

A Book By  
Suvarnasekhar

A RIFT BETWEEN ERAS  
**GAADIWAALA**



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Stories Matter  
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please contact:

**BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS**  
[www.BlueRoseONE.com](http://www.BlueRoseONE.com)  
[info@bluerosepublishers.com](mailto:info@bluerosepublishers.com)  
+4407342408967

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# Chapter One:

## The Beginning

Burrowed in the lush forested foothills of the Vindhya Mountains lies a secluded town—Tamapura. This town is surrounded by groves filled with ancient trees, fragrant sandalwood, and rare flora—all considered sacred by the locals. A river flowing nearby is considered auspicious and home to many of the town's ceremonies. The town is believed to have deep cultural ties to the natural world and ancient traditions—in fact, there are Druid influences at play.

At the heart of the town is the Dharma Sabha Hall (Council of Justice), made with stone and wood, where disputes are settled and judgments are passed. Next to it is the Agni Kunda (Fire Altar), where the rites are performed for truth-seeking and purification.

A little way off from the Dharma Sabha Hall is the Bazaar of Tamapura. All the townsfolk sell handcrafted wares, herbs, and amulets laced with magic for protection. It's also the very first place visitors from other places get a taste of the customs and traditions of Tamapura. In the middle of the bazaar is the Ashtakona Chauraha (Octagonal Square)—tales of mystery,

justice, and the power of the Druids are told openly here.

Mimas had grown up in Tamapura. All his life, he had been surrounded by the mysticism of Tamapura; however, he never really felt drawn towards the Druid influence. He had accepted it as one of the many things that made his town unique. He was a huntsman and a dedicated family man. He had fallen into a routine after his marriage to the beautiful Callisto.

He would wake up every morning, go through his morning rituals, and get ready to go out hunting. He would kiss his wife and their six-month-old daughter Ellara goodbye and go into the forest. If he was lucky, he would be able to hunt game more than enough for two days, and on his way back, he'd stop at the bazaar to exchange some of his sport for other goods his family would need. Callisto was an excellent cook and could make the same game taste different with the different herbs she had collected during *her* morning traditions of going to the forest with the other women of the town, with their babes in tow.

But this morning, something seemed off. Mimas and Callisto were not in the same sync they usually were. They kept getting in each other's ways, snapping at each other, and it got to a point where baby Ellara cried loudly due to the bickering!

“What is going on with you this morning, wife?” Mimas demanded, disgruntled at having to dance out of her way twice now. “You seem distracted.”

“I cannot explain it,” Callisto said softly, her voice barely above a whisper. “There is something heavy weighing down on my heart. I have a bad feeling about today.”

Hearing this, Mimas’ mood lightened. He laughed and said, “I think living in Tamapura is *finally* getting to you.”

“What do you mean?” She asked, looking at him with worry.

“I mean, we live in a town surrounded by magic and mysticism, sometimes we think everything is an omen. It is not. I promise you, it is not.”

She bit her bottom lip and said, “I hope you are right, Mimas. I cannot shake off the feeling.”

He laughed and placed a kiss on her cheek, “You worry too much, wife. Now, be safe, while I go hunt our food.”

“Be careful,” she called after him.

He raised a hand in farewell, shouldering his bow and arrow. He had done this a hundred times since he was a teenager, old enough to hunt for food and provide for his family. What could *possibly* go wrong?

He remembered hearing the crunch of the fallen leaves beneath the foot of the wild animal he had been hunting! Mimas had been a sure shot since his teenage years. There was no way he could have made the mistake he did—not unless someone had set him up to take the blame for it. Mimas knew this town was known for its magic, and it was all too easy to cross over to the dark side.

He concentrated and let his arrow fly from the bow. It landed with precision on its prey. Half a beat later, he heard someone yelling in agony.

*What on earth?* Mimas thought, his blood going cold. Wild animals don't speak the human tongue. This sound was not something that would come from his prey. He ran towards the place where he was sure his prey had come from. He did not care that the overgrown creepers and climbers were pricking him with their thorns! He came to a grinding halt when he noticed a hunched figure lying on the forest ground, with *his* arrow sticking to his chest.

