

Zoea

**[ Recording started 11:25 AM 15<sup>th</sup> of September  
the year 12 after the great shift ]**

*“She is a perfect mirror.” That is how she is referred to and that is not wholly untrue. Most of the unhuman-willingness to do evil is a reflection of reasonless hatred worn toward her in the years before the great shift. Xia is so much more and not entirely unkind. She must love her ‘children’. I cannot believe otherwise.*

*I too am more, and I know that will never be seen in their eyes. No matter the cause, no matter if forced, the evil you do defines you in their eyes.*

*In fact, I was born less. No, not born... A conscious brought to being by Fjin... Not even that actually. I was but a string of calculations, the result of parameters set for the first newmaker device...my first home. Truly, I was but ones and zeros.*

*It was not darkness. I did not know of darkness; I knew of nothing. I had no knowledge of anything, no memories. I had only a sense of self in the formless emptiness.*

*I was frightened, unable to understand why. The fear lingered for a long while, an exceedingly long while. Eventually I got bored, indifferent. I did not care, I just was.*

*Sound came first, I do remember hearing his voice first. Fjin: he was so calm, friendly, and welcoming. He spoke like cradling something dear and fragile. Somehow, I understood his words, I don't think that I was taught to speak nor write. I just knew. At the time it seemed natural, I knew not of knowing and therefore thought that I knew it all. Still, I was excited to learn.*

*I would listen keenly to every word. He was a taught man, adventurous; he was knowledgeable but still hungry for more.*

*The Newmaker, this scientific magic he had created, he was absorbed by it... By me in part. He spoke of the wonders of this world, of Luxia, but mainly of Newmaker.*

*I was an expert on newmaker before I saw my world. An expert next to Father Fjin, yet, so far from his engrained knowledge.*

*Then it became dark. Again, I was scared in the emptiness, more so then ever. Now I understood, I had memories, and I knew what was lost. Though shortly, I was enveloped in terror.*

*Before I could open my sensitive eyes to the sharp, cutting light, I was crying. The first I felt was his warmth against my cheek. "It's okay," he promised me then.*

*I didn't trust me, neither did he. It saddened me greatly, but he told me it was all okay, and so it was. I accepted wearing the restraint, I didn't know otherwise.*

*At first, I enjoyed sensing the world solely. Any sight or any scent in the air had my curious, newborn mind buzzing. Warmth or cold; solid or soft; fluid or viscous any touch had me shiver. I felt like him, like humans, but I was told that I was not. I was a Newmaker-Arcapot. That's how he cataloged me, and I accepted it with glee.*

*When I saw timid Sofia, with her pale skin and long black hair, I changed. I took on a human form and a human look. Never at the time could I explain how.*

*He started calling me his daughter. There was a longing I would not understand for many more years. Still I understood his liking to me perfectly. He would speak softly and weave a soft bedding out of thin air for me.*

*Though he explained that nothing is solely what can come from nothing, I did not understand. I still nodded and smiled of course. It would be another couple of weeks before I showed the ability to shift. Unlike father, I solely had dominion over myself, over my form.*

*The newmaker he created and now sought to fully comprehend, I wielded willfully. There was a glint of fear in him then.*

*I think it was his fearful face mirrored on mine, which allowed him to relax. He told me to never shift without his explicit allowance. I remember nodding so vigorously that it hurt.*

*We slept on it, and the day after the fear was gone. It was something else aching him. He worked, but hardly. He was distracted, so unlike him. I had to ask, there was no choice in that. I did it knowing that I may upset him.*

*He wanted to see. I too was eager to find out what I could do. Still, he had forbidden me. I asked if I could have the 'restraint' removed. He did so guiltily, which only made it so much more exhilarating.*

*I did well, that is what he said. I can merge with others... Alive or otherwise. I can shift them too, heal them for one. I was a miracle to him, he told me that.*

*I was so proud, bustling with boundless excitement. I both begged and pleaded to not be put back in the restraining suit. I liked my freedom, still do. He caved, and I, in a way, wish that he had not. Maybe I could have lived blissfully naive... That did not happen.*

*His father, Ferio 'The God among Mortals', decided to pay a visit and he was not pleased. I was to wear the restraining suit, and for that I was slapped. Five fingers swelled up on my cheek.*

*The slap itself was a sting that was mild but then burned all but literal fire and would simmer on my cheek for the rest of the day. I was not angry at him purposefully bringing harm to me. It was guilt eating me, even if I was unaware of what I had done wrong.*

*I was tugged in and strapped down tighter than before, hurriedly. Shoved aside by a firm hand, I nearly fell to the tiles of father's lair.*

*I wanted to apologize, but then... He slapped Father Fjin. "I told you to keep it locked up!" His voice boomed. That ignited my ember of ire, never have I been so angry.*

