



The Black Pigeon

Chapter I: Storm Rose Compass

He woke up and sat on the edge of the bed with a look of curiosity on his face. The room in which he found himself seemed completely unfamiliar. It was small, dark and he could not remember how he had gotten there. He could not resist the impulse to draw the curtains open and look outside. All that was visible were a park in the colors of early fall and a few modern apartment buildings. The sky showed signs of the rain to come. He could not see anyone walking by. But what bothered him the most was that he could not remember anything about his surroundings. There was nothing familiar and this made him both curious and uneasy. He carefully examined his clothes. The sea-blue and green hues of his trousers looked out of place. The semi-transparent beige shirt, with green and purple shades, did not disappoint either, making him look like a parrot. The long sleeves, purposely unbuttoned, allowed him to see a sort of watch whose face, instead of having a regular display was covered in a multitude of geometric symbols shining in a bright blue color.

He started feeling his face, still unable to believe he was in this place.

“There has to be a mirror somewhere in here!” he said out loud as he discovered his long, colorful hair.

He rushed towards the door and opened it trembling. A rather long and dark corridor opened into a larger room where only a thin ray of light could be seen. When he stepped into the hallway, a few small lights turned on close to the floor. He gazed at them for a short while, then rushed in search of a mirror.

He opened a few doors, each hiding a similar dark room, until he finally found the bathroom. To his disappointment, there was no mirror. He stopped in the middle of the room with a



confused look on his face. He turned to walk out of the room, when something on the opposite wall caught his eye. The wall was slowly and barely noticeably turning into a perfect mirror. He had the feeling a window had been opened and from it someone was looking at him in amazement. It took a few moments to realize that the reflection in the mirror was his own. The first impulse was to slap himself and wake up. He stopped, realizing it would be pointless. He was confused and could not find his composure. He was shaking all over and could barely stand. The face in the mirror was looking back, scared, gaunt and lost in thought. There was emptiness in the pit of his stomach. He took a deep breath, feeling that he was asphyxiating. He took a closer look and tried to focus, examining his facial features. There was a peculiar kindness in his eyes, which for some reason looked oddly familiar. As for the rest of the reflection it felt as he were meeting a stranger. His long dark hair was laced with streaks of dark blue. What was even stranger was that there was something he liked about the look. He wanted to laugh without knowing why.

He sat down, controlling the urge to start shaking and attempted to pull himself together. The first questions he needed to answer were “Who am I?” and “What am I doing here?”

He looked for any ID documents, but as expected he was unable to find anything in his shirt or pants pockets. A thought popped into his mind. He needed to pray... “Prayer is the way to your soul!” He heard these words in his mind, as if coming from an obscure past. He went into the hallway and kneeled.

“What’s the matter with the Dragon¹?” DeTubin² asked impatiently, staring at the known and yet unfamiliar face in front of him.

¹ The Dragon - Felipe Gaza, 43 years old, the lead singer of the band “The Ancestors”, a Power Music band and one of the few who still play live. He was interested in myths and ancient magical rituals, F1Reactor races, rock climbing, diving, etc. Unlike other lead singers, he did not enjoy the typical rock-star lifestyle, leading a well-balanced life, at odds with his music.

² DeTubin - Rafael Mendoza, 46 years old, bass player of the band “The Ancestors”, also known as Half-Machine, thanks to his numerous bionic implants. He got the nickname DeTubin as a child due to the fact he only drank through a gigantic straw, similar to a cartoon character who ate, breathed and drank through a tube. He was short and stocky, with a clean-shaven head, a 7-corner beard, full of tattoos and piercings; voluble and determined, an



“... I don't know exactly. There is nothing wrong with him physically. All scans show good results”, replied AgA the Tall³, rhythmically tapping her temples, close to her recently upgraded eyes. Maybe he has suffered a mental shock or something ... Maybe someone from W.A.O.⁴ or the Bene Gesserit⁵. I have seen two freaky girls recently in the proximal region.

DeTubin looked into his girlfriend's eyes, with a hint of displeasure on his face.

