

G O D
A NOVEL
BY DARÍO CARDONA

DRAFT ONE:
DEVELOPED TEXT (BASIC)

APRIL 2014

SHADDAI is one of the Jewish names for God,
Associated with line number 12 of the DNA coding system.

12 is reduced to 3,

The third line of DNA.

All work together to become agents of change.

The quietude of a particle represents chaos,

The evolution leads to the movement,

And the movement leads to an end

Or is reduced to its minimum,

As it was in the beginning.

The point 0, God.

PART ONE

1

The cityscape of New York lay clothed in black. The metallic grey of the buildings that once dominated the landscape and illuminated the streets at night with its endless

network of gridded windows was now interrupted by the intermittent flashes of scattered fires. Smoke gushed from the tip of its two tallest towers like incense sticks set alight, plunging the already chaotic city into screaming terror. In the streets directly below, people ran around like scattered ants, desperately trying to escape the dense fog of thick, white powder that surrounded them on all sides. Their faces white, as though bathed in talc, they desperately covered their noses and mouths with their shirts or bags in an effort to breathe. Their eyes watering and with blood trickling out from under their noses and the corners of their mouths, the unified screams of panic were interrupted by retching coughs as the weakest doubled over and tried to spit what their lungs were rejecting. Disorientated and half blind, unable to see the ground beneath their feet, they ran on, colliding into equally desperate souls or abandoned cars. From amidst the fresh waves of white ash that devoured each boulevard, the stationary white lights of cell phones could be seen: even amidst this inferno, there were those that felt the urge to record the panic and death that lay around them.

Suddenly, a new tide of panic seemed to fill the air. From the dark of the billowing smoke, a heavy shadow emerged. Plummeting to the ground at full speed, it touched the earth and soared back up again. The people below came to a standstill, falsely assured that their cover of white smoke would protect them from any further danger. Covering their eyes in a bid to see what was happening, they looked up at the night sky. The purer winds higher up in the atmosphere were separating the curtains of fog and dust, revealing the swirling motions of six gigantic shadows as they circled around the charred remains of the World Trade Centre. The shadows solidified and took shape to form six horses, their riotous manes whipping the air, steered by six faceless riders. Moving as one body, they flew over the space in which the towers had once stood.

Meandering in the darkness with the leaden glow of pure, black vinyl, the manes of the six horses began to wrap themselves around what remained of the two buildings. Each strand propelled itself violently into the mess of debris, tearing apart whatever dead body it came across to reach at and suck upon the souls of the dead. Screams of terror rang out across the stilled air as the now incinerated passengers of American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines 175 felt the last of their remains merge with the manes of the unfathomable beasts and disappear into blackness.

Infusing the last soul that could be found in the wreckage of the twinned towers, the horses dispersed, scattering through a city that, under the light of such inexplicable events, had transformed into another. Finding ample bodies convulsing or already dead, the horsemen descended, looking on as their horses' manes sucked up whatever souls now lay bare.

Not content with having taken the souls of the fallen, the shadowed horses signalled a need to hunt the living. Given a nod from each of their riders, they galloped through corridors and crashed through the walls of the surrounding buildings, jumping like snakes upon whatever human lay nearby. A new wave of terror now surged through the city as the echoes of fresh victims rung out like an unheeded siren.

A seventh rider, more magnificent and deadly now descended from the clouds and stood above the city. The six riders instantly pulled away from their victims and turned their attention towards him. Without any further movement, they offered a silent martial salute.

The seventh horseman nodded and suddenly took off, swiftly followed by his six soldiers. Descending upon a large apartment building adjacent to Mount Sinai Hospital,

the horses and their riders frantically looked through the windows of each floor, searching anxiously for something.

On the seventh floor, in a previously prepped bedroom, Morgan Kaan cried out in agony as the baby inside her struggled to get out. Two midwives, flanking her on either side, glanced over at each other anxiously, as Morgan's shrieks intensified. The pain she was going through was like nothing they had ever seen. Morgan writhed and kicked as what felt like explosions in her abdomen reached a level of numbing torture – the torment would not let up, did not increase or decrease but stayed complete and total. A trickle of blood ran down her open legs, forming a black, muddy puddle. The nurses, trying to ignore the fresh red stain and the thick gush of blood that had been released, continued to hold her and cry out to her to keep on pushing.