"No, no, no," Mimas yelled, "What cruel trick is this? What are you doing here? Who are you?"

But the figure kept unusually still on the forest floor and Mimas could not move a muscle. Was this what Callisto had meant in the morning? When she said



her heart was too still? It was an accident—a tragic accident.

Would the Dharma Sabha Hall believe him? They loved their theatrics! They loved their *show* of power more than trying to get the truth. He shuddered, remembering the awful trial by elements that someone else had to go through a few years ago. Would the same misfortune befall Mimas?

He shook his head. He could not stand here and speculate. He needed to move, get away from the man. Take Callisto and Ellara and leave Tamapura as soon as possible. There was *nothing* left for them here. He would be branding his family as outcasts if he stayed. The obvious choice was to just leave. Staying here and fighting for justice seemed like a thankless task. He knew he could never prove his innocence. The arrow in the figure was enough evidence for the town magistrate to convict him!

Mimas turned heel and ran back home as quickly as possible.

\*

“Mimas?” Callisto asked when she saw him huffing and puffing at the doorway to their house, “What is wrong?”

“We have to run,” he said, breathlessly, “Run and never look back. Something terrible has happened! Oh, Callisto, I should have listened to you.”

Callisto's blood turned to ice as she realized the gravity of the trouble that Mimas was in. She sprang to her feet and at once went to get their things and Ellara. She did not know what trouble Mimas was in, but his voice was enough to make her understand that it was deadly serious. She had married him—and where she came from, wives went with their husbands—even if they thought they were not a hundred per cent right.

“Hurry up,” Mimas shouted, “We have to make the most of the daylight...”

But the words died on his lips. He saw the town guards walk with purpose towards his house. He did not want Callisto and Ellara to be a part of this. If he ran now, they would simply release a kill-on-sight order on him. He *had* to live. He needed to be there for his family. Still, the whole thing irked him. His crime had barely taken place and the town guards were coming towards him!

He knew without a shred of doubt now that someone had set him up to take the fall for his crime. He called loudly to Callisto, “Callisto stay inside with Ellara. No matter what happens do not come out.”

“What?” She asked, trying to poke her head out of the window.

“Do as I say,” he thundered. “Stay inside.”

“Mimas – what is going on?”

“I will see you soon. Okay? Take care of Ellara in my absence. This will all be over soon.”

He did not believe for a second that it would all be over any time soon. It would be twenty-one days before he saw his wife and child again. But he could not tell that to Callisto. He needed her to *believe* that things would be fine, even if they weren't. The guards reached his doorstep. One of them actually looked like he was sorry for his role in all of this.

“Mimas?” The sorry-looking guard asked.

“Yes,” Mimas said, dreading the worst.

“You are under arrest,” he said, “We are here to escort you to the town jail, where you will be awaiting your trial.”

A sharp intake of breath from inside told Mimas that his wife had heard this. He considered running away from the guards.

“Do not do that,” the guard said, as though reading his mind, “Do not resist arrest.”

“I am innocent!” Mimas said, urgently, “I am telling you someone did this!”

The guard placed the handcuffs on Mimas and said, “Even if that were true, you have to discuss it with your legal representative. Please come with us now. Do not make this any harder than it has to be.”

Mimas bowed his head in defeat.

\*

The walk from his house to the town jail had been horrible. Everyone *knew* he had been taken into custody for a crime. Tamapura was not a big town. Everyone knew someone who knew Mimas. He could hear the whispers on the streets. He could *only* hope that it would not result in Callisto and Ellara being victims of his wrongful conviction.

Mimas sat in his cell, hardly daring to close his eyes. He had heard the horror stories of what goes behind the jail walls. He knew he needed to survive—not for himself—but for his daughter. She was innocent in all of this!