“The Dragon? Charmed by those simple-minded women? Have you taken too much SkyJet⁶, or what? ... There must be something serious going on”, he said stroking his beard while lost in thought.

AgA the Tall shrugged helplessly.

“What does he think about this?”

“You ask him. He seems very confused.”

DeTubin approached the kneeling man in the middle of the room. The man gave the impression of an ancient monk.

He shook him gently, as if expecting retaliation in return.

expert at jokes and irony and also an unsurpassed digital code breaker. He and RagMan (the songwriter and keyboard player) were the hackers of the group.

³ AgA the Tall - Metora Bedcriff, 38 years old, a tall English-woman with colorless eyes, was the one in charge of special effects and concert choreography; a specialist in collecting and sorting information.

⁴ W.A.O. - Women's Allgood Organization, the oldest feminist political association, rooted in the first feminist movements of the 20th century; advocated for women's rights and kept watch for any abuse committed on a global level. Operates at a political level, with influence in the legislative framework at the European level.

⁵ Bene Gesserit – group which borrowed its name from Frank Herbert's (one of the most important science fiction writers of the 20th century) novel "Dune". Just as its counterpart in the novel, Bene Gesserit was an organization with deep interests in mystical topics, promoting its exclusively female members based on their paranormal abilities. Bene Gesserit's doctrine was to impose a new matriarchal order to replace the secular patriarchal one. In theory it sounded promising, but in reality many of the groups power-hungry members committed abuses that often made headlines. The numerous scandals involved slave-owning, drug addictions and empathy blackmail, use of aphrodisiacs and hypnosis. All this to impose an autocratic exacerbated feminine domination over the declining masculine order.

⁶ SkyJet - a powerful drug with no addiction risk, used by all those willing to escape their reality on command. Legal in a few countries, but illegal in most, including European countries.



The man opened his eyes and smiled pleasantly. DeTubin looked at him blankly, unable to believe what he was seeing.

“Dragon, have you gone mad? What is up with this Jesus-like look on your face? I swear that...”

“Be quiet! Do not blaspheme! Keep your nonsense to yourself, Half-Machine!” said The Dragon, his eyes narrowing to thin slits.

Aga the Tall sighed with relief. At least there was something left of the old Dragon.

“What the hell happened to you?” asked DeTubin with a hint of worry in his voice.

The Dragon looked at him intently for two seconds and then replied:

“You cannot understand.”

“What? Am I too stupid or something?”

“No... there are things in which you do not believe and would not understand. There are many things that I do not understand either ... In the meantime, try to recover my passwords. I know how to access my unit but cannot remember anything about this morning. The passwords are going to be a problem. I cannot remember them, it's almost as if they have vanished.”

“Typical!” snorted Aga the Tall. “The last time you *lost* them it took us 3 days to recover them. And this was before 58.95. Now at 59.24, there will be a lot more routines to run.”

“Meh, don't worry about it ... A week's worth of work and we'll recover them”, said DeTubin, slapping the Dragon on the back. “Logos⁷ is on his way and we'll leave you with him; he just landed on El Prat. You'll figure this out in the end.”

They left him alone and took a taxi back to their apartment.

⁷ Logos - Turi Bututin, Russian, 40 years old, expert in probabilistic mathematics and futurology; educated in all the scientific disciplines and with a passion for archeology and treasure hunting; guitar player in the band "The Ancestors".



“Perhaps we should try to get surveillance camera videos from around the neighborhood, before we try recovering the passwords, Bibi⁸”, said AgA, playing with one of her lover’s chain earrings.

“Yes, I hadn’t even thought about the cameras. It would be best to start there.”

(On the same day, in one of the restaurants on the outskirts of Seoul)

The rain lashed rhythmically against the huge windows. June took a seat in a secluded area of the restaurant and ordered her typical meal: rice noodles, chicken and a generous portion of kimchi. She was cold so she left her coat on. She sat down at the table and quietly spent the few minutes until the robot-waiter came back with her order to complete a few tasks.

Firstly, she sent a few detailed orders to the sisters of the Seoul chapter of the Protectors of Igfon, of which she was the leader, and afterwards placed a call to Barcelona to find out the details of the event about which she had been contacted earlier. She had been running in the rain and therefore had to postpone her call until she reached the restaurant.