From the back of the room, Morgan's partner continued to film the birth. His brow wet with sweat and with his hand trembling uncontrollably, he tried to capture what he could, not knowing that his reel of unstable white lights and grey coloured walls would never be seen by anyone.

Suddenly, with a resounding echo of powerful sucking, the blood that Morgan had lost, withdrew, re-entering the body from which it had come.

In that same instance, the lights of the building flashed out. From outside they could hear cries of blind panic, doors opening and being slammed shut and the footfall of humans running down hallways trying to escape. The nurses, trying to resist the urge to leave Morgan and see what was happening, continued with their roles, and calming her down, urged her to keep on pushing.

Oblivious to the disasters that were unfolding outside, Morgan's partner continued filming, closing in on the blood-stained bedsheets and Morgan's matted hair. So excited that he barely registered the death-like paleness of his wife's face, he murmured songs in a cheerful tone whilst the nurses continued to drag her through the birth.

Outside the building, the screams were getting louder as a growing crowd of spectators gathered from across the street and watched aghast. For even though everything that had happened on this day had already exceeded the natural order of things, the presence of six riders made of shadow and soot caused a further blanket of horrified surprise to fall upon anyone whose gazes they drew.

The colossal horses were now breathing hard: they had found what they sought. Their jet black forelocks unfurled from their manes, surrounding the glass encased apartment building like the silk-threads of a caterpillar's glands. After a few seconds, the strands burst through the windows, causing the shattered pieces to crash to the ground. From inside the building, crowds begin to run as they try to find refuge. But there is no escape: the threads of hair wrap themselves around legs, necks, heads and torsos, dragging each every body in its path like endless chords in motion. Dragging them out of the building and blowing up walls of concrete and glass, it leaves them suspended in mid-air for a few precious moments before throwing them down onto the roads below.

Inside the makeshift birthing room, everyone was breathless and silent as Morgan's screams descended into a muffled moan. Aware that something was taking place outside but not daring to move away, the nurses continued to wipe the sweat from her brow and wipe the blood from her legs, whilst her partner continued to record what he could stomach.

"It's here!" cried one of the nurses, as the head of the baby appeared.

The walls suddenly began to shake – as though angered at her words. Inflamed, they shook a second time, causing bits of concrete from the walls and ceilings to fall to the floor.

Terrified, Morgan held on to the railings of the bed and looked around. Disorientated, her partner picked up the camera and dusting it off, filmed the crumbling façade for a single moment before turning to see if everyone was ok. Rushing over to Morgan's side and relieved to see she was unhurt, he took her by the hand. As he went to kiss it, a strand of thick vine-like black hair crashed through the outer wall and wrapping itself around him, pulled him away. His face, blank with surprise, turned white as he was pulled back out into the night air and thrown out into the darkness. Without a scream, he vanished into the night, his body crushed upon landing.

Screaming, the nurses and Morgan stay rooted to the spot, unable to move or think. A second invasion of multiple black vines crashed into the room and grabbing the nurses by the legs, dragged them out. They tried in vain to cling to whatever their fingers could grasp, but were flung out like paper dolls to their deaths.

Alone in the room, Morgan screamed – but whether from fear or pain she hardly knew. The bump inside her was making its way to the crevice between her legs, hot and humid. In one glorious moment, she was suddenly empty – as though the pain had simply fallen out of her. A shrill, high-pitched cry followed, cutting the night in two. She took the hot, screaming bulge with both hands and embracing it, held it close to her chest in an effort to calm its trembling limbs.

On hearing the cry, the six riders their horses made a series of short, violent movements as if they were puppets whose strings were suddenly being jostled by an unwanted master.

Through the hole in the wall of the bedroom, a particularly thick strand of hair entered, slowly, and assuming the position of a cobra about to attack, stood before Morgan and her baby.

Without knowing how, Morgan fell from her bed and hurriedly crawled to the furthest corner of the room, her daughter wrapped safely in her arms. The strand of hair followed her and with a deafening hiss as though about to attack, raised itself. But just as it was about to pounce it suddenly withdrew as though it had been pulled away, and disappeared into the night sky.

Clambering to her feet, Morgan made her way to the hole in the wall to see what was happening outside. She stood, her blood-stained nightgown flapping against the wind, gripping onto her daughter, as her eyes took in a sight they could not fathom.

