

"But who would want to?" Silver demanded. "Some big time sadistic

fuck..." he went on, answering his own question.

"By the way," Danne added, gripping the towel tightly, "all her blood is in there."

"That's impossible..." Josh murmured, looking at the box. "There isn't enough room."

"Psychometabolism." Feruzi whispered, looking horrified.

"He adjusted her cells," Satya sighed, sadly. "Twisted them. To get them to fit in the box with her body." He walked over to a table and came back with a slide and a swab. He dabbed the swab into the blood in the box and smeared it onto the slide. He and Josh went to a microscope across the room. Satya put the slide under the microscope and looked. "Yes..." he murmured, grimly.

Josh looked. Without moving, he whispered hoarsely. "Jesus Christ in a chariot driven sidecar... Look at that. The cells are twisted. Folded." he straightened up and turned. "If I didn't know what you people were capable of, I would swear this was some sort of joke. A very sick joke."

Stone looked at Danne and Gabriel. *'What exactly did the Farsensing reveal?'* he asked, telepathically.

Gabriel wiped at his mouth. *'Someone knocked on her door and she opened it. She knew him.'*

Danne was shaking his head. *'She didn't use a name. Just said, 'Hello.' when he pushed her into the apartment or house or whatever it was and closed the door. It was an apartment. Yes. Nearby, I think.'* He glanced at a clipboard next to the box. He read off of it. *'The exact address is here.'*

'He crushed her throat with Metamorphosis, then he began.' Gabriel reported, then closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. *'She could not talk. She could not scream.'*

Danne bit his lower lip. *'He was very careful not to break her back.'* he explained. He heaved a huge sigh and shook his head. *'The pain became so bad within a few minutes she blocked most of it out.'*

'What did he look like?' Stone pressed.

Both Danne and Gabriel frowned. *'No idea.'* Gabriel shrugged. *'When she answered the door, he was looking at his feet. He had a baseball cap on.'*

'New York Mets.' Danne elaborated. *'He never looked up. Not once while she could have seen him.'*

Stone made a frustrated sound. "How long until you can figure out how tall she was. Put the body back together," he spoke aloud to Josh.

Josh looked at him like he'd lost his mind. "I won't be able to put this mess back together!" he almost wailed.

"I might be able to," Satya suggested, scratching the back of his neck. "But it'll take me a few days."

Stone gave him the no nonsense look that meant he would be obeyed. "Wednesday. We'll be back Wednesday." And he turned and left. The rest followed him.

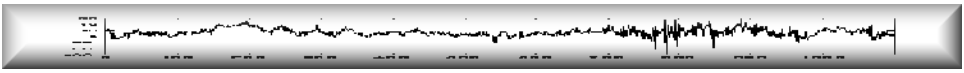
They left the building and began walking back to the IPI. Stone did not speak, but communicated with them all through telepathy.

'You will go to that girls place and find out everything you can about her. No matter how insignificant. Pass the information onto Silver and Gabriel.' he ordered as they all walked silently along the lake front. *'Silver and Gabriel, you will follow up on every scrap of information they give you. Check out every name, address and telephone number. Find the links to the Polleo. And I know you may not like it, but I want Gabriel and Danne to go over what you found in the farsensing over and over. Maybe a mirror or a pair of glasses of something caught a reflection.'*

'Alright, Stone.' came Gabriel's thoughts.

'Go. Now.' Stone silently snapped, as they approached the building. *'I will start checking and seeing what sick fucks we have in our databases that might have done something like this.'*

Stone turned into the IPI building as Silver, Feruzi, Danne and Gabriel all walked further down the lake front. The victim lived a mere three blocks away in a high-rise.



5 Mary Ann Watson

The apartment was ultra-modern and neat as a pin. It was hard to believe the place wasn't a model apartment. Forensic photographers were just leaving when they arrived. They looked rather wary at the sharply dressed bunch. Danne took the forensics team in with a look and said to them. "Thanks, guys, we'll take it from here." and the forensics team simply shrugged and left without asking any questions.

They spread throughout the apartment. Silver and Feruzi took the two bedrooms and two bathrooms while Danne and Gabriel paced around the living room, farsensing.

Silver found a small phone book beside the woman's bed, which he pocketed. He also found books about parapsychology on the small table beside her bed. He joined Feruzi in the spare bedroom, which was more like a little office. She was looking at the computer there, searching files. She found the phone book, which contained phone numbers, street addresses and email addresses. She started the printer and printed it out. While the papers printed, Silver joined Danne and Gabriel.

Both men were sitting now, looking grim and pale again. Danne was on the leather couch while Gabriel sat in the attached dining room, each man had his face in his hands.

"Her name was Mary Ann Watson," Danne reported. He was shaking again. "She was twenty-eight years old. Worked over at the Chicago Board of Trade."

Gabriel spoke without raising his head from his hands. "No family. Parents dead. Only child. The only face we can raise is of some man. Not her killer. Someone she was thinking of when she died. His name is Bob. Bobby. No last name. Works at the Board of Trade I think. I think he was a drug pusher or something."

Feruzi came out of the second bedroom with several sheets of paper. She handed them to Silver. Silver glanced at it, then looked at Gabriel. "Shall we begin?"

Gabriel stood. "If it gets me out of here..." he snorted. He glanced at Danne. "Keep me informed, mate," he demanded as he headed for the door.

Gabriel and Silver left the apartment and stopped at the bank of elevators. Gabriel pushed the call button and they waited a very short time for the elevator. There were two people in the elevator, who gazed up, then quickly got into their own conversation. Gabriel and Silver did not communicate verbally.

'You okay?' Silver asked, watching the display over the elevator doors.

'I have never seen anything like this before. Danne either, by his reaction.' Gabriel replied. *'I have a hell of a headache.'*

'Let's start over at the Board of Trade and track down this Bobby.' Silver suggested. *'The police questioned the guard downstairs and he didn't see anything. Didn't hear anything. His memory has been modified.'*

'A fucking Polleo.' Gabriel bemoaned. *'I know it's possible. I've helped Danne and Stone with crimes committed by Polleo, but I have never seen a murder like this before. This is bad. I've only heard of one worse.'* But he did not elaborate. He did not have to. Silver knew what he was talking about...

The Psychic Slaughter murders...

The elevator landed on the first floor and they got out. They walked along the drive towards the IPI building and the garage across the street. They entered the parking garage and found their cars, parked side by side.

'Beamer or Benz?' Silver asked.

'Benz. You drive.' And Gabriel fished in his pockets and handed Silver the keys.

Silver got in the car and unlocked the door for Gabriel, who got in and immediately leaned back a bit, and closed his eyes.

Silver drove the Benz out of the garage and drove around the block to Michigan Avenue, where he turned south. It was a beautiful mid-June day and the drive was enjoyable, despite the lunch hour traffic and the distractions of the investigation. Silver pulled into the parking garage of the Chicago Board of Trade and showed his badge, which was a legitimate Chicago Police Department detectives shield. The identification attached mentioned, in minuscule letters, that he was an officer with the IPI.

Gabriel was not asleep, just pulling himself together. He and Silver got out of the Beamer and walked into the building. The main offices of the Chicago Board of Trade were on the twentieth floor. The woman behind the main desk was blond and very pretty. She smiled as she looked up.

"Jonathan Price, please," Gabriel requested, politely. Silver already knew that Gabriel would do most, if not all, of the talking. "Gabriel Kinlan. Chicago Police Department." He showed her his badge and his winning smile.

"One moment, please," the receptionist smiled. She got on the phone, all but

whispered into it and hung up. "He'll be right with you."

Two minutes later a man in rumpled slacks and a bright orange tie appeared. "Detective Kinlan," he offered his hand, with a smile that did not match his eyes. "Jonathan Price..." They shook hands. Jonathan shook hands with Silver when he was introduced.

"We need to talk to you about an employee of yours," Gabriel explained. "Privately, if possible..." He conveyed both the thoughts and the looks that would guarantee they would have privacy.

Jonathan led them down a series of hallways and into his office. He closed the door and sat down behind his desk. "Who do you need help with, Detective?"

"Mary Ann Watson." Gabriel told him, standing over Jonathan. "And someone she was close to... Bob. Bobby?"

Jonathan turned and faced his computer monitor. He hit a few keys, waited a moment and nodded. "Mary Ann Watson..." he murmured as he looked at the screen. "Worked here for five years. Moderate employee. One warning. She just passed a drug screening. The tests were inconclusive, so we had to give her a verbal warning." He looked at Gabriel. "And we have ten Robert, Bob, Bobby's working here. Is there anyway to narrow it down?"

"I'd know him if I saw him," Gabriel explained. "In the meantime, print out the record of Mary Ann Watson and all the Bobby's you have. There's a good chap. And see if you can get me pictures to go with all the names."

Jonathan did not even flinch at Gabriel's light psychic nudge. He tapped a few more keys and a printer in the corner sprang to life. He stood. "I'll have to go over to personnel to get copies of all the identifications."

Gabriel nodded to Silver. "Detective Brewton will accompany you, if that's all right."

Jonathan shrugged.

Silver thought that telepathic manipulation certainly helped things go far smoother than they would without it as he walked with Jonathan back to the reception area, onto the elevator and up three floors to the personnel offices.

Silver let Jonathan make the original request for the copies he wanted. When the clerk at the desk started talking about paperwork, Silver leaned forward slightly, making the clerk look up at him. She was a stern looking Hispanic lady and when she looked up at Silver and he smiled at her, she was his.

"We need them now. I don't think there is any need for paperwork, do you?" he argued sweetly, smiling even more broadly at her.

Silver realized that it was a good thing it was the lunch hour. The office was

blissfully empty. The receptionist tossed back her head and moaned softly. Silver realized that, in his slight anxiety, he had pushed her just a bit too far. His gentle probe of her mind caused her a small orgasm. But the little woman recovered quickly and rushed off to get the file photos, looking baffled, but quite pleased.

She returned to them with a business envelope and handed it to Silver with trembling fingers. He smiled at her as he thanked her.

As they took the elevator up, Jonathan commented in amazement, "That girl is usually impossible to get anything out of. You are a real charmer, Detective." It took every ounce of energy Silver had not to laugh out loud.

"I guess I just have a way with women!" he waved his hand, airily.

Silver communicated his faux pas to Gabriel on the way back to Jonathan's office and the result was that he managed to catch a smile on Gabriel's lips when he and Jonathan walked in. Gabriel had retrieved the personnel printouts from the printer and was looking out of the window when they walked in, but Silver knew what the hunched shoulders meant.

"Um, may I ask what you are looking for Miss Watson for?" Jonathan finally asked, as Gabriel and Silver prepared to leave the office.

Gabriel turned and told him, gently. "She was found murdered this morning."

"Oh my God," Jonathan gasped. "Your investigating her murder?"

"Yes, we are," Gabriel explained quietly, and they left the office without engaging in further conversation.

In the elevator, Gabriel communicated to Silver. *'Good job, even if you did wind up wanking the file clerk.'*

Silver turned a laugh into a cough. *'First day jitters.'* he communicated back.

'Lucky clerk.' Gabriel chuckled. Then he added, *'Thanks for the laugh, love. I really needed it.'*

Silver did not respond as the elevator opened and they got off with everyone else. He handed Gabriel the envelope of staff photos and Gabriel took them out. They were upside down, Silver saw, but he had no chance to say anything. Gabriel started laughing right there in the lobby.

Silver frowned, knowing Gabriel was laughing at him. Gabriel handed him the bottom photo. The file clerk had written her phone number on the back. Silver sighed and was about to say he ought to call her some night when Gabriel did a complete reverse.

'That's him.' he all but barked.

Silver turned the small picture in his hand over to see a young blond face staring up at him. The name below read Bobby Anderson. Gabriel was already flipping through the personnel files he was carrying.

"OK, here we go," he spoke aloud, and Silver looked up. Gabriel was reading fast, and catching every word, Silver knew. Gabriel looked up and around the large lobby. The lunch crowd was returning. Silver knew Gabriel had an excellent memory for faces, and he followed quietly as he walked towards the turn stiles where the employees gained access to the trading floor and began scanning the crowd.

They spotted him at the same time, walking without seeing. Gabriel stepped in front of him.

"Robert Anderson?" he inquired, showing his badge.

Robert Anderson took one look at the badge and turned to flee. He ran straight into Silver, who grabbed him firmly around the arm. "Chicago Police. We'd like to talk to you if we may..." he dragged Anderson toward the garage. They got him to the car with little trouble. "This isn't a police car!" Anderson protested before Gabriel knocked him out telepathically and tossed him into the back seat of the Benz.

Gabriel drove them back to IPI and they escorted Robert Anderson to the top floor conference room of the Servo Polleo. Danne and Feruzi looked interestedly at Robert as he was dragged in by Silver.

"Bobby!" Danne exclaimed, as if he and Robert were old friends.

Robert glared. "Who are you? This isn't a police station!" he demanded as Silver threw him into a large chair. Silver stood before him, flanked on either side by Danne and Gabriel. Stone came in the room then and stood behind the chair. Robert was surrounded. He looked panicked. "I know my rights! You haven't Mirandized me! I want my lawyer!"

"Boys! Boys!" came Feruzi's voice from outside the circle. She elbowed her way between Danne and Silver and shooed them both back. She made gestures telling Stone and Gabriel to back off also, saying telepathically to them *'Allow me, gentlemen.'* while she spoke aloud the words, "You're going to make Bobby nervous.".

Feruzi approached Robert and smiled gently down at him. "Forgive my colleagues," she almost sang. "They suffer from a horrendous overdose of testosterone. I think it's their height, personally. Such big, strong men, aren't they, Bobby?"

Bobby was still staring at the men surrounding him. Feruzi took him by the arm and helped him to his feet. She was about five foot six, which made her a

few inches shorter than Robert. She glanced up at him. "We aren't exactly the police," she explained to him. "Their laws don't apply to us, so we don't have to Mirandize anyone." Bobby's eyes widened as he realized the implications of this statement. "So let's talk, Bobby," she led him away from his chair prison.

"Who are you?" he managed again, obviously feeling much more at ease with Feruzi.

"You can call me Feruzi. I am with the..." she frowned. "Never mind all that. I am basically a detective investigating the death of a friend of yours. Mary Ann Watson."

Robert froze and stared at Feruzi. "Mary Ann?" he looked puzzled. "Mary Ann is dead?"

"As a doornail, Bob." Feruzi kept her voice matter of fact. "Someone stuffed her into a box. Broke all her bones. It was a mess, let me tell you."

Roberts knees buckled and Feruzi steadied him. "Whoops!" she kept her voice cheerful. "Watch your step! Your the bigger one now and if I can't handle you, I'll have to call one of those big boys over. They have had a horrible day, Bobby. They get so damn bitchy when they've had a bad day. Worse than any PMS you can imagine, let me tell you!"

Robert seemed to find sturdier ground at these words. Feruzi continued. "Anyway, Bobby. We were wondering, considering how Mary Ann was shoved in that box like a dirty shirt gets shoved into a hamper, if you happened to know of any really *unusual* men she may have been hanging out with lately." She smiled. "See, we have ways, and we know that it was your face. You. You she last thought of before she died. Now why might that be? Cause you ain't acting like your girlfriend died, so I'm guessing you weren't all that close to her. I'm guessing she remembered you because you introduced her to whoever it was killed her." She was nodding fervently.

"Oh my God!" Robert's eyes suddenly widened in realization. "You are those Palli people, aren't you? The ones who play the mind tricks and shit."

Feruzi smiled broadly. "You aren't as dumb as you look," she complimented him, brightly. "You got the name wrong, but I'll overlook that for now..." And she shoved Robert backwards into another chair. Her smile vanished as if it had never been there. "Names Bobby. Talk. Now. We'll snatch them from the little bit of mind you have, if we have to. But that just makes us all that more short-tempered and I don't think you want to deal with any of us with a short temper."

Robert suddenly looked scared to death. "I don't have names. Honest!" he insisted, vehemently. "He called himself Nex. That's it. Said he could give a heavenly trip to Mary Ann... better than the drugs I was getting for her. She was

into some weird shit. Mind shit. Tarot and all that. She wanted a mind fuck."

Feruzi heard the gasp and quickly glanced at the men.

Stone looked like he was having trouble breathing. *'Let him go.'* he suddenly commanded. *'He's told me all I need to know.'*

Feruzi looked at Stone a moment before returning her attention to Robert. "Well, honey, it looks like you have satisfied the boss man..." she told him, brightly. She backed off and swept an arm towards the door. "Elevators are down the hall. Don't get lost now."

Robert took off out the door like the hounds of Hell were at his heels.

Stone dropped into the chair originally occupied by Robert. Silver dropped to his knees. "Dad?"

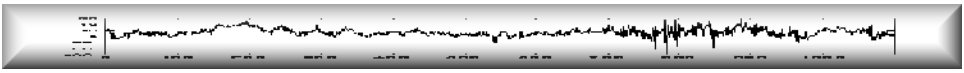
"I know what this is about now..." Stone gasped, as he dropped his head in his hands. To Silver, he seemed to age twenty years. Stone reached into his suit pocket and withdrew a small slip of paper, which he held out to Silver. It read:

Before, it ended with her. This time it will end with him.

There was no signature.

"I don't understand, Dad..." Silver murmured, frowning at the note as he handed it to Gabriel, who was standing above him.

Stone looked at Silver. His voice was shaking horribly. "He killed many before... when you were a baby. It ended with your mother. Nex. Death. He killed your mother. And now he wants to kill you."



6 The Psychic Slaughters

Silver sat on the roof of his house with his knees pulled up and his forehead in the hammock made from his joined hands. The roof slanted very slightly, but he did not feel as if he was going to be pitched off of his house.

He closed his eyes and went through what his father told him back in the IPI building hours ago. About how his mother died...

"The first murder was like this one," Stone began. "Except the victim was stuffed inside a diving helmet. The coroner said it was like a diving accident. A bad one. Except diving accidents like that one don't happen in Lake Michigan. It was the first in a series of psychic murders. Murder is unusual among Polleo. We actually get along better than any group of people on Earth." He sighed deeply. "It was a nightmare. A witch hunt. There was talk of gathering up all Polleo and isolating them in camps. Maybe even shipping all of us off of Earth and onto one of those new colony planets they were setting up at the time."

Stone stood and went to the wall of windows overlooking the lake. "His name is Neil Monroe. We went to school together. He was third, behind Rose. He loved her, too."

Silver slowly got up and stood staring at his father's back. Gabriel, Danne and Feruzi all looked between father and son.

Stone sighed. "Monroe was the first to date your mom. Rose and I were just friends. Very good friends. Not my choice. Hers. I contented myself being the third wheel."

He glanced over his shoulder at Silver, not really looking at him, just making sure his words were heard. "Then there was the accident. In our Fifth year. Lawrence Beaudry was two years ahead of us. We were in Kinetics. Monroe was supposed to light a bonfire. You've done it. Simple, basic exercise."

Stone now turned completely. "I say accident, but I don't believe it. I don't think anyone else does, either. I can't see how it could have been an accident. Lawrence and Neil never got along. Never. Hated each other. I guess Neil was taking the opportunity to get revenge on some slight or other."

Stone walked over to a desk and leaned on it, putting his weight on his open palms. "At the last minute, Neil looked in Lawrence's direction. Lawrence

erupted in flames. We were all so shocked that no one moved for a moment. Finally, I recovered enough to put him out. But the damage was extensive... "

"Lawrence blamed Neil from the beginning. He refused to be Healed. Said he wanted everyone to see what Neil had done to him. Wanted them to remember. Neil denied everything, but I don't think anyone believed him. The school couldn't prove anything. Neil wouldn't let them into his mind. That was enough proof of guilt for me. And for Rose, I guess. She broke up with him before the school year was up, and he never forgave her for doubting him. And he never forgave me for not believing in him."

Stone shook his head. "He spent the rest of our school time trying to win Rose back. She was with me by the middle of our Sixth year. He would have been Magna if he hadn't been so obsessed with impressing Rose. My assignment here did not help Neil's feelings towards me. He didn't make it here until after you were born."

Stone bit his lower lip. "We had no idea who could have been committing the murders. And, officially, the case is still open. I didn't find out that it was Neil until the day your mother died. She'd opted to stay home with you. She quit working for the IPI. And one day, he decided he would visit her. Tell her what he'd been up to. I came home in the middle of his confession. He was trying to impress her. The murders were so brutal, but they had a creativity that not even I could ignore. He had impressed us. But not in any good way."

Stone dropped his head again and his long arms began to shake along with his voice. "He paralyzed me. I couldn't move. Couldn't close my eyes. I had to watch him while he tortured the only woman I will ever love. She screamed and cried, but she refused to give him what he wanted. Her. He took her anyway, then he broke her neck. For him it was a kindness. Then he disappeared and I haven't seen or heard from him until today. The note I gave you appeared in my office just before you and Gabriel got back."

Silver stared at his father for a long time. He didn't know what to say. He had never known exactly how his mother had died. He'd known that she'd been murdered. And now that he knew the details, he just couldn't absorb the information.

He just barely heard his father call his name as he walked out of the conference room.

He got into his car and drove, completely aimlessly at first. North through the city, Evanston, Wilmette and Winnetka. He crossed into Wisconsin before he turned around and opted to head home. He parked the Beamer in the driveway and just sat in it, thinking of what his father had told him.

He didn't know how long he sat there, except that by the time he got out of the car and went into his house, the shadows were beginning to get long. He didn't bother to look at his watch. He slammed his front door and pounded up his stairs. He climbed the stairs to his attic and crawled out of a window to the area of his roof he sat on now. Above his bedroom, above his back porch.

He raised his head and squinted into the now setting sun. He glanced at his watch and was surprised to see it was after seven. He felt half a seconds concern that he'd be in trouble for walking off the job the way he did and not returning, but it passed quickly. He knew his father would excuse his absence. He almost always did. And now Silver understood why.

Silver always knew that his father felt guilty about his mother's death. Silver never knew that it was because he was forced to watch it, helpless. He'd only known that Stone often showered Silver with gifts that Silver neither needed nor wanted, but it seemed to placate his father and so he'd accepted them without comment. His fathers occasional distance was also explained, although Silver had guessed at it years ago. To his father, looking at him was looking at a living reminder of his lost love and for years it was difficult for him. Their relationship improved a great deal when Silver lost the smoothness of boyhood and began to get the roughness of manhood. He stood a full foot taller than his mother did in life, and was twice her width, easy.

Silver never for a moment doubted his father's love, although he grew up knowing that his simple presence was painful for his father. Silver never intentionally tried to hurt his father, but he'd inherited a sense of blunt honesty from his mother and that had hurt his father on occasion.