Sister Greta answered the phone in Barcelona.

“Sister June, as I have told you earlier, we are facing an unusual problem. One of our reading vectors⁹ is in a coma. We have no idea what the trigger was. We only have knowledge of his orders just before his strong connection felt his disappearance. It’s Lorry, you know her...probably you can feel...”

She was suddenly overwhelmed by a wave of hopelessness and despair. She kept looking for the soul of her beloved Serin, but to no avail. His body was next to her, inert, in a vegetative state. She could not see him, could not feel him anywhere and this filled her with pain. She had cried so

⁸ Bibi – DeTubin’s nickname given by Aga the Tall.

⁹ Reading vector - the Protectors named „vectors” all of the male members. Specifically, the „reading vector” was a male who could read the intentions, desires and emotional state of the person with whom they were speaking.



much that her mouth felt like cotton and her nails were worn from running them across the surface of the table. June hung up. She had heard and felt enough.

A few beggars entered the restaurant and sat down by the door. It was the day when they received alms from restaurant patrons. Typically they would sit outside waiting to receive leftovers, but due to the downpour, the restaurant employees allowed them inside.

June searched her memories for a similar event. She found a few potential options but they needed to be confirmed. The situation in Spain was unusual, nonetheless.

She looked with pity at a beggar who approached her table. She determinately looked in her bag for the jar of blessed rice and offered the beggar a handful. She had the strange sensation that she was being watched and turned to the other tables to see who it may be but she only saw regular people, quietly eating their meals. Maybe it had just been a wandering spirit.

The beggar started backing up towards the door, bowing in gratitude.

June turned back to her food, ready to reanalyze the events in Barcelona, when a loud scream coming from the entrance broke the silence and made everyone turn their heads towards the source of the noise.

“Drop it! Drop it, I said!”

One of the other beggars had rushed to the one who had received the rice and violently hit her across her hands.

It all looked like a surreal dream. Time seemed to have stopped and she saw the grains of rice spill on the floor in slow motion. People started moving towards the door and formed a circle around the restaurant entrance.

June found herself standing next to the place where the grains had fallen and looked at the floor in amazement. It was a pigeon, a dark pigeon outlined by the grains of rice.





Someone suddenly grabbed her arm. She turned around, trying to free herself but the grip did not loosen.

She was overcome with panic and then June's facial expression changed. The others looked in amazement as she fell to her knees in front of that who had grabbed her arm, in an almost tangible worship.

“엄마(Eomama)! 나를 축복 해줘(Naleul chugbog haejwo)!”¹⁰

(a few moments later in Cetis Baroni's Barcelona home)

“She has returned...!” Greta's voice echoed in her head.

She had just dozed off on the couch next to Frederic, when Greta's message woke her. She was straining to make sense of what Greta was saying.

“Who...” but she suddenly stopped. She realized who Greta was talking about and it could not be anything else but the worst possibility. “I will...summon the girls to let them know as well. Think about this and provide me with your thoughts on the matter tomorrow” said Cetis quickly, feeling weak in the knees.

“Of course, dear. Try not to let this get to you more than necessary. You can call Betty to talk if you feel you need it.”

Cetis agreed, but she had already started feeling sick. The “someone” who had returned had done so because something serious had occurred. Something that could threaten everything they had worked to build over the past years.

She found the strength to call Betty and persuade herself to calm down. She managed to do so moderately, but this was not important. She had to decide what to tell the girls that evening, while finding it difficult to concentrate...

¹⁰ "Mother! Bless me! [Kr. In the original]"



(Seat of the Protectors of Igfon, Seoul, the same evening)

The girls moved aside in disgust. The heavy smell of bad kimchi, coming from the stranger escorted by June, was making them sick to their stomach. June held the beggar's hand all the way from the restaurant to the Protectors' headquarters. Only after entering the building did she let go of her hand and lay at her feet. Before she left the restaurant she had requested all hands on deck and by the looks of it all the girls were there.

