
PART ZERO - THE BOOK OF EVER

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EVER CALAVERO

Ever Calavero looked outside the window of his private jet as he took a sip of ice-cold San Pellegrino. The afternoon sun blazed outside as he wondered what life would be like once he arrived at Stone University.

The blasted school was his father's alma mater. His incessant demand for him to attend the school was a condition for Ever to continue having access to the family's billions in wealth.

"Not one cent," Javier Calavero had told Ever for the hundredth time. "You have to go to school there, Everson, or I will donate the shit out of our money to charity after I leave this world. I don't even care what your major would be. Just go for goodness sake."

Ever's father wasn't joking at all. When Ever's cousin Luciano refused to go to the school, he was kicked off the Calavero inheritance plans. The only grace he was given was that he could temporari-

ly live at one of the estates because Ever's mom couldn't bear to see him homeless.

That was a year ago now. Ever hadn't talked to or heard from Luciano for a year since he packed up his suitcase and disappeared. Ever's father was so disappointed. Luciano could not even be mentioned at the dining table anymore.

Ever took another sip of cold mineral water.

Luckily I'm not stupid like him. Ever grinned to himself. *Why the hell would I give all this up? I have unlimited spending on my American Express card for Pete's sake. Luciano made the wrong choice.*

"Mr. Calavero," Ever's pilot William said through the plane speakers. "We are clear for takeoff. Are you ready, sir?"

"Finally," Ever sighed, half-slamming his drink on a red coaster. "Take off. Took you long enough."

"But, sir, I have to follow all regulations and-."

"Enough. No need to explain. Just go."

"Understood, sir."

The private jet's engine roared to life. In a minute or so, it was finally in the air. The buildings down below looked like tiny toys. Ever was on a plane nearly every weekend so he was used to the sight.

Ever got up to use the restroom to fix his dark brown hair with a silver comb. As he stared into the mirror, he reminded himself that he needed to get a tan. His face was getting too pale again from spending too much time in libraries.

After that, Ever changed into a dark gray blazer. He always believed in looking good to feel good, even if he was just going to take a nap.

Ever went inside his cabin to lie down on a bed with black silk sheets. He wanted to be energized and ready to go once the plane landed in a few hours.

But before Ever's head could touch his pillow, he heard his pilot scream in terror as the plane's red security lights went off.

Ever groaned as he jolted back up.

Fucking hell. What did William do this time?

"Hide, Calavero!" Ever's pilot yelled into the speakers before he was interrupted by a heavy thump.

Ever heard a deep voice growl before the speakers went silent. "Be quiet, moron."

Ever's heart pounded against his chest as he triple-locked his cabin door.

I need a gun. How the hell did someone get inside?

Knowing his father, Ever knew that he had a hidden gun somewhere on this plane.

Shit! Where is it?

Ever's eyes darted across the cabin and he noticed a combination lock safe under the bed. It had to be it.

As Ever turned to the combination lock to enter the numbers, he heard heavy footsteps approaching outside.

As fast as his fingers could go, Ever inputted 1-8-6-9, his father's four favorite numbers. It was his combination for everything.

Ever heard a click. The lock was free. He popped open the safe and grabbed the pistol inside. He pointed the pistol at the door and disengaged the safety.

"Don't you fucking dare come through that door! I'm armed!" Ever screamed. "Touch that door and you'll be sorry."

The man outside laughed in a raspy voice, sending chills down Ever's spine. "I'm happy to oblige, Ever. Is that all you need?"

"Do I know you?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. It doesn't matter now. It's a shame, really. We could have used someone like you."

A bright flash of white light nearly blinded Ever, filling the room for a second. When it disappeared, a man wearing a white mask and a black suit was standing before me. The mask appeared to be stained with specks of fresh blood.

Did the man just bypass the door to get in? Ever gasped. How the fuck did he do that?

Before Ever could press the trigger, the man aimed his hand toward him and an invisible force yanked the gun from his hand.

"Ah, an HK4," the man lowered his voice as he studied the weapon. "Your father certainly had great taste."

Ever raised both his hands in the air but was confused by his statement.

Did he say "had" great taste?

The Masked Man looked directly into Ever's eyes. Ever didn't know how, but he could feel him laughing. What was so funny about this situation?

"Did you just say-?"

"Yes, Everson," the man interrupted. "I did say 'had'. You're very perceptive. I, shall we say, took care of Javier before heading you off. The poor fool didn't put up a good fight. Disappointing, really. I thought he'd be stronger."

Ever's heart wrenched with the sudden realization. *Was this psycho saying that my father was dead? And that he killed him?*

"But hey," the man continued. "Now you don't have a reason to go to college anymore, right?"

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a clear plastic bag with a bloody severed hand inside. Ever recognized the gold wedding band on it. It was his father's hand.

"Here. I figured you'd want to say goodbye to Javier before you join him at the Other Side. Or hello would be more appropriate. Whatever works for you."

The man tossed Ever's father's bloody hand over to him. He almost gagged at the gruesome sight.

At that moment, Ever was filled with a rage he had never felt before. He charged and lept for the gun

without hesitation. He was going to blow this guy's brains out.

The man raised his left hand to form a stop gesture.

Ever saw white light seeping through his white mask. He suddenly couldn't move his body. The man was somehow keeping Ever in place with a strange power.

"You look just like him," the man said, examining Ever's face. "You even have the same annoying determination. I can't have that ruining everything."

Holding the gun in his other hand, the man paused for a few moments, as if deciding on what to do next.

Even with all his might, Ever still couldn't move a muscle.

"I've suffered for a very long time thanks to your father," the man smirked. "The only thing I regret is killing him too quickly. I will not grant you the same brevity."

After aiming the pistol at the cabin window, the man fired several shots before the window shattered into pieces. In a split second, frenzied air filled the cabin and incited chaos inside.

"Goodbye, Everson Calavero. We will not meet again," the man taunted before disappearing into white light.

"Wait! Come back here, motherfucker!" Ever screamed as he regained control of his body. He

grabbed onto the leg of a bolted chair while the surrounding air swirled into the broken window.

Ever felt the air get heavier around him as he struggled to breathe. He knew that screaming would only hurt his oxygen, but he didn't care anymore. He'd just learned that some psycho with strange powers killed his father.

"You're going to fucking pay for this, asshole!" Ever screamed, imagining himself choking The Masked Man to death. "I'm going to fucking kill you!"

At that moment, at the apex of his anger, Ever's eyes flashed with bright white light as he felt his body disappear into thin air before everything went black.

After he was gone, the plane's engines exploded midair, shattering it into a rain of burning debris.

THE MASKED MAN

The Masked Man opened his eyes and found himself where he willed himself to be, a dark abandoned warehouse filled with nothing but rusty vehicles and the smell of rotting wood.

A deep voice called out to the Masked Man. “You’re back early, my friend. How did it go?”

The Masked Man turned around to face the voice’s direction. A decrepit old man floated toward him like a ghostly skeleton. His bald head and dark eyes made him look like death incarnate. As he sat down on a wooden chair, the old man looked like a deposed king on a broken throne.

“I’ve fulfilled your request, sir,” the Masked Man bowed to the old man, his Benefactor. “Javier Calavero and, I believe, his son are dead and will no longer be our problems.”

The Benefactor sighed. The air became cold and heavy.

“You *believe* he’s dead? That doesn’t sound like a definite answer to me. I want confirmation, not speculation.”

“I sabotaged the plane we were on before I escaped, sir. There’s no way he could have survived.”

The Benefactor scratched his chin with a menacing scowl. The Masked Man shivered as the room became colder and colder. Even through the cold, sweat beads dripped down his neck.

“Excuses. Excuses. Do you realize what you’ve done? If we’re to have any chance of stealing all of Sol Alpha’s power, both Javier and his son have to die.”

“But they did, sir. I’m sure.”

The Benefactor’s eyes glowed with red light. “Are you now?”

The Masked Man was silent as doubt crept into his mind.

“I am not sure, sir,” he admitted. “Ever may have inherited Javier’s powers.”

The Benefactor nodded as the angry red light in his eyes faded. “Thank you for admitting it. We’ll find another time to kill Javier’s son. In the meantime, I stumbled upon a rare opportunity that will allow me to help you more closely.”

The Masked Man almost choked in gratitude. “What is it, sir?”

The Benefactor flashed a sinister grin. He pointed to a van-sized box covered with a black curtain at the far end of the warehouse. With his eyes glowing red,

the Benefactor used his hands to levitate the box to the center of the warehouse.

With a dramatic swipe of his hands, the Benefactor removed the black curtain from the box, revealing it to be a jail cell. Inside the jail cell were three black-haired young men tied up together on the floor to each other.

“Triplets?” the Masked Man gasped. “Are they dead?”

“Soon,” the Benefactor smirked. “But for now, we can use them to buy us some time. They’re Sol Alpha triplet legacies, a once-in-a-lifetime chance.”

The Benefactor’s eyes glowed with red light as he used telekinesis on the jail cell to rattle it, waking the triplets.

One of the triplets gasped as he awoke, struggling to escape from the rope he was wrapped in.

“Help!” he yelled, trying to kick his way out. “Someone, help!”

The Masked Man laughed and turned to his Benefactor. “Sir, why didn’t you shut their mouths with tape or something? Someone could hear them screaming. We’ll be caught.”

The Benefactor smirked. “Down here? I highly doubt that. This place has been abandoned for years. There’s nobody around for miles.”

“I see. Well, that’s good. I misunderstood.”

“I’m glad you think so,” the Benefactor laughed. “Better to hear them. Their screaming is the sound of Justice, my friend.”

The Benefactor raised a bony hand at the triplets and used telekinesis to untie them. The three of them huddled together, terror-struck, in the corner of the jail cell.

“Let’s do a fun group activity, shall we?” the Benefactor told the triplets in a hoarse voice. “I will let one of you live if you kill the other two. Simple enough, right? I’m sure your parents only need one of you to be alive.”

The more aggressive triplet slammed his fist as a response to the Benefactor’s taunting. “Let us out of here, asshole!”

The Benefactor reached for three knives from a nearby wooden table and teleported them inside the jail cell. “Perhaps these would, shall we say, speed up the process.”

Each triplet went to grab a knife. Immediately, one of them threw the knife at the Benefactor.

The Benefactor’s eyes glowed with red light as he deflected the knife with telekinesis, sending it clattering across the warehouse floor.

“How reckless,” the Benefactor tsk-tsked. “Now you have no chance against your brothers without your knife. What a bone-headed move.”

The triplet who threw the knife screamed. “We won’t hurt each other!”

The Benefactor turned to the Masked Man and nodded.

“*Kill the one who threw the knife,*” the Benefactor commanded the Masked Man telepathically.

“Yes, *sir*,” the Masked Man replied.