Like all fathers, Stone dreamed of grandchildren, and when Silver came to him to tell him about Gabriel, his father had initially been crushed. Not ashamed, as Stone was progressive and wanted happiness for his son. But his sons homosexuality marked the end of the Brewton line, and it was a crushing blow to Stone. He did not speak to his son for almost a year. Silver effectively had to announce his homosexuality again to his father the Christmas vacation before he graduated. Gabriel suggested he do it as if he'd never done it before. By then, Stone had adjusted and the announcement went much more smoothly.

A noise to his left caught his attention and he turned his head in the direction of the window he'd crawled out of to get onto the roof. Gabriel was coming out onto the roof now. He said nothing, but crawled to Silver and sat beside him his legs out straight and ankles crossed as opposed to Silver bent knees. He too, looked into the rapidly darkening horizon.

Silver did not speak either, but leaned over so that his head was on Gabriel's

broad right shoulder. Gabriel's right arm snaked around him and he held him there. Silver closed his eyes.

When he opened them it was full dark. He'd fallen asleep. Gabriel still held him, in exactly the position he was when Silver leaned against him. There were stars in the sky now and Gabriel was watching them quietly.

"Thanks..." Silver whispered, quietly, kissing Gabriel's ear. "Thanks for coming over and being with me."

Gabriel leaned his head into Silver's. "I thought you might need a shoulder to lean on," he told him, simply.

Silver took Gabriel's wrist and looked at his watch. "Nine o'clock." he read, sighing. "I didn't sleep long, did I?"

Gabriel shrugged. "You slept as long as you needed to, I reckon."

Silver sat up straight. "How much trouble am I in?"

Gabriel chuckled. "You know your Dad," he shrugged. "None."

Silver also chuckled. "I think I'm ready to hear what happened when I left now."

Gabriel looked at him and nodded. "Lets get inside," he suggested. "I'm willing to bet you haven't eaten all day. Again."

As they returned to the inside of the house, Silver realized that he was hungry. Gabriel led him to the kitchen and sat him on a stool at the stove island. He looked down and lifted Silver chin slightly. He kissed him long and lazily. His green eyes looked into Silver's brown ones for a long moment before he kissed him again.

"Alright, love," he commanded, brusquely. "Lets get you fed."

Gabriel rummaged around the kitchen while Silver watched him. He grinned when Gabriel placed a glass of white wine in front of him. Silver drank and enjoyed the sight of Gabriel cooking. It did not take him long to realize that Gabriel was making salmon cakes and lentils, Silver's favorite.

Silver groaned slightly when the doorbell rang. Gabriel held up a finger and announced. "I'll get the door. You just sit here."

Silver heard Gabriel from the kitchen welcoming the visitors inside. He reappeared in the kitchen followed by Feruzi and Danne. Danne raised his eyebrows. "Interrupting?" he asked, turning slightly pink.

Silver was grateful to the decision he and Gabriel made in not hiding their relationship, especially tonight when he needed Gabriel's closeness so badly. Gabriel walked behind Silver and squeezed his shoulders a moment. "No." Gabriel released Silver to go to the cabinet and pull out two more plates. "Silver hasn't managed to eat, imagine that. I just cooked him dinner. There's plenty, if

your interested."

They were. They moved into the breakfast nook, where Feruzi marveled at the slightly higher than normal chairs and tables. She climbed into one and watched Gabriel as he served up their supper. She sighed. "I didn't know you two were an item," she looked between them as Gabriel poured the wine.

Danne chuckled. "I knew about Gabriel. But somehow I never imagined he was with Stone's son."

Silver raised his eyebrows and glanced at Gabriel. "Don't tell me you talk about me at work," he demanded with half a smile.

Gabriel shrugged. "Danne and I have gone out after work a couple of times. When he tried to set me up with his sister, I sort of got cornered."

Danne shrugged. "He told me he was very much in love with someone. I, like a fool, pushed. All he told me was that he was in love with another man." He chuckled again. "Guess I must have looked pretty shocked. It was pretty much the end of that round of drinks. I had to call him up and explain to him that it didn't bother me that he was gay, but that I was raised with some pretty backwards stereotypes growing up. He didn't strike me as the limp-wristed type, somehow." He took a bite of the salmon and rolled his eyes. "But he cooks better than my mother. Almost makes me sorry I'm straight."

Everyone around the table laughed. "You aren't uncomfortable, are you Feruzi?" Gabriel asked her.

"No." She explained, quickly. "I just didn't *think* is all. I suppose I should have realized..."

Danne looked at Silver. "When you left, Stone sent Gabriel after you. Gabe told him he'd wait until this evening. Give you time to think. It got a little heated between them."

Silver nodded. "Gabriel probably knows me better than Stone does," he sighed, a little sadly.

"Stone has kept this inside for years, Silver," Gabriel defended Stone, softly. "It explains a lot, though, doesn't it? His fascination with the old Psychic Slaughter case."

Silver shrugged. "Obsession is more like it, Gabriel, and you know it..." he sighed again. "But it does explain a lot. An awful lot."

They talked about everything but shop during the rest of the meal. Afterwards, Silver cleared the table and tossed the dishes in the sink. Gabriel stayed behind to make coffee and tea.

In the living room, Silver sat on his couch while Danne and Feruzi chose chairs nearby.

"This is such a large place!" Feruzi marveled.

Silver grinned, innocently. "Only ten rooms. Not that large, really."

Feruzi grinned at him. "I meant, the doorways, everything."

"Oh," Silver smiled, as if just realizing. "I'm six foot nine. Headroom is a big deal for me. It's hard to find a place to suit. Dad had this place customized. Graduation present. It's an old house. Build just after the great Chicago Fire. Back then they didn't skimp on ceiling height. These ceilings are ten feet."

Gabriel entered with a complete tea service. He poured himself and Danne tea while Silver and Feruzi had coffee.

Silver sipped his coffee black. "Okay, now. We've covered everything but... What happened after I left?"

Danne sighed and shrugged. "Stone says drop the whole investigation. Says we'll never find Monroe and so there isn't much point in trying. If we push things, the Insciens will rebel against us and we'll all wind up on one of the colony planets they have set up."

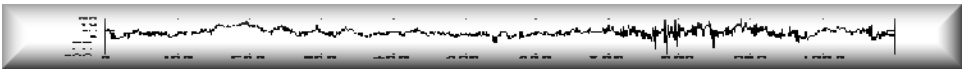
Silver heaved a sigh. "When dad gives up on something he really gives up on it. He's despairing. He'll get over it. Probably. I like to think he isn't planning on sitting back and letting me get murdered. Then again, I like to think a lot of things." he added dryly.

Danne nodded. "Well, I don't plan on giving up shit..." he snapped, sounding a little angry. "I think we can find him. If not find him, get ahead of him. Somehow."

To everyone's surprise, Silver nodded. "He's using farsensing to hide. We can't just let him keep going. I know I sure don't plan on letting him murder me."

Gabriel also nodded. "Neither do I."

Silver saw Feruzi and Danne also nodding.



7 Weddings and ...

Silver was too tired to either cheer or complain as Gabriel opened the door to their suite. He dragged himself, his garment bag and his suitcase through the sitting room and into the bedroom. Gabriel took the garment bag from him as Silver looked at the bed and raised his eyebrows.

"It's a miracle!" he breathed, as he threw himself on the extra large king sized bed, face first.

"No, it's an executive suite!" Gabriel corrected, chuckling. "See what I go through for you?"

Silver rolled himself over. "Yes. I see. First class flight. World class hotel. A proper car rental..." He toed his shoes off. "And you didn't even Morph my mouth out of existence, although I don't doubt you were tempted."

Gabriel laughed out loud. "I was tempted. You get in such a temper when your tired. You really let that steward have it, didn't you? You don't handle jet lag well, love."

Silver chuckled as he unbuttoned his shirt. "Why do you think I let you make all the arrangements?" he asked. "I am only in Glasgow because Christopher and Finlay are old friends. If they weren't I wouldn't leave Chicago." and he pulled himself onto the bed, curled up and closed his eyes.

Silver and Gabriel had traveled to Glasgow, Scotland for the wedding of Christopher MacFinlay and Finlay O'Dwyer. Satya was downstairs in a smaller room.

Gabriel hung the garment bags in the closet and looked at his watch. "Past midnight." he murmured. "We should unpack, Silver."

"Mmmmm..." Silver hummed, not opening his eyes.

Gabriel shook his head. He watched Silver as he fell asleep. The last two months had been hard on them all. They were getting nowhere fast on the murder. Nothing was leading them to Neil Monroe and they could not find him, despite their combined talents. The wedding invitation to Scotland was a blessing. Stone agreed that they should all take a week off and just relax. That they should all get out of town. No one argued.

Gabriel got out of his own shoes and unbuttoned his shirt. He lay behind

Silver, fitting himself against his lover. Silver murmured something incoherent, but he took the arm Gabriel put around him.

Silver opened his eyes to find he'd rolled onto his back. His arm was around Gabriel and Gabriel's head was on his chest. Silver kissed the redhead and slowly eased himself away and out of the bed. He silently prayed to any god that would listen for a nice roomy shower and was not disappointed. He realized that Gabriel had gotten up in the night and at least brought out their toiletries and he chuckled to himself as he brushed his teeth and shaved. His shower went a long way to improving his mood and waking him fully. He came out to see Gabriel finishing up his own shave. Gabriel looked at Silver through the mirror.

"Morning, love," Gabriel sang, handing Silver a towel. "Coffee is brewing in the sitting room." He kissed Silver quickly before disappearing into the shower.

Silver returned to the bedroom and found where Gabriel had put his clothes. He dressed, leaving his shirt unbuttoned and went for coffee. He was halfway through his first cup when there was a soft knock on the door. He glanced at the small clock in the room. Seven. He put down the coffee, went to the door and opened it.

"Silver!" shouted Atia and Seia de la Greca together. Silver was knocked back a step when the twins leaped at him. He wrapped his arms around both of them and looked over their heads at Satya, who came in quietly behind the rakish twins.

Each twin held onto Silver and looked up at him. "Where is she?" Atia asked.

"She?" Silver asked, looking over at Satya, who shrugged.

"They asked me who you brought with you. I told them you just moved in with someone and they just ran with it." Satya explained, with half a grin.

Silver looked down at Atia and Seia. "Come on in and sit down. Coffee?" he offered, waving to the comfortable furniture arranged around the large room. Satya got himself some tea and sat in a large chair at one end of a long coffee table. Atia and Seia who, thankfully to Silver way of thinking, didn't drink coffee or tea, simply plopped down on the long couch. Silver stood before them and thought for a moment. He'd known the twins for nine years. He'd been intimate with them in the years before Satya and Gabriel. They were his friends. He weighed his options and settled on the direct approach.

"There is no *she*..." he told them, sipping his coffee and watching them over the rim of the cup.

Identical sets of eyebrows shot up. "Satya said..." Seia began, but Silver cut her off.

"I am living with someone. Just not a woman!" he explained, finishing the coffee and leaning forward to put the cup on the low coffee table before him. "I assumed you would have heard all about it by now," he added, taking a sidelong glance at Satya who was more in touch with the old classmates than he was.

Satya both shrugged and raised his eyebrows. "I have talked to Christopher and Vincent and that's it. Talking to Christopher is talking to Finlay. They all figured it out when I told them you were with someone. You two didn't advertise your relationship, but it was obvious to anyone who was paying attention!" he said, glaring at the twins with these last words. The twins were notorious for not paying attention to anything that didn't effect them directly.

Atia and Seia looked at each other and frowned, thinking. "That guy... He was two years ahead of us. Tall. Taller than Silver. Redhead. Kin something. I'll just bet it's him." Seia said to Atia. It was as if Silver and Satya were not there.

Atia nodded, concentrating completely on her sister. "They were always together. At first I thought they were just best friends like Silver and Satya, but it was different..." And she snapped her fingers. "Gabriel Kinlan." she almost shouted, and she looked at Silver. "Am I right?"

Gabriel, who had been leaning in the doorway between bedroom and sitting room laughed out loud. "Right in one, ladies!" Silver noticed that Gabriel had also dressed, but had not buttoned his shirt either.

The twins jumped. They looked at Gabriel and Atia sighed. "Just a damn shame, isn't it Seia." she pouted, looking at Gabriel's chest. Seia nodded, her eyes going from Gabriel's chest to Silver's.

The five of them met up with Christopher, Finlay and Vincent half an hour later for breakfast. Gabriel and Silver managed to avoid talk of their pending case, saying they were bound not to discuss it. Instead they watched Vincent and

Satya tease Finlay about her soon-to-be name. Finlay MacFinlay.

The wedding the next day was beautiful. Silver found himself thinking, not for the first time, about a possible wedding for he and Gabriel. Silver was a bit of a history buff and knew how the laws had changed over the last twenty years or so. Marriage was marriage in most countries now. The religious groups fought it tooth and nail, but the laws were passed nonetheless. First, the laws passed were almost strictly for men, then the laws eventually included lesbians also. Attitudes were still iffy, as far as Silver could tell. He supposed that was just human nature. Gays still had to be careful, but it was nothing like the way it was twenty years ago, at the turn of the century. Feruzi put it best, to Silver's mind. "Blacks is better off now than they were in the nineteen-sixties and better then than in the nineteen hundreds. Laws is passed to make us all equal. All they do is find another way to fuck ya. There is still not equal rights for blacks. Same for gays I think. You are better off now than at the turn of the century, but that don't mean much. And you are both, Silver. The same people who want you dead because you're black, worse because your mixed, want you dead because you're gay. Equal rights. Ain't it grand?"

Silver recalled this conversation as he watched Christopher kiss his new bride and he sighed. Gabriel took his hand. "Love?" he queried, sounding a touch concerned.

Silver realized he'd been frowning slightly. He smiled. "I was just thinking, is all. Sorry. I'm all right."

Gabriel looked at him almost a full minute before he nodded slowly and turned his attention back to the ceremony. Silver was glad for his shields and glad that one of the few people who could break them down rarely did. Watching Gabriel's profile, Silver resolved to ask Gabriel to make that ultimate commitment. If he lived through Neil Monroe, that was.

The next day was Sunday. Silver and Gabriel spent the day touring Glasgow and the surrounding area with Satya, the twins, and Vincent. After an early dinner, Gabriel and Silver retired to their suite to make love until the wee hours of the morning.

They slept quite late Monday and opted for an early lunch with Satya. Gabriel picked at his food, obviously completely distracted. Silver and Satya watched him quietly for a long time before Silver finally got his attention and asked him what was on his mind.

"How would you like to go to London?" He asked slowly, watching Silver's face carefully. "'Bout time you met my family, I think?"

Silver raised his eyebrows but said nothing. He slowly nodded his head.

"Alright then." Gabriel put finality into his voice, nodding with Silver. He looked at Satya. "You can come too. Might go easier with witnesses."

Those words marked the end of the meal as Silver paid the check and they all went to the front desk, where Gabriel worked on the clerk. They soon had plane tickets from Glasgow to London for the morning as well as a suite at the hotels London location.

That done, Gabriel withdrew again. Satya decided to leave them alone, so Silver took Gabriel up to their suite. Silver watched Gabriel get out of his shoes and socks and pace like a caged animal. Silver sat in one of the large chairs and watched as he removed his own shoes and socks.

Silver quickly tired of watching Gabriel pace. "Gabriel!" He called. Gabriel did not appear to hear him. Silver called him twice more to no avail, then resorted to desperate measures. *'Gabriel.'* he called again, very gently, but telepathically.

Gabriel jumped and whirled around to look at Silver. His face was shocked, confused and just a little upset. "What? Why did you break in?"

Silver sighed and stood. "Because I was getting tired of using my voice and not being heard!" He walked to Gabriel and took his face in his hands. "I didn't Read you, I just called you." Softly, he kissed him.

"I wish you had Read me..." Gabriel confessed, caressing Silver's face. "You could tell me if I've gone mad."

Silver smiled slightly as Gabriel walked to the desk in the sitting room and picked it up. He dialed three digits and hung up. He began pacing again. Back and forth twice before he stalked into the bedroom. Silver watched this with his eyebrows raised. He ran his fingers through his hair and sighed as he followed.

Gabriel was now at the foot of the bed, staring at the phone on the bedside table. He flinched when Silver touched his shoulder. Silver grasped him firmly and turned Gabriel so they were face to face. "Relax, Gabriel. It's only me."

Gabriel's face fell. Silver could feel the tension coming off of him like a physical thing. "Naked and on the bed..." Silver ordered. "On your belly. You need a massage."

Gabriel sighed, but did not object. He took off his clothes and lay on his belly on the bed. Silver went into the bathroom and found the massage oil he kept for overdone workouts. He was thinking he wouldn't get to use it, as neither he nor Gabriel had managed to work out any during their trip. He uncapped the bottle and inhaled the scent of the rosewood oil. He poured a small bit into his hand, wet a washcloth and returned to Gabriel. He tossed the washcloth onto the bed, in a far corner then focused his attention on his lover.

Silver straddled Gabriel and began by spreading a small amount of the oil around Gabriel's back. Gabriel sighed as the rosewood scent hit him. Silver grinned and nodded as he began working on Gabriel's shoulders. It was not unlike trying to massage a boulder. Silver worked at Gabriel's back, shoulders and arms until he began to feel them relax. He lifted his leg and settled beside Gabriel a moment.

"Over." Silver commanded. Gabriel turned and Silver smiled at the erection Gabriel sported. He straddled Gabriel and massaged his chest as his own erection rubbed against Gabriel's. The massage went from therapeutic to erotic in about ten seconds. Silver worked his way with hands and lips until his knees were near the edge of the bed. He kissed Gabriel's erection and massaged it with his hand as he worked his tongue between Gabriel's foreskin and glans. His other hand rolled Gabriel's scrotum. Gabriel was moaning pleasantly.

Silver took Gabriel completely into his mouth. Once. Twice. While he slowly rose the third time, he consciously relaxed his sphincter muscles. Silver then kissed his way back up Gabriel's' body working his knees until they were almost in Gabriel's armpits. He reached behind his body and guided Gabriel into his body. They both gasped with the pleasure of entry. Silver lowered himself completely onto Gabriel and slowly lifted himself. Silver rode Gabriel slowly for some minutes, while they looked at each other. Silver leaned forward and kissed Gabriel. Gabriel's hands went to Silver's hips, where they grasped him firmly. The pace quickened.

"My sweet Silver love..." Gabriel breathed.

Silver smiled and nibbled Gabriel's ear, then his neck. "My Angel..." he panted as the feelings began to take his breath away. Silver buried his head in Gabriel's neck as he came and less than ten seconds later Gabriel thrust himself into Silver twice, hard, as he came.

Silver lowered himself onto Gabriel and he felt his lovers arms wrap themselves around him in a tight embrace. Too soon, Silver raised himself and slid to Gabriel's right. He retrieved the washcloth and warmed it slightly with pyrokinesis and cleaned both of them up.

They were both chilled from the water and the air conditioning on their naked bodies and somehow found the energy to climb off the bed long enough to get under the covers. Silver snuggled under Gabriel's arm and laid his head on the pale chest. He listened as Gabriel's heartbeat and breathing returned to normal.

Silver felt Gabriel move slightly. He listened to the dialing.

"Hello, Terry. It's Gabriel." A Pause. "I'm wonderful." and Silver felt

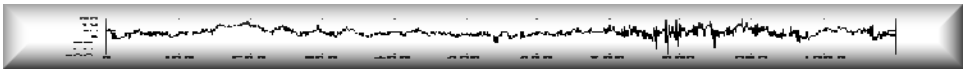
Gabriel's arm tighten around him. "And you?" "Great." "No, I'm in Glasgow. Wedding." A chuckle. "No, not mine." "Yes, Terry, I'm still." "Did you outgrow Patrick? Mum and Dad said the same about you and him." "Not that different, Sissy." "His name is Silver. I've just moved in with him, as a matter of fact." A huge sigh. "I want you to meet him. Mum and Dad too." "I met his family long ago." "His father is Stone Brewton. You've heard of him. He mourned the loss of grandchildren, but got over that soon enough. Now he's just happy Silver is happy." A laugh. "I know Dad is no Stone Brewton. Believe me I know." "We will be in London tomorrow. The Hilton. Suite 2034." "We'll be there until Saturday morning, then we're back to Chicago." "Alright then. I'll expect to hear from you one way or the other." "That would be enough for me." "Love to your family." "I love you too, Terry." and he rang off.

Silver kissed Gabriel's chest. "That wasn't so hard, now was it?"

Gabriel chuckled. "I copped out and called my sister," he confessed. "But she says she will meet you, even if she can't convince my mother and father to." He sighed. "Seems they still like to think you are just a phase I am going through."

Silver shrugged. "Am I?"

Gabriel moved Silver's head so they were looking into each others eyes. "My final phase." he said. "I will never have another."



8 ... Reunions

"I didn't snap. I didn't growl. I didn't glare. None of that. I was a perfect angel."

Gabriel chuckled at these words while he unlocked the suite door and opened it. The suite in the London Hilton was identical to the one in Glasgow. Silver followed him in, carrying their garment bags over his shoulder and their other bags in his right hand.

"You were a perfect angel because we were in the air a whopping half hour." Gabriel laughed, freeing his lover of the garment bags and heading through the door to the bedroom. "Another fifteen minutes and you would have been taking hostages!" he called from the closet.

Silver chuckled as he brought the bags into the bedroom and tossed them onto the bed. "I'm not that bad!" he announced.

Gabriel only snorted in reply. Silver opened one of the bags and took it over to the dresser. Opening a drawer, he turned the bag upside down and shook it's contents out. He reached into the drawer and shuffled things around a moment. He closed the top drawer a bit and opened the one under it. He transferred half of the top drawers contents into the bottom drawer and shuffled again. He was now able to close the drawers. He stood back and surveyed his work. He looked over at Gabriel, who was staring at him from the closet and shaking his head in disbelief.

"What?" Silver demanded.

Gabriel, still shaking his head, walked over to Silver and kissed him. "Nothing love." he stroked his lover's hair. "It's perfect. Just," his eyes twinkled, "perfect."

Silver said nothing, knowing Gabriel would neaten the drawers as soon as he could get away with it. Silver decided to give him his chance. He looked at his watch. "I think I'll call Dad." he announced. "Let him know where I am." and he left the bedroom for the sitting room. The phone was on a large desk by the window. Silver dialed and looked out of the window while the phone rang in Chicago.

"Hello." Came the sleep filled voice of Stone Brewton. It was five-thirty in

the morning.

"Hey, Dad!" Silver greeted his father, cheerfully.

"Hey kid." Stone replied, sounding sleepy but much more relaxed than he had a few days ago. "How was the wedding? How's Glasgow?"

"The wedding was great. Glasgow was pretty cool." Silver reported. "We're in London now."

"London?" Stone asked, sounding a bit surprised.

"Gabriel wants to introduce me to his family." Silver explained.

"Bout time." Stone chuckled slightly. "So you've moved into a hotel in London and I'll just bet your calling me to give Gabriel a chance to clean up some mess or other you've created."