Filling the vast expanse of sky above, spectral, wingless beings were shooting down towards the faceless riders and lighting up like fireflies on contact. Unending swarms of these strange, shadowed creatures descended, enveloping the riders and the horses completely. As they sparked and lit up, their reflected forms strengthened and each took the shape of an elderly albino, whose wrinkled skins fused together, forging an elastic mass that imprisoned the riders and their beasts. The Lumens* had arrived.

The great mass of the Lumens' skin surrounded the six riders like a large sheet of fleshy canvass, barring their way and tethering them to a corner of the room. Unstable, it began to tremble as it struggled to contain the force now at its centre. Cracks began to appear in the lines of its folds as its cells buckled and strained. The rider, seeing its opportunity, reared his horse, both uniting in revolt, and like a knife, stabbed their way through the incredible wall of luminous skin. The cut was swift and clean: they watched for

an instant as the wound spread across the entire mass like a ray of yellow blood flooding once invisible veins.

The Lumen separated, causing the riders and their horses to fall to the ground with the slow, rocking motion of feathers falling through the air.

Spurred on by the coming of what they had deemed to be the apocalyptic end, the Lumen had descended to protect a course of events that had already begun, and which was destined to alter the history of all mankind.

Defeated at this first hurdle, their bodies floated like dying embers to the floor until they faded into nothingness. But the war was only just beginning.

Bypassing the Lumen, the swirling mane of the seventh rider crashed into the room where Morgan stood, knocking her onto her back. Blank of all thoughts or words, she watched transfixed as the mane separated itself into three strands and braided itself into a single plait that glistened like a knife in the dark.

As the mane finished plaiting itself, the seventh rider enveloped itself in a dense fog which emitted from its core a series of electrical sparks. Undergoing a willed transmutation, he forged himself to his horse's mane and travelled like a formless mist into the room where Morgan now lay. Resuming a more human scale of his original form, he stood before Morgan and her child. Morgan shook her head, sobbing, whilst her daughter screamed and wailed.

The rider stood still as thick, long hairs began to sprout from his back. Moving with speed and thickening with each second, they pointed towards Morgan and the newborn as though hungry to consume them both. Adding themselves to the braided hair of the horses mane, they quickly slid across the floor and wrapped themselves around the baby's neck. Wrenching her from Morgan's arms, they squeezed in an attempt to strangle the newborn.

Screaming, the baby opened her eyes. Attracted by the deep blackness of her pupils, one of the strands loosened its hold, and as though curious, broke free from the braid to tap the baby's right pupil. Instantly, the pupil turned white. Spreading like bacteria, the pigment transformed the braid that had touched it into a glowing white and reached the rider in just a few seconds. Confused, the rider tried to take a step back in an attempt to flee, before he could even lift his leg, exploded into a column of white dust and crystal powder that scattered across the room.

Too bewildered to even scream, Morgan leapt forward to catch her baby as the rest of the braid exploded into white nothingness.

Clutching her crying daughter to her, Morgan sat and rocked her to and fro. "Lauranne," she cried, relieved enough to let the tears fall from her eyes. "Lauranne...is your name, my daughter...and you have saved us."

2

They glide under the cover of the dark night. With each step they take, there is a rustle and murmur of leaves as the black feathers of their tunics brush against the floor. Scarcely speaking, any words they utter are whispered, as though each syllable demands that an immediate silence follow. High above them, the moon emerged from its chosen hideout of passing clouds, instantly illuminating their bald white, misshapen heads. Beneath their bristling tunics, small sparks flashed and flickered through their translucent skins, like lights being turned on and off in quick succession. The Talantines had arrived.

Eve, confined by the perimeters of the one-room wooden shack, lay helpless, her back against a roughly cleaved wall. Her dark skin mingled with the wood it now touches: both were dry, old and uneven. She breathed in calm, even, bouts, even though all around her, through the cracks of the wooden walls, she could see shadows, swaying, indistinguishable and menacing.

Her reptilian, amber eyes opened wide and looked frantically from side to side as the whispers closed in. Her mouth was dry, as was her breathing. Grabbing the hem of her dress, she wrinkled the cloth as her fists clenched tight. A cold sweat ran up her spine and a thick and heavy sweat formed across her body as a tremor shuddered between her legs.

A sharp breeze whistled through the wooden planks of the house walls, causing a gush of air to blow across Eve's clammy forehead. Rocking her body from side to side she opened her mouth to scream, but no sound emerged. The house lay silent: only the imperceptible hiss of the wind could be heard. She opened her mouth again and closing

her eyes, gave a muffled gasp that shivered in the air like the faint tremors of an aborted cry.