The Masked Man stepped closer to the jail cell. He focused his powers on the triplet who threw the knife, imagining what he wanted to happen. He levitated the triplet off the ground. With a quick crunch, he snapped the triplet’s neck. The dead legacy fell to the ground with a thud.

“Bravo,” the Benefactor laughed. He stared at the two survivors in the jail cell. “I guess we’re technically down to twins now? The clock is ticking, boys. One of you must die. Choose quickly.”

The two surviving twins couldn’t stop staring at their dead brother. They both dropped their knives in horror.

One twin screamed at the top of his lungs. “No fucking way! Let us out of here!”

“Ugh, you two are no sport,” the Benefactor scoffed.

The Benefactor’s eyes glowed with red light as he lifted the remaining twins off the ground with telekinesis. He then teleported a large bucket inside the jail cell, just below the floating brothers. With his left hand, he floated the dead brother with the living ones.

Using the same technique that the Masked Man used earlier, the Benefactor snapped their necks. After all the triplets were dead, he used his powers to wring the blood out of them like someone juicing an orange. The red liquid dripped into the bucket below the triplets.

“Perfect,” the Benefactor said, his eyes high from his kill. “Their blood should be more than enough to sustain us for the time being. Go and make preparations for our next attack.”

BROTHER ANDREW

Andrew Deus flashed one of his best smiles as he sat down at a round table to have an emergency meeting with some of the other officers of his chapter.

It was the Chapter President's nervous tick. Smiling and distracting people with his good looks calmed him during times of intense stress. Andrew loosened his gold tie and removed his white blazer in an attempt to further calm down.

The vast round table, designed for twenty-five Brothers, was made of pure oak and white marble. The walls were decorated with the portraits of past chapter presidents. The lights were only half-lit, because of the seriousness of the emergency meeting.

Andrew's normally neat black hair was a sweaty mess. The day had been nothing but a stress bomb for him. He had no notes ready for this emergency meeting, and it showed.

“What the hell are you so smiley about? Pinche pendejo.” Joshua Credenza cursed in Spanish and nodded in disappointment as he adjusted his glasses. “Three potential legacy recruits are dead, man. D-E-A-D! We’re in serious hot water when the High Council gets here tomorrow.”

“Well,” Andrew flashed another smile. “Isn’t recruitment supposed to be your area of expertise? You wouldn’t shut up about it all summer.”

“Fucking what did you just say?” Josh took off his glasses and threw them at Andrew.

Andrew’s eyes flashed with white light as he telekinetically caught the glasses midair.

“Woah there, art major. I’m sorry,” Andrew sighed as he levitated the glasses back to Josh.

Andrew heard an angry knock before a white-haired man with a scowl stomped inside the meeting room to sit down at the round table.

“Councilmember Saiden Regresso,” Andrew sighed. “I thought you wouldn’t be here until tomorrow, sir.”

“Cut the crap, Andrew,” Saiden glared at the young man with his red hazel eyes as he straightened his gray blazer. “I had to cancel a campaign event to come here because the Grand President is out on the field investigating. Do you have any idea what this could do to my election bid? Huh?”

Saiden’s eyes glowed with white light as he took a breath to calm himself down. He was only in his late twenties, but he was often mistaken for being

older. "Excuse my outburst. Even with my Founding Power to see glimpses of the future, I couldn't see this coming. Something powerful must have been blocking me."

"Maybe you should cut down on day drinking?" Josh cracked.

Saiden scoffed and scowled at Josh. "I'm going to pretend I didn't hear you say that."

The High Councilmember, Saiden Regresso, was in the middle of a congressional election in California. Although he was young, all of his hair was snow white, and made him appear much older.

The High Council was Sol Alpha Fraternity's highest authority and a trio of the most powerful living alumni. Together, they governed the chapters throughout the world.

Saiden took a deep breath and took out a black envelope from his briefcase. He opened the envelope and placed three pictures on the round table.

"Three legacies are dead. And now this," Saiden muttered. "This is preposterous."

Andrew gasped when he saw the pictures. They were of Councilmember Javier Calavero's bloody corpse, sitting lifeless at his desk.

"Look," Andrew nearly gagged as he pointed to one of the ghastly pictures. "His hand was cut off."

"Indeed," Saiden sighed. "The timing is no coincidence. Now that we're down to two members of the Council, we have to be on high alert. I've decided to cancel recruitment this semester."

Josh slammed his fist on the round table. “You can’t be serious. I’ve been looking forward to recruitment. What the hell am I supposed to do now?”

Saiden took another deep breath before grabbing Josh’s shoulder. “Three, make that four, people are dead. Get it through your thick skull. Recruitment is the last of our worries.”

“Sir,” Andrew spoke up. “Who will replace Councilmember Javier?”

“Grand President Jax and I will appoint someone when the time is right. In the meantime, I want your chapter to stay vigilant.”

Andrew and Josh nodded.

“Yes, sir,” Andrew said.

“Good,” Saiden said, packing up the photos of Javier Calavero’s corpse. “I should head back to my campaign office, then. So much to attend to.”

Saiden’s eyes glowed with white light as he began to teleport, but was disrupted by a flash of lightning and a roar of thunder.

A young man materialized midair and crashed onto the middle of the round table, cracking the decades-old piece by the sheer force of his impact.

As the young man opened his eyes, Andrew, Josh, and Saiden stared in disbelief. The young man was holding Javier’s severed hand.

“Am I dead?” the young man gasped and glanced at his bent right arm. “I think my arm is broken.”

“Gee, you think?” Saiden rolled his eyes.

Andrew and Josh exchanged glances. Andrew remembered seeing the young man on a legacy roster of potential recruits.

“That’s Javier’s son, Everson,” Andrew pointed. “But how did he teleport? And what’s he doing with Javier’s hand?”

“Get up, kid,” Saiden growled as his eyes glowed with white light. He used telekinesis to force Ever to stand up. He approached Javier’s son with a glowing hand and touched him on the forehead.

Saiden closed his eyes and twisted Ever’s arm into the right position. Ever yelled as his broken arm was covered with a bright white light. In mere seconds, pain disappeared from his face.

Ever gasped. “How did you do that? Am I where I think I am?”

Andrew smirked at Ever. “And where’s that supposed to be?”

“Heaven, I guess?”

Andrew burst out in laughter.

Josh chimed in. “You’re at school. Very far from heaven. Maybe closer to hell.”

Saiden scoffed as a scowl formed on his face. “Enough with the jokes, jesters. Just when I thought things couldn’t get even more messed up, this guy shows up out of nowhere with powers.”

The white-haired man pointed to a seat. “Sit down, Everson.”

“Actually, people just call me Ever,” Ever said.

“Whatever, kid. Just do what I say.”

Ever scoffed at Saiden. “Who the hell are you to tell me what to do? Do you know who my father is?”

“Could you shut up for a second, or should I break your arm again?”

Ever sat down with his arms crossed and rolled his eyes. “Okay, fine then.”

Andrew could sense the rage growing inside Saiden as the Councilmember paced around Ever.

“I can see that you didn’t inherit your father’s social graces. Javier and I were close friends. What happened to him and why the hell do you have his hand?”

Ever took off his blazer and used it to cover his father’s severed hand.

“This strange masked man killed my father,” Ever recounted, his hands trembling. “Somehow he got inside my private jet and tried to kill me, too.”

Ever’s trembling hands balled up into a fist. “The man had strange powers. Going through doors, telekinesis, weird glowy eyes like yours.”

His eyes glared at Saiden, as if scanning him for guilt. “Kind of like your powers.”

“Watch it, kid,” Saiden grunted. “Everyone in this room has powers. Including you now apparently.”

Andrew flinched as Saiden grabbed his arm.

“Restrain him,” Saiden ordered. “Now.”

“But we need to ask him about-.”

“I said now. You too, Josh. Remember, he has Javier’s Founding Powers. I need us to work together.”

Andrew nodded and aimed his hand at Ever. Josh did the same.

Before Ever could do anything, Andrew's eyes glowed with white light as he used telekinesis to keep Ever in place.

But Ever appeared to resist Andrew's powers. He was struggling, but he could still move.

Josh's eyes glowed with white light as he joined in, giving Andrew a boost. This time, Ever was completely still.

"Hold him still," Saiden said, putting his hand on Ever's forehead.

Saiden's eyes glowed with a powerful golden light as he made eye contact with Ever.

"You will not remember us," Saiden whispered, exerting his power over Ever. "You're just an ordinary freshman. You don't have powers."

With a swift movement, Saiden slapped Ever across the face, rendering him unconscious.

Andrew gulped. "Ouch. Did you really have to slap the guy? Isn't that a bit harsh?"

"Sorry, Javier." Saiden sighed and wiped his hands on a handkerchief. "I just really hate rich legacies. Unfortunately, the fool still has powers. I'm not powerful enough to take them alone. I need the Grand President's help to do that."

"What do we do now?"

"I'll take him to the hospital to see Dr. Lawson. He's a good friend of mine. An alum."

With a scowl, Saiden grabbed Ever's hand. With a flash of light, the two disappeared from the meeting room.

Andrew grinned at Josh. "We have to recruit that legacy. Who cares what Saiden says."

Josh rolled his eyes. "Yeah, but how are we going to do that?"

Andrew grinned as he reached into his pocket for a golden keychain with silver keys. "Ever seemed to have dropped his keys. Get ready to recruit him."

"You sneaky little diablo," Josh laughed. "Groovy. Looks like I get to recruit at least one guy this semester after all."

EVER CALAVERO

Ever opened his tired eyes and found himself inside a private hospital room. Beside his lumpy bed was a tray with a ham sandwich and milk.

Scratching his head, Ever made a disgusted face. *What the hell happened? And why are they feeding me peasant food? Gross.*

Ever yelled to get the attention of a hospital worker. “Hey! Can someone explain what I’m doing here?”

As he waited for someone to help him, Ever tried hard to recollect what happened to him.

I was going to a new school. I was on my jet.

That’s all I remember.

Someone aggressively knocked on the door before it swung open. A young-looking doctor who appeared fresh out of medical school entered. His pale face aired an aura of seriousness and had a pin

on his lapel of the Greek letter Alpha with sun rays surrounding it.

“Hey Doc,” Ever smirked. “Can you help me out here? What happened to me?”

The doctor nodded his head and reached for a clipboard on the wall with his notes.

“Ah, yes. Let’s see here. Everson Calavero. College freshman. Survivor of an aerial vehicle accident. That’s you, correct?”

“Obviously,” Ever snorted.

The doctor put down his clipboard and stared into Ever’s eyes, as if he recognized him from somewhere.

“You’re lucky to be alive, kid,” the doctor said flatly. “My name is Dr. Martin Lawson. I performed your surgery after some locals found you. You’re welcome.”

Dr. Lawson pushed the ham sandwich tray toward Ever. “You should eat. Get your strength back.”

Ever pushed the tray back. “Not this peasant garbage. Let me order some fresh sushi.”