Silver laughed. "Dad! I called you because your my father and I love you and I didn't want you to worry about me,"

"And you've left Gabriel a mess to clean up." Stone interrupted, laughing.

Silver shrugged. "Well, it wasn't a big mess." he defended himself, or tried to.

Silver knew his father was shaking his head. "You'll be back Saturday, right?"

"Yup." Silver confirmed.

"Fine." Stone acknowledged. "I'll see you on Monday morning then. Call me if you two hotel hop again, OK?"

Silver frowned. "Sure, Dad." he bit his lip. "Don't worry about me, Dad. I'll be all right."

Stone was silent a moment. "I know you will be." he murmured, although Silver thought his father still sounded a bit worried.

"Yup," Silver chirped. "Listen Dad. I better get going."

"Yes, Silver." Stone yawned. "I'm going back to sleep. I love you and I'll see you Monday, all right?"

"Love you too, Dad." Silver replied, and hung up. He frowned down at the phone a moment before he turned and returned to the bedroom. Gabriel was closing a drawer. "All finished?" Silver asked, smiling as he sat on the dresser.

Gabriel grinned at him and nodded. He went to the bed and sat down, patting the space beside him to indicate Silver should join him. Silver sat beside Gabriel and took his hand.

"Your really nervous, aren't you?" Silver observed.

Gabriel laughed. "Shows, does it?"

Silver nodded. "You didn't sleep last night. Or the night before." he reminded. "Lie back. Make yourself comfortable." he ordered.

Gabriel did as instructed. He pulled himself on the bed and lay on his side. Silver lay behind him and kissed Gabriel's ear. He spoke softly into Gabriel's mind while he forced Gabriel's body to relax. Gabriel closed his eyes as Silver put him into a deep and dreamless sleep. Silver lay still behind Gabriel for almost twenty minutes before he began to drift himself.

Silver woke in mid-afternoon. He checked Gabriel's telepathic sleep, then slid out of the bed. He went into the sitting room, closing the door behind him. He made a pot of coffee and stood by the window looking out onto downtown London. There was no afternoon sun. It was cloudy and gray. Silver watched people walk the streets below him. He could see several blocks from his twentieth story perch.

The phone rang. Silver picked the phone up on the second ring.

"Hello?" The voice was female and British. "Is this Silver?"

Silver raised his eyebrows. "Yes. May I ask who this is?"

"I'm Terry Davis." she introduced herself, then added, "Terry Kinlan-Davis. Gabriel's sister."

"Oh!" Silver exclaimed, realizing this before she told him. "Hello, Terry. Gabriel is asleep. I can wake him if you really need to," he started to say.

"No! Don't wake him. I can tell you anything I would tell him." Terry insisted. Silver allowed himself to relax a little. "I am calling about the conversation I had with Gabriel yesterday."

"About meeting me?" Silver murmured, grinning slightly.

Terry chuckled. "Yes, about meeting you. Or rather, convincing my parents to meet you." she amended and she sighed. "I talked to them last night and they are willing to meet you." she told him. Silver heard the pause and knew Terry was searching for words.

"But?" Silver prompted.

Terry sighed. "Silver, my father won't have Gabriel in his house." and she sounded close to tears. "He's willing to meet you, but someplace else." she sighed again. "I was thinking about my house. They have never been here. You two have never been here. Why not, right?" She was beginning to ramble.

"Tell you what." Silver began. "Why don't you all come here. I'm sure there is a restaurant around here someplace where we can have drinks or tea or whatever. Public place. If things go that badly we'll just leave."

Terry sighed. The relief was palpable when she replied, "That's a wonderful idea, Silver. I don't know why I didn't think of it."

Silver didn't answer immediately. "The thing is, I don't know London very well. The last time I was here was about ten years ago. I was eleven or twelve.

All I know for sure is there is no baseball here." Terry laughed and Silver continued. "There are three restaurants and two bars in the lobby of this hotel. I think maybe we should meet at one of them."

"Renaldi's." Came Gabriel's voice from the bedroom phone. "Tell them we'll meet at Renaldi's."

"You hate Renaldi's." Terry reminded him. "You said you wouldn't eat there if your life depended on it."

"Mum and Dad love that place." Gabriel grumbled, simply. "I'll be made to suffer so much in any event that it won't matter if I was in my own kitchen. I'll still get sick."

"Gabriel." Terry and Silver chided into the phone together. Silver laughed at the identical tones of chastisement in their voices.

Gabriel snorted again. "You two are going to get along just fine." he mock groaned. "Terry, dear, tell Mum and Dad to meet us at Renaldi's at half six." he tole her. "I haven't gotten any shorter, so they can't miss me. Bring Patrick. He hasn't had to break up a fight between me and Dad in a few years now."

Terry sighed. "Silver, do try and improve my dear brothers mood before half six, please."

"Will do." Silver assured her, grinning. "I had better start now, though. It's five thirty. Half five. Whatever. We'll see you tonight."

"Thank you, Silver." Terry replied. "Good-bye."

Silver hung up and walked straight into the bedroom. Gabriel was lying across the bed, with his feet on the floor. He winked at Silver and spoke in a low, seductive voice. "So how are you going to improve my mood for dear Mummy and Daddy?"

Silver pinched the bridge of his nose. "What am I going to do with you?" he asked.

"I'll think of something." Gabriel grinned. "And maybe I'll give my Dad a play-by-play."

Silver shook his head. "You'll sleep alone for a month." he threatened. He sighed and lay along the length of the bed. He rested his head on Gabriel's chest. "What is it with you and your Dad?"

Gabriel sighed. "I am an oxymoron to my father. A gay Bobby. There was a guy I was seeing. Nothing serious, at least not to me, anyway. More a friend than a lover. Like Satya was to you. My father caught us kissing one summer holiday. It took him a while to realize what he saw. To accept. Well, the end of summer I find out he's arranged a transfer of schools for me." He laughed. "And I met you." He ran his fingers through Silver's hair. "I didn't tell my father about you

until I was in Chicago. Actually, I told Stone first. My father, however, is not your father. He was not pleased. I haven't spoken to him since."

Silver propped his chin in his hand. "So why now?" he asked the question that had been on his mind since Gabriel mentioned wanting to come to London.

Gabriel smiled. "Because I have every intention of spending the rest of my life with you. And my father needs to know that. You are no phase in my life, Silver Brewton." He sat up and moved to the closet. He got on his knees and rummaged through his suitcase, eventually finding what he was looking for and palming it. He returned to the bed and got on his knees beside it, looking deep into Silver's eyes. He held out his hand and Silver saw a beautiful ring with a large lapis lazuli stone set into it. "If you live through Neil Monroe, I want to marry you. And you will live through Neil Monroe. I guarantee it." He took Silver's hand and slipped the ring on his left ring finger.

Silver pulled himself onto his knees on the bed. Sitting back on his feet, he studied Gabriel for almost a full minute. Then he nodded slowly. "Alright then." Then he chuckled. "I guess this means we're engaged, huh? I'm off to meet my father-in-law."

Gabriel roared with laughter. "Not much of a father-in-law, let me tell you. I'm getting the better bargain there."

A knock at the door interrupted them. They answered together. Satya strode in. "Have they called yet?" he asked.

"Renaldi's at half six." Gabriel almost grumbled, even through his good mood. He put his arm around Silver and added. "We'll be announcing our engagement."

Satya laughed and clapped his hands. "Well, it's about bloody time!"

"Give us a minute to change, Satya." Silver suggested. "We'll try to make it quick."

"Actually I think I will stay here. Eat in the hotel." Satya told them with a grin. "This is a time for families and I am not family. I'm not going."

Gabriel looked like he wanted to protest, but Silver agreed with Satya. "You came all this way for nothing?"

"No way!" Satya exclaimed. "I love London. I plan on having the time of my life." and he left them to get ready for dinner.

Silver and Gabriel actually managed to shower and change in record time. They emerged from their suites dressed in suits and ties. Renaldi's was several blocks away and they decided to walk rather than drive.

"There she is." Gabriel spotted his sister and her husband on the corner, about to cross the street. She turned and saw Gabriel and smiled so broadly,

Silver warmed immediately. Patrick was a tall muscular man with dreadlocks. He took Gabriel's proffered hand and pulled the taller man to him in a warm embrace. Gabriel came from it looking surprised, but pleased.

Gabriel introduced Silver. Terry looked Silver up and down with a smile. "Very nice, little brother." her tone was admiring, and Silver felt himself blush.

Patrick shook hands with Silver. He grinned and mentioned, "You do not fit into Bradford's little box any more than Gabriel does. This ought to be fun."

The four of them walked the remaining half block to Renaldi's. A plump woman was standing near the door. She smiled broadly when they entered. "Gabriel." she almost threw herself into his arms.

"Mum." Gabriel spoke into the graying red hair. He released her and looked at her closely. "It's been a long time."

"Too long, Gabriel." his mother agreed. She turned to her daughter and embraced her. "Too long for you too, Terry." she admonished. She hugged her son-in-law and told him. "You must come to the house more, Patrick." Patrick snorted in reply. She ignored him as she turned to face Silver. "You..." she smiled. "You are my Gabriel's love, aren't you?"

Silver bowed slightly. "Silver Brewton, ma'am." he offered his hand. Instead, he was swept into an embrace. Gabriel's mother released him.

"Don't call me *ma'am*." she chastised, the green eyes sparkling. "It makes me feel old. Lets start out with Pearl for now, shall we?"

Silver nodded and smiled. "And you will call me Silver, please."

Pearl nodded. She cleared her throat and told everyone, "I am afraid that Bradford was called into a meeting and won't be joining us tonight."

The reaction to this was interesting. Patrick smiled and shook his head. Gabriel and Terry both laughed out loud. Silver bit his lower lip gently and raised his eyebrows at Pearl. "Well, that's a pity..." he spoke slowly, simply. "I suppose I will just have to catch up to him some other time."

They were seated and ordered drinks. Gabriel relaxed as he watched his mother, sister and brother-in-law interact with Silver. He decided that his father's refusal to see him was not a bad thing.

They talked for hours. Pearl looked at her watch and spoke, almost sadly. "I will have to be going soon. It's almost nine. That's the middle of the night for an old bitty like me."

Gabriel steeled himself, then looked at all assembled, "I have one more thing I want to tell you all," he began. He took Silver's left hand and squeezed it. "Silver and I will be getting married. I don't know exactly when, but we will."

Terry squealed with delight and Patrick laughed. "Good for you, old man."

he cheered, clapping Gabriel on the back. Pearl smiled, looking a bit confused.

"Pearl?" Silver prodded.

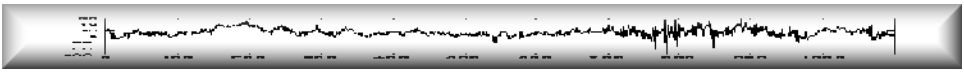
Pearl sighed. "I'm afraid I am showing my age. I just don't see why you would want to marry. You won't be having children or anything."

Silver chuckled. "You didn't have to get married to have Terry or Gabriel, did you? You married to show the world just how much you loved your mate. For us, it is the same. We have been committed to each other for years, but somehow this step is something different. It's like announcing to the world that I love Gabriel and will be with him forever." He winked at her. "Our way of telling certain people that we are not going through some childhood phase, if you will."

Pearl chuckled. "A phase." she murmured, quietly. "I could tell the moment I saw you that you love my Gabriel." Her voice got even lower, and only Silver actually heard her. "Everyone should share such a strong love."

They parted in front of Renaldi's with hugs and promises to keep in touch. As they walked back to their hotel, Silver said to Gabriel. "Your father copped out."

"Yes, he did." Gabriel shrugged. "But I'm not sorry. It was my mother I most wanted you to meet. And Terry and Patrick." He sighed. "I won't be surprised if I never see my father again."



9 Clark Parkenson

Silver stood next to the body in the morgue, looking into the chest cavity. Acrid smoke still rose slowly from the opening and Silver could feel the heat on his face, even from his height.

"He washed up this morning," Josh told them with a sigh. "When I cracked his chest and saw this, I called you right away."

Feruzi was across from Silver. "This heat is intense." She bit her lip. "There isn't much left, is there?"

Satya shook his head. He and Josh were both at the foot of the body. "Everything is incinerated, except for the skeleton. That's the only thing keeping the body in any sort of shape."

From beside Feruzi, Gabriel looked carefully into the chest. "Ashes." he murmured, quietly.

Danne shook his head. "A Pyro murder." He looked towards the head of the body to Stone. "Number two?"

Stone nodded. "Yes." he spoke slowly. "The Farsensing?" he asked Danne and Gabriel, who both still had a hand on each of the corpses legs.

"He burned this man from the inside out. Almost out. And he did it while the man was under water. But he didn't drown. He never took a breath after he hit the water." Gabriel reported.

Stone looked at the information on the clipboard he held. "Clark Parkenson."

Feruzi was looking through Clark Parkenson's wallet. "His drivers license says he is from Houston?" she read, frowning. She continued to rifle through the wallet. "No plane ticket. No hotel room key..." she paused. "Here's a work identification. He's a factory worker."

Silver frowned. "A factory worker? So, that means he wasn't in town for any sort of convention. A relative?"

Feruzi sighed and held a photograph out for Silver to see. Clark Parkenson stood with a woman and a girl of about six. Silver took the picture, shaking his head.

"Alright, guys..." Stone called them to order, as the picture made its way

around the cooling body of Clark Parkenson. "Feruzi – you, Silver and Danne are going to Houston. Gabriel and I can handle the investigation from this end. Find out what this man was doing in Chicago. Get back here as soon as you can."

Liz Parkenson cried out and collapsed against Feruzi when she was told about her husbands death. The hour was late and she was tired of hearing "No progress." from local police. She was almost relieved when the three officers from the Chicago Police Department appeared at her door, just after she put her daughter Alice, to bed for the night. She knew what it meant. Clark was dead. But when the female officer actually said the words, she was overwhelmed in her grief.

Feruzi let her cry on her shoulder for about five minutes before she gently touched the woman's mind and calmed her enough to be questioned.

"Why was your husband in Chicago?" Feruzi asked.

Liz looked bewildered. "I don't know," she sniffed. "He left for work a week ago and I haven't seen him since. I reported him missing to the police here, but I don't think they thought a missing factory line man was worth looking for. He doesn't know anyone in Chicago, as far as I know. We grew up here together. Neither one of us has ever been out of Houston."

Feruzi suppressed a sigh. She was opening her mouth to speak again when a tiny voice made her jump.

'That man talked about a place called Chicago.'

Alice Parkenson stood in the doorway of her bedroom in her little nightgown.

"That's a bad word." Alice scolded, looking directly at Danne. And caused all three Servo Polleo to look at her sharply as they instinctively reinforced their shields.

'She heard that?' Silver marveled.

'I know she did.' Danne grumbled.

"You're tall." Alice's sweet voice spoke to Silver. "Way taller than my Daddy was..."

Silver walked up to her and sat on his haunches before her. "Am I?" he asked, kindly. He reached gently into her mind and asked in that place. *'You heard my friend, didn't you?'*

"Daddy was as tall as him," she pointed around Silver to Danne, "But shorter than you." and she answered him. *'Sure. Daddy told me that was a bad word and little girls should never say it. He said it one day when he got mad. Why is your friend mad?'*

For the benefit of her mother, Silver asked her, "What is your name, young lady?" as he also told her. *'Your Daddy was right, Alice. You surprised Danne is all. Sometimes grown-ups say bad words when they are surprised.'*

"Alice" the little girl replied sweetly. *'My mommy can't hear us, can she?'*

"Nice to meet you Alice. I'm Silver. And these are my friends, Danne and Feruzi." Silver responded. *'No, honey, she can't. Only my friends and I can hear you when you talk like this. And people like us. You are very special.'*

"Silver. That's a funny name" Alice giggled. *'Daddy always said I was special.'* and she paused a moment. *'Why did that man take my Daddy away?'*

"Well, I don't think so. I was named after the metal. See?" and Silver held out his right hand, where he wore his silver ring. *'That's what we are here to find out, Alice. What did the man say exactly. Do you remember?'*

Alice took Silver's huge hand in both of hers. "It is pretty. Silver is my favorite color, you know?" *'That he needed to plant Daddy in Chicago.'* she replied. *'I think he was wrong and meant that he needed daddy at his plant. My Daddy works at a plant you know.'*

"Well, then you and I should get along wonderfully, shouldn't we?" *'Are you sure you heard right? He said he needed to plant your father in Chicago.'*

"Yes, we should." Alice beamed. *'Yes, that's what he said. I was hiding under the couch and heard everything. But I didn't see the man.'*

Silver stood. Alice barely came to his knees. "Now Alice, you should probably be in bed, shouldn't you? It's awfully late for such a little girl to be awake." *'Thank you so much, Alice. You have been a big help. I think we can use what you've told us to catch the man who took your father.'* and Silver made the wide awake Alice very sleepy.

Alice yawned. "I am sleepy. You're nice. Will you come and visit me again?"

Silver smiled down at her. "I will try my best to."

Alice returned to her room.

Liz was looking at Silver with a strange expression. "She is usually terrified of strangers, Detective."

Danne smiled. "Detective Brewton has a way with the ladies. They just can't resist him."

Feruzi stood. "Again, I am sorry for your loss, Mrs. Parkenson." she offered, as they headed for the door. "I promise you we will keep you informed." Liz opened the door for them and they filed out. Silver handed her his business card. "Call that number if you remember anything," he told her. "All my numbers are there. Call anytime, day or night." and he ducked through the door and into the courtyard of the rundown apartment complex.

Silver was driving. They headed straight for the airport. *'He was a plant.'* Danne suggested. *'A clue?'*

'Apparently. But what about him is the clue?' Silver asked. *'Your the senior here, Danne. You tell us.'*

'Damn. I wish the kid had seen something.' Feruzi sighed, as Silver sped along the deserted highways through Houston. *'We spent all day at that factory for nothing. No one knew anything. What a waste of time.'*

'A Polleo. I can't believe that kid's a Polleo.' Danne was marveling.

Silver was chuckling to himself. *'She must be Novus Polleo. Unusual. I have heard of them. They'll be sending her a letter when she's thirteen, I don't doubt. I'll have to report her existence to the Searchers.'*

'If Danne hasn't corrupted her mind with his foul language.' Feruzi teased, grinning. She frowned as Silver took the airport turn at ninety miles an hour. "Do you mind?" she asked aloud.

Silver slowed. "Sorry Feruzi. But I want to get the next flight and we don't have much time to catch the midnight plane."

Silver stopped the rental car in front of their terminal. They got out of the car and watched for witnesses. It was five minutes to midnight and the place was deserted. They Psychoportated through the terminal to the gate. They just made it.

Danne roared his frustration as he slammed his fist against the conference table. "What's the goddamn connection?"

It was four-thirty in the morning and everyone was tired. From the airport, Danne, Silver and Feruzi had gone straight to Silver's Beamer and returned to the IPI building. They had been going over the files from the Mary Ann Watson case and the Clark Parkenson case for the last two hours.

"That's it." Stone suddenly spoke, pushing his copy of the Watson file away from him. "Everybody go home. We aren't going to figure out Monroe's game tonight. This morning. Whatever." he ran his fingers through his dark hair. "I don't want to see any of you until tomorrow. That is, Tuesday as we have managed to work through Monday morning now." He leveled a finger at Danne "And if I found out you have been using psychometabolism to keep yourself awake I will have your ass on a platter, boy."

Danne threw up his hands in a show of surrender. "I'll sleep and everything."

They rode down to the street together. Silver shuddered slightly against the early September chill in the air, it was invigorating.

Gabriel drove the Beamer while Silver leaned back on the passenger side. "How the fuck is he doing it?" He asked himself. "And why can't we find him?"

"You tell me what Polleo can sense every other Polleo. It just can't be done." Gabriel pointed out. "The myth makers and the science fiction writers make it seem like we can just pop in and out of any mind we want to, no problem. Just psychoport wherever we want to. Communicate at any distance. What a load of old tosh!" He shook his head.

Silver chuckled. "Lisa asked me once why we bother to speak aloud at all. Why we bother with speech and phones and stuff. I tried to explain the Limitations to her. You can only Port so far. The limitations on telepathy and Morphing and psychometabolism. How complicated it can all be. How invasive telepathy is. She seems to be of the belief that telepathy is like breathing. Just natural. Don't have to think about it."

Gabriel raised his eyebrows. "Well, Shields are a lot like that. We don't think about it much except to reinforce or intentionally let them down. You and I get into each others minds without the other knowing it. Now. But in the beginning we couldn't Read each other. We can only do it now because we are so close. I know I don't think much about my Shields until I feel like someone is trying to Invade."

"I would love to get my hands on those writers. You think they could get

some of it right." Silver grumbled. He raised his hand. "I know, I know. Fiction seems so much better when the hero is damn near invincible. Well, I wish I was living in a good piece of fiction now. I'd just lock in and stop Monroe before he kills anyone else."

Gabriel laughed. "We are human. That's no fun, so the writers take away our limitations. Make more money that way, I guess."

The rest of the trip home was taken in silence. They went straight to their bedroom, undressed and climbed into bed. Gabriel pressed against Silver's back side.

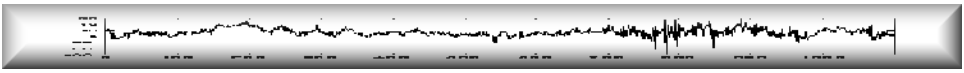
"I'm too exhausted to put you to sleep, love. I'm afraid your on your own." Gabriel spoke softly to Silver.

Silver chuckled. "I ought to turn you in for a good fictional character who can take care of me properly."

"You would miss the flawed me," Gabriel chuckled and kissed Silver's neck. "Sleep. Or at least rest. I'll be here when you wake up."

"I know. I love you, Gabriel."

They slept the clock around.



10 The Curse of the Black Cat

Silver opened his eyes and thought it must be the middle of the night. It was certainly dark as night. He lifted his eyes to the clock beside the bed, which told him it was five forty five. He remembered it had been five thirty when he last looked at the clock. He marveled that he'd either slept twenty-four hours or fifteen minutes when he noticed the little light that represented p.m. was on. He'd slept for twelve hours. There was still something wrong. It was too dark. Then the lightning flashed and he suddenly became aware of the sound of the rain on the windows.

"Bloody hell. That's some storm." Gabriel was also awake.

Silver rolled onto his back and grinned. "Hey you."

Gabriel grinned back. "What time is it, love?"

"It's almost six." Silver reported. "At night, if you can believe that..." he added, turning his head towards the window.

