

Dehisce

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In a world marked and unmarked by a past that no longer exists, wiped clean, it was no surprise that the dream life of Mahes, a young girl, who is submerged in realms at night that make no sense to her waking self, would find herself at an impasse that would change the course of history... her story. She is uncanny in her demeanour, though that's expected, it's only been 13 years after a deadly virus swept through the world and decimated nearly half its population, not to mention the untold damage the earth suffered in the wake of the pandemic. A vaccine that was said to save humanity and cure humans of their fatal flaw - their human nature - altered the very fabric of the human being, and how we expressed ourselves. It numbed us to the darkness that resides in every being. The darkness that is necessary to feel and appreciate the light. Instead, the vaccine made it so that the very cells of the human were altered, we walked through the world as zombies, drained of the essence that makes us human beings.

Mahe shares and does not share a secret life with her Ouma, secret, because the part of Mahe that Knows, only lives in her dreams, and the part of her that lives in The Rising trots through the world as if life wasn't a gift for her to revel in.

Ever since she was a little girl, Mahes has been immersed in an absurdly vivid dream life, experiencing a reality so different from the sterile world she lives in, that not too long ago, was wiped clean of all sin and evil. When day turned into night and the world slept, her dreams felt so real and intense she would feel dazed upon waking, staring into the distance plagued with the remnants of her dreams.

Her Ouma would often tell her of how things were before The Rising, as it came to be known. Stories of The Dark Age were forbidden but Mahes' Ouma was a woman who knew how to keep significant information cloaked.

The evening before her 13th birthday, Ouma came into her room and said, "Mahes, I am giving you this key and when you wake tomorrow, I will show you what it opens", she tucked the key beneath Mahes' pillow, kissed her forehead and turned out the light. She drifted into sleep feeling the descent of a great change up them.

In the dark of night, beneath the light of the full moon, Mahes rolled over to feel the touch of wet grass beneath her fingers. Before she could process this, she saw her Ouma appear by the edge of the pond they would frequent when Ouma would orate about The Dark Age. "Bring me the key that's in your hand, place it into this rock and turn it until you hear a click", and so she did, upon hearing the click, Mahes and Ouma were sucked into the pond and transported to a world that Mahes only knew through her dreams and the stories of her Ouma.

When she came to on the other side, she had to adjust, the jolt giving her whiplash, leaving her disoriented for a minute. “Ouma, what the heck just happened?!” she sputtered.

“Mahes, to your left, on the grass, you’ll find a tiny little box”, still confused, Mahes patted the earth around her and found a little violet square. “Open it” Ouma encouraged. Mahes found a copper coloured wooden elephant figurine attached to a silver chain, “Well put it on dear, it’s yours” Ouma exclaimed. “It’s beautiful Ouma, but first, can you explain what’s going on and what the heck happened after that click?!” Mahes exasperated.

“I don’t quite know what to call it baby, so I’m going to say we gooped.” Mahes gave Ouma a puzzled look. “Get up and look around” Mahes stood up and gave her surroundings a good look. Gooping, it seemed, was familiar, yet unfamiliar to her. They were still at the pond, but somehow surrounding the pond was a grand library, “I had to put the books somewhere, those crazies were burning books by the pond when The Rising first began, you’d think it were frankincense?!” Ouma chortled.

“When I first began hearing of the reports of Them burning books, I knew something deeply disturbing was happening, I just didn’t think it would come to this, that’s when I began creating the Chamber”, Ouma revealed.

Mahes looked around at what seemed a library, a medicine room as well as a storage space, mixed into a laboratory. Mahes knew Ouma was a collector of little objects and trinkets and she finally saw, but was yet to understand the full extent of it. She knew the hidden parts of her Ouma would become apparent to her in the form of a diary entry, that was the Chamber.

Although Mahes knew this was her first time in the Chamber, she knew this place, this plane, they had, as Ouma said, gooped into. Suddenly everything clicked into place: all the stories she thought or rather told herself were just stories, somehow came together. Mahes knew all the times she sat with Ouma at the pond, absorbing hours of story and asking seemingly endless questions were for a greater purpose and suddenly, it became evident that the earth beneath her feet shifted.