Dr Lawson sighed. “We don’t have that here.”

“Not to worry. I’ll have it special ordered.”

“This isn’t a gourmet restaurant.”

Ever stood up from the hospital bed and removed the IV from his arm. He reached into his wallet and flashed a shiny black credit card at the doctor. “I will make it a restaurant.”

Dr. Lawson rolled his eyes and pointed to a red button on the wall. “If you need anything that isn’t

sushi, just press that. You're free to leave if you're feeling well."

Before he left the room, Dr. Lawson reached into his pocket and handed Ever a golden envelope. "I almost forgot. It's a letter from your mother."

After Dr. Lawson was out of sight and the door was closed, Ever could swear he heard him whisper "fucking idiot" as he scribbled notes on his clipboard.

Ever scoffed and rolled his eyes. "What a drag. Guess I'll just wait to get sushi later."

Forgetting about food for a bit, Ever opened the golden envelope from his mother, Maria. Her delicate handwriting brought him a sense of peace. She had been pushing to come with him on the plane ride, but Ever had her stay home. His stubbornness paid off, resulting in his mother still alive.

"Ever," Maria's letter read. "I trust you've made it to the university safely. Your father bought a small house for you near campus so you won't have to dorm in a small room. I snuck the key onto your keychain before you left. Stay safe and good luck with your studies, mijo."

Ever looked inside the envelope again and found an address to the house his father had purchased.

No cramped dorms? Far out!

Looking around him, Ever searched for his keys, but he couldn't find them anywhere in his belongings.

Just my luck. Where could they be?

A voice called out to Ever. "Are you looking for these?"

Ever looked up and saw a young Asian man in a white blazer twirl a golden keychain in the air.

"Hey, buddy. Those are mine." Ever glared at the man, extending his hand to grab the keys.

"Maria figured you'd lose them. She made me pack an extra set just in case. You're certainly a mama's boy, huh?" The man offered his hand. "I'm Preston Lupin. Your father hired me as your security assistant. The man paid a hefty annual sum in advance, so I'll be sure you're safe at all times."

Ever laughed as he shook Preston's hand. "Good to meet you, but I don't need a damn security assistant. What does my father think I am? A toddler?"

Pocketing the keys into a jacket, Ever felt a buzzing sensation in his head. *Ugh, what's wrong with me?*

Closing his eyes and taking a breath, Ever shook off the strange feeling.

"Is something wrong, Ever?" Preston asked.

"I'm fine," Ever replied, scratching his head. "Just make yourself useful and take me to the new house. I decided I'm not going to fire you."

Ever heard Preston chuckle, but let it slide.

Preston led him to a golden Rolls-Royce parked right outside the hospital. As they drove to Ever's new house, the two men sat in silence until Preston spoke.

"So I heard you survived a plane accident? How was that? Must have been terrifying."

“Yeah, it must have been,” Ever muttered, realizing how dumb he must have sounded.

Must have been? How stupid did that sound? Of course it was. Damn it. Must be these meds Lawson put me on. That quack.

Ever corrected himself. “I mean, yeah, I’m glad I was able to survive.”

“Glad to hear,” Preston cracked, driving onto a private road. “If you didn’t, I’d probably be out of a job right now and couldn’t pay for school. I’m still technically in high school, but I’ve been taking university courses around the world since middle school, so I’m at the third year level already.”

“Oh, wow.” Ever laughed, relieved to feel the awkwardness melt away. Though he was abruptly intimidated by the fact that his father hired a genius to guard him.

Preston stopped the car in front of a white-bricked two-story house with black picket fences. It looked like a generic suburban home, but there were no other homes nearby. It was as private as private could be.

“It’s tiny, but it’ll have to do,” Ever said as he stepped out of the car and gazed at his new home.

Rolling his eyes, Preston carried Ever’s luggage into the house and into the master bedroom on the first floor.

“Would that be all for today, Ever?” Preston asked. “I’m going to head to campus.”

“Not yet,” Ever said, handing Preston his credit card. “Bring me some sushi with extra sashimi and then you can leave for tonight. And get yourself something too. On me.”

“Groovy,” Preston’s eyes lit up as Ever turned to sit down at the dinner table. “That sounds great! I’ll be back before you know it!”

“And don’t forget-,” Ever started.

Preston disappeared before Ever could finish his sentence. Normally, this would freak him out in a yelling fit, but a deep, unsettling feeling made it seem ordinary.

What was I going to say? I can’t remember.

The buzzing sensation returned to pierce through Ever’s head. It came in waves that gradually slowed as Ever forced himself back to reality.

After the buzzing faded, Ever noticed two letters on the dinner table.

The first one was sealed with a gold sticker and was from Sol Alpha Fraternity. The other letter was from his dad.

“Great. More letters,” Ever groaned, ripping off the seal from the Sol Alpha letter.

“Dear Everson Calavero,” the fraternity letter read. “The Brothers of Sol Alpha Fraternity at Stone University invite you to join our brotherhood for the time of your life. Our fraternity values men who have a drive to help others through adversity and challenges. Meet us in front of the Art Building

at midnight. Your future awaits. Sincerely, Andrew Deus, President of Alpha Chapter.”

“What a goofy sounding group,” Ever laughed. “Sol Alpha, please. As if I’d join a bunch of juvenile alcoholics. I didn’t even want to be here in the first place. Hard pass.”

Ever tossed the Sol Alpha invitation in the trash before sitting back down to read the letter from his father. It was covered in a light coating of dust, showing it had been sitting here for a while now.

“My son Ever,” the letter from Javier read, “I know you did not want to attend school. Even so, I want to congratulate you on getting in. There is one more task I want you to do. After you complete it and make your decision, let me know right away.”

The letter continued, “There is a fraternity on campus called Sol Alpha. It was my fraternity while I was a student here. I’d like you to consider joining them. Through them, you will experience something that goes beyond your wildest dreams. After all these years, you will know why I wanted you to attend this school. Good luck, son. I know you’ll make the decision that is right for you.”

After Ever finished reading the letter, it flew out of his hands and turned into gold dust before eventually disappearing.

“What kind of screwed up crap is this?” Ever stood up, shock rippling through his body. “I should call my dad on the phone.”

The buzzing sensation returned and pierced his brain for a third time, as if a thousand knives were slicing it simultaneously.

“Shit! Preston! Help me!” Ever yelled, but no one could hear him.

Memories flooded into Ever’s mind as he screamed in pain.

The Masked Man.

The plane’s sabotage.

Sol Alpha. Andrew. Josh. Saiden.

His father’s death.

Cold sweat covered Ever’s face. His eyes glowed with white light as his powers kicked back in.

Ever focused his hand on the trash can where the Sol Alpha invitation was. As he did so, the letter flew out and zipped into his hand. It was just like what Saiden did to him at the fraternity house.

Father, I will find Sol Alpha and I will kill the man who killed you.

As anger filled Ever, he didn’t even notice that a large plate of freshly made sushi was placed on the dinner table.

Preston raised an eyebrow after he finished setting the table. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost. What happened? And what’s that letter? It looks familiar.”

“Nothing that concerns you,” Ever replied, hiding the Sol Alpha invitation from Preston’s sight. “Prepare the car and take me to campus right now.”

“Are you sure you should head there? Maybe I should take you back to the hospital. You look pale and it’s almost midnight.”

Ever snapped back at Preston. “You weren’t paid to talk back to me. I said we’re heading to campus. Now let’s go.”

“As you wish.” Preston nodded and stepped outside the house.

Ever looked at the invitation in his hand and thought about his father’s letter.

Okay, Sol Alpha. Let’s see what you’re all about.

EVER CALAVERO

The Stone University campus felt like a ghost town as Ever walked through toward the Art Building. Without students and professors going about their day, the place looked lifeless.

Despite the school's prestigious reputation, most of its buildings were painted a boring gray color. The only exception was the maroon and dark blue Art Building. As Ever approached it, he looked for signs of life.

Ever's Patek Philippe watch showed that it was midnight. *The Sol Alphas should have been here by now. This better not be some sort of prank.*

"Come on out. I'm right here, boys!" Ever shouted, waving his invitation in the air.

"Right behind you," a young man's voice said. "Thanks for being on time."

Ever turned around and saw two familiar faces wearing white suits with golden ties. It was Andrew Deus and Joshua Credenza.

Andrew reached into his pocket and tossed Ever his keys. "I believe these belong to you. I had to borrow it for a bit to drop off the invitation. Hope you understand."

A voice interrupted the meeting. "Andrew! Josh!"

Surprised, Ever turned and saw Preston angrily stomping towards the group of men.

"This was your doing? This is why Ever came here suddenly?" Preston groaned. "This wasn't authorized by the High Council. Saiden is going to throw a massive fit!"

Andrew sighed and flashed a smile. "Mellow down, Preston. This is Javier's son, a legacy. Why not just let me handle this? It would be a waste not to recruit him."

"Stay out of this. I was told to keep him safe! I'm even getting paid for this."

"Damn it, Preston. Just shut up. You're ruining the moment."

Ever couldn't believe what he was hearing. He had told Preston to leave him alone after dropping him off on campus, and now he was witnessing him arguing with the Sol Alphas.

Unable to contain his surprise, Ever exploded into frustration. "Excuse me? I'm right here, you morons. I can hear you!"

“I should go get Saiden,” Preston threatened, eyes glowing. It didn’t seem like he heard Ever’s confused outburst.

Josh stepped forward in front of Preston. “Like hell you will.”

With a wave of his hand, Josh pushed Preston away with an invisible telekinetic force.

“How dare you,” Preston snapped back, his face twisted with anger.

Preston’s eyes glowed with bright white light as he telekinetically lifted Josh from the ground.

“Let me go!” Josh yelled.

Ever stepped forward and got between Preston and Josh. He had to stop this before it got ugly.

Letting go of thinking, Ever slipped into instinct. His eyes glowed with white light as he unleashed a telekinetic wave that dragged both Preston and Josh across the cold pavement.

“Enough,” Ever said, light fading from his eyes. “I need you all to explain what the hell is going on.”

Preston struggled to get up. “So that’s the force of Javier’s powers, huh? Damn that hurt.”

Josh nodded, his arm bleeding from Ever’s attack. “Let’s not do that again. Ouch.”

Andrew smiled nervously as sweat dripped down his forehead. “Let’s think this through and have a civil conversation. No need for any more of this.”

Running over to Josh, Andrew’s eyes flashed with white light as he put his hands on his vice president’s

bleeding arm. In seconds, Josh's arm looked as good as new.

Ever couldn't believe what he was seeing. It was like a miracle. Would he be able to do that, too?

"Thanks a lot," Josh said as he got back on his feet.

Andrew turned to Preston. "Now you see why we need Ever in our chapter? And the last time I checked, I'm the Chapter President here. What I say goes."

Preston scoffed as he got back up. "Fine. I won't tell Saiden. I still think this is a bad idea though."