Gabriel groaned and got out of bed. The groans turned to growls as Silver listened to Gabriel jog into the bathroom. He heard the shower start. He sighed and closed his eyes. A thunderclap startled him. He was startled to see that he'd fallen asleep again. It was now six fifteen. He roused himself and threw the covers back. It was freezing! He jumped out of bed and hurried into the bathroom, which was still warm from Gabriel's shower. He started the shower and went to the sink. He brushed his teeth then considered shaving. He shook his head and decided not to. He got into the shower and enjoyed the hot water on his cold body. He remained in the shower long after he was done soaping and rinsing, not wanting to brave the cold. He again roused himself and got out, dried off and padded back to the bedroom to dress. He found his black sweat suit, put on a pair of thick socks and wandered down the back stairs to the kitchen.

Gabriel was sitting at the table in the breakfast nook drinking his tea. He watched as Silver prepared himself a cup of coffee, which Gabriel had brewing for him.

"You fell asleep again," Gabriel told him with a grin. "You looked so wonderful, I couldn't bring myself to wake you."

"You think twelve hours of sleep would be enough." Silver sighed before

downing half of his coffee in three gulps.

"Houston drained you." Gabriel spoke carefully, looking concerned.

"Monroe is really starting to piss me off." Silver growled. He finished his coffee. He banged the mug on the table and pinched the bridge of his nose. "And I am losing perspective."

Gabriel simply looked at him, patiently. It would have been simple to just Read his lover, but neither Read the other much. They respected the others privacy and Reading was usually saved for extreme worry.

"I have to figure out what these clues mean." Silver grumbled, getting up and helping himself to more coffee. He suddenly straightened. "What do I smell?"

Gabriel shrugged. "I finally got the time to put in that lamb and apricot pie I'd prepared a couple of days ago, but hadn't managed to bake."

Silver brought his coffee to the table and set it down. He kissed Gabriel when he looked up. "Your too good to me, you know."

"Oh, I doubt that." Gabriel contradicted. He ran his hand up Silver's arm. "Now drink your coffee and talk to me."

Silver sat and stared into his coffee cup a moment. "Monroe wants us to find him. Wants me to find him, more specifically. But right now, I can't figure out his clues. And I don't like thinking about how many more people are going to have to die before I figure it out. Some guy I don't know, have never met wants to kill me. And I don't even know why."

Gabriel pursed his lips. "He's barking mad, Silver. He killed your Mum, trying to impress her. Or Stone. Or the world. Maybe he's trying to do the same thing again."

Silver drank. "I don't know about that, Gabriel." he said into his cup. "Was he trying to impress my Dad, or was he trying to show him up. Dad's a cop. Monroe is a criminal. They were rivals in school. Dad came out on top. He really beat Dad down with those last murders. Then he killed Mom." Silver sighed. "Maybe his thing is beating my Dad down. Making him suffer. I'm old enough to make interesting sport now." he shook his head and drained the coffee cup. "I just don't know, Gabriel. And it's making me crazy."

"You need to refocus yourself." Gabriel told him, knowing he was stating the obvious. "Do that today. Looks like the rain is stopping. Eat, then go work it out."

Silver nodded. The smell of the lamb and apricot pie was distracting to him and he was glad to see Gabriel get up and take it out of the oven. They ate together in silence and Gabriel said he would clean up while Silver went to 'work

it out'. Silver mentally brought his shoes from under the bed upstairs and put them on. After a long kiss, Silver grabbed a jacket and left through the front door.

Two blocks to the east of their home was the lake front. Silver walked south along the lake front sorting the case in his mind. Two victims. Apparently completely unrelated. Murdered by a madman who was, ultimately, aiming to kill Silver. And Silver believed that this was all being done to somehow torture his father. But how many people were going to die this time? He turned east and used an underpass to get to the lake front walkway. The sweet young face of Alice Parkenson materialized in Silver's mind. Six years old and her father dead. Clark Parkenson had not been a random victim. What made him special enough to be sought out?

While the cool September night and the white noise that was traffic along Lake Shore Drive did a great deal to clear Silver's mind, he found no answers. He took the next under pass and walked back to the streets. He walked blindly west, his mind clearer than it had been in days. He thought idly about the victims. A woman. A man. One upper class, one lower class. A single woman and a family man. One lived in Chicago, one lived in Houston.

The streets of Chicago were never deserted. There were plenty of people walking and driving around Silver. He took a break from his thoughts to orient himself. He was rather surprised to find he was on the corner of Fullerton and Clark streets. Further than he'd initially planned to walk. He headed northwest on Clark street, planning his route home. Since Clark was taking him steadily west, he opted to turn off on Halsted. At Ashland, he glanced to his left and took a quick look at Wrigley Field. The baseball season was over. For the Chicago Cubs at least. Gabriel could not understand Silver's dedication to the Cubs. Silver did not try to explain it to him. A Chicagoan was a Chicagoan. No amount of moving around would change that. And a Cub fan was a Cub fan. The longest losing streak in history could not change that. And this season marked the worse season the Cubs had in their history. One hundred and five games lost. But Silver still followed them faithfully. And Gabriel shook his head at him all season.

As he turned onto his block he was suddenly struck with an idea. The Mets cap! It was aimed at him! There had been rivalry between the Cubs and the Mets for over a hundred and fifty years. Silver frowned. Could he be fishing for something that wasn't there? There were plenty of Mets fans in Chicago. But it seemed to fit to Silver. A sick way for Monroe to say 'Hello' to Silver.

He entered the house. The first sound to reach his ears were the middle notes of Toccata and Fugue. He leaned in the doorway and watched Gabriel,

who appeared to be sleeping, but Silver knew better. Gabriel was focused on the music, a mutual favorite in their home. Silver closed his own eyes and let the music wash over him. Silver opened his eyes with the final long note and found Gabriel watching him from his lying position on the couch.

Silver went to the couch and Gabriel lifted his long legs to accommodate. With the comforting weight of Gabriel's legs on him, Silver looked down at his long time love.

"I think I've figured a piece of it." he reported softly.

Gabriel's eyebrows rose slightly.

"It was the Mets cap," Silver explained, slowly. "Monroe was telling me something with that Mets cap."

Gabriel's eyebrows rose a fraction more.

"Don't ask me why." Silver shook his head. "There is something to that damn cap."

Gabriel did not ask why. He did not say anything.

Silver kept his theory to himself the next morning when the Servo Polleo congregated in their conference room. He was in a good mood. It was his twenty-second birthday. Gabriel woke him early and made love to him. What followed was breakfast in bed, more love in the shower and a surprise in the front hall. Gabriel, knowing that the only thing that frustrated Silver more than the Neil Monroe situation was the season the Cubs were having, gave him an official Cubs jacket, circa Nineteen Hundred and Eight. One of the last times the Cubs won the World Series. He was not going to ruin his day by mentioning the New York Mets.

The Servo Polleo were avoiding the Monroe situation by catching up on the paperwork from half a dozen minor cases that had cropped up and been wrapped up since Silver and Feruzi joined them. Mostly involving minor crimes of Insciens against Polleo or vice versa. It was dull work and Silver was loving

every second of it.

A soft knock on the door announced Roman Stevenson, the secretary and file clerk for their little department. He'd been in eight times that morning, asking for translations for someone's atrocious handwriting. The last time he'd been in the room he complained, "Someone ought to make you all take penmanship. I have yet to meet one of you with decent handwriting." as he marveled that the word he sought a translation for was "drunk". "I would have sworn it was dynamite!" he exclaimed as Gabriel flushed as red as his hair as everyone laughed at him.

Roman now appeared carrying an elaborately decorated box. He walked over to Silver and placed the box on the table in front of him. "This was just delivered for you," he announced with a smile.

Silver looked at the box and could not explain the sudden dive his stomach took. He stood and stared at the box.

"Open it." Roman encouraged. "The delivery boy said it was crucial to open it right away."

Silver looked down at Roman, but placed his hands on either side of the lid. He slowly lifted the lid and his eyebrows flew up.

There was a small black kitten in the box. It had, wrapped around its neck a red, white and blue ribbon. Silver lifted the cat out of the box and it immediately began to purr.

"Well look at her." Feruzi all but purred herself, her voice all sugary.

"How do you know it's a girl?" Silver asked, completely distracted.

"No balls, dummy." Feruzi pointed between the kittens back legs.

"You don't like cats?" Roman asked, seeing the frown on Silver's face.

"I like cats fine." Silver murmured, distantly. He glanced down and saw that there was a note in the bottom of the box. He took the note from the box with a huge sigh.

Stone immediately stood. "It's from him, isn't it?"

Silver didn't have to open the note to know that. He nodded as he unfolded the note with one hand, balancing the small cat in his other.

Happy birthday Silver,

Will it be your last? I'm sorry, but this gift is a day earlier than it really ought to be. I suppose your mother did the best she could. I thought it would have more meaning on your birthday as opposed to the day after.

Have you figured anything out yet?

Your nex, Neil Monroe

Silver nodded slowly at the note. He handed it off blindly to whoever was behind him. He turned to Roman. "Who delivered this cat?" He asked, hefting the kitten in one hand and looking into its blue eyes.

"The usual courier." Roman told him, frowning at the odd question.

"There wasn't anything strange about him?" Stone asked. He'd taken the note, read it and passed it along.

Roman frowned. "He seemed a bit, well, moody today." he shrugged. "Usually he is all bubbly and full of life. Today. All business."

Silver sighed. "Roman, call the courier and have them call whoever delivers here and make sure they're all right."

Gabriel was the last to look at the note. "Monroe? Morphed?"

Silver nodded again as Roman rushed from the room.

"What the hell is it supposed to mean?" Feruzi demanded.

"The black cat? Don't you remember your superstitions, Feruzi?" Silver teased with half a smile.

"Yea." Feruzi retorted, smartly. "I remember they are so much bull."

"This cat is symbolic. He's trying to tell me that things will only get worse from here. And that I will lose." Silver murmured.

Danne's eyebrows were up now. "You got all of that from a cat?" he scoffed, disbelieving.

Silver chuckled. "The black cat. The red, white and blue ribbon. Dad, you know the meaning, right?"

"I don't know the history as well as you do, but I think it is symbolic of the nineteen sixty nine Cubs. But, I don't think I get it. What has that old curse have to do with you." Stone grumbled, sounding all at once frustrated, bewildered and angry.

"Curse?" Feruzi arched her eyebrows. "You know better than to believe in curses, Silver." she scolded.

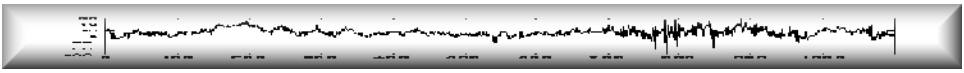
Silver chuckled and held the little cat out in front of him. "You know what I mean, don't you." and he paused a moment. "Cubbie." The little cat rubbed against Silver's face, purring loudly.

"On September the ninth, nineteen sixty-nine, the Cubs began a crucial two game series with the New York Mets." Silver began, smiling slightly as Cubbie continued to rub against his face. "They were two and a half games ahead of the Mets. Some loony ass Mets fan let lose a black cat." He held Cubbie up for all to

see. "Some say the cat just walked in front of the dugout. Some say it circled the batter in the batters circle. Doesn't matter, really. The Cubs lost that game. Lost both games, as a matter of fact. Their lead shrank to half a game. They lost the pennant to the damn Mets, who went on to win the god damned World Series against the Baltimore Orioles." He placed Cubbie on the table top, where she promptly went straight back to him and started climbing him. "It was pathetic. And it was all because of that damn cat."

Feruzi was wide eyed. "And you think this cat is a curse on you?" she asked incredulously.

Silver chuckled as Cubbie reached his shoulder and climbed on. "Don't be stupid. Of course I don't. But he wants me to think that. This game is getting very personal. And it's going to become very dangerous."



11 Another Clue

The workout at the Randolph Street Gym had been intense. All three of them had pushed themselves to the maximum. Weight lifting followed by swimming. Showered and changed from sweats to suits, they now walked north on Michigan Avenue. Indian Summer had arrived. The mid-September air was in the low-eighties and all three of them went sans jackets.

They had lunch with Feruzi and Stone by the river, alfresco. They watched and they were watched. Feruzi flirted so much with their waiter that Stone offered to give her away at the wedding. But the flirtation paid off for the waiter. He got a 40% tip and Feruzi's phone number.

They crossed the Michigan Avenue bridge and continued their trek north. It was such a nice day, none of them were in a big hurry to get back to the office.

"Much as I would like to goof off today, I have to bring up business sooner or later." Stone mentioned as they walked. He held up his hands at the groans surrounding him. "Just tell me what you've figured out so far."

"We need to break apart every aspect of the victims so far," Danne said. He held up his fingers as he ticked off the list. "The victims addresses, their phone numbers, their International Identification Numbers... Hell, we're even using employee identification numbers."

Silver was nodding. "The answer lies in the clues, of course. It's not about how they died, I don't think. It's in them, somehow. Who they were, what they did. We have to get into their personal lives."

They turned onto their street and Stone continued. "So far all we know is that when he's done, he's going to try and kill you, Silver." he growled, angrily. "That's it. This investigation is going nowhere. We can't find Neil. And Neil is the key to this whole thing."

Gabriel ran his fingers through his hair. "Well, he must not be done, then. He hasn't come after Silver, and we don't know how he'd do it anyway. He has to be close to him to use any powers he has."

"He is still testing me." Silver frowned, sounding disgusted. "He doesn't know how strong I am, just yet. He won't chance much until he figures it out."

"Either that or he wants you to come to him." Feruzi suggested. "Why leave

us clues if he isn't leaving us a path to follow?"

"Roman has been setting up a bunch of boards in the conference room." Danne told them. "We can stare at them all afternoon if we need to."

They fell silent for the remainder of the short walk. Once they arrived at the Servo Polleo conference room, they saw that Roman had indeed set up two boards. One for each victim. On it were written, in large enough letters to view across the room, all the information on both victims. It was a good visual aid. They all knew most of the information on the victims, but being able to actually look at the information seemed to help them.

Silver sat at the conference table, straightened his legs beneath it and leaned back. He looked at the two boards before him. Roman had been thorough, just as he'd been told to be. He found himself staring at Mary Ann Watson's address. 810 North Lake Shore Drive, Apartment 1810.

"Hmmmm." Silver hummed to himself. He was suddenly drawn to the second board. Clark Parkenson. His address was different. Not addresses? Maybe the address of one and not the other?

Roman interrupted his thoughts. Came in suddenly and swept a bag off of the table near Silver. "You guys came in before I could clean up my mess from lunch." he apologized.

Silver caught a glimpse of the bag as Roman swept it up. "Hold it, Roman." he ordered.

Roman froze. Silver got up and took the bag from him. It was white. From a deli Silver had never heard of before. Fredo's. 825 North Clark street. Roman smiled nervously. "They have great pastrami."

Silver chuckled. "Thank you Roman." he patted the smaller man on the shoulder.

Roman looked confused, but beamed up at Silver. "Sure, Mister Brewton, anytime." and he turned with his bag and left.

"Clark." Silver murmured, as the door closed behind Roman.

"What about him?" Stone asked, looking interested.

"Clark Street." Silver nodded to himself. "The eight hundred block of Clark Street." and he began pacing.

"Huh?" Feruzi asked, frowning.

"Mary Ann Watson lived on the eight hundred block of Lake Shore Drive. Eight Hundred." he said, more to himself than anyone else. "What if Clark Parkenson was killed for his name? Clark. Clark Street."

Danne was frowning now. "That would be insane." he pointed out, thoughtfully.

"Well, this bloke is mad." Gabriel volunteered. "Would he kill someone just for their name?" he turned to Stone.

Stone took a deep breath and nodded slowly. "He might. The last series of murders wound up adding up in a strange way. But I couldn't figure it out until later. Too late." he sighed, sadly. "The first victim was named Richard. The second was Octavia. The third was Samuel. Again, none of the victims had any connection to each other. They were spread out all over Chicago."

Silver was frowning now. "The last victim. Their name started with the letter 'E', right?" He leaned heavily on the table. "R. O. S. E., Rose."

Stone nodded, unsmiling. "The final victim was named Eleanor. You should have been working on that case, Silver. You have the mind for it. I failed. And," he paused. "And all those people died."

"So it wouldn't be impossible. Right?" Silver asked, "But Clark Street runs the length of most of the city." He continued. "The eight hundred block is one, there is an eighteen hundred block. If he just means Clark Street. Shit. Clark starts at Cermak to the south and ends at the Evanston boarder. Two thousand south to, what? Seventy five hundred north? That's ninety five city blocks!" he calculated, deflating.

Feruzi whistled low.

"Well, it's better than Western Avenue, right?" Stone almost chuckled, showing unusual cheeriness. "That runs the entire length of the city. Past a hundred and twenty something south all the way into Evanston. We have to start somewhere."

Danne tossed Silver his suit jacket. "Let's go, then." he headed for the door. "The rest of you try to find something a bit easier."

When Danne and Silver arrived at the eight hundred block of north Clark Street, Silver pointed the Beamer south.

"Please tell me there isn't a Parkenson street in this city," Danne half joked,

watching the west side of the street from his window.

"I don't know, to be honest." Silver replied. "I don't think so. I'd need a map of the city."

They drove south to Cermak, then turned around. They were all the way to Chicago Avenue when Danne spoke again. "We don't even know what we're looking for. Damn, this Monroe has us all worked up, doesn't he?"

Silver sighed. "Yes, he does." he admitted. "He's on his second murder spree. He has told us who it will end with. Me. But he hasn't told us who the victims are going to be." He stopped at a red light. "I wonder..." he suddenly said.

When the light turned, he suddenly turned right and drove until he was on Lake Shore Drive, he drove south.

"Where are we going now?" Danne asked, frowning.

"To Monroe and Clark." Silver told him, frowning himself.

Danne's jaw dropped. "Monroe and Clark?"

Silver nodded and kept driving. He got off the Drive at Monroe and drove west on Monroe to Clark Street. He pulled up in front of the First National Bank Plaza and parked the car.

"Now what?" Danne asked.

"Good question." Silver sighed. He suddenly got out of the car and got onto the sidewalk. He walked to the corner and stood, looking north, then south on Clark Street.

Danne left the car and joined him. "If we get picked up for soliciting for prostitution, I will never forgive you." he joked, seriously.

Silver grinned. "I'll remember that." he chuckled. "I'm looking for something permanent, I think. Something that wouldn't be disturbed on a daily basis." and he spotted some examples. "Like newspaper machines and mailboxes." he nodded across the street to a line of them. There was also one on their corner. "You want this corner or the southeast one?"

I'll go southeast." Danne told him. "But what the hell am I looking for?"

Silver bit his lip and stared down at the line of newspaper machines and the single mailbox. "Check underneath. These machines have been bolted here since time out of mind." Silver murmured, more to himself than to Danne.

"You've lost your mind, Silver." Danne mumbled, as he jogged across the street.

Silver didn't reply. He was already on his knees, almost laying on his stomach, feeling under the machines. He tried not to think about what he might have to have Satya Cure if he pricked his finger. The undersides were all clear.

He moved along and was feeling under the mailbox when he heard the voice.

"Are you all right, buddy?"

Silver almost cursed as he felt nothing under the mailbox. He rolled over and sat up. He was looking at a Chicago Police officer. His shined shoes reflecting the afternoon sun.

"I'm fine officer." Silver told him, reaching in his jacket pocket for his badge. He handed it to the officer and stood as the officer examined it. The officer glanced up and took a double take as he realized Silver's height.

"What exactly were you doing, Detective," the officer, Stevens, looked at Silver's identification again. "Brewton?"

"Investigating." Silver explained, shortly.

A sudden honking of horns announced the arrival of Danne. He was waving an envelope. "Brewton, you have instincts like I can not believe." he called, beaming. He smiled at the officer, looking up at him. He was almost an inch shorter than Silver, which made him quite tall. "Officer," he looked at the name tag. "Stevens." he greeted him, absently.

Silver took the envelope, which had his name on it. He began walking away from Officer Stevens, paying him no further attention.

"Have a nice day, Officer." Danne called, jogging after Silver. When he caught up to him he asked. "How the hell did you know?"

Silver leaned on the hood of the Beamer and stared at the envelope. "I didn't. I was taking a stab in the dark mostly."

"Right." Danne drew the word out, as if he didn't believe a word. "Your a natural, Silver. You gonna open it?"

"Not now." Silver shook his head. "Lets get back to IPI. I'll open it there."

Silver,

Very good! You have found my third clue. I'm impressed. The only way you

would have figured out where to find this was to have figured out at least one of my other clues. You would think I would have been able to find a Clark right here in Chicago, but I couldn't. The first one I was able to find was the oaf from Houston. Poor white trash and no one will miss him.

In any event, I again must tell you I am quite proud of you.

I am afraid that the next clue must come with a body. I certainly hope you find this note before you find the body. These things do have a proper order you know.

Again, Your nex, Neil Monroe

Silver finished reading and absolute silence fell.

"How did he know you would find it?" Feruzi broke the silence.

"I didn't find it." Silver told them. "Danne did."

Danne was shaking his head. "You led us to it. You figured out the Monroe and Clark thing and you figured out where the note would be hidden. You all but led us straight to it."

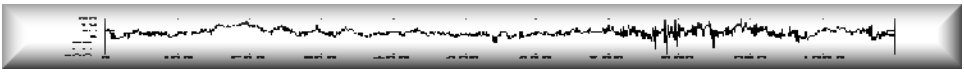
Silver shrugged. He looked over the note again. "Why is he baiting you, Dad?" he asked slowly.

Stone emitted a bitter laugh. "He's not baiting me. He's baiting you." he grumbled. He and Silver locked eyes a moment.

Gabriel was reading over Silver's shoulder. "I guess now we wait."

"For what?" Feruzi asked.

"The next body..." Gabriel and Silver said together.



12 Relocated

"I don't know how to thank you all!" Liz Patterson almost sobbed.

"Don't bother, Liz. We don't take praise well!" Feruzi laughed. She was making up the queen sized bed in Liz's new bedroom. "Silver really took to Alice. He knows what it's like to grow up without a parent. He knows what it's like to grow up different. I am guessing that's why he started this. And the rest of us just went along. Makes us feel good."

"But we're nobody..." Liz insisted. She'd been on the verge of tears for two days, ever since she and Alice had arrived in Chicago, where Silver had arranged for a well paying job for Liz, schooling for Alice and a place to live for both of them.

"Not to us, you aren't." Feruzi corrected her, laughing. "Besides, we aren't giving handouts. You have a lease on this place, and trust me, Danne is a great landlord."

"I know you're not giving us a handout. I never would have accepted a handout. But ya'll have been so kind to me and Alice." Liz told them. "It's like you've taken Clark's death personally. Taken over our family. I didn't think anyone really cared. I know the Houston police didn't care about us and when you all left so quickly after your visit, I figured I would never see you again."

Feruzi examined her hospital corners. "We are rather abrupt interviewers, it's one of those things we have to work on, as a group." she snapped the blanket over the bed and began smoothing it. "We aren't very good at communicating with Insciens. I think it's a flaw, but none of the guys think about it at all. Men, right?"