Without warning they broke into the house, striding in through the unlocked door. Eve grimaced, her expression blank: there was no hint of violence or fear on her face, although her heart was beating so fast it became a murmur. Bending over, she brought her face to her knees and struggling, stood up to face the figures that now stood before her. The black cloaked beings stayed immobile, their bald heads and frozen looks inspecting her in turn. Their pale faces looked upon hers eagerly, as if Eve was a pool of water from which they longed to drink but were unsure of whether or not it was safe to do so.

Eve began to shake uncontrollably and instinctively covered her belly: her pregnant state demanding protection.

One of the large Talantine slowly approached Eve and reached out his hand. But as his grey, pale fingers neared her form, they suddenly stopped to hover in the air.

Eve looked up, numbed fear stamped across her face, wanting but unable to scream. She felt a sudden shudder erupt through her body like an earthquake as something burst open. Her legs were instantly soaked as a thick, organic smell covered the room and an avalanche of clear jelly-like liquid crashed to the floor, splashing against her ankles and calves: her amniotic sac had broken. Drying her hands against her dress, Eve tried to calm the tide of panic rising in her chest and breathed deeply, releasing each captured ball of air with a loud, ear-splitting groan.

“She is Eve,” declared the Talantine, as he grimly eyed the woman in front of him. “She is the first mother.”

The wind outside began to roar as if it too wanted to get inside the house. Eve slid to her knees and opened her legs wide as she could as she struggled to find a more comfortable position. Grabbing at the nearest chair, she climbed into it, her body instantly taking its shape.

The pale eyes of the leading Talantine began to glow. As Eve felt the first kick of pain, their black tunics rose in an invisible breeze. As Eve’s groans mutated into screams, the head Talantine approached her and bending down so that crisp, white lips were by her ear, began to whisper.

“As soon as he is born, he must die. He is the origin: the beginning. He will be the particle which once unleashed, will allow the genes that must not be to develop!”

Eve frantically shook her head and let loose a silent scream, her eyes widening with panicked horror as two Talantines marched forward and roughly taking her by the arms, forced her onto her back. Kicking out in pointless retaliation, she became mute as the Talantine violently grabbed her legs and pinned them down until they fell still.

Subdued and blinded by pain, the Talantines pushed the now silent Eve over to her side. Her naked back had malformed into an expanse of bubbling liquid: it was as though her skin had transformed into an ocean of burnt, slimy fluid. Grimacing, they held her down as a third Talantine approached and kneeling down, reached deep into Eve’s vertebrae to pull out a glistening balloon-like bag. Within its thinly-stretched uterine wall, lay a clear pool of amniotic fluid and the outline of a thick placenta, wrapped around the breathing body of a tiny foetus. A cluster of matted hair and a pair of wide, black eyes shone out at them from amidst the dense dark of the room.

Mustering all her strength, Eve screamed out loud as she was pushed once more onto her back and cried out, “No! Not him! Please! It is not him!” Trying desperately to break free of her captors, she lashed out, her hands and head shaking with new ferocity: but with her legs still pinned to the floor, she made little difference except to tire her

violated body yet further. A gaping void, and endless hole as though a precious organ had suddenly been knocked out of place began to fill her senses: only then did she realise her womb had been emptied.

The baby, still enveloped in its thick, translucent sac, was held up high by the Talantine, for all his companions to see. They stood to gaze up at it, a look of curiosity mingled with disgusted astonishment etched out on each of their faces. Fury blazed like fire through each of their veins, causing rivers of pale white light to emanate from beneath their dark feathered cloaks.)

Pulling the baby out from the once-safe confines of its sac, the Talantina proceeded to hang it from the nearest roof beam with its own umbilical cord. Pained by this unexpected tug to its body the baby screamed with all the fury of a confused newborn, its cry sharp enough to split the night in two and shatter eardrums.

Smiling, the tallest Talantine pulled out a silver dagger from beneath his black robe, and stepping towards the tiny, whimpering form of the child swinging before him, grabbed the child's head. He held it for a brief moment in the palm of his ice-cold hands as though it were a small pendant, before drawing an imaginary line across its neck. His companions smiled: some beheadings were a cause for celebration. But as he aligned the dagger with the baby's neck and lifted it to make the final cut, a sudden tremor seized the house and knocked him to the floor.