Ever crossed his arms over his chest. "Now that we're all caught up. Why the hell should I join Sol Alpha? Besides the powers, I don't see why I need to be with a group of knuckleheads."

"You practically are already one of us, knucklehead," Andrew shrugged. "We just want to make sure you're not insane or a psycho. Now hold still. Preston, I'll need your strength too."

Preston radiated reluctance as he nodded and raised his hand and aimed at Ever. "I can't believe I'm agreeing to this nonsense."

Andrew and Josh followed. The three men had their hands pointed at Ever while their eyes flashed with white light.

"What the hell is this for? Are you going to erase my memories again?" Ever laughed. "Been there. Done that. I'll just remember again."

Andrew laughed. "Who said anything about erasing your memory?"

Before Ever could protest, he felt his body collapse onto the ground. He felt his consciousness split and travel far away from where he stood. There was nothing but light all around him, bending and whirling everywhere.

When Ever came to his senses, he found himself on an ivory rowboat with Preston, Andrew, and Josh.

The smell of saltwater filled the air as Ever took in his new surroundings. There was nothing for miles except the ocean and the sun setting.

Preston raised an eyebrow at Andrew. “*This* is the Judgement Trial you created for Ever? What a joke. You’re not supposed to give him a relaxing vacation. You’re supposed to test his character. I can’t believe this. The Council will not be happy.”

Josh mocked Preston’s whiny tone. “*The Council will not be happy.*”

Andrew rolled his eyes. “Please, just watch and mellow out. You’re taking the fun out of this. He’s a legacy, so just go along.”

Ever shot a confused look at the Sol Alphas. “Where the hell are we? Did you teleport us somewhere?”

“Well, yes, and no. This is a part of the Astral World,” Andrew told him. “This is another plane of reality where our Astral Bodies can make anything real, a kind of in-between life and death. Our physical bodies are still safe on campus. If someone tries to wake us, we’ll just pop right back in. No big deal.”

Andrew stood up, and before he could take a step into the water, Ever grabbed him by the ankle. “What the hell are you doing?”

“Let go. Just watch.”

Ever’s eyes expanded in amazement as Andrew walked on the water as if it was solid ground.

“See? Perfectly safe,” Andrew smiled. “Come on in. The water’s fine.”

Ever gulped as he stood up. *I must be going crazy.*

Stepping into the billowing water, he half-expected to sink and drown.

But the opposite happened. Andrew wasn’t lying. Ever stood on solid water and wasn’t sinking to the bottom.

“Holy cow!” Ever jumped up and down.

“We could actually do this in our physical bodies,” Josh added. “You know, once you learn to control your powers.”

Josh stepped into the water and suddenly grabbed Ever’s arm. “And this as well.” Without warning, Josh lifted off the ground and flew up into the sky. He rose to about 50 feet while carrying Ever, who almost vomited from the sudden change in altitude.

“Have a good landing,” Josh laughed as he let go of Ever midair.

“Motherfucker!” Ever yelled as he felt his body zoom back to the solid ocean.

But before he could crash land, Ever imagined himself floating. His powers kicked in, and he was able to stop a foot above the water.

Andrew clapped his hands. "Far out! You're a fast learner, aren't you? When I taught Preston how to fly, let's just say it wasn't as smooth as this."

Preston scoffed and crossed his arms over his chest. "Lies."

Too shaken from the drop, Ever stepped back into the boat. "Are you losers trying to kill me?"

"You can't die here," Andrew said, before he gulped. "I mean, you can, but it takes someone with evil intent to do that. We're safe here. Trust me."

Josh landed back on the water and stood there laughing. "We don't even fly that much, anyway. It's easier to just teleport."

"Yup," Preston added. "True. Did you hear that, Andrew? Who needs to fly?"

Ever's chest still pounded from the drop. "Right. And I get more of this if I join Sol Alpha?"

"Yes," Andrew nodded. His eyes flashed with white light as a golden envelope with Ever's name on it appeared in his hands. "As soon as you accept our bid, we will welcome you to our chapter. Otherwise, you will lose all your powers."

Just before Ever could take the golden letter, he heard a woman screaming for help.

Andrew turned to Josh in a panic, who pointed to a black wooden ship that appeared out of nowhere. It was rotting and was covered in seaweed and broken shells. The smell of death and decay filled the surrounding air.

Ever looked at the top of the enormous ship. There was a sleeping woman tied up at the edge and a mysterious hooded figure wielding a sword next to her.

“Everson,” the figure boomed. “How have you been? I trust you’ve been well.”

The figure’s familiar voice sent chills down Ever’s spine. He could recognize it from anywhere.

It can’t be. No way.

After the figure removed his hood, Ever’s world shattered.

It was Javier Calavero.

EVER CALAVERO

The pounding in Ever's chest thumped harder as he took in the gruesome sight of his father holding a woman hostage.

Javier Calavero was the spitting image of Ever, but with a beard. Ever watched in horror as Javier held his blade at the girl's neck.

"Give me back the rest of my powers," Javier threatened. "Or this innocent will die."

Ever couldn't believe what he was hearing. Was his dead father really doing this? He refused to believe it. He was strict, but he wouldn't go this far. The man he knew had honor.

Preston grabbed Andrew's shoulder, startling him. "This isn't part of your design, right? Tell me it isn't, you sicko. The High Council is going to kill you."

"No," Andrew's face turned pale. "I don't know how this is happening. This is a breach. It has to be."

Josh grabbed Ever's shoulder. "Don't listen to what Javier says. We're going to escape. Try to imagine yourself back on campus. Now!"

Before Ever's eyes, Josh's body disappeared into white light. Right after, Preston and Andrew followed suit. Ever was left alone on the boat.

"Your friends are cowards," Javier sneered. "But I understand why they would run. My skills far outmatch all of yours combined. They won't reach their physical bodies in time."

Javier's eyes glowed with white light. In seconds, the three Sol Alphas reappeared on the boat. The men screamed as their bodies transformed into marble statues, frozen in agony.

Ever's father laughed and closed his eyes. "Are you going to try fleeing as well?"

"In your dreams! Release her, Javier!" Ever shouted.

"No way. I'll make this simple for you, son," Javier said. "If you surrender your powers peacefully, you and the lady won't have to be referred to in the past tense."

Javier's eyes glowed with red light as he used telekinesis to yank Ever from the boat and onto the black ship's deck.

"What will it be?" Javier said, driving his blade deeper into the woman's neck, just above her thin skin.

Ever clenched his fist. *This can't be my father.*

My father would never do this for power. No. I refuse to believe that he would give up his honor. I have to know the truth.

“Don’t kill her! You’ll have your powers back,” Ever said. “I just need you to answer one question.”

Javier’s eyes narrowed at Ever’s request. “I might as well give you that. Go on.”

“When did having powers become more important than having honor to you? You’ve always scolded me for every little thing that you’d perceive as dishonorable. So why are you doing this?”

As soon as Ever asked the question, his face was met with Javier’s heavy fist, knocking out several of his front teeth.

Wiping the blood from his mouth, Ever knew that this wasn’t his father. His father would not sacrifice his honor for personal gain.

“You’re not Javier. He’s dead,” Ever told the man in front of him. “If you were, then you’d have an answer for me. You’re nothing but a fake.”

The man in front of Ever flashed a sinister smile. His face melted right off him, revealing a white mask.

“Everson, Everson. Well done,” the Masked Man laughed as his disguise broke. “Your father would be proud. Not bad for a spoiled brat.”

“So it’s you again,” Ever glared at the Masked Man. “You’ll never have my father’s powers.”

“You’re turning back on your word? How dishonorable. Maybe this will convince you to change your

mind.” The Masked Man spun around and sliced off the woman’s head, sending it tumbling overboard. “This is nothing compared to the pain I’ve felt for years!”

Shocked at the gruesome sight, a torrent of anger filled Ever inside. Focusing his intentions on hurting the Masked Man, Ever aimed his fist at the Masked Man, and without meaning to, fired off a beam of burning white light.

“Argh! What the-!” The Masked Man screamed and jumped out of the way, the hot beam missing him by a few inches. He tried to push Ever with telekinesis, but Ever easily deflected his move with a single swish of his hand.

“I can’t believe I failed to kill you for a second time,” the Masked Man scoffed. “I’m in for it now. You really are your father’s son.”

With no other choice, the Masked Man ran to the edge of the boat and jumped off before disappearing into a cloud of black smoke.

The black ship rumbled and shook before melting into dust. Before it completely disappeared, Ever flew back onto the boat with the marbleized Sol Alphas.

Remembering how Andrew healed Josh, Ever focused his energy as he touched their shoulders. After their bodies were covered in white light, the Sol Alphas were back in their original forms.

Andrew sighed in relief after he could talk again. “Exquisite timing. I thought I was stuck like that forever. What kind of sick power was that?”

Ever smiled, but looked down. “I saved you guys. I wasn’t able to save that woman. He killed her. It’s all my fault.”

Andrew nodded in disagreement. “This is the Astral World. She never existed, but your heart was in the right place.” He presented Ever with the golden letter once more. “Which is why we want you to be our Brother.”

“Even if you refuse, you still get to keep your father’s powers,” Josh admitted. “Only the High Council can take them, or if you voluntarily give them up to someone.”

Andrew, Preston, and Josh held out their hands. Their faces gave off an anxious vibe of anticipation.

Ever shook their hands one by one before giving them an answer.

Hesitating no longer, Ever nodded his head. His choice was clear. With powerful Brothers on his side, he could get revenge on his father’s killer. “I’d be glad to join Sol Alpha. Count me in.”

Andrew’s eyes lit up and shook Ever’s hand again. “Welcome to Sol Alpha, Brother Ever.”

Josh grinned and nudged Andrew’s arm. “It’d be better if we bug out back to campus.”

Andrew nodded. The four Brothers closed their eyes and transported their Astral Bodies back into their physical bodies.

After Ever opened his physical eyes, he saw a familiar stern face seething with anger.

It was the man who wiped out his memories earlier, Councilmember Saiden Regresso.

“You boys disobeyed my orders,” Saiden sighed, fixing his gray tie. “I told you idiots that recruitment was to be postponed. I’m disappointed that even Preston went along with this.”

Andrew clenched his fist. “Are you telling me you’d rather not recruit Javier’s son? And it’s too late now. He already accepted our invitation.”

“Oh he did, did he?”

Saiden’s eyes glowed with a powerful white light. In seconds, the Brothers were all transported back to the chapter meeting room at the round table.

“I’m invalidating Ever’s decision to join Sol Alpha,” Saiden declared. “That was not a properly sanctioned Judgement Trial. We will recruit him when the time is right.”

Ever, appalled at Saiden’s decree, spoke up. “My father’s murderer attacked us in the Astral World. We survived the encounter, so I think you should rethink your half-baked decision. I am a Brother of Sol Alpha whether or not you like it.”