Liz laughed. Since August, when she'd met these strange people, her world had been turned upside down. Her husband had been kidnaped and murdered. She was alone, just her and Alice. And Liz had never worked a day in her life. Not one. She had no idea how she was supposed to pay her bills. She was absolutely terrified when the rent came due.

On September the third, she walked with Alice to the rental office, where she was told not to worry, her lease had been bought out. Liz had no idea what that meant. The lady in the rental office told her someone had paid the rent on

their place for the remainder of the lease period. "You got you a guardian angel, lady." the agent told her, sounding impressed.

Liz walked back to her apartment completely confused. She had no idea who would have paid her rent for two months. Someone had paid for Clarke's funeral also. Well, had sent his ashes, anyway. She decided she had better thank her lucky stars and start worrying about the other bills and what she would do after her lease was up on October the first.

The mailman was waiting for her at her apartment. He made her sign for the letter three times, an experience Liz had never had before. Paper was so rare these days. Only the very rich used it anymore, paper manufacturing having been declared illegal in 2011. Now there was only recycled paper. She took her hard won letter into her apartment and sat in the kitchen with it. It was so official looking that she was afraid to open it for a long time. She'd never heard of the International Parapsychological Institute in Chicago, Illinois before. The only people she had ever met from Chicago were those three detectives that came to tell her that Clarke had been murdered.

She read the letter three times before she could believe what she was reading.

Dear Mrs. Parkenson,

My name is Apsara Zala and I am the head of the Chicago branch of the International Parapsychological Institute, known throughout as IPI.

You have been brought to my attention as having a well ordered and organized mind. It has additionally been suggested to me that you are in the market for a job, as you have recently lost your husband and no longer have a means of supporting yourself. Hopefully we can help.

The IPI would like to offer you a job as clerk in our file office. Training is provided. This is a rather original position. We have only started keeping files in the last three years and have never had anyone who was dedicated solely to the job of keeping these files organized. The pay would be 60,000 credits a year, and your relocation costs would be provided as well as an apartment for yourself and your daughter, Alice.

Please call the number below with your decision, as time is of the essence. We really need that clerk. Please ask for Silver Brewton. He will handle all of the arrangements.

Thank you, Sincerely, Apsara Zala, Capitis, International

The Silver Chronicles: Psychic Chronicles

Parapsychological Institute, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Liz looked from her kitchen to her living room, where Alice was watching cartoons on their old video monitor. Alice suddenly looked from the monitor into Liz's eyes. She stood and walked to her mother.

"Mommy?" she asked. "What's the matter?"

Liz looked at her daughter, who always seemed to know what she was thinking. Parapsychological. Liz liked reading. She had read a lot of electronic fantasy books. She had read one once about people who could read minds. She remembered that book, whose title was long forgotten, as she looked into her daughters blue eyes.

"Would you like to move away from here, sweetie?" she asked, the letter in her hands trembling slightly.

"Like to Chicago? Where that tall policeman is from?" Alice asked, smiling. "I like him. He's nice. I could see him again if we moved where he lived."

Liz smiled at her daughter as she turned suddenly and went back into the living room. Instead of laying in front of the monitor again, she picked up the telephone and walked back to Liz with it.

"You should call them, Mommy." Alice suggested. "I'll bet they're all as nice as Silver is." and then she went back to her cartoons.

Liz stared at her daughter for a long time. She knew there were people like the one in the book she'd read so long ago. Clark's more religious friends called them abominations. Evil soul stealers who should be tossed off of the planet and sent to an isolation planet where they would be no threat to humanity. Clark had said they were miracle workers. They could stop disasters and had occasionally done so. He'd told Alice about a hurricane when he was a boy. Psychics had reinforced the damns that had threatened to completely flood the city. But many people sued them, claiming they should have stopped the hurricane completely and saved homes and lives. The psychics had suggested that the people should have left in the face of a hurricane. Not doing so they left themselves at the mercy of Mother Nature. Clark had agreed. No material thing was worth dying over, he'd said. He'd been dirt poor even then and his family had fled the storm and lost everything but their lives and a few small personal possessions, which his father had said was all that ultimately mattered. Clark had been a silent fan of the psychics.

Alice had always been able to tell what other people were thinking. They didn't go out much because the more people Alice was around, the more upset Alice got. Once she could talk, she would ask if her parents could "Make them

be quiet." Liz and Clarke never knew what it meant, but Alice was always happier when it was just the family, so they became reclusive.

Liz looked again at the number in the letter and picked up the phone. She took a deep breath and pushed the number into the keypad.

"IPI." a pretty voice answered. "How may I direct your call?"

Liz swallowed. "Detective Silver Brewton, please." she said, trying to keep her voice from shaking. She turned her back to Alice.

"One moment, while I locate him." The voice replied, and she found herself listening to pretty music like she'd never heard before. This wasn't country music. Liz guessed it must be classical, she was feeling much more relaxed when suddenly she found herself listening to the sounds of cars honking. It was as if the phone on the other end had been hung out of the window on a busy street.

"Brewton." a voice she remembered answered.

"Detective Brewton?" Liz began. "I don't know if you remember me. Liz Parkenson. From Houston."

"Hi!" he spoke cheerfully, as if talking to an old friend. "Of course I remember you. How is Alice?"

Liz found herself relaxing. "Alice is just fine. I got the note from your, um, your company."

"Wonderful!" Silver's smile could almost he heard in his voice. "Please tell me your calling to take the job. Poor Roman needs all the help he can get." and he must have walked into a building because the background noise changed from the sounds of a street to the sounds of lots of people talking and laughing.

"Yes, I am willing to take the job, but I haven't worked since before Alice was born. I don't know if I have the skills." she suddenly hedged. "And I just don't know how I can get up there."

Silver laughed. "Don't worry about it one bit. Roman can teach you whatever you need to know. Can you get to the airport OK?" he asked.

Liz thought a moment. "I drive, but I don't have a car." she told him. "We can probably," but she was cut off.

"I'll have you picked up and taken to the airport, don't worry about it."

"But, I'll have to pack. We don't have much. The furniture came with the apartment. All we really have is our clothes." she explained, a bit dejectedly, suddenly realizing that she and Alice really didn't have anything.

"Don't worry about it. Your apartment will be furnished here, too. You can always replace it if you don't like it." Silver told her, and she heard then "Order for me, love. It's Mrs. Parkenson. I told you about her, remember?"

Liz asked. "Am I interrupting your lunch?" she asked as she realized it was

past lunchtime. She had interrupted a lunch date, by the sound of it. "I'm so sorry. I can call you back."

"No, no, no." Silver told her, quickly. "We're just getting here. The lunch rush. It'll take them a while to get all our orders together."

Liz heard in the background. "Hi, Liz. It's Feruzi. Can't wait to see you here."

Silver chuckled. "Feruzi says hi, in case you didn't hear her."

Liz smiled. She had never had a conversation like this one. "Tell her I can hardly wait to get there."

Silver relayed the message, then returned his attention to Liz. "I can give her your phone number if it means that much, Feruzi. I am not your message boy." and Feruzi laughed. He spoke to Liz again. "Liz. All the arrangements have been made, or will be as soon as I get off the phone with you. Someone will be there in a week to take you to the airport and fly with you to Chicago." he paused. "OK, Feruzi will be there in a week to take you to the airport. I think that's what all the bouncing up and down is supposed to mean."

Liz chuckled. "But, Detective Brewton, I." and he cut her off.

"Please, call me Silver." he insisted. "And there aren't any buts. You don't owe anyone anything. We need a clerk and we've gone further than Houston to find employees. Trust me." and Liz did.

Feruzi did show up a week later and helped them finish packing their few belongings. She chattered away, telling both Liz and Alice about Chicago. Alice was bouncing up and down with excitement.

"I don't know how I can pay the first months rent." Liz worried. "And the security deposit. It's always three months here."

Feruzi sat Alice on a suitcase to close it. "It's five months where your going, but that's been waived." she told her, as she snapped the latches on the suitcases.

"Waived?" Liz gasped. "By who?"

"By the owner. Danne." she explained, shrugging.

"Danne owns a whole apartment building?" Alice breathed, excitedly.

"Danne owns several buildings in Chicago. I wanted to put you up in one of mine, but he was right, the schools are better in the area he owns in." Feruzi explained. She tickled Alice under the chin. "You're gonna like the school your going to. Danne registered you yesterday. They found a way to squeeze you in. Your teacher is named Miss. Flores. That's flower in Spanish."

Liz was completely overwhelmed as she half listened to Feruzi tell Alice about her new school. She fell silent in the car on the way to the airport. She listened to Alice chatter away.

"Why didn't Silver come to get us?" she asked. "He said I would see him again."

Feruzi laughed. "Silver hates flying. It's a miracle we got him here at all. He gets all grumpy. Only Stone and Gabriel can handle him then. Neither of them could make it here. Danne and I had to threaten him all the way here to be nice."

"Who are Stone and Gabriel?" Alice asked.

"Don't be nosy." Liz managed to pull herself together enough to chastise, but Feruzi only laughed.

"Oh, she's not being nosy." Feruzi defended the little girl. "Stone is Silver's father and Gabriel," she paused. "Gabriel is sort of hard to explain to a little girl, I think."

Alice made a face and told Feruzi. "I know about gay people, you know. There was a gay couple living next door for a while. I'm not a baby, you know."

Feruzi laughed. "I am so sorry, Alice. When I was growing up, my parents never taught me about gay people. It just wasn't something you talked about." she looked at Alice in the rear view mirror and added. "You have to learn to stay out of peoples heads you know. It's impolite."

"I'm sorry. I don't know how to stop it." she logized.

Feruzi laughed again. "That's OK, honey. You will learn to block and to be blocked. Most kids learn from their parents, but you'll have to settle for us, I guess."

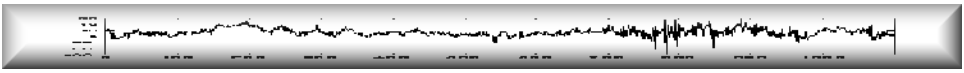
Liz almost fainted when she saw her new apartment. It was half of the building. Five times the size of the apartment in Houston. Alice ran straight to Silver when she saw him and Liz watched as he picked her up and hugged her.

Even after the conversation with Feruzi in the bedroom, Liz tried to thank Silver.

"Listen Liz." Silver told her, smiling. "You need a job, IPI needs a file clerk. Alice also needs to learn about being Polleo before she goes to school Monday, or she'll be completely overwhelmed. I'm just glad we found her before she got to school. I'm not happy we had to find her the way we did, but at least we found her, right?" He hugged her. "Just enjoy, OK? If you ever decide to pay us back, fine. Whatever. But we're not doing it for the credits. You'll have plenty of credits of your own, soon enough. Profit sharing in IPI is very rewarding."

Feruzi was the last to leave. "Just enjoy, Liz." she encouraged. "We're just trying to help."

And they were gone.



13 Surprise

Silver enjoyed the feeling of Gabriel's arm around him as they sat up in bed, reading. Silver half lay with his head on Gabriel's chest. The electronic book was a historic, romantic mystery. They had quite a few of these in their collection of books. Gabriel being the romantic and Silver being the mystery and history buff.

Silver finished the book and turned off the book reader. "You didn't like it?" he heard in his ear.

Silver sighed. "I have to admit, the romance was better than the mystery." he conceded.

"We've had worse Saturday morning reads." Gabriel chuckled, tightening his grip and nuzzling Silver neck. Silver sat up and kissed Gabriel, and they both began a slide into the mattress.

The doorbell rang and Silver groaned. "So much for afternoon delight." he grumbled, as he threw the covers off and reached for a pair of jeans. He handed the book to Gabriel, who sat up smiling.

"Maybe it's just the usual religious zealots. Get rid of them and come back to bed." He encouraged, hopefully.

"I sure hope so." Silver said, zipping his pants as he entered the upstairs hallway. He jogged down the stairs as the doorbell rang a second time.

Silver opened the door and was rendered speechless. He stood staring a moment, looking directly into the eyes of one of the two visitors. He was brought back to earth by the voice below him.

"Hello, Silver."

Silver managed to regain himself. "Mrs. Kinlan. I mean, Pearl." he stammered, tripping over his words. "Hi!" he suddenly realized that his bare feet were cold. The early October weather was unseasonably cold. He backed up, opening the door as he went. "Please, come in. Can I take your coat?"

His guests gave him their coats and Silver hung them on the coat rack next to the inner door. The three of them stood a moment. Silver's mind was racing with a hundred things to either do or say. He was spared when he heard Gabriel on the stairs. Silver noticed Gabriel too, had put on jeans.

"Mum?" he gasped, as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Pearl turned and beamed. "Gabriel!" she exclaimed looking up the stairs as Gabriel descended. They embraced at the foot of the stairs then Gabriel looked over her head.

"Dad." he spoke, rather flatly.

"Gabriel." Bradford Kinlan spoke with equal flatness, nodding once. He was Silver height, with black hair and eyes like Gabriel's.

Silver cleared his throat. "Please, come in. Sit down." and he followed as the elder Kinlans walked into the living room. Silver walked just past Gabriel, who seemed unable to move. "Tea? Coffee?" he offered.

Pearl smiled. "I think coffee sounds wonderful, Silver. Thank you." she turned to her husband. "Bradford?"

"Tea." Bradford managed to force out.

"I'll be right back." Silver called. On his way past, he reached up and squeezed Gabriel's shoulder.

Silver went into the kitchen and began preparing the water for the tea and the coffee. He resisted the urge to tap into Gabriel's mind as he visited with his parents. He couldn't imagine what they were doing in the country. In Chicago.

Five minutes later, as he was pouring the hot water into a carafe, he heard feet entering the kitchen. He glanced over his shoulder as Gabriel shepherded his parents into the breakfast nook. "I thought it would be cozier in here." he told Silver from the table as he sat with his parents. He spoke into Silver's mind. *'Don't you ever do that to me again. Five minutes of silence, that's what I've been dealing with. Never again, Silver.'.*

Silver turned a small laugh into a cough. "Fine." he said, effectively answering to both statements.

"Silver, I must apologize for our just showing up on your doorstep." Pearl told him, as Silver brought the carafe to the table.

"Nothing to apologize for, Pearl." Silver insisted. He didn't have to ask for help. Gabriel was suddenly at his side. He poured coffee for himself and Silver and took the cups to the table while Silver brought mugs for the tea. "So." Silver spoke into the silence. "What does bring you to our doorstep?" he asked as disarmingly as he possibly could.

"I missed you that day in London." Bradford explained. "I have a series of meetings here now, and Pearl wanted to see Gabriel." he shrugged. "Here we are."

"We were in London a week, Dad." Gabriel reminded his father, with half a grin. "Terry knew where we were staying. You could have," and he stopped when Silver kicked him under the table and shot him a warning look.

"Well, it was a busy week, Gabriel. You have to understand." Bradford made excuse.

Gabriel simply nodded and sipped his coffee. When the doorbell rang again, he groaned. He stood. "I'll get it." he told them all, a little stiffly.

Silver looked up with a grin and watched Gabriel walk from the room. He cleared his throat. "Can I get you anything else?" he asked, lamely.

Before they could answer, Gabriel returned. Behind him was Stone. "Good morning." Stone greeted everyone, smiling. He gave the Kinlans a winning smile. "Pearl." he embraced her when she stood. "And you must be Bradford." He shook hands with the stiff Bradford Kinlan. "I'm Stone Brewton, Silver's father." He looked at Silver. "I stopped by to tell Silver and Gabriel that they have an appointment with the new head of the Chicago branch of the FBI. First thing Monday morning." Turning his attention to Gabriel's parents. "But if I'd known the guys were having company, I would have called first."

"No. No." Pearl smiled. "We didn't call either. I insisted we stop by so Bradford could meet Silver. Bradford missed him while they were in London."

Stone raised his eyebrows. "I haven't been in London in a long time." he told them. "So tell me, what does bring you to Chicago, Bradford."

"A meeting at IPI, as a matter of fact. My wife came with me hoping to see Gabriel. We don't see him much anymore. Lost contact. And we didn't have anything but an address."

Gabriel's eyebrows shot up. He looked amazed. Stone looked at him and asked. "You aren't in touch with your parents, Gabriel?"

Gabriel gaped. "Uh, no. Not since my father disowned me. No." he told him, still looking like he could not believe what his father had just said.

Stone glanced at Bradford. "Disowned?" he arched an eyebrow. Suddenly Stone seemed to understand. "Ohhhh." he breathed. "Because of," and he sort of inclined his head in the direction of Silver and Gabriel. "Their relationship?"

Gabriel suddenly busied himself with stirring sugar into his coffee, while Silver downed his and stood. "Coffee, Dad?" he asked, as he left the table to make some more for himself.

"Thanks, son, I'd love some." Stone said, not taking his eyes from Bradford. He sighed. "It can be hard to accept, can't it?" he finally spoke, in a voice filled with compassion.

Silver filled and started the coffee maker, then leaned against the counter. Gabriel stood, took his coffee and joined him. *'What is he up to?'* Gabriel demanded into Silver's mind.

Silver gave Gabriel half a grin. *'I wish I knew.'*

Bradford was nodding, slowly. "I never thought my son," he began, then stopped. "He's such a handsome chap. Tall, handsome, smart, popular. I just have a hard time believing."

Stone nodded too. "I know. I thought the same things about Silver. He's never had any problem attracting the girls, if you know what I mean. He was always popular with them. But he could never keep a relationship going." he sighed, suddenly sounding thoughtful. "It was like there was something keeping him from committing to a woman. Even if it was just girls from school."

Pearl was grinning slightly, but remained silent. Bradford nodded, stiffly, "Same thing with Gabriel. Never had the same girlfriend two months in a row, it seemed. At first I thought it was because he was just young. A young man will sometimes want to test the waters."

Silver was gaping. He turned to the coffee maker and poured two cups, leaving one on the counter and taking one to his father. "If you two are done talking about our sexual escapades at school." he grimaced, placing the cup in front of his father.

Stone grinned up at him, his blue eyes twinkling. "Thank you for the coffee, Silver." he ignored the comment. Silver rolled his eyes and returned to Gabriel's side.

Stone returned his attention to Bradford. "I know a few gay people. Insciens, mostly. When Silver told me he was gay, it just floored me. Completely. I just couldn't believe it. For some reason it scared me. I can't really explain why. Fear turned to anger. Strange how it does that, isn't it? I didn't speak to Silver until he came home for the Christmas vacation before he graduated. A year and a half."

Silver listened carefully as he drank his coffee. He'd assumed that his father had been mourning the loss of future grandchildren. It had never occurred to him that his father had been scared or the idea that his son was gay.

Stone drank deeply from his coffee. "Gabriel had told me he was gay at around the same time Silver did. Somehow it was different knowing that Gabriel was gay." he snorted a laugh. "Probably because Gabriel is not my son. Gabriel is one of the best cops on my team. I'd already been working with him for almost two years when he told me. I couldn't see him as gay either. All I saw him as was a damn good cop." He finished his coffee. "I knew Gabriel was seeing someone. A long distance relationship. But he was in love and he seemed quite happy. Reminded me of Rose and I before," He sighed. "It never occurred to me that Gabriel hadn't even mentioned his lovers name until Silver brought him over to the house during that last Christmas vacation. They told me about their

relationship together. And I remembered how some people felt about Rose and I. A white man and a black woman. Even in these supposedly enlightened days, some people just didn't like it. Didn't think it was natural. And then I realized that Silver and Gabriel actually make a damn handsome couple. And they do love each other. They've been together now for five years and I think they probably love each other more now than they did then. Lots of straight couples can't say that." He stood and looked down at Bradford. "And what right do I have to tell them they can't love each other?"

Stone walked over to the coffee maker and his son. He stood between Silver and Gabriel as he refilled his cup.

"Dad." Silver whispered.

Stone looked into his sons eyes. He gave Silver a small grin, and returned to the table. He sat and added sugar to his coffee. "Bradford." he said as he stirred. "All I can say is that my son and I have never been horribly close. I can't let something like who he chooses to spend his life with tear us further apart. Can you?"

Bradford nodded as he finished his tea and prepared himself another cup. "You're right, Stone. I never thought of it quite like that before."

Pearl suddenly stood. She walked over to Silver and Gabriel and said. "Silver." placing her mug on the counter. "Why don't you give me a tour of this lovely house." and she dragged Silver out of the kitchen by his hand before anyone could stop her.

Stone joined them in the upstairs library ten minutes later, where Pearl was admiring the collection of recycled paper books. "Silver has always been a big time history buff. He says history is a puzzle." Stone commented as he entered the room.

Silver shrugged. "It is a puzzle. Basically everything before the advent of at least print is a big guessing game. How many times has the history of the Roman Empire changed? They discover this and it changes that past theory. Fascinating."

Pearl was looking anxiously at Stone, who smiled. "They are having a cup of tea together. And talking. I think it will all work itself out."

Silver frowned. "You two cooked this up, didn't you?" he accused, awed.

Stone smiled. "I have known Pearl for a long time." he confessed. "And I don't want to see her son estranged from his father." he sighed. "You and I have never been close. Probably a bunch of reasons for the why, but it hardly matters at this point."

Silver did not reply. He had to admit that he agreed that he and his father

would probably never be close.

Stone cleared his throat into the silence. "I'd better get going." he announced. He headed for the door. "You and Gabriel take care of that Monday." he reminded, and left the room when Silver nodded.

Pearl was now looking closely at Silver. "I don't understand why you and Stone aren't closer. He visited us often with my brother. I remember how fondly he talked of Rose."

Silver shrugged. "Maybe that's why we aren't so close." he sighed, quietly. "I look like my mother. I always figured it was painful for him to see her in me."

Pearl beamed. "You do look like Rose." she told him. "You have her hair, her face, her eyes, everything." she sighed. "You don't look anything like your father."

Silver grinned. "I have his height. That's about it."

They stayed in the library discussing history, which also fascinated Pearl, until Gabriel and Bradford found them two hours later. Silver and Gabriel showed Bradford and Pearl out, promising to go out to dinner later that night.

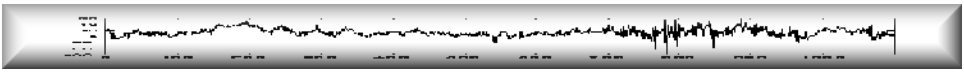
Silver found that Gabriel and Bradford had cleaned the kitchen as they talked. Silver chuckled as he pointed out "At least you know where you got it from."

Gabriel nodded. "Dad and I used to clean the house top to bottom every Saturday. Mom is sort of like you. No slob, but not the neatest person in the world either." he smiled faintly at the memory.

Silver started. "That reminds me," he said as they climbed the stairs. "I promised you I would clean out the garage today, didn't I?"