Uttering a scream of pure, distilled terror, Eve watched in horror as hundreds of arms and legs emerged from her body to fill all the space before her. Further limbs emerged and broke through the walls and ceiling of her shack, each vying to reach the Talantina: the old house, worn out by time, forged itself with Eve to form one singular body, each willing to fight to the death to save the child.

Attacking the Talantine from all sides, the conjoined limbs of the house and Eve twisted and crushed whatever lay in their paths. There was no escape route for the screeching Talantine as they found every path blocked by the vast expanse of trembling skin and wood. One by one, they fall unconscious to the floor, an indecipherable murmur escaping their lips before the last breath was taken.

Reaching up to the beam, one of the extended arms of the house cupped the crying baby and cautiously brought it back down to Eve whose face, strained and wrinkled beyond its own limits, was unrecognisable. The moment its body came into contact with that of its mother, the baby calmed down and breathing more easily, stopped crying.

All at once, the remaining limbs withdrew with a loud creak and re-forged the house from which they had stemmed. Eve, stood up and gazing over at the bodies of Talantine that lay strewn about her, prepared to leave.

Stepping outside into the calm night air, Eve looked down at her child. His large, wide eyes looked back at up at her, the full moon reflected in the circle of his pupils. She smiled, and allowing herself a precious moment of peace in his presence, observed with tenderness the tiny creature that had nearly died at the hands of dark forces for which she had no name.

Sighing happily, she took a step forwards.

A burst of dust blew up from the ground with a furious blast. Ten Talantine rose up from the ground a few feet from which Eve now stood. Screaming, she tries to run but is instantly surrounded on all sides. Locking her in a circle, the Talantine began to approach her slowly as she spun around helplessly. As though knowing they were in danger, the baby began to cry, his screams bankrupting the night.

From behind, the walls of the house began to shake and bend with terrifying force. Eve closed her eyes and clutched her child to her chest as tightly as she could without suffocating him. A sudden explosion was heard as the walls of the house separated, expanded and then fragments into a thousand dagger-like pieces. Rising high in the air, they lay suspended in mid-motion for a few seconds before forming a funnel that pointed straight to the hearts of each Talantine.

The Talantine, confused and bewildered, stared up at the menacing shards of wood, each piece reflected in their widened black eyes. The first Talantine to be attacked let loose a blood-curdling howl as linear cuts and blood clots formed over every inch of his skin. In quick succession, one by one, the Talantine were attacked and fell to the floor, each releasing a piercing howl in turn.

From amidst the fallen and kneeling Talantines, one Talantine rose to its feet and stood tall, unafraid of the howling cries and angry swirls of wind surrounding them all. Bearing an expression more frightening than all the rest, he wore a feathered tunic, different in colour and grandeur to those worn by the others who bowed their heads towards him as if in reverence. This was Bel, the fearsome leader of the Talantine, arriving to do what the others had failed to do and take the child for himself. With a screech that caused even the splintered wood now standing mid-air before him to shiver, he gave his command: "Take the life of Eva! And give me the origin!"

Upon his utterance of the last word, the already fragments pieces of the house shattered into a million pieces and flew into the bodies of the Talantine, killing them instantly.

Trembling, Eve stood where she was and gazed down at her body. But the lethal wooden spikes had not touched her, nor the baby that now lay quietly in her arms. Unaware that this was the one moment in which it would have been safest for her to run, she remained where she was, too tired and shocked to do anything by wallow in numbed despair.

Crawling towards her, a dying Talantine reached out to touch her feet. Repulsed, Eve took a few steps backwards, her eyes unblinking.

Rasping for air, the Talantine struggled to his knees, and removing his robe, inserted his thin, white fingers into a wound in his chest. Pulling out the long wooden splinter that lay within and dropping it to the floor, his re-inserted all his fingers into the wound, stretching it open until the darkness of his flesh and a network of shimmering veins was revealed.

Paralyzed in horror, unable to breathe or utter a cry, Eve stood rooted to the spot.

Giving one last smile, the Talantine took a deep breath and mustering every atom in his being, gave a ferocious leap. His body latched itself onto Eve as thousands of black needles sprung out from underneath his flesh. Pinpricks of blood began to seep out from Eve as she fell to her knees. With a look of surprise and utter anguish, she collapsed onto her side. Managing to push the dead figure of the Talantine away from her, she curled up into a ball, her haemorrhaging arms still holding the child. Not knowing whether her child had managed to survive, she closed her eyes, ready for death.