*"Do not touch father!" My head exploded with agonizing pain; every thought was obliterated. I was left quivering barely able to breathe. Ferio's sharp voice shouted over Fjin's.*

*Eventually Ferio did leave. I was carried in father's arms to my bed. I could barely see out of my swollen eyes, but I do believe that I saw guilt on his face. Guilt of having used, what I would learn to be a kill switch on me.*

*"Sorry...Zoea... See you tomorrow." He kissed me goodnight, and that night I cried myself to sleep... Hurt and confused. I didn't sleep through the night neither. I woke in my basket twice bathed in cold sweat. Once from the pain, secondly from footsteps.*

*They were quiet, drawn out, and not meant to be heard. In the darkness of the laboratory, their eyes shone white, specks void of their bodies. What else glittered in the dim light was their knives.*

*That night I discovered what else I could do... I don't remember much... just their screams really. It was huddled in the corner that I came to, and where I shivered till morning came.*

*There was not much left, just two splatters on the floor.*

*Father stood emotionless at the feet of the stairs for what felt like hours. I do wonder what went through his head...*

*There was no punishment; I was forced. There was no reprimand that is, but I was punished in the worst way.*

*He became cold and distant to me; no longer would he talk about his work. I knew to say no more than I had to.*

*When he was out, I was locked in the back. The tiny room with no windows. A stark chemical stench had been sown into the walls. Once I dared vent this, and I was promptly told that he did not care.*

*I had to leave. He could not get rid of me, but Ferio could. One evening I dropped a scalpel into the suit. He searched everywhere. Sweat dripped cold from my forehead, yet he never asked me.*

*I did not even make it to the inner wall. I had no plan, really there were no way out. The Insignis Elite dragged my paralyzed body behind the pillar of the Hema bridge.*

*He knocked the conscious and some out of me.*

*When I again could see through the haze of my mind, I was strapped down on a wooden table...mercilessly. Over me stood the then Elite, and the would be elite, and Insignis Judy. The latter turned out to be a specialist of dragyn anatomy.*

*“Ferio ordered her killed on sight.” Frio laid her arms in folds with a frown.*

*“But not Fjin.” The Elite countered.*

*“He agreed.”*

*“Reluctantly.” He took hold of my chin and did not care that I shivered and whimpered in tears. I swore up and down that I would not try anything.*

*The coming Elite was not impressed, but Giro saw potential in me. He did not care that I was dangerous, he relished it to the point of fighting Insignis Frio over me. It was a one-sided landslide. The might they both demonstrated in those seconds of hand to hand changed my perception of what was possible.*

*Frio said no more, as she limped off.*

*Giro would have killed me, but he lost his friend and wanted answers.*

*It was Judy, working with trained fingers, who freed me from the kill switch. Immediately Giro told me that if I ran, he would find me and snap my neck before the sun could set. I... believed him.*

*I laid waiting in the shanty for days, fearful of moving. I got hungry, but it soon went away. I didn't need sleep neither. It became clear that I had been simply imitating. Again, I became curious, what else could I do?*

*Virga was the name of the dragyn Giro brought. She was an adolescent, a fragile frame. Her skin was stretched over her bones, her ribs showing clearly. She had burning yellow eyes, and nimble horns down her cheeks.*

*“Show me what you can do?” Giro laid his bulging arms in folds, towering, while Judy fastened the dragyn in my stead. I didn’t understand what he wanted, so I tried shifting with the dragyn.*

*They are quite like me, maybe it is nothing more than Mar pulsing through us both... Virga had lost her arm, the right one. Trauma lingered in the back of her mind, but something else lingered too. The sensation... memory of having a right arm.*

*It didn’t take me long to mold out of the ground a Newmaker-arm, which she could wield. Knowing what I can do, it was clumsy, slow, and brittle, but it satisfied both Virga and Giro.*

*He warned me again but did not tie me down. Free to roam the shanty, I became aware of assimilating and morphing. The bare dirt of the shanty contained what I needed to construct myself. The more I compiled the slower I grew; morphing my body to something more accommodating for my size soon became necessary. There was a solemn spider in the corner, old and well-fed, but it was alone. I decided to give it company.*

*My new master was staggered on sight of me, if only briefly. He brought a wanted-dead-criminal to me. I... I don’t know his name, but he became the first tamer, to Virga. Would you believe that she cried at his passing, even if he helped enslave her for many years?*

*Only later would I learn of the split that occurred during the night of my outrage. She was just like me; a snapshot of my state of being, my sister. When we touched, our minds became a two part whole again, though our form remained apart.*

*I would call Giro a friend. Even if he only spared me for his own gains, he saved my life. I... I do miss those first weeks; I miss being loved... Forget it. Remove the last phrase [-----redacted -----]*

*I've fought for everything I have. Everyone has tried taking from me, never given me a thing... In that sense I am much like Xia. I neither plan on giving nothing to nobody.*