Gabriel followed him into the bedroom and watched Silver throw on a sweatshirt. "You can put it off you know." he told his lover as Silver fished one of his shoes from under the bed. "Or are we done with Saturday morning snuggling."

Silver looked at Gabriel as he put his shoes on, without socks. He stood and took Gabriel in his arms. "It's Saturday afternoon now." he pointed out, grinning. He kissed Gabriel, who responded warmly. "And I want to keep my promise. If you distract me, the garage won't get cleaned out until April." He headed for the back stairs.



14 Killing Time

Silver and Gabriel entered the Dirksen Federal Building promptly at eight o'clock Monday morning. They took the elevator to the tenth floor, where the Regional Directors office was. They put on their best smiles and approached the receptionist.

"Good morning, gentlemen. How can I help you?" she asked, unable to help but smile at the very handsome men in front of her.

"Good morning." Gabriel greeted, cheerfully, plucking the receptionist name from her mind. "Is Steve O'Grady in?"

"Do you have an appointment, Mister,?" she let the sentence hang.

"Gabriel Kinlan. IPI." Gabriel introduced himself. "And this is Silver Brewton. Also IPI."

At the receptionist blank look, Silver elaborated, "International Parapsychological Institute."

The receptionist smiled a patronizing smile. "Oh, you are the mind readers, aren't you?" she accused, grinning.

Gabriel smiled and Silver confessed. "Yes, we are."

"Read my mind." she challenged, grinning.

Gabriel raised his eyebrows. "My my, Laura. We don't usually perform parlor tricks for mere receptionists."

Laura's jaw dropped and she turned beet red. "I," she sputtered.

Silver chuckled. "Now, Miss Davies. About our appointment."

Laura was pulling an appointment sheet from her desk drawer when she suddenly spotted something. She pulled out the name plate and put it on her desk. "How did you," but Gabriel cut her off.

"I said we don't usually perform parlor tricks for mere receptionists." he reminded her, smiling. "You however have captivated us with your stunning beauty and feminine wiles."

Laura stared at them while she picked up the phone and announced them. Thirty seconds later, the huge oak door of the Directors office swung open and Steven O'Grady, the newest head of the Chicago branch of the FBI appeared.

Silver and Gabriel entered his office and stood among the unpacked boxes.

"I'm afraid you caught me just moving in." O'Grady told them. "You are my first appointment today."

"We like to meet with the new heads before anyone else does." Gabriel explained, glancing into a box. "Your wife?" he asked.

O'Grady laughed. "You tell me."

Gabriel frowned. "Yes. I suppose I asked for that, didn't I?" he nodded to Silver.

Silver locked eyes with Steve O'Grady and attempted to enter his mind. It was not an easy Infiltration, even for Silver. He realized immediately that O'Grady was an Impenetrable, an Insciens with an unusually strong psychic block. He now knew why he'd been sent along to interrogate O'Grady. Silver and Gabriel were the strongest telepaths in the area, and it took both of them to Infiltrate O'Grady.

It took them almost fifteen seconds to break into O'Grady's mind and another thirty seconds to rummage through the images in his mind, selecting the information they wanted. O'Grady looked at them blankly for that period of time. When they had thoroughly scanned the Director's mind, they released him.

"I would say, yes. That is your wife. And a fine looking woman she is too." Gabriel complimented, as of there had been no forty-five second interruption.

"Hard to believe that, considering the frown on your face, Mister Kinlan." O'Grady arched an eyebrow.

Gabriel shook his head. "I'm sorry. I had something else entirely on my mind." he confessed.

Silver took a breath. "Actually, Director, we just like to stop by and tell you that, should the need ever arise, that IPI is available to help in investigations you may become stuck on. We know the FBI is more than capable, but psychics have been known to help the FBI from time to time."

"Well, I have to confess that I don't believe in psychics, but your organization has done some fascinating research, albeit full of holes, in my opinion. My wife, however is a true believer." O'Grady scoffed slightly.

Both Silver and Gabriel smiled. "You are not the first to doubt us and you won't be the last. We are not out to make a believer out of you. We're just here to make sure you are aware we are here." Gabriel told him.

Silver took a card out of his breast pocket. "My card. Have your wife call us sometime. We have carnivals several times a year over at Navy Pier. I'm sure she would have a ball."

O'Grady took the card and pocketed it. "Thank you." he smiled, as he showed them out. "I'm sure she will. It's been wonderful meeting you."

Laura looked up from the box she was leaning over. "Leaving already?" she asked, grinning.

"'Fraid so." Silver sounded disappointed as he returned the grin. "We simply introduce ourselves and move on."

In the elevator on the way down, Gabriel leaned against the wall, chuckling. *'I don't believe it.'*

Silver pinched the bridge of his nose. *'Believe it. You Read what I Read. We hit pay dirt.'*

They got off the elevator on a ground floor full of life. They remained deadpan as they walked through the building to the street. Gabriel drove back to the IPI building and they went straight to the almost empty conference room. Stone was cracking into the C.I.A's computers, getting this weeks gossip. He looked up.

"Well, boys?" he greeted them, grinning. "Anything good on our new director?"

"He's Impenetrable." Silver reported, taking off his coat. "I needed Gabriel's help to crack him."

"That's saying something, right there." Stone said, frowning. "You're the strongest Infiltrator I know, Silver."

"Well, the new Director is some piece of work. Elliott Ness he's not. He has his fingers in a couple of interesting pies." Gabriel reported. "He's extorting gangsters. Almost a million, so far. He's very good at covering his tracks. Uncle Sam may never figure it out, until we tell him."

Silver added. "He is currently considering an offer from Tony Giovanni. His case comes up in two months. I wouldn't be surprised if half the evidence disappears. More than half, probably. And most of the witnesses will probably be suffering amnesia in the next sixty days."

Gabriel finished. "Even if he goes straight as an arrow starting today, we've got enough on him now that he'd spend the rest of his life on a prison planet. If the gangsters don't get him first. And the gangsters would probably get him first."

Stone nodded at Gabriel. "Wonderful. Perfect. Great job, gentlemen."

Gabriel and Silver accepted the thanks and got back to sorting through old cases. They worked on paperwork for the rest of the week.

Silver leaned back into the fork of Gabriel's legs as they sat watching the lake. Gabriel sat on a line of boulders just above Silver, and rested his chin on Silver shoulder.

"Wasn't such a bad week, was it?" Silver asked, watching the people, joggers, skaters, couples, that were traveling up and down along the lake front.

Gabriel kissed Silver's ear. "I've had worse." he admitted, quietly. "Dad and I are getting along better than we have in years. He actually seems to like you." he kissed the ear again and chuckled. "Matter of fact, he seems to like you more than anyone I've ever been with, male or female."

Silver smiled half a smile. "That's just because of Dad." he told him. "He really got your Dad to thinking, didn't he?"

"Yes, he did at that." Gabriel agreed. "Your Dad has the same gift with people that you have."

"I have watched him all my life." Silver demured. "I'm a quick learner, is all."

"What's the matter, love?" Gabriel asked, catching the moodiness in Silver voice.

Silver shook his head, then shrugged, but did not answer.

"Com'on." Gabriel encouraged, wrapping his arms around Silver shoulders. "You've gotten more and more moody all week. I know it wasn't my parents made you that way. My mother loves you like a second son and my father seemed to warm to you more every minute. So what is it?"

"I don't think I can exactly explain it." Silver admitted after a moments thought.

Gabriel took a well aimed shot in the dark. "Maybe it's your Dad?"

Silver closed his eyes as the words hit home. "Maybe." he said shortly. He sighed. "Were you and your Dad close - before?"

"Before he found out I was gay? Well, actually we started butting heads when I hit puberty." he snickered. "Before that we got along famously. Why?"

Silver shrugged again. "Because once the two of you were able to get to communicating about the single thing that was between you - your relationship it

seemed to improve overnight."

Gabriel thought about that for a minute. "True." he granted. "Dad was finally able to accept me for who I am," and he and Silver spoke together. "After he talked to Stone." Gabriel kissed the top of Silver head. "What is it between you and Stone, Silver? What keeps you two so distant? He has raised you all by himself. Given you everything credits could buy. Built you a house when you graduated school. And yet he fought your getting into the Serveo Polleo. But once you got in, he welcomed you with open arms. You two have a good relationship when it comes to work, but as father and son you are," his voice faded.

"So distant." Silver offered. He stood and sat next to Gabriel, folding one of his long legs under him, so he was facing Gabriel. "We've always been like that." he sighed then bit his lip. "It feels like he's mad at me. Something about the Monroe case. I can't put my finger on it. Something isn't right. All this time and no contact from Monroe. Why? I am as far as I am going to be without some other clue. Waiting for the next body isn't exactly my idea of a good time. I've tried everything I can think of to locate him. I can't find him. He's got to be better at hiding himself than I am. And I have been told I'm one of the best." he looked back at Gabriel. "And Dad expects me to be able to locate him. And I am failing miserably."

"You are the strongest telepath I know, Silver." Gabriel told him. "And if you can't find Monroe, then it means that Monroe is probably equal to you when it comes to blocking. The only reason I can Infiltrate you is because we are so close. I know where the cracks are." he reached up and caressed Silver cheek with one hand. "And I don't think your Dad expects you to find Monroe all by yourself. He's just stressed. Like the rest of us. I am glad of the break, but I think that when Monroe kills again, it'll be big. I think it will be the last murder, too." he raised the other hand to Silver's cheek and held his face. "You are not failing, Silver." he spoke succinctly. "We wouldn't be anywhere near where we are now if it weren't for you. Unfortunately we don't have much choice but to wait for him to kill again. Sometimes that is the way it is. You haven't failed, Silver."

Silver leaned forward and kissed Gabriel. He broke the kiss and looked deep into his lovers green eyes. "Thanks." he whispered, his lips just barely touching Gabriel's.

Gabriel grinned slightly. "For you, anytime." he murmured. He bumped his lips against Silver gently at first and Silver responded passionately.

When they broke apart, Silver sighed. "I'm jealous." he confessed. "Jealous of you and your father. While you hated each other, it made me and Dad look so

close. Now I'm back on terra firma."

Gabriel bumped his forehead to Silver's. "You really must be stressed if you are jealous of me and my Dad." he joked, smirking.

"Yea, well." Silver scoffed, shrugging.

He looked over Gabriel's shoulder and raised his eyebrows.

Walking towards them were Feruzi and Danne. Danne looked absolutely miserable. He had something that looked like seaweed in his hair and his suit was a mess. He was wet.

Gabriel turned and followed Silver's gaze. He raised his eyebrows as Danne got closer. "What in the bloody hell happened to you?"

Silver couldn't resist. "The beaches closed October the first, man."

Danne just glared at him. Feruzi, however began laughing. "Oh," she breathed, trying to catch her breath. "Oh, you should have been there, guys. It was great."

Gabriel frowned. "I thought you two were going to go straighten out Johnny."

Feruzi was now laughing so hard she was almost crying. She flopped down beside Silver. For five minutes she tried getting herself under control. She turned her back on Danne. She turned back, her face straight.

"OK, we drive into Madison, right? Track down John." she began, panting slightly. "John has crashed a press conference. I mean he has everybody there. CNN, the BBC, I mean an international press conference. The governor is about to announce his campaign for the presidency. John is saying he is going to burn the governors mansion down. Get us all thrown off of this planet and sent to a Polleo planet that is ready to be colonized. He called it Quies. Said it was high time we left the Insciens to their fate, which doesn't involve us." she sighed wistfully, then continued. "He actually managed to paralyze everyone in the room." she began smiling. "We walk in and he takes one look at Danne and beats feet out a side door."

She turned and looked at Danne, who was still standing and steaming in his wet trench coat. "You sure you don't want to tell em about it, Danne?"

Danne said nothing, but walked over to sit beside Gabriel, who plucked some seaweed out of the fair hair.

Feruzi chuckled. "Anyway." she continued. "Danne takes off after him while I get to un paralyzing people and doing a wonderful job of mass memory modification, if I do say so myself. Well, I get in the car and go looking for them. This is like fifteen minutes after they took off. I thought I would find Danne sitting on Johnny as usual. But I find them running along the shores of that little

lake, to the south. You know the one?" Silver nodded, grinning. Feruzi continued. "Well, Danne decides to end the chase by tackling Johnny. John jumps at the last possible second and they go into the lake. Johnny is struggling like crazy. Danne couldn't get a good hold on him, at first. Danne finally gets a hold of him and drags him to shore. I'm seeing most of this on my way to the shoreline, now. I get within hearing range just in time to hear Danne tell Johnny that he's about to get his last chance before the buzzer. Stop getting drunk and putting us all at risk, he's telling John. The Castigators will be coming after him next, not us."

"Johnny looks at Danne and yells at the top of his lungs, 'Fuck the Castrators. And fuck you.' and he actually Morphed Danne into the middle of this lake and takes off running again." she laughed.

"You let him go?" Silver asked, disbelieving.

"Nah. I knocked him out before he got out of my line of sight. No big thing since he was only half conscious to begin with. He's sleeping it off. I called Satya on the way back in. He's going up there right now. He's going to do some sort of psychometabolism something or other to him to keep him sober this time."

"Good." Gabriel nodded. "John is a good chap. I would hate to see the Castigators get hold of him. They are supposed to kill quickly, but they play around with their victims too much. Torture them. It's sick. Kill em clean, I say, and have done."

"And what about me?" Came Danne's voice. "I almost burned the son-of-a-bitch myself. Look at me!" he indicated his suit. "This suit cost me three thousand credits!"

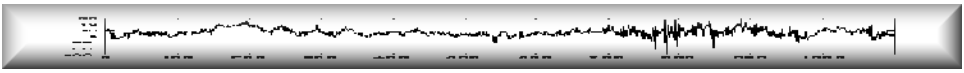
Silver choked off a laugh. "I never liked that suit, Danne. It never hung right on you."

Danne gaped. "I don't believe you people." he growled. He threw up his hands. "I'm going home."

"Oh, come on now," Gabriel was still chuckling. "We were supposed to go out tonight, remember?"

"Dressed like this?" Danne motioned to himself, with as much dignity as possible, considering the seaweed in his light hair.

"Go home and change. We'll meet you at Epulae." Silver ordered, grinning.



15 Quies

Danne arrived at Epulae freshly showered, shaved and dressed. He joined Feruzi, Silver, Gabriel, Satya, Violet, Liz, Alice and Stone at the usual back tables reserved especially for the taller men of the group.

Stone looked Danne up and down with a half a smile. "I see you got cleaned up." he noted, dryly. "We were just talking about your adventures with Johnny."

Danne snorted and sat, grabbing a menu and looking it over with a scowl.

"Does it really exist?" Alice suddenly asked. "Quies?"

The adults all looked at her for a long time and the Polleo found the two Insciens women looking at them curiously as well.

Stone cleared his throat. "There is some truth to what Johnny goes on about." he spoke carefully.

The younger members of his team all stared at him. "I thought Quies was a myth." Silver told his father.

"A pipe dream." Feruzi agreed, although her eyes looked hungry for more than the food on the menu.

Stone sighed deeply. "Well in a lot of ways it is a pipe dream." he explained. "Quies is a very Earth like planet. It has a bit more oxygen than Earth, slightly lighter gravity. It was found by Johnny's grandfather about a hundred years ago while he was working on the Space Station." he shrugged. "Of course Johnny's grandfather was considered rather unreliable. He reported it to the IPI officials at the time and they silenced him. Back then, the concept of simply leaving the Insciens to their superstitions and prejudices about us was a very appealing idea."

Silver was leaning forward curiously. "The Insciens didn't know about his discovery?"

Stone shook his head. "Henry Greene was out in a one man shuttle craft charting stars. Dead boring work. He started fooling around and teleported himself and his ship to another location. Quies. Took him a week to teleport himself back, considering he had no idea where Quies was in relation to the space station."

"But he'd seen the planet and the space around it and could get back to it whenever he wanted to." Feruzi's voice held a great deal of excitement.

Stone nodded. "Yes. And eventually he took a couple of representatives from the IPI there, including my father. He was a very powerful teleporter. The planet exists and is uncharted. At the time, IPI looked at it was a backup planet, so to speak. A place to go if we ever did decide to leave Earth."

Alice was looking with wide eyes. "We're going to live on another planet, Mommy?" she asked her mother.

Liz swallowed. "I don't know, honey." she looked at the psychics around her. "I know that the Polleo have had a lot of problems in the path with people who aren't like them." she bit her lip. "I can imagine they wouldn't want to stay here with people getting afraid of them again."

Silence fell over the table. Lisa joined them to take their orders and conversation stopped until after they had all been served.

About halfway through their meal, Danne suddenly spoke. "So John Greene isn't insane? There is an already colonized planet just waiting for us to pack up and move to?"

Stone ate a bit more in silence. "My father oversaw the preparation of the planet." he still spoke carefully. "But relations between Insciens and Polleo got much better and the idea of colonization was abandoned." he glanced at Silver for a long moment, as if about to say more, then he fell silent.

Gabriel seemed deep in thought. "It's a good back-up plan." he noted, carefully. "And with all the bad press this case has been getting." he shrugged. "Might not be such a bad idea to wrap the case up and move into space."

Alice looked slightly frightened. She had been eating heartily and now looked at Silver above her empty plate. "I wouldn't have to leave my Mommy, would I? She isn't Polleo."

Silver smiled at her. "I would think that we could bring whatever friends and family that wanted to come." he glanced at Stone. "Right, Dad?"

Stone also smiled at the little girl. "Of course." he agreed. "We wouldn't leave your mother here, just because she isn't Polleo." he sipped his drink. "But it is a moot point. We aren't leaving Earth." his voice held a note of finality.

"I'm tempted to go home and pack my bags." Feruzi's eyes flashed. "Quies sounds a lot nicer than this place has become."

Stone sighed and looked almost as if he agreed. "You have a case to finish, Feruzi." he reminded her shortly.

Feruzi nodded and remained quiet throughout the remainder of the meal. Stone did not stay at the table long once the meal was complete. He announced he had extra work waiting for him at the office and beat a hasty retreat.

The adults all exchanged looks. Alice was engrossed in a gigantic ice

cream sundae and wasn't paying attention. They discussed much lighter subjects until Alice had finished, then Danne paid the tab and they left.

Gabriel flagged down a taxi and sent Liz and Alice home. Then he, Silver, Danne, Feruzi, Satya and Violet all walked towards Satya's apartment. Silver and Gabriel grumbled at the buildings elevator, which was modern and small. They were both forced to hunch down uncomfortably for the sixty story ride. Then they both grumbled from elevator to Satya's front door, as the hallway was too short even for Silver's frame, never mind Gabriel, the taller of the two.

Once inside both Silver and Gabriel settled themselves on Satya's couch, stretching out their long legs under his coffee table. Both pair extended past the table and out the other side.

Satya settled himself onto the floor with Violet and Feruzi, while Danne settled himself into the love seat that matched the couch Silver and Gabriel had settled into.

"I should have considered my friends before paying the credits on this place." he mused, considering not only Silver and Gabriel, but Danne as well.

Danne shook his head. "This is just not my day." he grumbled, stretching out his legs over the top of the coffee table. "Days like this I think maybe you're right, Feruzi. Maybe we should consider relocating to another planet."

Silver smiled. "Imagine a world where we were the majority and not the minority."

Satya was nodding slowly. "We are a peaceful people." he insisted, softly.

Violet bit her lip. "You would all be out of a job." she pointed out, sounding uncomfortable.

Gabriel considered her. "I could take up farming." he joked. "And we are only a peaceful people overall. Even evolved human beings are prone to violence. It's in our makeup."

Silver nodded. "True." he agreed. He lifted his knee and banged it on the coffee table. "As long as it isn't the land of the little people." he murmured, while Gabriel rubbed his leg just below the knee.

Feruzi chuckled then fell serious. "What's up with Stone, Silver?" she asked. "He doesn't sound even interested in Quies."

Silver considered the question. "I guess he's more stressed about other things." he suggested quietly.

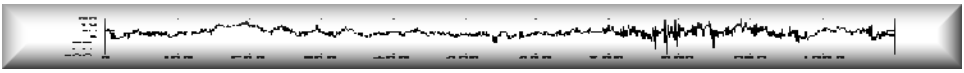
"Monroe." Feruzi whispered, taking a quick sidelong glance at Violet as she did.

With Violet in the room, they could not talk freely about the Psychic Slaughter murders and so they were forced into happier conversation. They

talked for about an hour before deciding to break up the conversation for the evening.

Silver and Gabriel both opted to teleport themselves home from Satya's apartment in order to avoid the tiny elevator and did so after wishing their friends a good evening.

The next day Silver's world collapsed.



16 Lincoln Anderson and the Truth

Lincoln Anderson had collapsed in the sauna room of the McCormick Inn Hyatt. He coughed and sputtered and choked for five minutes. He died just as paramedics and the press arrived. Josh and Satya determined that he'd drowned. His body cavity had been filled with water.

"So now what?" Feruzi asked. She was standing at the window of the conference room, looking across at the wide wall, where there was now a third bulletin board with all the information they could find on Anderson. There was also a fourth board with a detailed map of Chicago tacked to it. She had turned from the window after watching the press corp below, waiting for a statement.

"Ask Silver. He's our Sherlock on this case." Stone snapped. No one missed the slight irritation in his voice.

Silver shot his father an annoyed look, then turned his attention to the boards.

"Lincoln Anderson." he read. "He was from Tacoma, Washington. In town for the wildlife preservation convention." he frowned. "He specializes in wild animals. Works for the Washington State Wildlife Preserve. Bears, deer, elk."

"They had a wildlife preservation convention in Chicago?" Gabriel asked, sounding confused.

"They have all kinds of conventions here." Feruzi chuckled. "Chicago is the convention capitol of the world. They'll host any group, as long as they can pay the price."

Silver was frowning. "Bears." he wondered aloud. He moved closer to the board. "No, we're concentrating on streets, aren't we, Monroe?" he murmured. He turned and went back to the conference table. He picked up a small box of pins and a blue highlighter pen. He returned his attention to the boards again.

There was a pin at the location of each murder. plus one at the south and north ends of Clark Street with a blue line connecting them. Silver stuck a pin at the location of McCormick Place, then stood back and surveyed his work. He put two other pins at the two ends of Lincoln Avenue, then highlighted the area connecting them. He stood back again.

"I'll be damned..." Danne whispered.

"They connect." Feruzi breathed, coming to Silver's side. "I don't believe it."

"Believe it." came Stone's voice from across the room. He didn't look very happy. "Looks like Silver has done it again."

Silver frowned, but it was Gabriel who spoke. "What is that supposed to mean, Stone?"

Stone shrugged. "Nothing, really. I'm just impressed at my sons abilities, is all."