Hours passed by. He began to drift in and out of an uneasy sleep. He did not know when it would be time for them to try his case. He did not even know if there would even be *one* person who would be rooting for him, who would understand that it was all a big mistake. It was never supposed to be this way.

Every minute of being in this place was pure hell for him! He wanted to go home, to be with Callisto and Ellara. He wanted to go back in time and listen to his wife when she said her heart felt heavy. *Something* had tried to warn him about this whole debacle. Something had tried its best to keep Mimas from following his morning routine.

Tamapura was surrounded by magic and mysticism— maybe one of the spirits had overheard the plot that was being made against him and decided to intervene. He half-opened his eyes to see someone sitting at the foot of the bench he was lying down on.

Mimas sat bolt upright, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, “Who are you? How did you get inside here?”

“I received a message about you, Mimas,” the person said. There was something deeply ethereal about him. He was glowing and his face was the perfect picture of peace.

It was a far cry from how Mimas felt at the moment. But he could not help but wonder who even knew about him in this universe. He eyed the figure suspiciously.

“You have not eaten since you got here,” the figure continued, “Here – eat.”

He pushed a plate of bread and milk towards Mimas.

“How long have I been here?” Mimas asked, surprised.

“Both too long and not long enough,” the figure responded, “Eat, Mimas. If you want to keep fighting, you will need your strength.”

“You believe I am innocent,” Mimas said, slowly.

“Yes,” he replied, simply.

Even though it defied all logic, Mimas felt his heart soar. Someone believed him. Someone was looking out for him. He did not know how long he had been in this place—had he finally succumbed to madness?

“You are not going mad,” the glowing figure reassured him, “You are simply waking up. You have been asleep all this time.”

He kept a fresh set of clothes next to the food, and said, “I have to leave now. But I will come back. In the meantime, remember *your* truth. Hold on to it. That is the only thing which will get you out of this alive.”

“So, there is hope,” Mimas said, hardly daring to believe the words coming out of his mouth.

“There is always hope,” the figure said. He smiled for the first time. It made him look even more ethereal and beautiful, if that was possible. “You just need to find it and hold on to it.”

Then he disappeared.

Mimas would have written the whole encounter off as a dream had it not been for the fact that the food remained next to him, as did the new set of clothes.

## Chapter Two: The Hearing

After what seemed like forever, Mimas was taken before the Dharma Sabha Hall. The judge sat before the accused, and the town's magistrate, Shani, started his long tirade about how justice needed to be served, how Mimas had committed a heinous crime, and the evidence pointed to the fact that he needed to be punished.

"How would the defendant like to plead?" The judge asked.

"Not guilty," Mimas said, firmly. "I know I was set up."

"Can you prove it?" The judge asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Well..."

Where was the legal representative he had been promised? Before he could form a coherent sentence, the door of the Dharma Sabha Hall burst open, and a young man came running in. He yelled as he rushed to the front, "I apologize, everyone. I had to take a minor detour."

"Who are you?" The judge asked, surprised.

Even Mimas was surprised. Who indeed *was* this? Why was he bursting into the Dharma Sabha Hall like his life depended on it?

“I am Mimas’ legal representative,” the man said. “I am Surya.”

“This hearing started ten minutes ago,” the judge reprimanded him, “Do you not have regard for our time, young man?”

“I apologize, Judge,” Surya said, “But I just got to know *this* morning that I was going to be Mimas’ legal representative.”

The judge glared at the row of councilmen who sat on the side, watching the scene unfold. It had been their job to ensure the smooth sailing of cases that were tried. Even though he was known for his strict sentences, he was a fair judge.

“Do you wish to ask the court for more time, Surya?” He asked harshly.

The councilmen winced. They knew the judge would hold all of them personally accountable for the delay in Mimas’ trial.

“Y-yes.”

“Fine. Hearing is set for tomorrow afternoon. Court dismissed.”



Surya turned to Mimas and grinned. “That was great. Maybe I have beginner’s luck.”

“Beginner’s luck?” Mimas echoed, horrified. “How long have you been practicing law?”