Saiden’s eyes narrowed. “Ugh. Just as stubborn as Javier. What a conundrum.”

A different man’s voice suddenly reached across the round table.

“Javier’s son is right. You’re not the only Councilmember who has a voice in this, Saiden,” he said.

Flustered, Saiden turned to where the voice came from.

Sitting across the table was Grand President Jax Honoramor. The bronze-skinned young man with black hair wore a white trench coat with a golden tie decorated with the symbols of the four card suits: hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs. He looked like he was busy filling out paperwork and had been sitting at the table for hours.

“I vote in favor of Ever’s admission,” Jax declared. “And since Javier is not here to break the tie, that vote goes to Chapter President Andrew. I’m sure you know what that means, Saiden.”

Saiden grunted in defeat. “Damn it, Jax. I didn’t say no. I was only suggesting we should wait. But fine, I concede.”

Jax nodded. “Good to hear. I’ll take things from here for a bit while you focus on your congressional election. See you later, Regresso.”

Saiden shot a dirty look at Ever and Jax before sighing. “You’re right, Jax. Take care, Brothers. I will win this.” The Councilmember’s angry face softened as he teleported away from the meeting room.

Jax laughed. “That silly man. Even with the Founding Power of seeing glimpses of the future, he wasn’t able to see this predicament. I’m sure glad I didn’t get that power.”

Ever grinned as Jax approached him. “Saiden can see the future?”

“Not as well as we’d like, but that’s good. It means we can always change the future,” the Grand President said. “Now that Saiden is out of the way and I’m in town, I’m going to train you personally as temporary Chapter Advisor.”

“No sweat,” Ever grinned. “I’m a fast learner.”

For a brief fraction of a second, Ever sensed a bit of hostility coming from Jax, a small spot of darkness in a room of light. He wasn’t sure what to make of it.

“For all our sakes, I hope that’s true,” the Grand President whispered. “We will catch your father’s murderer.”

EVER CALAVERO

It was a new day. The campus buzzed with life once more while students and professors wandered half-asleep to their morning classes.

Twenty minutes late, Ever walked inside the first college class of his life. He proudly wore a freshly tailored white blazer decorated with the Sol Alpha symbol.

Stone University was known for keeping its class sizes small. The compact classroom was filled with twenty other freshmen. They all stared at Ever, radiating second-hand embarrassment.

Professor Karl Deus shot Ever a stern look. “Mr. Calavero. Do not be late again for my class. You’ve already worn out your luck after surviving your private jet crash.”

Ever heard some students giggle, but he just shrugged it off.

Professor Deus rolled his wheelchair over to Ever and handed him a copy of the class syllabus, *Introduction to World History*.

“Thanks, Teach,” Ever said, taking the syllabus.

The professor cleared his throat. “You will address me as Professor Deus.”

As much as Ever wanted to deliver a funny come-back, he held himself back. He was wearing Sol Alpha letters, after all. He didn’t want to single-handedly ruin their reputation as the classiest fraternity on campus.

“Always maintain level-headedness and behave like a gentleman,” Jax had told him after formal initiation last night. “We’re fraternity men, not frat boys. Act like it.”

With Jax’s words in mind, Ever addressed Karl Deus properly. “Of course, Professor Deus. I apologize.”

“Good.” Professor Deus nodded and pointed to an empty seat in the front row. “Now have a seat next to my nephew over there.”

Ever grinned after he saw who he was going to sit next to.

“What’s up, Chapter President?” Ever shook Andrew’s hand before he sat down.

“Glad to see you here, novice,” Andrew cracked.

Professor Deus cleared his throat. “Now, as I was saying before the tardy rich kid rudely interrupted me, this class will not have any homework. I will

base your grade on four take-home exams worth 25 percentage points each.”

While Professor Deus wrote on the blackboard, Ever chuckled in silence as Andrew imitated a fake yawn.

Andrew’s eyes flashed with white light for a brief second as he broadcasted a telepathic thought to Ever. *“Any news from Jax? Is he still investigating?”*

“Yeah,” Ever replied with his mind. *“He said he doesn’t have any leads yet, but he told me that whoever killed my dad also killed three other legacies. In the meantime, he just told me to attend class as if everything is normal.”*

“Bummer. But at least after this class, we’re going to have a cookout at the House.”

“Far out! I’ll order us some ribeyes and have them delivered. On me. I’m not really a hot dog and burger fan.”

Andrew couldn’t think of a reply. Instead, he gave Ever a big thumbs up.

After an hour of Professor Deus rambling about the syllabus, class was finally over.

“See you all next time,” Professor Deus said. He suddenly turned to Ever and gestured for him to come forward. “Calavero, I need to speak to you. You too, Andrew.”

Andrew and Ever let out simultaneous quiet groans while they packed their backpacks.

Professor Deus crossed his chest with his arms. “Listen. Dean Benjamin Beacham is coming in a few minutes to ask you to take over an evening fundrais-

er gala in a couple of days. He'll tell you more, but that's all I know."

"Uncle Karl, that's a ridiculously short notice," Andrew sighed. "Why did the other fraternity back out?"

Professor Deus raised an eyebrow. "They killed a pledge, Andrew. I thought you'd know about this already, considering your position."

"Oh. Well shit," Andrew gulped. "Sorry to hear. My chapter has been dealing with, um, internal conflicts."

"So? You better step up and do this right. I'd give anything to be in your position right now."

Professor Deus looked directly at Ever's face. His expression changed from stern know-it-all to one of nostalgia. "You really look like Javier when he was younger. It's uncanny," he said.

Weirded out, Ever just nodded. "Um, thanks I guess. How do you know that?"

"He's never mentioned me? He and I were classmates here at this school. How is he doing? I haven't seen him for months."

Ever stumbled upon his words as he revealed his father's fate. "He's dead now, sir."

Professor Deus frowned as his face turned pale. "Oh. I'm so sorry to hear that. How dreadful. I give you my condolences."

Right as Professor Deus finished, Dean Beacham walked into the classroom. Nicknamed by the student body as "Dean Pirate," Beacham wore a black

eye patch over his right eye. He wore a black suit and a red tie, his usual outfit.

“There you are, Andrew,” Dean Pirate grumbled in a low voice. “I’ve been meaning to talk to you about your chapter helping with this year’s Fundraising Night. A lot of wealthy alumni have already made reservations and unfortunately, there was an incident with the fraternity that was supposed to host it this time.”

Ever rolled his eyes. “Yes, Professor Deus told us. They killed a pledge. Why don’t I just write a big fat check for the school and we could just cancel the entire event.”

“Oh my God,” Dean Pirate gasped, his eyes wide with surprise. “I don’t know what to say. I’ve never in my life heard a student say that. Er, what was your name again, young man?”

“Ever Calavero.”

“Javier Calavero’s son? Of Calavero Realty?”

“That’s the one,” Ever grinned.

“Well then, that explains everything. Your father is quite the legendary alumnus here.”

“So we have a deal then?”

Dean Pirate straightened his suit and tie. “Unfortunately, I don’t accept your offer out of respect to all the alumni who already made plans to attend. There are over a hundred guests confirmed already. The show must go on.”

Andrew turned to Dean Pirate. "This is quite a short notice, Mr. Beacham. What still needs to be done?"

Dean Pirate brought out a list from his briefcase. "I just need your Brothers to act as concierge to our guests, ready the stage, and you do a short appreciation speech. That's all that's left."

Andrew nodded. "That sounds reasonable. Fine, I agree with your terms. I can't promise that every Brother will help. At the very least, myself and my vice president will attend."

"Wonderful," Dean Pirate beamed. "I was worried that I'd have to ask an unreliable chapter, but I shouldn't have been. After all, your reputation precedes you. The rest of Greek Life are basically losers. Don't tell them I said that."

"Glad to help, sir," Andrew shook Pirate's hand, cringing at the dean's derogatory comments. "I'll make arrangements as soon as I can."

Professor Deus clapped his hand. "Good! That's settled then. I guess we'll both be off. Tons of scratch to collect, am I right?"

After Professor Deus and Dean Pirate left, Ever and Andrew were left alone inside the class. They were free to use their powers with no one seeing.

Andrew grinned. "Let's have a blast at the House to get our mind off school for a bit. It's only syllabus week after all."

The two Brothers' eyes flashed with white light as they teleported to the Chapter House.

EVER CALAVERO

The three-story Alpha Chapter House stood proudly at the well-maintained fraternity grounds. It was painted in white and gold, with the front door displaying carvings of the fraternity's symbol.

After teleporting from Professor Deus's classroom, Ever and Andrew were greeted by ten Brothers who were cooking up a feast of hot dogs and burgers.

Josh went up to Ever and Andrew with two cold cans of beer. "Glad you and the novice made it! Let's go!"

Ever looked at the can of beer and sighed. "Domestic? Really? I was going to buy us some-."

"Oh quit complaining, silver spoon," Josh laughed. "Just come and join the fun. We are going to play a little something we call Floaters. I think you'll come to like it."

Ever felt a hand slam on his back. He turned around and saw Preston with a big grin.

“I will be the designated healer,” Preston said, holding two handles of vodka. “As per usual, there is food and water nearby if you need it.”

“The rules are simple, Ever,” Andrew said, flying ten feet off the grass.

Ever, and seven other Brothers did what Andrew did while Preston and Josh poured vodka shots. The rest of the Brothers manned the grills or sat down to watch.

“We’ll each take a shot and try to maintain flight every five minutes,” Andrew said. “Your goal is to remain in the air. Whoever touches the ground is out. Whoever is left at the end wins. Understand?”

“Hell yeah,” Ever said. “Bring it!”

The game started. During the first round, Preston and Josh levitated the shot glasses to the Brothers.

“Okay! Round one!” Andrew announced, downing his shot of vodka while the rest of the Brothers followed.

The game continued. After the third shot, Ever noticed that some of the Brothers sank down in the air. He grinned and laughed at them as he was still ten feet above the ground, the same as Andrew.

By the seventh shot, only Andrew and Ever remained in the air. But by now, they were halfway to the ground.

Preston was busy on the ground healing Brothers to sobriety while Josh poured the final shots.

Ever took his eighth shot at the same time as Andrew, who was struggling to keep afloat, just like he was. The world was spinning, but Ever fought through the disorientation.

Before Ever knew it, he landed on the ground while Andrew remained floating.

“Andrew wins!” Preston announced.

Ever laughed. “Damn. I thought my beginner’s luck would save me. Oh, well.”

Before Ever could react, Preston touched his forehead and used his healing powers to remove the alcohol from Ever’s body. In seconds, Ever was sober again.

“Next time, I’ll get you, Andrew,” Ever laughed.

“You wish, novice,” Andrew laughed while Preston healed him.

The cookout continued with Brothers continuing to play Floaters and other weird games involving their powers. Before Ever knew it, the sun was setting.