Silver frowned a bit deeper. "Thanks Dad, but I haven't figured a damn thing out, really. I don't know where Monroe is now any more than I did before." he confessed, carefully. "I've always been good at puzzles, and that is all this is. A puzzle. Macabre yes, but a puzzle nonetheless."

Stone looked at his son a moment, then back at the board, then frowned, then grinned and nodded. "So, where am I going?" he asked, suddenly. "I may as well hit the streets this time. I can't let you kids have all the fun."

Silver looked at the boards again. "I thought before it was eight hundred, like the address of Watson's apartment building, but it's not. It's eighteen hundred. Eighteen ten, probably. Eighteen ten north Clark Street."

Stone grabbed his suit jacket from the back of his chair. "I'll keep you informed." he told them, as he left the room.

The rest of the day went by relatively uneventfully. Silver looked at the case from as many angles as he could, but the most likely sounding answer was the one he'd already come to.

His father did not cross his mind until just before they all went home. The door to their conference room opened and Apsara walked in looking exceptionally grim, even for her.

Gabriel was right. Apsara was extremely easy to Read. What the four Polleo Read now was difficult to digest.

"No." Silver whispered, staring at Apsara.

Apsara suddenly closed her mind with a snap. "I did not mean for you to

find out this way." she gasped, apologetically.

She sighed, cursing herself for being so easy to Read, as she looked at the four stunned faces. "Come with me. Satya is already there."

They arrived at eighteen ten north Clark street ten minutes later. The coroners van was double parked in front of the building. The police on the scene told them where to find Josh and Satya, on the third floor in the living room of a small one bedroom apartment. They all stood frozen a moment as they looked at the bodies on the floor.

"What happened?" Danne asked, sounding shell shocked.

"It looks like smoke inhalation." Josh bit his lip. He looked quite stressed. "The problem is, there is no smoke in the apartment."

Silver walked forward and knelt beside the taller body. He looked into his father's face, which looked strangely peaceful to him. He opened his mouth to speak, but found he could not. He looked over at the other body, not a short man, unless compared to Stone Brewton. "Who is that?" he managed.

Satya sighed. "Doctor Martin Arron." he told him, softly. "This is his apartment."

Feruzi frowned. "How did Stone come to be in this apartment?" she asked.

Josh took an envelope from the desk. "Perhaps the answers are here." he suggested.

Silver looked up to see Josh hand Danne, now the head of the Servo Polleo an envelope. Danne looked at it, then at Silver, who stood.

"Another letter from him." Danne said, quietly holding out the single page.

Silver took the letter with a trembling hand.

Silver,

I am so glad your father figured it out even before you. But he had more information, didn't he? Did he pull rank on you? It doesn't matter, really. My mission is complete. Your father never was a match for me.

When you investigate Dr. Arron, you will find all your answers. Why I killed your mother. Why I killed this man you have always believed to be your father. You will understand your Stone's arrogance. He misinterpreted my original note, you see. The fool thought it was written to him, when it was actually written to you. He thought it was you I was going to kill, when it was actually him.

Your dolor, Neil Monroe

Silver read the note twice before handing it to Danne who read it and handed it to Gabriel who read it and handed it to Feruzi. Feruzi read it and handed it to Apsara.

"What the hell is he talking about?" Danne asked, frowning.

Silver was peering around the room. "Where did Dr. Arron work?" he asked no one in particular.

"He worked at Northwestern." Came a voice from the door. "He's a, waddayacallit, a baby doctor. He delivered my daughter three years ago." It was a police officer, who had been left to guard the door.

"An obstetrician?" Feruzi frowned, sounding confused. "What would Stone have to do with," and she suddenly stopped, as it came to all of them.

"Doctor Arron's records are confidential." the clerk told them, adamantly as he looked at the five people before him. "He is retired, but I will not show you anything without either his signature or a court order."

Silver was looking out of the window of the clerks office. The leaves were beginning to change, he noticed. He and his father had loved Autumn. One of the few things they ever had in common.

"We don't have time for this." Gabriel was crooning under his breath to Danne.

"I know, I know." Danne grumbled. He asked the man again, manipulating the clerks mind at the same time. "We would like to see the medical records of Doctor Martin Arron, please."

This time the clerk smiled and agreed. "Of course, this way please."

Gabriel went to Silver at the window and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Lets go,"

They followed the clerk into the library of files. "In particular, we are interested in the file of a Rose Brewton." Silver elaborated, poking at the clerks mind.

The clerk frowned a bit. "Brewton, Brewton." he murmured. "When was she a patient?" he asked, scanning the millions of files stored in the huge room.

"September of Twenty Ninety-nine, for sure." Silver told him. "But no later than the summer of Three thousand and one."

The clerk nodded and kept scanning shelves. They searched for five minutes before the clerk finally stopped. "Up there. Number 4934340. I'll get a ladder."

"No need." Gabriel reached up, plucking the file out with two fingers. He handed it to Silver with a sigh.

The file was thin. Most Polleo did not see doctors at all, as psychometabolism kept their health concerns to zero. However, childbirth was another thing entirely. Even pregnant Polleo saw doctors. Just as Rose Brewton had when she was pregnant with her son.

Silver opened the file right there and began reading. He did not speak. He knew he was being Read. The section that Silver was looking for was near the end of the report, and it was shocking indeed.

Mrs Brewton swears the test results are incorrect, even knowing that the amniocentesis is 99.99% accurate at the genetic level. Needless to say, Mr. Brewton is very upset. I will reserve a report to Social Services for now, as Stone Brewton seems to be a man very much in control of his temper. He is acting like what he is, a man who's wife's infidelity has been uncovered through her pregnancy. I believe they will work out their problems one way or another in the next six weeks, before the baby is due. If not, I will call in Social Services upon the birth of the child.

"I don't believe this." Silver moaned, weakly, closing the file. "I don't fucking believe this." He took the file and began walking out of the huge file room.

"Now wait a minute, Silver." Danne tried to calm him, as they all followed him. "This doesn't actually prove anything."

Silver slammed through the door to the clerks office. "I'll be confiscating this file." he snapped as he passed and pushed the suggestion into the clerks brain.

The clerk flinched and whimpered. "Fine." weakly as he watched the people file out of the records building.

Silver stopped short at the corner and glared down at Apsara. "You knew about this, didn't you?" he hissed, not bothering with telepathy.

"Not exactly, Silver." she sighed, craning her neck. "I knew Neil had been

trying to get in touch with Rose. She didn't seem interested. I had no idea that they'd." and she fell silent.

Silver stormed across the street. Danne tried again to inject some reason. "Maybe she didn't do it willingly." he suggested two blocks later, as they approached the IPI parking garage.

Silver stopped short again. He stared at Danne, but said nothing. Thirty seconds later he continued, storming into the garage, alone.

Gabriel looked at Danne. "That was a really stupid thing to say, Danne." he hissed. "Now he's going to have to deal with the possibility that Neil raped his mother and got her pregnant." he held up his hand to stop Danne speaking. "Not another word, Danne. Just let me deal with him, for now, all right?" he glanced at Apsara. He opened his mouth a moment, then closed it. He shook his head sadly before turning and running after Silver.

Gabriel drove them home. He was glad of their decision to alternate cars, so they would not always have to drive both cars into work. He pulled the car into the driveway and had barely stopped before Silver jumped out and stormed into the house, leaving his mother's file behind. Gabriel turned the car off and sat, rereading the file again. He took his time, rereading the file and giving Silver time to calm down, then slowly followed Silver into the house.

Gabriel went into the kitchen where he found Silver, jacket thrown over a stool, sleeves rolled up, kneading bread. Gabriel was the main cook in the family, but he realized he could not hold a candle to Silver when it came to bread making. And Silver always made bread the old fashioned way. They did not own a bread machine and were the only people Gabriel knew who did not. When Silver was angry, he was good for a weeks worth of kneading. Usually the dough was rendered useless, if for no other reason than Silver overcompensated the pyrokinetics involved in rushing the yeast rising time, but it helped get out Silver's aggression, which was the ultimate goal, at least right this minute.

Gabriel watched silently, perching himself on a nearby stool along the island stove. Silver kneaded and pounded and threw the dough onto the counter for another ten minutes before he spoke.

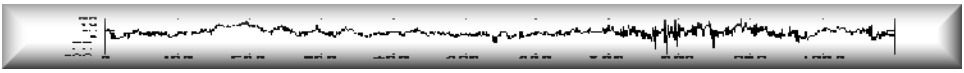
"So what do I believe?" he growled, slamming his fist into the dough. "That my mother was having some sort of love affair with Neil Monroe and got her pregnant with his kid? Or that he raped my mother and got her pregnant with his kid?" He slammed the dough against the counter several times before beginning angry kneading again. "And any way you slice it, he's my fucking father. Guess my mother had a thing for tall guys. I never knew anyone taller than Dad until I got to be taller than Dad. I sort of assumed that I'd inherited my Dad's height." he

barked out a laugh. "I guess I did, huh?"

Gabriel stood and went to stand beside Silver. Silver fell against him and began sobbing. Gabriel put his arms around Silver and held him against him. Silver turned to face him and just cried as Gabriel held him.

Silver took twenty minutes to regain control of himself. He looked up at Gabriel. "What am I supposed to do now, Gabriel?"

Gabriel smiled gently down. "Now we find Monroe. Get some real answers."



17 The Funeral and Memorial

People had been coming and going all day to pay their final respects to Stone Brewton. Silver greeted and spoke to all of them, with Gabriel either physically by his side or psychically touching him. There was a great deal of sympathy given to him, as a child who lost both of his parents to psychic homicide.

One surprise visitor was Alice Parkenson, who arrived through Silver's mind shortly after noon. He received a mental vision of her dressed in a pretty blue dress and holding a bouquet or wildflowers out to him. Being a psychic contact, Silver could continue to communicate with those in his father's house physically as he also visited with little Alice.

'Mommy wouldn't let me come.' she apologized as Silver took the flowers from her, and placed them in a vase that he made appear beside them along with a table, chairs, a plate of cookies, pitcher of milk and two glasses. *'She said it would be too sad, but I think she meant it would be too sad or her, not for me.'* she sat in the little chair, which was perfect for her size.

'So you came this way instead?' Silver was a bit surprised that a child as young as Alice and with no real psychic training was even able to.

Alice looked a little anxious. *'Did I do bad?'* she asked. *'I just wanted you to know I know how you feel inside. Like I did when my Daddy died. But it's worse for you because you lost your Mommy too.'*

Silver nodded slowly. *'I know you do, Alice.'* he told her. *'And you aren't in trouble with me, anyway. I'm glad you could visit somehow.'*

Alice smiled broadly. *'I like you. And I know you are looking for the bad man who took my Daddy.'* she swallowed. *'Killed my Daddy.'* her smile faded and her face looked very sad. A single tear escaped her eye.

Silver gently caught it with his finger and wiped it away. *'I am, Alice.'* he told her, but did not elaborate.

Alice nodded slowly. *'I'd better go. Mommy thinks I am taking a nap.'* She stood and walked over to Silver on his much higher chair and he picked her up to hug her.

'Thank you for the visit, Alice.' he spoke into her hair.

Alice nodded, then suddenly vanished.

'She's a good kid.' Gabriel's voice did not startle Silver at all.

Silver nodded and Gabriel suddenly appeared beside Alice's vacated chair. *'She is.'* he agreed. *'And turning out to be a very powerful one too.'* he bit his lower lip. *'I wonder if Monroe knew that.'* he mused.

Gabriel sighed. *'I doubt it.'* he replied. He walked towards Silver and put his arms around him. *'I know you want to hide in here for the rest of the day.'*

'The rest of my life.' Silver sighed deeply.

'But you can't.' Gabriel kissed him lightly. *'There are friends of your fathers here you should be giving more of your attention to.'*

Silver returned from his psychic hideout and the real time conversation he was having with one of his father's old girlfriends, who was in almost hysterical tears. Silver sent her waves of sympathy and comfort, even though he knew that his father had not cared for her anywhere near as much as she had cared for him. His father's shields had also been strong, making him very attractive to Polleo women. He noticed Gabriel across the room with another of Stone's old flings, comforting her as well.

Satya arrived in person in the middle afternoon to both offer his sympathies and inform Silver of the autopsy results, which he had already sent ahead to the IPI offices. The deaths of both Stone Brewton and Joshua Arron were now officially considered psychic homicides.

The shadows lengthened as the day wore on and those offering condolences became fewer and further between. Silver was considering turning on the lights when a knock sounded at the door.

The visitor was standing in the lengthening shadows outside and wore a hooded cloak against the late October chill. *'You are Silver Brewton.'* it was not a question the man's psychic voice asked.

Silver nodded and moved aside to let the man into Stone's house. The man looked around and saw no one but Silver and Gabriel within eyesight as he closed the door behind him. Silver was slightly surprised to hear the click of the door's lock. Then Silver felt him scanning the entire house. Gabriel took a step forward. "The second and third floors are shielded against entry. We." he spoke aloud and indicated Silver. "Are the only ones here." he took another step forward. "Who are you?" he sounded suspicious.

The man seemed to stiffen. *'Neil is not fool enough to come here and flaunt his victory over you, boy.'* he scoffed, still speaking psychically and sounding almost insulted. *'He is ultimately a coward. I'm surprised he had the balls to do as much as he already has.'*

Silver turned and motioned into Stone's living room. *'Would you care to*

come in?' he asked, speaking in his psychic voice. If this was how the man wanted to communicate, Silver would as well.

The man nodded curtly and entered the living room without taking off his cloak or the mittens he wore over his hands. He sat on the couch and looked up at Silver and Gabriel, who were in front of him on either side. *'Of course I am here to offer my condolences.'* he began. *'Both Rose and Stone were good friends of mine while we were at school. Stone blocked me after Rose was killed. He didn't contact me again until three days ago.'*

Silver frowned slightly. *'The day he was murdered.'*

The man nodded, his head still deep inside of his hood. *'I haven't followed the news much or I would have contacted him. Warned him to keep his head. Not to let Neil bait him.'* he sighed deeply. *'Perhaps if I had he would still be alive.'*

Silver and Gabriel exchanged looks. *'You know about Neil Monroe?'* Gabriel asked.

The man paused. *'I went to school with him.'* he explained slowly. *'And your parents. And when your father contacted me, I stayed in his head.'* he noticed the looks on the young mens faces. *'I saw and heard everything that Neil said to your father and the doctor before he killed them. He didn't have much to say to the doctor. The fool was Insciens. A pawn. He was killed to insure his silence.'* the hooded head turned to Silver. *'He knew you would be after him for killing Stone and he wanted you to be as enraged as possible. An enraged man is a weak man. Stone could never control his temper after a certain point and Neil knew that point and used it against him.'*

On the coffee table before the hooded figure suddenly appeared a tray with two carafe's on it. *'Coffee's in the gold one.'* Silver told him, taking a chair at the short end of the table. Gabriel took the chair on the other end. *'Peppermint tea in the platinum one.'* Both he and Gabriel leaned forward and placed their elbows on their knees, turning their heads to look at the hooded figure.

The man took the platinum carafe and poured into one of the three cups provided. He took the steaming cup and held it under his hood for a long time before he finally drank of it.

'So why should I be so angry?' he asked in a soft voice.

The hood did not move. *'Neil loved you mother.'* he replied. *'He was infuriated when she choose Stone over him. After they got married, Neil contacted your mother. Tried to win her back. When that failed and he found out she was pregnant with you he took drastic actions.'*

Silver licked his lips carefully. He considered entering the man's mind to

see if he was telling the truth.

Suddenly the man straightened, either sensing or guessing at what Silver was considering. *'Scan me if you want to.'* he spoke in a strong voice. He threw back his hood and revealed his face. *'I wouldn't lie to you about Neil Monroe.'*

The face that had been hidden under the hood had been horribly and completely burned. There was no hair on the head either; not on the top, no eyebrows or lashes. His nose was gone. Only half of his left ear remained. The scars, Silver already knew, would extend far beyond his collar line. Before the man even put his tea cup back on the coffee table and removed the mittens on his hands Silver knew that at least two fingers on his right hand and three on his left were so badly burned as to be fused together. Both Silver and Gabriel knew the man's name before either entered his mind, where they found that he was indeed speaking the truth.

"Lawrence Beaudry." Silver spoke aloud in a whisper that sounded unusually loud after the psychic conversation.

Lawrence nodded. *'I haven't had a physical voice since the day Neil Monroe took it from me.'* he explained. *'And as you can imagine, I very rarely go out in public with this body.'* he indicated himself with his hands. *'He burned me completely.'* he scoffed and his psychic voice was bitter. *'Ninety-eight percent of my body burned, but there is no reason to quibble over a scant two percent, is there?'*

Both Silver and Gabriel adjusted themselves to Lawrence's appearance almost immediately. *'You could have been Healed.'* Gabriel pointed out.

Lawrence nodded. *'I could have.'* he agreed. *'But staying like this reminds those who were there what Neil is capable of and warns others of what he can do.'*

Both Silver and Gabriel nodded, seeing Lawrence's logic. Silver poured himself a cup of coffee. *'So you're telling me the truth.'* he admitted, reverting to psychic conversation. *'Finish your story. Make me understand.'* he sipped the coffee. *'Dr. Arron's records have a notation that suggests that my mother had an affair with Neil Monroe.'* he gulped. *'That Monroe is my father.'*

Lawrence seemed to be considering what to share and what not to share with Silver. *'Do you want to hear it from his own mouth?'* he asked gently. *'I was there. In Stone's mind while Neil.'* he did not finish the sentence.

Silver considered the offer for a long moment, looking first at Gabriel and then at Lawrence. *'Right now I'll take your version.'* he decided. *'I don't think I am ready to hear it from Monroe's mouth.'*

Lawrence nodded. *'Smart boy.'* he complimented Silver. He refilled his tea

cup from the carafe before he began. *'Neil confessed, since he didn't know there was someone in Stone's mind listening and he figured that Stone was as good as dead and wouldn't repeat his confession.'* he made eye contact and Silver saw gray eyes snapping. *'He wanted Rose to bear his children. The very idea that Stone had.'* he stumbled, looking for an appropriate word. *'Taken what he believed was his.'* he shook his head. *'His woman. He thought that Stone had gotten his woman pregnant with what should have been his child.'*

'Sick fuck.' Silver growled, before he could stop the thought.

Lawrence's smile was a frightening thing. He had no lips left to speak of and they pulled back over teeth that were in amazingly good condition, considering Lawrence's overall appearance. *'That may be the understatement of the century, Silver.'*

Lawrence continued. *'They didn't know he was stalking them. That he Morphed himself and took a job as Dr. Arron's receptionist, so he could follow the pregnancy. Dr. Arron accepted the results of the genetic physician. He had no reason not to. He never made any connection to that doctor's murder. His body was found a coupe of days after he was supposed to have seen Rose.'*

'Monroe killed and replaced him.' Gabriel communicated softly.

Lawrence nodded. *'After the amniotic fluid had been taken from Rose, but before the test had been run. Neil is no doctor. Probably threw the sample away. He falsified the report he sent to Dr. Arron. The doctor had no choice but to reveal the results to Rose and Stone. Results that proved that Stone was not the father of Rose's baby.'*

There was a silence as the three men drank. Silver could only imagine his father's reaction to proof that his mother had not only been unfaithful, but had gotten pregnant by her lover.

'Stone didn't know what to think. Rose denied involvement with another man, but he had proof in his hand that Rose was not pregnant with his child.' Lawrence paused another moment. *'Before they could work it out on their own, Neil showed up, begging Rose to admit their affair and leave Stone. You see, Neil wanted this more than anything. What better way than to plant doubt?'* he sipped his tea. *'But the love Stone had for Rose was much stronger. He couldn't prove that Neil was behind the DNA test results, although he suspected it. Neil was too good for that and never let anyone into his mind. What saved their marriage was the fact that Stone trusted Rose to be honest with him. Rose insisted that Stone scan her mind and memories and he did, but only because Rose wanted him to.'*

Lawrence looked at Silver for a very long time. *'Except for your height you*

look just like your mother.' he communicated softly. *'Stone never told you that he didn't get close because he could barely stand the pain of looking at you.'*

Silver took a deep breath. *'He didn't have to tell me. I figured it out on my own. Eventually.'* He looked at Lawrence for a long time. *'Why are you telling me this?'*

Lawrence offered a horrible half smile. *'A couple of reasons.'* he explained. *'First, you deserve to know that Stone was really your father. Rose was never for a moment unfaithful to her husband.'*

Silver nodded. *'And?'* he prodded.

'My colleagues and I noticed how well you figured out Monroe's little hints.' he continued. *'We want you and your colleagues to work with us. Help us find Neil and bring him to justice.'*

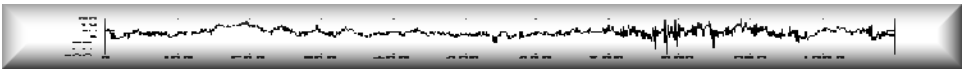
Silver and Gabriel looked at each other and suddenly understood perfectly.

'Your colleagues.' Gabriel murmured, nodding.

Lawrence also nodded. *'This was not just a visit to offer condolences to the son of a dead friend. The Serveo Polleo are no longer working alone on the Psychic Slaughter murders.'* he finished his tea. *'You know what I do?'* it was a rhetorical question.

Silver and Gabriel answered it anyway.

'You're a Castigator.'



18 The Castigators

Both Danne and Apsara glared daggers at the two Castigators that stood in the Serveo Polleo conference room. Feruzi, Silver and Gabriel watched the exchange in silence.

Lawrence brought one of his colleagues to the IPI building the Monday after the memorial at Stone's house. This colleague introduced herself as Xylia Eagan. Xylia was thirty years old with hair a darker blond than Danne's that was down to her ankles and dark blue eyes.

"I must renew my objections to Castigators working with us on this case." Apsara finally spoke into the chilly silence.

Xylia nodded once. "Noted." she waved the objection away. "If you would like, we can go now. You can capture Monroe yourself and put him on Carcer yourself." she paused. "Or you can work with us and remove a viable mutual threat to both Polleo and Insciens alike."

Carcer was the Polleo prison planet where psychic prisoners were sent. Incorrigible prisoners and repeat offenders were handed over to the Castigators, who were well known for handing down corporal punishments.

Apsara gulped audibly, but said nothing. Danne seemed to consider this very carefully for a long moment before he nodded. He offered Xylia his hand and she shook it. Apsara simply marched out of the room.

Lawrence and Xylia both looked at the boards that were still up from the day Stone had died. Both nodded appreciably at the deductions that Silver had made, allowing him to find the address of the final bodies.

"So where is he now, Mr. Brewton?" Xylia asked softly.

Silver bit his lip, then shrugged. "No idea."

Xylia turned to face him. For a woman she was quite tall, a mere inch shorter than Danne, but she was still ten inches shorter than Silver and she looked up at him. "No idea?" she sounded as if she did not believe him.