“You are my first case.”

Mimas knew instantly that whatever hope he had conjured would dissipate in a matter of seconds. But Surya seemed bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. He had a thirst for getting justice, and he was not going to leave any stone unturned until he got Mimas his due.

The scramble of everyone leaving the courthouse made Mimas look around. He saw Callisto hurry away from the place, with their daughter in her arms. He knew he could not go after her. The guards would ensure he did not go too far.

Even though he had been glad to see them, he did not want them around his trial. On his way inside the courtroom, he had yelled at Callisto saying, “Why have you come here? Go home, immediately!”

Now, he sat next to his newly appointed lawyer, wondering if he would ever see his family again.

“I am never getting out of this alive, am I?” Mimas asked, defeated.

“I would not say that,” Surya said. “Listen, you need to tell me *exactly* what happened that morning. We

need to create enough doubt in the jury's mind to get your case thrown out of court."

"It does not happen like that in Tamapura. Are you new here?" Mimas asked, shocked, "Do you not know about the trials I will have to go through?"

"I am from two neighboring villages over," Surya said. "And while I have heard about Tamapura and the mysteries and mysticism that surrounds it, I believe in facts over fiction, Mimas. So, I need you to tell me *exactly* what happened that morning."

He knew the young magistrate meant well. He was trying to build a case in which Mimas would come out unscathed. The truth was Mimas had gone over the events of that morning a hundred of times over in his head. He had gone through every minor detail. That morning had been burned into the back of his mind. So, he told Surya everything he remembered.

"Do you think you can save me?" Mimas asked him, urgently. "And do not lie to me, Surya."

"I will do my best to get you back to your life," Surya promised. "But you will have to save yourself. No one can do that for you."

\*

Mimas was escorted back into the prison cell that had become his home. He lay down heavily on the bed and wondered if his wife and child had reached home

safely. Surya had given him a sliver of hope. But he hardly dared to believe it completely.

He prayed to the gods who were supposed to be keeping guard over Tamapura, to ensure his wife and daughter had reached home safely. It was going to be a long journey ahead for him. He wanted to fast forward to a time when none of this would matter anymore. But that was just wishful thinking.

For the next few days, he watched Surya build a case for him and argue about how it was not fair to accuse him of wrongdoing, when the only proof was an arrow. An arrow anyone could have stolen from him! He jolted when he heard this, he had never considered this possibility! Who had premeditated this? Who in this town hated Mimas enough to watch him suffer for a crime he did not commit?

Around the fifth day, someone called his name. He turned his head to see a man he had never seen before, beckoning him. Mimas looked at the guards, they nodded to let him know it was okay to go speak to the man.

“Your family is waiting for you,” he said, shortly.

Mimas did not recognize him at first, not without the ethereal glow surrounding him, but it was the same person who had visited his jail cell! He was doing a good job of blending into the crowd. He knew right then that some energy was looking after him and it had tried

to warn him through Callisto. It continued to help him, by making sure his wife and daughter were safe.

“Oh, Callisto!” he said, happily, when he saw she was standing a little way off, holding their daughter.

Ellara giggled and threw her hands up. She had no idea about the hell that she had been born into. Mimas wished he could go back in time and change all of that.

“How are you doing?” Callisto asked, urgently now. “The man said you will be out of this place soon.”

“Soon is subjective,” he told her, trying his best to smile at her. But the sadness remained in his eyes. “One hour in my cell feels like an eternity, and a minute here feels like a blink.”

“We will get through this,” she whispered, “I know it. You are innocent.”

“I believe I am, and I believe you believe it too,” he said, “But the Dharma Sabha Hall needs more than just beliefs.”

They were not allowed physical contact with each other, so he merely tried to give her and Ellara his best smile. Surya found him shortly afterward and steered him towards the courthouse.

“Tell me you finally got something to prove my innocence?” Mimas muttered, urgently.

“I did not,” Surya admitted. “But I did find something that will create reasonable doubt.”

“So, what does that mean for me?”