Bel rose to his feet, and wiped away the splinters and that had pierced his translucent skin. He walked over to the now skinless Talantine whom Eve had pushed away only a few seconds before, and motioned for him to rise. The Talantine did so, and kneeled in reverence to his leader who looked down at him in silence. Bel nodded, and placing his hand on the soil before him, gave a flick of the fingers. A deep whirling hole opened before them, causing them both to disappear.

In the skies above, great clouds of black mist closed over the fields, covering everything in darkness, and allowing only the a few phosphorescent glimmers to shine through.

The bodies of the Talantine lay motionless amidst the different fragments of the house that lay strewn across the field. One by one, greatly weakened, they began to rise, trying desperately to reform their circle and return to their original position.

A cool breeze swept through the grass at their feet, running through the reeds as if it had a life of its own, before swiftly moving on to shake the tops of the trees lying in the far distance.

Amidst the breeze, faint black wires began to cross through the darkness like fine smoke. Stretching towards the fallen bodies of the Talantine and the house, they weaved in and out of one another, causing the air to palpitate with an almost imperceptible hiss. Thickening as each wire reached the Talantine, they wrapped themselves around the awaiting bodies forging cocoons of smoke, before soaring into the sky and disappearing.

A crashing ray of lightening flashed through the clouds, tearing them apart. There, at the centre, the silhouette of six riders became visible for a single instant, the wraithlike horses panting as they gazed down at the earth below.

The courtyard now lay empty of all bodies except for that of Eve and her child. The riders, having obtained what they wanted, disappeared, the clouds reforming behind them. Everything lay dark and silent once more, but like the house that now stood re-mended, there was a fragility to the stilled peace – as though it could crumble into chaos at any moment.

The widened crevices and battered boards that re-forged the house gave away the part it had played in this recent battle. Inside, every gap and crack of its conjoined structure was covered by the viscous colour of death. Huge puddles swamped the floor, rippling on occasion as large drops of blood dripped down in agonizingly slow motion from the ceiling.

The timbers of the wall and roof trembled nervously – like insects trodden underfoot but still vibrating moments after death. The beams in the ceiling creaked ominously, as though barely able to hold the weight of blood that covered every sliver of wood. There, at the very centre of the room, hanging down from one of the larger rafters like a piece of transparent honeycomb, was a single, teardrop shaped sac. The same colour and texture as the bag of placenta the Talantine had extracted from Eve's spine, the sac gradually began to increase in size, pulsating with greater force.

Sliding over the beams, the sac moved along the walls, leaving a glutinous trail of white in its wake. Expanding and contracting like an over-sized lung, it lit up as a ray of moonlight struck it head on. Within its confines, the outline of a small baby with black hair, large black eyes and a glowing white body was exposed.

As though reacting to the light, the baby began to cry.

The house shuddered violently, causing the already battered wooden boards to split open with an explosive roar. Rising in the air, the re-splintered wood began to swirl upon the axis of the amniotic sac, forging a tunnel that ran through its centre.

A strong wind reverberated around the sac, causing the funnel to transform into a whirlpool. The force of the drag created grew in power until a mighty tornado had formed. Unable to contain its own strength, it broke free from the energy field that given birth to it and cut its way through the night to a nearby village.

Crashing through homes, warehouses, churches and farms, the tornado smashed everything that lay in its path. Vehicles were raised and thrown across hundreds of miles;

trees and bushes were uprooted like playthings and shattered against the wall of swirling debris into a pile of ashen dust and the squeals of animals caught up helplessly by the angry tide of wind, echoed across the plains, merging themselves with the indistinguishable cry of humans.

In the eye of the tornado, a bright light shines forth: at its core, lay a baby, sleeping peacefully in the sheath of its sac, oblivious to the shadows of human heads and limbs caught up in the mire and occasionally lit up by the thunderous lightening that engulfed them.

3

Amongst a large patch of withered trees and dried out weeds, stands a once grand and expansive mansion. Illuminated by the sun, its faded white walls gives it an austere appearance, like that of an abandoned capitol. Although some of the windows had managed to retain their glass, most had been broken long ago, leaving the curtains to flow like cobwebs being blown by the wind.