Silence fell in the room.

"You have my blessing, lovely June!" said the stranger softly, lightly touching her forehead.

June felt her eyes fill with tears. On the one hand the joy of seeing her again and on the other the symbol on the restaurant floor had proved to be too much, even for her. The stranger hugged her, trying to calm her down. June let it all out and started to cry.

The other girls of the organization were looking on, not sure of what to make of the whole thing. Only a few of the older members joined June, hugging the legs and ragged clothing of the strange beggar.

(a few minutes later, same location)

The young Protectors were watching full of curiosity from the bathroom door as the beggar was being bathed and dressed by the more experienced members. Waves of filth ran down the bathroom floor. The body of a goddess emerged from behind all the layers of dirt. Her long, tangled and lice-ridden hair was washed and then burned in a ritual bowl in the small shrine of Samsin.

"Do not worry, it will grow back by tomorrow" she told the young ones, who looked at her with skepticism and confusion.



They dried her skin and gave her new, white clothes. The older ones escorted her to the forbidden chamber, which was still a well-guarded mystery to most of the Protectors. After the purifying bath, she needed rest to recover from the toll life in the mountains and on the streets had taken.

The young ones could not understand who the stranger was and why their older sisters seemed to worship her. It only lasted until a certain name was whispered among the Protectors and then they understood.

The name of the beggar was 달의 다른 쪽(*Dal-ui daleun jjog*), or The Other Side of the Moon.

(A little later in Barcelona)

“Now that we are all here, it is time I reveal the reason for which I have summoned you” said Cetus as she signaled Espo to take her place in the center of the room. She moved aside, lost in thought. She did not want the others to sense her apprehension.

“Her name is Dal-ui daleun jjog, or The Other Side of the Moon! [...] Your first question in face of this information may be whether the end of the world is coming...I am aware most of you expect me to say a definitive “No!” but I am forced to say “Yes!” ...You know full well that I am not a deeply passionate, crazy idealist and that I rely on logic, reason and common sense. Albeit [...], albeit there is sufficient reason to draw this dire conclusion.”

“Yes, the end of the world is coming. A certain type of world, anyway...We are all aware we live in a world of excess, of lack of restraint, of disorder and of violation of taboos...the Age of Kali-Yuga, which according to Indian sages, should have ended in 2082. But we find ourselves in the year 2223 and chaos still rules everyone’s lives. Religion and morality have become antiquated and their influence on a global scale is minimal. Overindulgences have become the norm and have become an integral part of all contemporary beings. It’s no wonder the world has been saturated with organizations, sects and great luminaries preaching the truth to a handful of followers. Of course, this is all well known to us, and that is why as part of the Protectors of Igfon we strive to



protect that which is sacred, necessary to a fulfilling spiritual life for each intelligent inhabitant of this planet. Therefore we have faith that our efforts will not be in vain and that a handful of special individuals shall find a path to a normal existence for all of us. A path that will blend nature and the sacred, without resorting to excess or unnecessary limitations. However,...it seems that our natural way of solving problems may be under threat. I will show you why right away...”

Espo turned on the 3D projector located in the middle of the chamber. The lights dimmed and in the center the image of a dark floor, on which lay the grains of rice given by June to the beggar, started to appear. All around the Protectors started whispering.

“You can clearly see the image of a dark pigeon...For those of you who are unaware, the Black Pigeon¹¹ is the name given to a woman who possesses outstanding abilities and now lives in a secluded monastery in France. Twelve years ago, her abilities made headline news as the media started calling her the forerunner of the Apocalypse. Her unique traits were however real and therefore all living beings in her vicinity experience an unmistakable feeling of guilt. The feeling was...and is as real as can be, since numerous cases of suicide have been reported as a result of profound guilt. It is a guilt which makes one aware of their own limitations and mistakes, an overwhelming guilt which makes one see themselves ugly and incapable in the face of perfection. It is a terrible thing to realize your own imperfections as it makes one wonder whether life is worth living. There are only a few souls on Earth that can look perfection in the eye. All the others are destroyed. It is akin to facing Judgment Day without it actually being real! And as there is nobody to reward good deeds, the soul condemns itself. In most cases, suicide or complete madness is the natural result of the encounter.”