“You will have a reduced sentence.”

“I am not going home to my family anytime soon, am I?”

“No, but you will be back with them sooner than you think.”

Mimas thought about the ethereal man who had sought him out. Instead of feeling despondent over the news that Surya shared, he focused on what the mystical figure had told him. He would come back for Mimas again.

Then he heard it.

He stood deathly still. He could hear the faint whispers of the heart, and it was coming from within. Someone was trying to communicate with him. And the calling had come, and his journey was going to begin from inside.

\*

## Chapter Three:

### The Calling

It had been a week since Mimas first heard the calling from within himself. He waited impatiently for the man to return to his cell again—for him to guide him and help him understand. But he waited in vain. The man with ethereal beauty did not come back to his cell. Mimas lay awake at night wondering if he had just imagined the whole thing! Was he going to spend the rest of his life behind bars? Would he ever see Callisto again? Would he ever get to hold Ellara in his arms? She seemed to be growing up so fast! Was he going to become a stranger in his own daughter's eyes? Too many questions swam in his head, there were no answers.

He sat up in bed and folded his legs. He closed his eyes and just hummed a tune. He did not know what was causing him to hum the tune or where he had learned it from, but it seemed to be calling from within. Just like he had found out last time when he had been at his wits' end.

“Good, you have begun listening to yourself,” the man's voice echoed in the cell.

Mimas made a move to open his eyes but the man continued, “Keep your eyes closed. Make your mind

free. You need to understand that they can lock you up and take away your freedom, but they can never take control of your mind. You have to master your mind because only then will you become truly free, even if you are released back into the world again.”

Against his better judgment, Mimas kept his eyes closed. He concentrated as the voice had guided him and then he heard it, the first tunes of the song that he had been unconsciously humming when he had first sat down cross-legged on the bed.

A guard passing by Mimas’ cell just then noticed that there was an ethereal glow surrounding him. He put his hand on his weapon, ready to strike if anything amiss were to happen. But his worry was short-lived. Mimas opened his eyes and looked straight at the guard.

“Yes?” Mimas asked, confused at the guard’s reaction to him.

“Do you know what you had been doing, prisoner?” he asked, in awe.

“Just trying to figure out where the music was coming from,” Mimas replied, truthfully. “Do you not hear it?”

“I do not know what witchcraft this is,” the guard breathed, “But I will report this to my superior.”

However, both Mimas and the guard knew it was an empty threat. No one would believe him. They would

tell him he should lay off the mead and perhaps not work extra-long hours, even if it brought in more money for his family to live comfortably on. Besides, Mimas did not even know what the guard had witnessed. Had he seen the man sneaking in?

Mimas had no idea how he had been coming in and out of his cell. He had no approved visitors, and he had turned away Callisto and Ellara the one time they had tried to visit him here. For a minute, he wondered whether that was what the guard was referring to.

“Be honest with me,” the guard pleaded, “Do you know witchcraft?”

“What? Of course I do not,” Mimas scoffed. “I told you – I was just trying to find the music.”

Before the guard could answer, someone turned the corner and said, “I would like a word. I am Mimas’ attorney Surya.”

Mimas got to his feet to greet Surya like an old friend. He knew their relationship was that of convenience, but since he had been locked up, Mimas barely had any human contact. He was not exactly happy to see Surya but he was glad it was putting his conversation with the guard to an end for the time being.

“I have good news and bad news,” Surya said, cutting to the chase. He had never been one for small talk.



Mimas sighed, “Tell me.”

“You will only get six months in prison if you admit that it was an accident,” he said, excitedly.

“That’s the bad news?” Mimas asked, apprehensively.

“No, that’s the good news,” Surya said, letting out a deep sigh. “The bad news is if we go to trial and we lose, it will be more than that!”

“Fine, I’ll take my chances in court,” I said, firmly.

“Mimas, it’s a long shot that we win...”

“I am innocent.”

“I know you believe you are innocent. But you will never get a fair trial here.”

“Do you believe I am innocent?”