As Ever saw Andrew getting healed after winning his third game of Floaters, he thought about Professor Deus and how he was in a wheelchair. He went over to Andrew to suggest an idea.

“Hey, Andrew,” Ever started. “Have you thought about healing your uncle so he could walk again? Would that be possible?”

The question seemed to startle Andrew, who dropped a shot glass and shattered it.

“Not now, Ever,” Andrew whispered while his expression darkened. “I don’t want to discuss school tonight.”

“It’s not about him as a professor. It’s about healing your family.”

“I said, not now!” Andrew yelled before teleporting back into the House.

Preston came rushing seconds after. “What’s the matter?”

Ever took Preston to a bench away from the grill area so they could talk in private.

“Andrew got upset when I brought up healing his uncle,” Ever told Preston. “I don’t know why. I just thought it’d be nice to help his uncle walk again. That’s all.”

Preston frowned. “That’s because Andrew has already tried that. Everyone here has. Even the entire High Council has tried. Nothing worked. It’s so strange too. We’ve secretly volunteered to heal hundreds of people with worse conditions, but this is one case we couldn’t crack.”

“Oh, I see,” Ever gulped. “But I don’t understand why a Sol Alpha Brother can’t be given the chance to walk again. There has to be some way to help him.”

“Ever, Professor Deus isn’t a Brother,” Preston explained. “He’s an alumnus, yeah, but he never joined Sol Alpha while he was here. So every time we try to heal him, we erase his memories.”

“So Andrew isn’t a legacy like me?”

“No. He’s the first in his family to become a Sol Alpha,” Preston revealed as he stood back up. “So anyway, I wouldn’t bring up healing his uncle anymore. You understand, right?”

“Of course.”

“Groovy. Now I gotta get back to healing them. Good talk.”

“Thanks, Preston.”

Ever looked at the Chapter House and saw Andrew looking through the window at him. Andrew nodded his head and gave a half-smile.

“So Preston told you, huh?” Andrew asked telepathically. *“It’s fine, man. I get it. I’d be curious too. It just pisses me off. I can’t do anything about it.”*

“I won’t bring it up again,” Ever replied. *“Sound good?”*

Andrew didn’t reply telepathically, but he gave Ever a nod through the window before closing the curtains and teleporting back in front of Ever.

“I’m going to play one more game of Floaters,” Andrew said. “After that, I’ll start prepping for Pirate’s damn fundraiser.”

Ever nodded and grinned. “You’re going down this time.”

Andrew snarked. “Aren’t you confident?”

THE MASKED MAN

The next night, The Masked Man walked with caution as he stepped inside the pitch-dark abandoned warehouse to face the Benefactor. He was almost sure he was going to die tonight.

He heard the Benefactor's bitter voice as soon as he was inside. "From the regret I sense inside you, it seems that you failed to take Javier's powers back. Such a waste of the power I've given you."

The Masked Man gulped. "I thought Everson would submit to me after you turned my appearance into his father's. The spoiled brat is more than I anticipated."

A faint light illuminated the dark warehouse, revealing the Benefactor drinking blood from a white teacup.

At first, the Masked Man didn't recognize the Benefactor. He had turned his appearance into

something else, and his power seemed to have increased. A sinister, cold energy radiated from him.

The Benefactor's once skeleton-like appearance was now of a kind grandfather with strands of long red and silver hair.

"Your failure to take back Javier's powers is something I can overlook," the Benefactor grinned. "As you can see, the legacy blood has worked wonders for me. My body is beginning to look like it once did."

"Thank you, sir," the Masked Man said with relief. "Perhaps now you can give me what we agreed to? It would motivate me to keep going with our plans."

The Benefactor's eyes glowed with red light as he used telekinesis to force the Masked Man to kneel.

"You audacious fool. Nothing is over yet," the Benefactor growled. "I will honor our deal when the time is right. And that's when Javier's Founding Power is mine. I'm not one to turn back on promises. You forget I fight for Justice."

The Masked Man struggled as the Benefactor's hold continued to keep him down. He needed to change the subject fast.

"I understand, sir. I have good news for you."

The Benefactor released his telekinetic grip from the Masked Man. The angry red light in his eyes faded. "Go on."

The Masked Man's voice trembled as he delivered the news. "Sol Alpha is hosting a school fundraiser

night. It's the perfect opportunity to strike. With everyone distracted, we can defeat them."

The Benefactor's sinister laugh echoed through the warehouse after he took another sip of blood. "You think I didn't already know about that? I planned it this way."

As his eyes glowed with red light, the Benefactor's appearance turned into that of Dean Pirate.

The Masked Man gasped. "What the? What happened to the real Benji? What did you do to him?"

The Benefactor took another sip of blood before answering. "His death was a *necessary* sacrifice. His body is now serving as fertilizer for the school vegetable garden."

The Masked Man did his best to hide his shock by nodding in agreement. "Yes. His death was for the best."

"Sol Alpha will meet its end at the fundraiser," the Benefactor grinned. "But right now, I must get rid of Jax Honoramor. He's the biggest threat to my plans. With that fool Saiden gone from campus and most of my powers restored, I will deal with the Grand President before he causes more problems."

Stunned, the Masked Man bowed in frightened admiration. "Shall I assist you in taking him down?"

"Conserve your energy, my friend. I will need you to be at your best for the fundraiser. You'll only hold me back. The Grand President may be young and inexperienced, but he holds one of the four Founding Powers."

After the Benefactor finished drinking his cup of blood, he shattered the crimson-stained teacup to the floor before disappearing into black smoke.

After he was sure the Benefactor was gone, the Masked Man slammed his fist on the floor. "I must not lose faith. I mustn't. I will have my revenge on Sol Alpha."

JAX HONORAMOR

It was the night before the fundraiser, and an hour before closing time at the campus food court. There was almost no one there except for the staff preparing to close up.

Councilmember Saiden was scheduled to meet Dean Pirate at the food court for a quick meeting regarding the fundraiser. When he couldn't make it, Jax agreed to take his place.

Jax expected the meeting to be an attempt to get him to donate money, which he already decided to agree to. He owned a casino, which he secretly set up to be a fundraiser arm for scholarships and chapter expenses.

The Grand President wasn't an alumnus of Alpha Chapter. He graduated from Sigma Chapter, but he still considered every chapter to be important. He was not to play favorites as Grand President when it came to the existence of the Fraternity.

It surprised Jax when a familiar face sat down next to him with a plate of scrambled eggs and steak.

“How are you, Jax?” Ever said. “I was starving, so I came over here to try the place out. What are you doing here?”

“Filling in for Saiden. Dean Beacham is coming here to chat with me about the event tomorrow night. I think he’s going to ask for scratch.”

“Oh, you mean Dean Pirate.” Ever chuckled as he took a bite of the steak. Disappointment filled his face as he chewed. “Can’t they do anything right? I asked for medium rare and they gave me over-cooked leather.”

Jax grinned. “Maybe the fundraiser will allow them to hire better cooks.”

“Maybe,” Ever said, putting the plate aside. “Well, this was a bummer. I’ve lost my appetite. I think I’ll just head back home.”

Before Ever could get up, Jax used telekinesis to force him to sit back down.

“Wait,” Jax whispered. “How are you holding up? So many things have happened to you in the past several days. I hope you’re doing better now.”

Ever appeared to be taken aback. “Hanging in there. Thanks for asking.”

As Jax looked into Ever’s eyes, he remembered Javier. The two almost looked the same. It was still strange to think he was gone under horrible circumstances.

“Listen, Ever,” Jax said, his voice lowering. “Your father was a good man. He taught me a lot about what I know today. If he didn’t care so much about his family, then he probably would’ve been Grand President instead of me. And now, you hold possibly the most important Founding Power. Your soul protects the original Ritual, the book that holds the source of our powers.”

“I don’t understand,” Ever said, his eyes giving off a haunted look.

“Don’t flip out after I say this. Saiden, you, and me inherited the power of Sol Alpha’s three Founders,” Jax explained. “If anyone else obtains even one of them, it would spell disaster for the entire world.”

Ever held back a laugh. “I think you need to mellow out.”

“I’m serious.”

An icy chill suddenly pierced through the air. With a puzzled face, Jax looked around and saw the restaurant workers standing motionless.

“What the hell?” Jax shouted, his jaw tightening.

He had little time to react as bolts of red lightning sent him and Ever flying against a wall.

Jax heard a sinister laugh as he regained his composure. Pain surged through his body like hot needles.

“So we meet at last, Grand President,” a familiar voice gloated. “Shall we begin?”

Dean Pirate stood before Jax and Ever, his hands crackling with red electricity and his eyes glowing with red light.

Jax clenched his fist. “So you’re behind all this. You led me to a trap. How did you manage to get your powers?”

Dean Pirate grinned. “That is none of your concern,” he said, shifting his gaze at Ever. “I’m glad to run into both of you tonight. I was only planning on killing you, but I’ll gladly take this brat’s life too.”

Jax laughed. “You seriously think you can take on the two of us? Is this a joke?”

Dean Pirate scoffed. “I absolutely do. After all, I was the one who killed Javier.”

Jax heard Ever scream. “You bastard! It was you?! You killed my father?!”

Without hesitating, Ever shot a powerful beam of white light at Dean Pirate’s chest. After that direct hit, Jax was sure that he was dead.

But he was wrong. Dean Pirate was still standing. His eyes glowed with red light as he blasted Ever with a barrage of scarlet electricity.

“Stop that at once!” Jax yelled, rushing at Dean Pirate. He focused his energy and blasted the dean with white lightning, Sol Alpha’s most powerful attack.

Dean Pirate screamed as Jax’s lightning electrified his body, forcing him to stop his attacks on Ever, who was bleeding all over his body.

“Argh!” Dean Pirate grunted, coughing up blood. “You’re going to pay for that, insolent fool.” Dean Pirate turned his sight back to Ever and prepared his hands to fire another round of red lightning.

But before Dean Pirate could launch a hit, Jax summoned his Founding Power to multiply his body into four identical copies. One of Jax’s bodies ran in front of Ever and took the blast of electricity before disintegrating into ash.

“No!” Dean Pirate yelled. “Get the hell of my way!”

The original Jax yelled. “I don’t think so!”

All three remaining Jax clones aimed their glowing hands at Dean Pirate, focusing their powers for a combined attack.

Using their full power, the Jax clones blanketed Dean Pirate with a web of lightning. The sheer impact would have killed any normal human being on contact.

Falling to his knees, Dean Pirate’s body was nearly burnt to a crisp. He gasped for air as he waved his hands to surrender.

“I must say,” Dean Pirate coughed, “I underestimated your strength. How foolish of me. Damn it.”

Jax’s bodies returned to a singular one as he approached the fallen dean.

“Just who the hell are you really?” Jax asked, his hands still crackling with electricity. “You’re coming with me.”

The dean flashed a half-defeated smile. “Not a chance, boy. Goodbye for now.”