The room was so quiet that everyone’s breath became audible. They were all enthralled by Espo’s explanation.

¹¹ The name of the Black Pigeon had been made by an enthusiastic journalist and it appears in contrast with the Peace’ white dove (symbol of the sacrament between God and people that there will be no second flood), like the messenger of the Apocalypse.



“Black Pigeon was locked away in a monastery by Orthodox priests so that she would not cause the destruction of the imperfect world around her. Soon afterwards all discussion and heated debates around the case died down. The world forgot about her and there had been no additional news until today. When I saw the symbol outlined by the grains of rice I had the realization that her reappearance and the way in which she did were not coincidental. This is what the monastery looked like twelve years ago” and a panoramic 3D image of a monastery located by a dense and full-of-life forest appeared, “and this is what it looks like today.”

The image was replaced by a monastery in the middle of an arid wasteland. The forest was dead, countless skeletons of all the wildlife were scattered everywhere and lay buried in the barren land. There was no sign of life.

“All life forms have disappeared, the soil and air samples are completely sterile. There are no bacteria to be found, which is highly unusual as they are able to adapt and survive in even the harshest environment. It is almost like a complete purification. The only being left in the monastery - all the other nuns have either left, gone crazy or have been removed - is an old nun. She is a special soul, for which the burden of severe guilt cannot prevail in the face of purity and spiritual equilibrium. She is the only one who cares for Mera, the woman known as The Black Pigeon. She is the only one who can be in her presence, but who also has to be careful to avoid looking into Mera`s eyes as this could prove fatal. I have reached out to the nun and she has relayed that over the last weeks the dead area around the monastery has begun to rapidly expand.”

The silence was suddenly broken by the amplified whispers of the Protectors. Espo went on, obviously troubled himself, despite his reputation as a calm and good-humored man.

“This is a problem on which we all need to meditate and to which we need to find a solution. And the sooner the better because at the rate of the dead zone`s expansion, in 10-years time Europe will be as full of life as Mars.”

Espo wiped the sweat from his forehead and continued his presentation.



“I have analyzed the reason behind the pattern in the grains of rice and have reached the conclusion that at the time at which sister June was talking to sister Greta Wild about this morning’s incident in Oretto Square, some type of information transfer occurred into the blessed rice. Sister Noun’s abilities enabled her to sense this, which is why she struck the beggar’s hands in order to reveal the hidden meaning behind the event”.

“We have not yet established the link between the incident in Oretto Square, which has resulted in our vector Serin entering a coma, and the Black Pigeon case. It seems like there is no video recording from security cameras around the square from 8:25am to 11:34am. They have all been erased. The few eyewitnesses who we have been able to interview do not recall anything unusual. We will have to keep looking for more clues because we know something out of the ordinary occurred in the square...we just need to find out what it was.”

“ You can find out all you need to know about sister Daleun¹² through a quick online search. There is no point in my going into additional details. [...] That is all I had for the time being. I wish you well and bless you all!”

Espo left the room, followed by his robotic sphere, floating closely behind him. There was so much data to analyze that he was certain he would not be sleeping that night. And to think that today will seem like a breeze by the time tomorrow comes.

¹² Sister Noun, or Daleun, or the The Other Side of the Moon - 55 years old, former member of the Bene Gesserit; it is rumored that she had driven 100 men crazy, to the extent that they would have killed at her command (making them erotically, empathically and intellectually dependent...as was the Bene Gesserit model). Noun possessed a uniquely strong aura, emanating an uncommon sensuality (only Djala he Djaia possessing a comparable one). After she left Bene Gesserit, she quickly become the leader of the Protectors in Korea as she had renounced her old ways and embraced a more balanced approach. Following the mass-media reports on Black Pigeon, Noun retreats to the Baekdu mountains to be alone and meditate as a way to make amends for the time in Bene Gesserit. Before she left she promised her sisters she will only return once the apocalyptic signs start manifesting themselves and therefore her return will also signify the beginning of the end.