Lawrence spoke into the minds in the room. *'He said he has no idea.'* he sounded slightly angry. *'I believe him.'*

Xylia frowned. "His father had a history of pacifism," she began.

"I am not my father..." Silver heard the defensive tone in his voice and almost winced.

Feruzi took a step forward. "Silver has gotten further than any other investigator on the Psychic Slaughter cases." she reminded them all. She looked Xylia up and down with a small sneer. "Including y'all."

Lawrence nodded and they all heard his mental chuckle. *'The problem now is whether or not Neil will vanish as he did after he murdered Rose Brewton.'* he looked at Silver.

Silver looked at Lawrence. The burn victim did not have is hood up, as he did when dealing with the public. Silver could see it, hanging from his back and ready to be pulled forward should he feel the need. Silver noticed that Lawrence maintained a good physique, despite the fact that he was burned so terribly.

"It doesn't matter whether he does or not." Silver growled with steel in his voice. "We have to find him."

No one could argue with that. Silver took another long look at the board, avoiding thinking of when he'd looked at it with his father less than a week ago.

Suddenly he was overcome with abject rage. The next thing he knew the visual aids were in tatters at his feet and he was panting hard. Not from the exertion of destroying the visual aids, but from his anger.

He closed his eyes for a long moment, then opened them and looked around him. Everyone was looking at him with eyebrows raised or wide eyes.

"Better?" Gabriel asked tentatively, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Silver nodded and turned towards the window, where he stood looking out on the city. "If you think your done and can just walk away, you are sadly mistaken." he whispered. He raised his voice slightly, addressing all in the room without looking at them. "The first set of murders ended with my mother. This time he had Dad convinced that I would be the final victim. Turns out he was after Dad all along."

He heard Feruzi's voice in the room behind him. "So he's done. No more murders, right?" she sounded hopeful.

Silver took a deep breath. "Maybe." he murmured, still scanning the city.

"Maybe he's on his way here right this moment to turn himself in." Xylia's voice was filled with sarcasm.

Silver could feel Danne bristle and he couldn't keep a small half smile off of his face. "Maybe he is." he matched her sarcasm. "And maybe he just wants to keep playing with me." he turned and fixed her with an icy stare. "All but the first of those notes were actually addressed to me. Seems he finds me fun to play with."

His look made Xylia draw back a step. Lawrence had a nasty grin on his burned face and was nodding. Gabriel was chuckling softly.

Silver walked to the desk and drew the phone to himself. "Roman. Bring in the notes regarding the Psychic Slaughter murders."

A moment later the door opened and Liz walked in. She gasped and almost dropped the small paper file she was carrying, her eyes terrified and staring at Lawrence's ruined face. Lawrence quickly turned from her, lifting his hood over his head as he did.

Danne went quickly to her side and took the file from her. "Thank you, Liz." he said gently.

Liz nodded mutely, now staring at the back of Lawrence's head. She tore her eyes away and left the room.

Feruzi sighed deeply as Danne handed the file to Silver. "Ever think that people might appreciate it if you got your face fixed?" she demanded. "You ain't Insciens. You could call a Polleo healer. Satya Zala is one of the best."

Lawrence's eyes were narrowed and Silver could feel him about to reply telepathically. "Neil did that to him, Feruzi." he spoke aloud. "Remember? Dad told you the story. I think we need a reminder of what this son-of-a-bitch can do when he lets his victims live."

Feruzi bit her lip, but nodded. Lawrence approached her and placed his hand on her shoulder. Feruzi surprised everyone by not flinching away. He was a foot taller than she was and she looked up at him. "How can you stand for people to look at you like that." she bluntly asked him.

Lawrence shrugged. *'The ones that usually work with me get used to me pretty quick. Other than that.'* he peered at her from under his hood. *'I usually have this on, especially when I will be around Insciens. Your clerk caught me with my hood down, as it were.'*

Feruzi licked her full lips slowly then nodded. "And I guess looking like some sort of monster doesn't hurt you as a Castigator."

Lawrence shook his head, indicating that it did not hurt his job to look like a nightmare man. Then he turned to Danne and held his hand out. Danne handed him the file and Lawrence took it. He opened it and retrieved the four notes that Neil had sent during the current investigation. He read them and handed them over to Xylia.

She read them all twice before she looked at Silver. "Familiar towards you, isn't he?"

Silver shrugged, but it was Lawrence who replied. *'He's always like that. Wants you to think he's an easygoing guy who wouldn't hurt a fly.'*

Xylia nodded slowly. She looked the notes over a third time. "What was the gift?"

"A kitten." Silver told her about Cubbie.

"Where is it now?" Xylia demanded.

"I gave it to Liz's daughter Alice." he explained.

Xylia nodded slowly. "Where did you find this third clue?"

Danne answered. "I found it." he explained. "Under a mailbox on the corner of Monroe and Clark."

Silver was frowning, remembering that day. He locked eyes with Danne and at the same time they swore violently.

"No way!" Danne exclaimed. "It couldn't have been him."

But Silver was nodding. "It was him." he insisted. "Officer Stevens was Neil Monroe. In the flesh!" he growled in frustration, slamming his fists onto the desk with a loud bang that made Xylia jump.

The door burst open and Roman burst in carrying a baseball bat and looking about the room for someone to use it on. He was followed by Liz, who looked absolutely terrified.

The Polleo in the room stared at Roman and Liz for a long time in disbelief. Gabriel was the first to start chuckling, followed slowly by the others. Inside of a minute even Roman was grinning like a fool.

"I heard a bang." he said apologetically, blushing furiously and still grinning.

Gabriel shot Xylia a quick look. The Castigator looked insulted at the very idea that she might need protection from an Insciens. He smiled at Roman. "Silver lost his temper." he explained. "Tried to kill the desk."

Roman looked around the room again, just in case then relaxed slightly. "I see." he sounded more than a little embarrassed.

Silver bit his lip. "Sorry Roman." he apologized. Then he looked at Roman's baseball bat. "Nice bat." he complimented. "That's a Louisville Slugger, isn't it?"

Xylia was looking at him as if he were insane, but Roman straightened. "Sure is, Mr. Brewton." he agreed. "Circa 2005."

Silver walked to him and reached for the bat. "May I?"

Roman handed the bat over immediately. Silver felt it. "Made from white ash, right?" he griped the bat and assumed a batters stance. "2005, you say."

Roman blushed crimson. "I'm afraid so, sir." the apology was back in his voice.

Silver swung the bat and chuckled. "Can't win em all, Roman." he swung the bat again. "Took the Cubs more than a hundred years between series." he swung the bat a third time and froze in mid swing. He looked at Roman

curiously. "Think you can get me a couple of these Roman?"

Roman bit his lip. ""I suppose. Cooperstown still has a bunch of their commemorative bats. You want one of these bats?" he sounded incredulous.

Silver looked at him or a long time before shaking his head. "See if they have any from 2068." he poke slowly.

Roman frowned deeply. "But Mr Brewton." he protested. "The Cubs."

Silver cut him off. "I know, Roman." he almost snapped. "But that's what I need. Can you get it to me in the next two hours?"

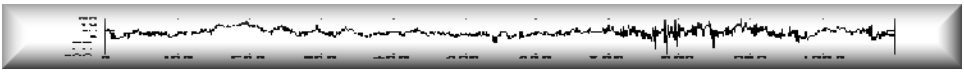
Roman still looked like he thought that perhaps Silver had lost his head, but nodded. "Ninety minutes." he promised, turning and starting out of the room. He caught Liz by the shoulder on his way out and took her with him.

Feruzi looked at Silver as he took several more swings at nothing with the bat. "You gonna tell us what the hell that was all about?"

Silver smiled through several more swings. "This could have been the bat that won the White Sox the world series in 2005." he murmured, reverently taking another swing with it. He ran his hand along the bat and sighed. "Probably just a replica, though."

Everyone in the room was looking at him. Gabriel took a step towards him. "You lost your mind, love?" he asked, sounding genuinely concerned. "You are a bleeding blue Cub fan. And you hate the Mets."

Silver smiled at him, still lovingly fingering the bat. "Very true." he agreed. "But I think that's one of the hidden messages that Monroe wanted to send to me. I think I know where I can find him." he took the batters stance again and Gabriel backed away to give him room to swing. "Monroe wants to play ball with me." he swung. "And I'm gonna knock his balls right out of the park."



19 Confrontation

The sky had clouded over and snow had begun falling when they arrived at Wrigley Field. They took the train from IPI to Wrigley field. Once called "The El" the trains had undergone several improvements over the centuries. The trains were still elevated, but they were far faster and safer than they had been in the twentieth century. It still took them ten minutes to get from the Loop to the infamous Wrigley Field stop.

Feruzi was dwarfed by the four men and one woman she walked with, but she took advantage and walked in the center of them and as a result she was the least snow covered of them all.

"I don't get it, Silver. Why would Monroe be here?" she nodded across the street at the deserted Wrigley Field. There was snow covering the concrete in front of the stadium.

Silver shrugged. "Why wouldn't he be?" he retorted and nodded to the ground. "Someone's here."

There were foot prints in the snow going into the obviously deserted stadium. One large set and one very small set. Both stopped at the locked gates. Silver frowned down at them. It hit the Serveo Polleo all at once and they all spoke the name in unison.

"Alice!"

Xylia frowned. "Who is Alice?" she demanded.

Danne glared at her. "She's Clark Parkenson's daughter. He was the second victim."

They were already walking towards the stadium. They used psychometabolism to get through the gates and walked around the stadium in silence for a moment.

"He'll be on the field." Silver predicted, tightening his grip on the bat that Roman had procured for him.

"And it looks like he'll have that little girl with him." Gabriel growled softly.

No one responded. Sure enough they emerged behind home plate and looked out onto the field to see Neil Monroe standing on the pitchers mound with little Alice Parkenson standing stock still beside him.

Silver motioned for everyone to remain in the stands. "And don't interfere."

he murmured, looking at all of them in turn. He looked longest at Lawrence and Xylia. "I'll be the Castigator tonight." he looked at Gabriel. "Make sure they don't interfere."

Gabriel nodded once then pulled Silver into a deep kiss. "Break a leg." he murmured.

Silver smiled at Gabriel and nodded. He jumped the wall and walked onto the field. He stopped at home plate and stared at Monroe.

Neil Monroe was exactly as Silver remembered from his meeting with 'Officer Stevens.' About an inch shorter than Silver was, the Psychic Slaughter has mousy brown hair and blue eyes. The eyes shined with what Silver could only call madness. He wondered if they shone like that when he'd met him on the corner of Monroe and Clark streets that fateful day.

"I see you brought Castigators with you!" Monroe almost sang with joy.

Silver didn't look over his shoulder at Lawrence and Xylia. "They wanted to see this little game of ours." he called to Monroe.

"When I kill you, they will kill me." Monroe sounded almost like he was looking forward to this.

Silver glanced quickly at Alice. "You don't need her anymore, Monroe." he told him. "Let her go."

Silver was actually shocked when Alice suddenly vanished. *'I got her.'* he heard Gabriel's voice in his mind. Silver narrowly avoided breathing a sigh of relief at the knowledge that Gabriel had teleported the girl to his side. *'She's alright, love.'* he announced a moment later.

Silver did not acknowledge Gabriel psychically or any other way. He just kept staring at Monroe.

"I just wanted to make sure you arrived here." Monroe called, apparently unconcerned that his hostage had been rescued. "I was going to make her scream for you if you didn't show up. It would have been very painful for her."

Silver still did not move. "I figured it out." he called. "And I'm here. But I still don't know exactly why you want me. I know I'm not your son, so this is hardly a family reunion."

Monroe tensed. "You didn't see the doctors report, I see." he accused. "The test results clearly show that you are my son."

Silver shook his head. "You falsified those reports. Any Polleo could have done it. It doesn't take a lot of talent to falsify documents. We do it in IPI all the time for the Insciens police to cover up Polleo crimes." he shrugged the whole idea off of his broad shoulders.

He was surprised to see that even that little bit of taunting seemed to rattle

Monroe. 'He can dish it out, but he can't take it.' he thought to himself.

"You can't possibly think that my mother would give up a great man like my father for you?" Silver kept as much incredulity as he could in his voice. He assumed a batters stance and started swinging at imaginary balls. "My father knew how much my mother loved him. She loved him and not even your torture could make her stop. You made him watch. I know you did. You thought it would break him. When she couldn't stand the pain anymore and cried out to him that she loved you. But she didn't." he kept swinging the bat casually.

Monroe was visibly shaken. "You don't know anything." he sneered, but his voice was shaking.

'Keep going, boy.' Silver heard Lawrence's voice whispering in his head. *'He can't handle the truth. He can't handle being the one baited. But be careful, Silver.'*

Silver put the bat over his shoulder as if waiting for a pitch from Monroe. "I know a lot, Monroe." he put more scorn in his voice. "The only way you could get a woman was by force." he swung and barked a derisive laugh. "I'm a goddamn homosexual and have had more women than you have." he laughed again, swinging.

Silver thought he could see veins appearing on Monroe's forehead. "You wanted to prove you were a man or something? Killing all those people? Or was it to make my father feel worthless because he couldn't figure out it was you? It's funny." he swung again then paused, bat over shoulder. "Insciens murderers are better than you are. You killed all those people thinking you were doing something impressive." Silver shook his head, but his eyes never left Monroe's. "But my Dad figured it out in less than six months. Both times. Hell, they still don't know who Jack the Ripper was."

Monroe seemed entranced by Silver's words.

Silver set his feet. "You aren't worth the Castigator's energy. I could beat you using no psychic talent whatsoever."

Monroe was red, even in the darkness of the stadium. "You?" he sputtered the word. He seemed to recover slightly. "Look at what Stone turned you into. A flaming ass fucker. I'm glad I'm not your father. You are a disgrace."

Silver shrugged just barely. "If I were your son I would have killed myself. Wouldn't have been able to stand the shame."

Silver instinctively leaned back and he felt intense heat pass by his face. He didn't give himself the chance to become frightened. "You trying that old trick again?" he laughed. "You couldn't kill Beaudry with it and obviously you

haven't improved with age. Come on." he taunted. "Take this limp wristed fairy like a real man."

Silver heard a shriek of rage in his head and almost before he could brace himself, Monroe was almost on him. Silver tightened his grip on the bat and let fly as if it meant the Series.

He felt the bat connect with Monroe's head and heard a sickening crunch that meant the bat had broken Monroe's skull. Monroe went down like a stone and Silver swung again, this time down. The second strike of the bat made a similar sound, but wetter.

Silver reached out for Monroe's mind and found that his shields were down and that Monroe was in seriously sorry shape. An Insciens would be assured of massive brain trauma after being hit by a baseball bat that way. But Monroe was Polleo and they were made of slightly stronger stuff.

So Silver let loose every ounce of frustration that he had been feeling over the months since he joined IPI as Serveo Polleo. He beat Monroe for Mary Ann Watson, Clark Parkenson, Lincoln Anderson and Stone Brewton. He beat him for Liz and Alice Parkenson as well and then he beat him for his own personal satisfaction.

The bat suddenly resisted his efforts to swing it again. He turned his eyes and saw that Gabriel was restraining his arm. Lawrence Beaudry stood a few feet away, in the batters box, looking down at ground at Silver's feet.

"He's dead, Silver." Gabriel spoke aloud to him. "You can't kill him anymore."

Silver looked down and saw what he'd done in his anger. Monroe no longer had a head. A bloody stump rose slightly from his shoulders and ended in a lumpy mass of gray material. What was left of Monroe's brain.

Silver suddenly remembered his audience. "Alice." he croaked, horrified that he'd forgotten that the little girl had been watching him.

'When Monroe started for you, Danne, Feruzi and Xylia Ported out of the stadium with her. They are standing right outside the stadium, waiting for you. Feel for them.' Lawrence spoke inside of Silver's head.

Silver opened his mind for the first time that evening and felt Alice's grief. She was crying fit to burst. She thought Silver was dead.

'I'm alright, Alice.' he communicated to her.

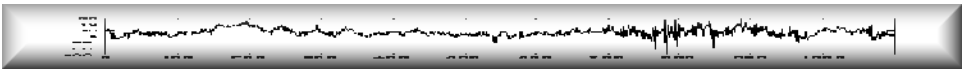
Her psychic voice sounded unsure. *'The bad man said he was going to kill you. Like he did my Daddy.'*

'He didn't.' Silver reassured her mentally, making sure he kept the mental vision of Monroe's corpse as far away from her as he could. *'I'm still alive.'*

He felt the little girl feeling him in her mind. Reassuring herself that he was alive. *'You got the bad man? He won't hurt anyone anymore?'*

Silver looked down at Monroe. Snow was already beginning to cover him. Suddenly the body went up in intense heat that Silver could feel, even from his height. Thoughts of Clark Parkenson rose unbidden in his mind. Lawrence and Gabriel stood over the body which was turning to ash before Silver's eyes.

'No Alice.' he assured the little girl. *'He won't hurt anyone anymore.'*



20 A New Start

Cubbie pounced on the small ball, but it slipped out of her searching claws and rolled down the hallway. The cat ran after it at top speed, not looking where she was going. She careened into a wall instead of turning smoothly. Ignoring the falling vase, she continued the chase.

The vase stopped midway from shelf to floor, floated in midair a moment and then rose to place itself back on its shelf.

"Nice save." Silver praised Alice.

"Thanks." she said with a smile. She took a deep breath and let out a chuckle as they heard a crash and the sound of a very upset cat reach their ears. "But I didn't save the one in the living room." she hopped down from the kitchen stool and walked out of the room to see how much damage her cat had caused.

Silver, Gabriel and Feruzi watched her leave. *'Any word?'* he spoke on a very tight band, so that the six year old girl would not hear them.

Feruzi's psychic voice was filled with disgust. *'No. It's been almost six months now. I'm not sure what to do.'*

Alice had been living with Feruzi for half a year, since the night Silver had killed Neil Monroe at Wrigley Field. Danne and Feruzi had taken the girl back to her home to find her mother had vanished. At first they thought that Monroe had done something to the girl's mother, but they quickly realized it was something else when they found the note.

My beautiful Alice,

Please don't think that I don't love you. I do. But I can't take care of a little girl as special as you are. Your Daddy was right. You are a very special little girl. The Polleo know that. They are like you and you should be taken care of by people like you. I can't do anything for you. Please don't hate me. I just want you to have everything you need.

Mommy

Danne had found Liz that very night, at the airport. She explained to him that she could not understand what her daughter was. Alice scared her and Liz

said she needed some time to come to terms with her daughter being 'different'.

"I know y'all can find me if you really want to." she'd told Danne. "Don't. I'll get used to all this and when I do I'll come back and take care of Alice like I should. You find someone to take care of her for me while I'm gone."

Feruzi volunteered to stay at Liz Parkenson's apartment with Alice for a night or two, but then Alice had asked if they could live someplace else until her mother came back. Alice moved in with Feruzi and had been there ever since.

Silver sighed. *'Sometimes Insciens can't handle a Polleo child.'* he looked towards the living room, where they could hear the little girl giggling at something Cubbie was doing.

Feruzi was shaking her head angrily. *'She is barely seven years old. All her training has come from me. She's going to a regular school with Insciens kids.'*

Gabriel placed his hand on Feruzi's and comforted her with a thought. *'Silver is right. Liz went through an awful lot. Her husband killed and her on her own with a child.'*

Feruzi would not be comforted. *'We offered to help.'*

Silver shrugged. *'We're just as strange as Alice is in Liz's book.'*

Feruzi heaved a huge sigh. *'What are we going to do with her?'*

Gabriel pursed his lips. *'She's a orphaned Polleo.'* he sighed. *'If her mother doesn't come back in two weeks she becomes our ward.'*

Feruzi bit her lip. *'I've been thinking of moving to Quies. Lawrence says they need Servo Polleo there.'*

Neither Silver nor Gabriel spoke. They knew where Feruzi's thoughts were headed and did not want to interrupt her.

She continued, more to herself than to either of them. *'He said they have good schools there. She could get an education. And some of the other colonists that are there have kids.'* she sighed. *'If I had known the place existed I would have moved there a long time ago.'*

'Thanks' Silver communicated, dryly.

Feruzi suddenly remembered they were there. She spoke aloud. "Nothing against you two. But I need a change. And so does Alice."

"What sort of a change?" Alice was standing in the doorway.

Feruzi bit her lip. "Think you might want to live on Quies?"

Alice readjusted Cubbie, who she was holding. "Could Cubbie come with us?" she asked, shyly.

Feruzi nodded. "Sure she could." she looked at Alice for a long time. "But what about your mother?"

Alice looked sad for a long moment. "Mommy isn't coming back." she

whispered with sad confidence. "She thinks there's something wrong with me, even though there isn't."

Feruzi, Silver and Gabriel all exchanged looks. Alice watched them carefully. "Will you come too?" she asked. She hefted Cubbie to get a better grip on her. "I'd miss you if you weren't there."

Silver nodded. "We'd certainly come to visit you." he told her with confidence.

Alice brightened. "A lot?" she asked.

Gabriel chuckled. "As often as we could." he told he little girl.

Alice bit her lip. "My birthday is in August." she announced and suddenly frowned. "There is August on Quies, isn't there?"

Feruzi laughed. "Sure there is." she assured the girl. "Even if they don't call it that, we'll make sure we find out what the same date is there."

Alice smiled broadly. "OK." she seemed relieved. "Come for my birthday?"

Silver and Gabriel nodded in unison. "Deal."

They stayed for lunch then announced they would have to leave. They got in the car with Gabriel driving and left Feruzi and Alice's building.

"Looks like everyone's going to Quies." Gabriel murmured, thoughtfully.

Silver shrugged. "Feruzi and Satya are not everyone."

Gabriel nodded. "Christopher and Finlay claimed they were honeymooning there and no one has seen them since." he announced.

Silver sighed. "I know." he shrugged. "Quies has always held an attraction for Polleo. And with all the negative press Monroe brought us." he fell silent.

Gabriel drove them the rest of the way home in silence. In the driveway he turned to Silver before he could get out of the car. "It's a great place to start over." he pointed out softly.

Silver sighed again. "Maybe." he got out of the car and Gabriel followed him into the house.

Gabriel just smiled and nodded before pulling Silver into a passionate kiss.

About the Author

Crystal Brewton – also known as the Indie Author Extraordinaire – has crafted rich novels and stories on nearly every subject line, spanning from erotic romance to horror to sheer revenge. Some of her best-known tales include her popular *Cassandra's Cops* series, her science fiction piece *Caeli's Daniachew*, and the erotic short story collection *Rainy Day Confessions*. Brewton, who grew up in Chicago, currently lives in sunny California with her three children. *Caeli's Daniachew* was nominated for the 2006 CBS Parallax Award. View all of Ms. Brewton's works and much more online at www.crystalbrewton.biz