She could finally comprehend how the people must have felt at the beginning of The Rising. It moved something in Mahes that did not start with her and she felt a familiar wave of melancholy sweep over her bones and she wept for the things lost to the fire, Ouma knowingly embraced her.

Ouma knew Mahes was only a child, but she also knew what she had prepared her granddaughter for and this was only the beginning of the story. The veil that thinned with each story Ouma shared, finally lifted, and Mahes consciousness burst open.

“You’re going to want to put on that necklace before we continue baby” Ouma said still holding Mahes. She shifted slightly to take a second look at the necklace, it was a beautiful little carving, you could tell its creator made it with love. “It was carved from the root of a Baobab Tree, my Oupa gave to me many moons ago.” Ouma said with a sad, but sweet smile.

When Mahes put on the necklace, a peculiar thing happened. A life-sized elephant apparition appeared, translucent by form, its huge shape did not knock over the trinkets in the room but instead passed through them, not disturbing the space, somehow she just fit in. “Her name is !Ûi-Aos, she’s been in our family for years,” Ouma said as !Ui-Aoas cuddled her trunk into Mahes neck, “ I think you two will get along just fine.”

“The necklace is a protective totem for when we go back, and don’t worry, no one will be able to see !Ûi-Aos, except for you.” Ouma explained as she got up from the ground. Mahes stood up eventually and observed the space again, though it was not obvious at first glance, the more she looked, the more apparent a barrier around the Chamber became. Translucent in appearance, almost invisible, but you could tell that it was there.

“Ouma, why today?” Mahes wondered, Ouma cocked her head to the side and was quiet for a while before she spoke.

“We’ve been hearing reports of murders by the Mystique in the Capitol, somehow it seems the vaccine wears off at thirteen and the children start acting out. They kill them before they get out of hand and start influencing the younger children with the truth.” Ouma said in a tone that that worried Mahes.

“What truth Ouma?” Mahes asked pensively. “The truth about us, the truth about human nature”, her Ouma replied. “Ouma what are you talking about?”

“Baby, when The Rising first began, They started producing films demonising the very essence of what makes us human. Our natural impulses. They started normalising the abnormal, slowly, somehow, and made us turn against ourselves, each other and nature. Those of us with the Sight knew what was happening and worked to preserve the truth, hence I made The Chamber.

“We, the Damara people, are magical beings, witches and warlocks. We are tribe of travellers, wisdom keepers, storytellers, griots, medicine women and healers. You come from a lineage of people who are well travelled to the point that we cannot trace where we came from; as the old saying amongst our tribesmen goes: “We come from everywhere”.

We were present at the rise and fall of every major dynasty, empire, and kingdom -we were the advisers, healers, and wisdom keepers- they all came and went, but our people survived. And the further we travelled, the more people joined the tribe, and through diversity the wisdom of the tribe grew. Your very great grandfather, the chief decided that we would settle in Namibia. We lived among the San people, in harmony with Mother Nature and the elements.

We traded and lived with the Nama, and the story according to the colonisers was that we lost our language, customs and traditions, but the truth is that we assimilated the Nama culture to preserve our own, and to keep our magic and language secret. Some of the slippery tongued tribe members started sharing our healing rites and tribe secrets, for riches and the new civilisation that was promised when the first Europeans came to the country. Though we did not mind sharing our wisdom, magic or healing rites, we were also aware that this information in the wrong hands would be catastrophic.

Much of the conflicts that occurred, were due to confusion we created to avert attention from the tribe, to protect ourselves. By the early 19th century, a mad German military commander heard many stories of the “magical tribe”. He wanted to capture us to use our powers to conquer the world during World War One but to no avail, he could not find us, nor a sliver of our magic. In his hatred and madness, he ordered the genocide of the Herero and Nama, decimating more than half of both tribes, he figured, if he couldn’t have our magic, no one could. Now you know how the rest of that story goes.”

Mahes sat listening to Ouma, taking it all in, she felt ill at all the violence enacted in search of the tribe’s secret powers. She also wondered of the many historical deletions that occurred to legitimise the position of the supposed victor in history. Mahes felt a great wave of sadness for the lives lost to this hegemony.

“The Wise Mother of the tribe, The One Who Knows, Ti Ma; decided that it was best for the tribesmen to split up and return to our natural way, to live as nomads. Many people of our tribe scattered to different parts of the world to preserve our magic and protect the tribe. Ti Ma feared that the concentration of the tribe in one place would continue to attract power hungry individuals and strife, as was evident in the genocide perpetrated on our soil. Unquestionably, magic that potent, draws to itself conflict.”