With his left hand, Dean Pirate shot a final red bolt at Ever, causing Jax to lose focus on the task at hand. Instead of taking Dean Pirate into custody, he instead redirected his energy to protect Ever. Using telekinesis, Jax deflected the red bolt away from him.

By the time Jax was ready to strike Dean Pirate, he had already disappeared into black smoke.

“Damn that bastard!” Jax yelled.

The Grand President ran over to Ever, who was still bleeding all over. Summoning all his power, Jax covered him with a healing light. Ever’s wounds from Dean Pirate’s electric attack disappeared in an instant.

Then Jax unleashed one more wave of light that engulfed the entire food court. The frozen workers, as well as the damage done to the area during the fight, turned back to normal.

Depleted of energy from the fight, Jax sat back down in a slump. “Are you okay, Ever?” Jax asked, huffing. “That was a close call. I’m wiped out.”

Despite the fear and anger in Ever’s eyes, he nodded. “That son of a bitch killed my father. I can’t believe he got away.”

Jax clenched his fist. He knew it was against Sol Alpha’s principles to want revenge, but the fight with Dean Pirate sparked a vengeful flame inside him. Still, he had to tone it down so as not to influence Ever.

“What now?” Ever asked Jax. “The fundraiser event. We’ll be vulnerable to attack if he decides to show up.”

“That madman won’t be able to recover from our fight so easily,” Jax reassured Ever. “I want you and the others to continue the fundraiser. I don’t want the public asking too many questions. Continue as normal.”

“But if he shows up-.”

“He won’t. You saw the damage I did to him. It’s impossible.”

Ever chuckled. “And people say I’m cocky.”

As soon as none of the restaurant workers turned their backs, Jax tossed a hundred dollar tip on the table before using the last of his energy to teleport himself and Ever to the front of the Chapter House.

“Home sweet home,” Jax sighed in relief. “I’m going to head up to the alumni guest room to recover. Best of luck tomorrow night at the fundraiser.”

“Good night, Jax,” Ever nodded, before teleporting away.

After Jax spoke with Andrew and Josh to catch them up on what happened, Jax settled into the alumni guest room. He stared through the window and watched the starlit night sky as his mind raced with questions.

That power Dean Pirate had. It’s on the same level as mine. It took nearly everything I had to inflict damage on him.

Could it be that he's a member of another organization only known by the High Council?

Jax shuddered at the thought.

No. There has to be another explanation.

A disgruntled alum maybe. Virtually unheard of, but that had to be it.

I refuse to believe the alternative.

The other organization has to be just an old legend.

THE BENEFACTOR

Damaged almost beyond recognition, the Benefactor crawled back to a chair inside his dark, musty warehouse.

Unable to hold the Dean Pirate transformation any longer, he turned back into his original appearance of an old man. Despite transforming, he retained the intense burns dealt by Jax Honoramor.

How could this happen? How could those youngsters be able to stand up against me? It's just not possible.

The Benefactor levitated a half-empty jar of legacy blood over to his table. He had wasted so much of his dwindling supply powering up the Masked Man and himself for two failed missions.

I may have lost this round, but my patience is infinite. It's now up to my incompetent servant to finish them at the fundraiser.

“Sir,” the Masked Man said, just outside the warehouse. “Were you successful in killing off the Grand President?”

Speak of the devil.

As the Masked Man walked inside, the Benefactor stretched the truth. “Let’s just say the so-called Grand President won’t be attending the fundraiser. I wasn’t able to kill him, but I exhausted him from his powers. You should be able to handle the students with no trouble.”

“That is great news, sir.”

The Benefactor gestured for the Masked Man to come forward. “I have a gift for you for tomorrow night. Drink the last of the legacy blood. I want to make sure they all suffer helplessly.”

“Sir, this is the last of your legacy blood. Are you sure I can take it?”

“You and you alone must finish the task. I have to stay here and work on finishing granting your wish. You *do* want your powers to become *permanent*, don’t you? I want the same thing.”

The Masked Man nodded. Lifting just the bottom portion of his mask, he drank the rest of the blood harvested from the legacy triplets. As he did so, tears of joy flowed down his face while his eyes glowed with red light. “I look forward to it. I never doubted you for a second.”

The Benefactor smiled with an air of victory.

Yes, my pawn. Drink it all up. The lion’s den awaits you.

“Go home and prepare, my friend,” the Benefactor said. “Javier’s son must die at your hands. There can be no mishaps this time.”

The Masked Man nodded with gratitude after he finished drinking the jar of blood. “Good night, sir.”

After the Masked Man teleported home, the Benefactor waited a few minutes before he levitated up to the ceiling and brought down a small black chest he had hidden earlier.

Inside the chest, there was another full jar of legacy blood. He kept it secret for an emergency.

The Benefactor poured half of the blood into a teacup and drank it, savoring its metallic flavor while the power it contained restored his damaged body and energy.

Tomorrow night will be quite the show. Sol Alpha will finally be nothing but a memory.

Once my servant takes Javier’s powers, I will take it from him.

But in case he fails, I must prepare for the worst.

Carrying the last of the legacy blood, the Benefactor teleported to an abandoned cemetery hidden in a remote forest. He was the only one alive who knew about it.

A red casket waited for the Benefactor, one that he’d been saving for this occasion.

The Benefactor laughed under the night sky as he poured the remaining legacy blood into the casket. The casket glowed with red light as it absorbed the blood’s power.

Either way, I will win.

And the world shall experience true Justice.

The Benefactor shattered the empty jar against a tree after he closed the casket for the night. It would be ready for him should his servant fail.

With no one that might have heard him for miles, the Benefactor's sinister laugh filled the night sky.

Prepare yourself, Sol Alpha.

EVER CALAVERO

It was the night of the fundraiser.

Ever, Preston, Andrew, and Josh each wore a white tuxedo, chatting with wealthy alumni checking into the event.

The outdoor venue was set with red tables adorned with white roses. Bright lights colored with a warm gold tint illuminated the stage and the surrounding area.

After stepping off a silver limousine, a woman wearing a fur coat approached Ever and gave him a hug. She had long, black hair and determined eyes.

Ever smiled and hugged her back. "I'm glad you came tonight, Jermaine."

"Cousin Ever," Jermaine smiled. "Good to see you. It's been such a long time. How is your father doing?"

Jermaine's question stung Ever, but he had to maintain his composure. He twisted his words to keep her occupied.

“My family is doing well. You graduated a couple of years ago, right?”

“Yes. It feels like ages ago already.” Jermaine took Ever’s hand tightly. “Gosh. You’re already so involved and it’s only just the start of the semester. I’m so excited for you.”

Ever nodded. “I’m glad that I ended up here. Please have a seat and enjoy the dinner. The chefs have prepared salmon and steak for everyone.”

“That sounds heavenly.” Jermaine smiled and walked over to her seat as the smell of roasted meat filled the evening air.

Before long, there were over a hundred people in attendance, filling the air with lively chatter and cigarette smoke. Preston was busy collecting donation checks and tallying up the total.

Ever nudged Andrew on the shoulder while no one was looking. “Where were all the side dishes that should’ve come before the main courses? This is all wrong.”

Andrew chuckled. “I barely had time to plan, Mr. Fancy Pants. Besides, the main dish is the most important part.”

Josh joined the conversation with a grin. “He’s right.”

Ever sighed. “For Pete’s sake, never mind.”

Noticing a brief flash of light from behind the red stage curtains, Ever went to look.

Behind the curtains was Jax Honoramor, wearing a white tuxedo. His eyes still sunken, he looked like he barely recovered from last night's encounter.

Ever scolded the Grand President. "Jax, you shouldn't be here. Take tonight off to rest."

Jax brushed off Ever's comment. "I'll be fine. If I'm this badly beat up, then Pirate is probably in worse condition. Saiden will not make it tonight."

Ever brought Jax over to where the others were sitting, at a table near the stage.

"Grand President," Andrew greeted Jax. "You don't look too well."

Jax gave Andrew a dirty look. "I know that. Like I told Ever, I'll be fine. I'm going to introduce you three during the thank you speech. You'll still have the spotlight."

A few professors took their seat behind the Sol Alpha table. Among those professors was Professor Deus, who rolled his wheelchair over close to Jax.

Andrew waved hello to his uncle. "Hi, Uncle Karl. Thanks for coming."

Professor Deus beamed, fixing his black suit and tie. "What a magnificent turnout. I am so glad that you're not like the other fraternities. It would have been a shame to call off this event."

The four Brothers nodded and smiled.

"Thank you, Professor," Ever said. "Now, if you'll excuse us, we're going up to the stage now. Andrew's speech is about to begin."

"Right. Good luck, gentlemen."

After Jax, Preston, Ever, Andrew, and Josh went up the stage, the sea of chit chat faded into attentive eagerness.

Jax took the microphone to greet the audience. “Thank you all for coming tonight to support Stone University’s mission to create tomorrow’s leaders. My name is Jax Honoramor of Sol Alpha Fraternity’s national leadership, stepping in for Dean Benjamin Beacham. Unfortunately, he had a family emergency to attend to so he couldn’t make it. I’m here to introduce some of the most promising students who volunteered to make sure this annual event continued as scheduled. Please welcome Andrew Deus, Joshua Credenza, and Ever Calavero!”

The crowd clapped as Andrew took the stand after Jax stepped aside.

Andrew cleared his throat. “Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Like Mr. Honoramor said, we’re all glad you all made it out today.”

Reading from a cue card, Andrew revealed the initial amount they’ve raised so far. “Together, you’ve all raised enough money to cover half of all student fees this year. That’s amazing. Thank you all. On behalf of my Brothers and fellow students, we are grateful for all of your help.”

The crowd gave a tremendous applause.

Once the cheering died down, the air suddenly turned cold and all the lights were out. The alumni attendees became frozen in their seats. No one

could move their bodies except for the Sol Alpha Brothers.

Ever sensed a dark presence powering up near him.

“Damn it.” Andrew gulped and grinned. “What’s going on?”

“Dean Pirate,” Jax whispered. “Show yourself, bastard.”

Before he had a chance to react, Jax was blasted with a beam of red light. It charred his white suit and made him fall off the stage with a thud.

A chilling voice pierced the air. “I only want one thing. If you cooperate, no one has to get hurt any longer.”

Preston and Josh used their powers to summon a floating orb of white light in the sky so they could see.

When the light shone on Jax’s attacker, Ever couldn’t believe his eyes.

Standing up from his wheelchair, Professor Karl Deus flashed a menacing smile at the Brothers. “Hand over Javier’s powers, Ever. This won’t be like how it was on your precious private jet.”

Professor Deus aimed his hand at his wheelchair and used telekinesis to send it to the sky before destroying it with red lightning.

“It’s so good to finally be free from that damn thing,” Professor Deus snarled. “And this time, I know it’s going to be forever.”