Inside its peeling walls, the heavy footfall and slow rustle of hundreds of robes could be heard, as though belonging to creatures that moved with great pain. A humming noise akin to a gathering swarm of bees intensified as they reached the main hall. There, behind the wooden planks of the open ornate door, a tide of white ebbed and flowed: the Lumens' clan had formed once more. Gathered in their hundreds, each dressed in sparkling white robes offset by their fluorescent albino skin and hair, they moved as though they were a single body, weeping and cradling their own forms as they crowded around something that lay in the centre of the room.

Beneath their billowing robes, the Lumen, at first glance, stood naked. But their skins were not akin to human skin: it was comprised of a translucent, almost see-through layer that exposed their thin, flashing veins like phosphorescent tubes carrying small capsules of light. In some, the light spread like streams from the chest to the ears; in others, it stretched from the whites of their eyes and formed electric gridlines descending from their cheekbones and nose and illuminating the rib cage to expose the intensity with which their pink, throbbing hearts beat.

The Lumens' movements seem uncoordinated and sporadic, but every few minutes, as though they were a single wave, they moved in one swift motion to the centre of the room, their bodies buzzing, sharp and energetic and their skins lighting up with vigour in those areas where the strongest emotions were aroused.

At the centre of the room lay a shimmering sphere, composed of the mangled glistening black hairs and twisted veins of the horses belonging to the six riders. At each wave that brought them closer to it, the Lumen's robes fluttered wide like swirling residues of smoke whilst the flashes of lights exuding from their veins intensified across all the different regions of their bodies. The sphere in turn, throbbed and pulsated as though on the brink of explosion, as though both repulsed and excited by potential contact with the elders of this cluster of beings.

Nutic, the head of the clan, raised his hands. Instantly, the Lumen came to a halt, and watched as he raised his eyes above the tremulous crowd with an expression of pride upon his face.

The Lumen closest to him move to sit upon bended knees. A hush falls upon the room as everyone awaits the premonition.

"The seventh reader must preserve his fury," he declared. "It must only be unleashed to stop the seventh messiah!"

Nutic lifted his ghostly white hand and pointed to the centre of the room where the hairs of the seventh horse now shone in mid-orbit.

"For now, we are quiet," he added. "For he has been murdered."

One of the Lumens of the court looked up at Nutic with an expression that sought permission. With a nod, Nutic granted it. The Lumen rose to his feet and approached the ear of his leader, his head bowed in reverence. Moistening his lips, and halting as though doubting his own words, he finally mustered up the courage he needed to dare speak:

“Honoured leader, there is danger in your words,” he said. “In the various developments that we have witnessed throughout our history, we have seen the rider appear dressed in the origin...” Faltering, the Lumen fell silent for a moment. Placing an index finger to his lips as though imposing silence upon himself, he hesitated yet further, but then continued. “And the origin of the rider’s dress...”

Nutic looked away from the Lumen’s gaze, nervous. “We have the certainty that the other has died!” he responded.

The Lumen covered his face and nodding, walked away in a state of fear. Returning to his original position, he kneeled back down in front of his leader.

Nutic took a few steps towards the spinning orb of hair and gave a nod as he walked on. Instantly, two Lumen rushed forward and placed a wooden platform at his feet. He ascended it and turned to watch it gather motion.

“He will live in the silence of the tornado!” he announced. “The particle has been arrested!”

At this final word, the teaming mass of Lumen undressed, each letting their robes drop to the floor with a silent thud. Their naked bodies, exposed in luminous splendour, were sexless, genderless: they were all one and the same. Looking intently at the small form of the baby enveloped by the silken sphere, they moved closer and closer to one another in tight formation until their shimmering skins merged to form one single endless sheet, encircling both the sphere and the baby sleeping within.

Holding hands and swaying, they emerged from the newly formed mass of skin slowly, as though fighting an invisible force field. Screaming in unison, they worked to keep their construction from tearing at the seams.

As though feeling the Lumens’ struggles, the he baby opened his eyes and with a look of surprise, emitted a terrifying scream. The Lumens cried softly, looking over at one another in a mingles state of fear and hope. The baby, as though soothed by the sound, fell asleep, his arms rigid and unmoving.

4

We traverse along this vast and unchanging savannah. The sands beneath our feet seem lifeless and dead to the touch – at first. But life here is not visible...it lies hidden under rocks or between endless layers of untouched soils. Reptiles which have yet to be named silently move and watch, their bodies expertly camouflaged by Nature’s hand. The patches of desert that surround us is but a case – a golden shell, masking each creature and providing all living