Ouma continued, “This brings us back to about 15 years ago to when The Rising first began. I started noticing in the media how the topic of cleanliness would arise, I didn’t think much of it at first, but the more persistent the message became, the more suspicious I grew. They started making films centred around cleanliness... the necessity of being pristine. I couldn’t see where it was going, but I sensed a greater motive. The themes transitioned from cleanliness and filth to good and evil and they really started focusing on The Seven Deadly Sins. I heard news from some parents, with school going children, that it became more integrated into their curriculum.

There were minute changes, but they were pernicious, seeping into everything. Eventually they prohibited normal human emotion like anger and sadness, and the expression of them, They would say, ‘Anger is a danger to your fellow man, and you wouldn’t want to harm your fellow man, would you?!’. They would police negative emotion as though they were crimes and the funny thing is, a lot of people were under the impression that there was no pushback on this, but with the very policing of our thoughts, resistance was inevitable. I knew of many who were who were silenced before they gained momentum.

Now Mahes, you were taught in school that you’re only allowed a specific bandwidth of emotions and that negative ones are not permitted, what’s more, is that only certain behaviours are permitted, and that any of The Seven Deadly sins are absolutely forbidden.”

Mahes introjected, reciting The Motto drilled into them at school, “The sins are; pride, greed, sloth, envy, gluttony, lust and wrath, these acts are forbidden and must be overcome through humility, charity, diligence, gratitude, temperance, and chastity. The human being is intrinsically evil and must strive for purity and goodness.” Ouma gave her granddaughter a sorrowful look.

“You see Mahes, none of the supposed sins, in thought, are contemptuous per say, and I do believe that any behaviour that hurts our fellow beings and nature should be ceased. But They taught us all to forgo our intrinsic nature. We are dual natured; for as there is night there is day, the human being is both dark and light, a walking contradiction, capable of giving life and destroying it, capable of inflicting pain and giving healing. They understood this, but They deluded us to abrogate our sovereignty through promoting a culture of purity and submission, and instilled guilt, shame, and the fear of punishment for being human.

This left no room for humans to be humans, which made it easier to control us to carry out their agenda. You’ll know from your dreams and my stories how animated life was before The Rising and how dull and robotic everything and everyone has become ever since. The very essence of life was drained from us; it breaks my heart.” Ouma admitted, blinking away the tears she so often pushed away.

“Ouma, how does this all connect, and why tonight?” Mahes questioned.

“Exactly thirteen years ago, much like tonight, when the moon was full, you were born. A violent earthquake erupted followed by natural disaster all over the world. A deadly virus that swept through the lands, killing humans and animals alike, destroying forests and polluting bodies of water. By my lights, it was Mother Nature’s attempt to wake and shake us up; to strike a balance, to see the error of our ways and what we were doing to each other. She was giving us a chance to write a different story, but They spun it to suit their narrative. They used the pandemic to their own advantage and said that God was punishing us for not obeying The Motto sooner. They proposed that a vaccine They would create, would put an end to the madness, all we needed to do was to submit to vaccination and we would be saved.

According to Them, the vaccine would cure us from our ‘evil ways’, and from committing any of the sins again, and God would cease punishing us for our disobedience. However, those of us with the Sight knew that this was just a front for them to enact their will and take over the world.”

Mahes sat listening, her brow deeply furrowed, she felt a deep sense of rage welling up inside of her, a feeling she was not accustomed to experiencing in her waking life.

“Those that refused the vaccine were forced to live on a small island with few resources, cut off from the rest of the world, I heard reports that a few of them survived”.

“Ouma, you keep talking about these reports, from whom is it that you’re getting this information?” Mahes asked.

“I was wondering when you would ask me about that. After some of the tribesmen left, another great power was revealed to us, telepathy. This was great because we remained connected while being apart, it’s beautiful really, though sometimes a pain with some of the annoying tribe member sending incessant messages” Ouma chuckled.

“We go by The Remains, the Omeb who dubbed us thought it quite clever”. Ouma mused.