Jax screamed at the deranged professor, unable to use his powers. “You’re going to regret this!” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a loaded pistol and aimed it at Professor Deus.

“Oh please,” Professor Deus chuckled, stealing the pistol from Jax’s hand with telekinesis. “It’s too late now, Grand President. This is what you all get for not initiating me all those years ago. That damn Javier thought I’d lost my memories of Sol Alpha, but I was able to remember.”

Jax raised both his hands. “What are you saying?”

“Javier and I were part of the same recruitment cohort,” Professor Deus explained. “But the Fraternity rejected me after I had failed a test of character in the Astral World. They kicked me away as someone who was impure of heart. Those bastards never gave me a second chance. Now you’re going to pay for all these years you made me wait. You all have healing powers, but you’ve never bothered to heal me? How cruel was that?!”

“That was before I became Grand President. I had no part in that.”

“Even so, you still wear those cursed letters.” Professor Deus charged his hands with crackling red lightning. “Now I’ve become more powerful than all of you.”

Adrenaline surged through Ever’s blood as he remembered his father’s bloody hand. He had to do something, and fast or his Brothers would be the next to die.

As Professor Deus fired a web of red lightning at him and his Brothers, Ever's instincts kicked in.

With his eyes illuminated with white and gold light, Ever summoned lightning in his hands and blasted the professor with it.

As the red and white electric forces collided, Ever's attack was being pushed back. Professor Deus's red eyes glowed more violently as he continuously fired red lightning. "You're just a novice, Everson! You can't possibly match me!"

Andrew, Josh, and Preston stood beside Ever. The three of them raised their hands as their eyes glowed with white light.

"Go, Ever," Andrew threatened. "We're right beside you, Brother."

Professor Deus uttered a low gasp. "Stay out of this, nephew! My quarrel is with them!"

Andrew ignored his uncle. "Sorry, Teach. I'm with them."

His eyes flaring, Professor Deus increased the intensity of his attack. "You insolent brat!"

The three Brothers fired beams of combined white light that amplified Ever's attack. As their powers exceeded Professor Deus, Ever's lightning pierced through and overpowered him. The professor screamed as the lightning scorched every part of his body.

"I was so close," the professor muttered before collapsing to the ground in shocked disbelief. "Damn you, Sol Alpha. Curse you all to hell."

A white blur passed Ever. It was Jax taking back his pistol and aiming it at Professor Deus. “Jackpot, asshole,” he said.

“No, wait!” Ever yelled. “It’s not his fault! There’s something I’d like to say first!”

Professor Deus coughed and uttered a weak laugh. “Do it, Jax. Just end me already. I’ve fallen so low already. I can’t possibly go on anymore.”

Ever’s eyes flashed with white light as he telekinetically stole the gun from Jax’s hand.

Jax glared at Ever. “What the hell do you think you’re doing? He’s too dangerous to leave like this.”

Ever handed the gun to Andrew before kneeling down beside Professor Deus. His father died by this madman’s hand, but he knew that Javier wouldn’t be proud of him if he retaliated in violence.

Against his every instinct and murderous desire to get revenge, Ever spoke to Professor Deus with a calm voice.

“I’m sorry about what happened between you and my father. I really am.”

Professor Deus couldn’t look at Ever as his face teared up. “Argh. I don’t deserve this. You are a better man than Javier.”

Ever’s eyes glowed with white light as he placed his hands on the professor’s shoulder. In just seconds, Ever’s healing power spread throughout his body and erased all of his wounds.

“This is what my father would have wanted. Please stand up,” Ever said with unshakeable confidence. “I think it worked this time.”

“This time?” Professor Deus gulped. “What?”

Andrew looked at his uncle with a frown. “I’ve tried repeatedly to heal you, but it’s never worked. Each time I failed, I had to erase my attempts from your memory. I’m sorry.”

“Is that so?”

Andrew and Ever smiled as Professor Deus slowly stood up to his full height. Tears flowed down his face as he gave both Brothers a hug.

“I can’t believe it. I’m really standing. My powers are gone, but I’m still up,” the professor said as he closed his tearful eyes. “Thank you all.”

Preston and Josh had astonished looks on their faces.

With his mouth wide open, Jax apologized to Professor Deus. “If it wasn’t for Ever, I would have already sent you to the Other Side. I’m so sorry.”

Professor Deus nodded, shaking Jax’s hand. “I understand, but my behavior was despicable and unbecoming of a professor.”

“Indeed,” Jax said, his eyes flashing with white light as he looked directly into the professor’s eyes. “But I’m afraid you’re going to have to forget all this.”

Andrew turned to Jax. “Is that really necessary? Erasing his memories?”

Jax frowned. "As much as I hate to admit it, Sol Alpha has caused him pain. Let your uncle live normally from now on."

Andrew nodded. "That would be for the best. Thank you, sir."

After Jax erased Professor Deus' memories, the frozen crowd of alumni returned to normal, humble bragging amongst themselves about how much money they had given.

The night continued on as normal, with Andrew wowing the crowd with his voice and Josh raising additional funds by auctioning off his paintings.

Once all the guests went home, Professor Deus took Ever and Andrew aside and spoke to them. "Listen, guys. I don't know why, but I feel so good right now. Did something happen? Did you put something in the food?"

Ever and Andrew exchanged glances. Ever tried his best not to laugh.

"You're *complaining* about feeling good?" Ever asked. "Seriously? You academic types are sure hard to please."

"Well, not really. It's difficult to explain. I have no words." The professor sighed. "I'm just going to cancel class for a month. I need some time to myself."

"Not a bad idea, Uncle Karl," Andrew agreed. "I could use the break as well."

"The semester barely started, idiot," Professor Deus cracked. "Anyway, I will see you gentlemen in a month."

After Professor Deus left, the Sol Alphas gathered in a circle.

Jax grabbed Ever's shoulder tightly. "I am sure glad you stopped me from doing something I'd regret. Ever, I am in your debt. Thank you."

Ever nodded. "It was nothing, Jax. I didn't think you'd actually do it, but I had to make sure."

"Oh, really?"

"Maybe."

Jax and Ever laughed.

Andrew snapped his finger. "Enough talk. Can we just go hit up a diner? I'm starving and we didn't even get to eat any of the catering."

"Yup. And Ever's paying," Preston chimed.

Ever rolled his eyes and laughed.

"Damn it. Fine. Just this once."

AFTERMATH

(The Benefactor)

Ever's cousin Jermaine stepped into her limousine with a disgruntled frown on her face.

What a disappointment you were, Karl Deus. What a shameful, pitiful attempt. I will need to find another servant to carry out my plans.

I thought the hatred you have for Sol Alpha would surely let you defeat them.

As soon as the limousine was far away from campus, Jermaine told the driver to stop and pull over at an empty parking lot.

The driver appeared puzzled and worried. "Miss Jermaine? What seems to be the matter? Would you like to stop at a hotel for the night or should I drop you off directly home?"

After stepping outside the limousine, Jermaine opened the driver's door and grabbed the driver's neck. She snapped it like a toothpick before he could

scream for help. Then she opened the trunk and tossed his body inside.

Oh well. There is always a backup plan.

As Jermaine's eyes glowed red, she transformed.

She turned back into the Benefactor, the appearance of a frail old man.

Next to the driver's dead body was the original Jermaine's corpse, rotting with flies. He had killed her earlier and stashed her here.

The Benefactor placed a fake suicide note on top of Jermaine's corpse. It said that she was glad to have made a difference to the university before she died.

Ah yes, the noble millionaire who tragically died giving up her vast fortune. What a sad story. Ever will be so sad.

Leaving the dead bodies in the limousine, the Benefactor teleported to the abandoned graveyard where he had prepared the red casket earlier.

After putting on a black suit and a black tie, the Benefactor stepped inside the casket. Using telekinesis, he buried himself in the cold ground.

The casket, infused with the powers of legacy blood, put the Benefactor into a deep sleep.

As he drifted off into slumber, the Benefactor seethed with anger.

This isn't over yet, Sol Alpha.

The world will know Justice.

They will know Umbra Omega.

-

(Ever Calavero)

The morning after the fundraiser, Ever woke up feeling refreshed and ready to go.

He found Preston waiting in his dining room, eating a plate of scrambled eggs and waffles.

“Ready to go to class?” Preston asked.

Ever poured himself a cup of black coffee. “Actually, Professor Deus cancelled class for a bit. You won’t be needed for a bit.”

“Damn,” Preston chuckled. “Well, that’s good for you, but I happen to enjoy driving that car of yours around.”

“That thing? The Rolls? Whatever. Go ahead and keep it. I’ll just teleport to campus from now on.”

Preston nearly choked on his food. “What? Are you kidding?”

“Nope. And I’ve decided I’m going to move into the Chapter House. It’ll be groovy.”

There was a knock on Ever’s door. When he opened it, Grand President Jax and Councilmember Saiden stepped inside.

Saiden gave Ever a dirty look before bursting into laughter. “Jax told me about how you handled Professor Deus. Well done. Not bad for a sheltered legacy.”

Ever’s eyes flashed with light as he shocked Saiden with a small jolt of electricity. “You were of enormous help,” he said with sarcasm. “I guess your campaign is more important than the Fraternity, huh?”

Saiden gritted his teeth. “Watch your tongue. I may have underestimated the threat a bit, but I knew

you guys could handle it. Besides, I'm over 70% in the polls now. I should win this easily."

"Spoken like a true politician." Jax nodded and laughed. "Anyhow, there's something Saiden and I agreed to ask you about."

Ever raised an eyebrow. "Ask away."

Jax extended his hand to Ever. "Saiden and I want to formally appoint you as the third member of the High Council. Complete our trio and take your father's place. You already have his powers, anyway. What do you say?"

Preston nearly choked on his food again. "High Councilmember?! But he's only a student!"

Jax dismissed Preston's comments. "He's more than capable of handling Javier's powers. He's proven it already."

Turning back to Ever, Jax repeated his offer. "So what do you say, Ever? Do you accept this new responsibility?"

Ever shook Jax's hand with a firm grasp.

"I'd be honored."

"Welcome to the High Council, Ever Calavero."

AFTERWORD

If you've enjoyed this book, please consider leaving a review on Amazon.

Every review helps me with my goal of giving back to the community in the form of scholarships and academic incentives.

I am available to respond to messages on all my social media pages. (@MrJacobVeritas)

Thank you very much!

Warm wishes,
Jacob Veritas

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House of Sol Alpha Series

Part One – The Book of Micah

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jacob Veritas is an urban fantasy author and digital editor.

He earned his Honors Bachelor of Science in TV, Film, & New Media from San Diego State University. He is a proud Aztec For Life.

During his time there, Jacob is (and will always be) an active member of Sigma Nu and Order of Omega. Jacob describes his writing style as fast-paced and reminiscent of video games. His mission is to restore people's love of reading, destroyed by boring, sleep-inducing academic writing.

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