“We send each other updates on the policies, regulations, any news of strange occurrences, killings and the likes. And just to keep in contact. Before the travel restriction came in effect, we’d travel to one another but sadly those days have come to pass. Hopefully once we execute the plan, we will regain our sovereignty and freedom.

We had people stationed in various places to gain intel on what the ingredients for the vaccine were, so that we could make a poultice to draw it out and an elixir to reduce its effects. We had to spread the information far and wide because we didn’t know how the vaccine would affect us. But we had to be careful with whom we shared our remedies because there were those who wanted to protect their sovereignty and freedom and there were ones who would spout the “do as you’re told” narrative.

We saw through the years that it made people numb, dull and easy to control. It took the zest out of them. Turned them into zombie like creatures that had no thoughts of their own, no will to power, no agency, they were just pawns.”

“What happened to my mother?” This seemed to be a question that burned in the back of Mahes’ mind. She had asked this question once before, but Ouma had evaded it, which shut Mahes down. Ouma had a pensive expression on her face.

“Your mother went into labour just before the earthquake erupted. She was nearing the end of your delivery when the first shockwaves hit. She suffered complications with the impact of the quake. She had just about pushed you out and a second quake hit, something went wrong; there was blood everywhere. The hospital went into disarray moments after, a fire broke out; the alarm blared. I remember a nurse gave me you, they rushed me out while they rusticated your mother, she bled out. They escorted us out the hospital to send us to a clinic but something in me told me to keep walking and somehow, we ended up at home, and it’s been the two of us ever since.” Ouma lost her resolve, she could no longer fight the tears, she’d disavowed her grief for so long she could not hold it a second longer, Mahes embraced her; and she sobbed.

“I told her I would deliver you at home, but she insisted on delivering in the hospital. If only I had convinced her, if only I tried harder, she would still be here today.” Ouma was inconsolable, Mahes let her cry, she knew how long Ouma had held on to this pain. They sat in silence until Mahes spoke solemnly.

“I have two more questions. One about my father’s whereabouts, and why you brought me here tonight.” Mahe spoke clearly.

“Your mother evaded my questions about him. She said that she would raise you by herself and left it at that, though it nagged me, I left it alone.” Mahes had so many questions that would remain unanswered, that a rage arose and boiled inside of her.

“The reason I brought you here tonight is because it marks the end of the 13 year lunar cycle, closing out the old and ushering in the new, it marks the dawn of a new age. We are harnessing the energy of the moon to strengthen you for the start of Project Zenith.

You see, 13 years ago when the earth quaked, from deep within the earth's core, it caused a split in the world, creating two earth realms, the light and the dark, one entrained with goodness and purity, and the other entrenched in darkness and strife. The Chamber rests on a portal between those realms, and tonight the veil between them has thinned significantly, making this the perfect time to begin your initiation.

You will go through a series of simulations. These tests will bring forth your shadow. They will call to light the darkest parts of you that remained repressed, so that you can integrate these aspects of yourself. The reason why they are hidden, is because the realm of our waking life inhibits our shadow, along with the vaccine that furthers dulls our senses." The more Ouma spoke the clearer it became to Mahes what her Ouma had prepared her for.

"Ouma, how have we been gooping this whole time without us getting caught? Because I thought tonight was the first time, we gooped." Mahes gave her Ouma a puzzled look.

"What you didn't notice was, that when we came to the pond, I would give you a gummy bear that rendered you in a state of mind that allowed us to goop without you noticing and just before we returned I'd give you another piece so that you would think we were in the light realm the entire time."

"So you drugged me?!" Mahes exclaimed, she was somewhere between amusement and shock.

"Well I couldn't exactly take you gooping at age 5 without you blabbing about how you disappeared into a pond with your Ouma, everyone would know something was up Mahes!" They both laughed hysterically.

A thick veil of silence fell between them. It was sobering. For they knew, the road that lay ahead was not going to be an easy one.

They felt the earth beneath their feet begin to quake, Ouma took Mahes hand and asked "Ready?" to which Mahes replied "Ready."

In the dark realm, ≠Khitago could see Ouma and Mahes through the thick glass of her crystal ball. "Gotcha!" the leader of The Mystique rumbled with a dark laugh. The wide and fearful eyes of her minions following her "and I'm coming for you Mama, I'm coming for you... dear daughter".

The End