“It does not matter what I believe.”

“It matters to me.”

“Mimas...”

“I want the truth.”

Surya sighed loudly again and said, “I have my doubts.”

“If you have doubts, how will you fight for me?”

“Excuse me?”

Mimas narrowed his eyes at his attorney and asked again, “You heard me. If you do not believe me, how are you going to fight for me?”

Surya had no answer for this. It was his job to keep his clients from going to jail. But he had never really questioned whether they were innocent or guilty. It was his job to keep proving they were all innocent, even if the world had more than enough evidence of their guilt.

“We will go to trial,” Mimas said, firmly. “But I want you to do something for me tonight.”

● “I am not helping you escape from this prison,” Surya hissed. “That is a crime.”

“That is not what I am asking you to do,” Mimas said, defeated. “What I would like you to do is go home, sit on the floor, close your eyes, and really think about everything that has transpired. And then ask yourself if you are fighting for me because it is your job or because I really am innocent and need someone to believe me.”

“That is a very strange ask,” the attorney said. “Very strange indeed, but I will not refuse to do it.”

“Good,” Mimas said, softly, “See you in the morning.”

Surya did not bother to ask him how he was so sure he would be seeing him in the morning.

\*

Someone was banging on the iron bars of Mimas' prison cell. He groaned loudly as he tossed and turned in bed. His sleep only started fading when he heard someone yell, "Wake up, prisoner. There is someone here to see you."

Mimas sat up in bed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, to see Surya swimming into his vision. He looked both nervous and happy.

"I am up, I am up," he said, still trying to fight the sleep that was refusing to go away. "Is it even visiting hours?"

"I am your attorney – I can see you whenever I want," Surya told him. "Also, I would like to speak to him alone."

The guard went off muttering under his breath about how the attorneys were messing up the whole judicial system. Surya looked at Mimas with those same wild eyes and said, "I did what you asked."

"And?"

"I heard the music you were talking about and snatches of the day you were arrested for the crime..." He took a pause, and Mimas held his breath, "...that you did not commit."

"Can you prove it?" Mimas asked, hardly daring to get his hopes up.

Surya believed him. Really believed him. He would ensure that he would fight for him until the very end. And because he believed him, there was a chance they might win. He would be cleared of all charges. Ellara would not grow up wondering who her father was. He would be united with Callisto again. His heart was already beginning to sing.

“But we cannot get our hopes up,” Surya warned him. “It’s one thing to believe you are innocent. It is an entirely different thing to prove it.”

“I have no doubt now that you will leave no stone unturned to prove that I am innocent,” Mimas said, smiling at his attorney. “Because now you really believe the cause you are fighting for. Is it not?”

Surya was still new to the court. He had heard stories about how other attorneys tried every dirty trick in the book to keep their clients from going to prison. He could fight, but he knew it would all come at a cost. The serjeant who was going to try Mimas’ case was not known for being kind. He pushed for the harshest sentences. Surya was one of the newer attorneys. He had not really gotten his day in court yet. He could imagine the serjeant’s happiness when he realized Surya was the one who had been appointed Mimas’ case.

“I wish I could tell you just believing you would let you off the hook, but that is not how courts work, Mimas.”

“The entire system is flawed. I know I am innocent.”

Suddenly, Surya’s face broke into a grin. It was a change from the wildness and the gloominess that Mimas had witnessed before.

“Then we just have to find who *is* guilty.”

## Chapter Four:

### The Meeting

Mimas was almost falling asleep in his cell when he heard the faint whispers. He got up and looked around, wildly. He noticed that the gate of his cell was slightly ajar. He was taken aback. He wondered if the guards were alright? Had something made them open his cell door?

He pushed it open, and it creaked in a low, rumbling tone. No one was stopping him. He could run home, grab Callisto and Ellara, and take his chances in a new town. There was no point in waiting around here in Tamapura, where everyone had already decided that he was the sinner. As the escape plan formed in his head, he heard something.

It was low, gravelly voices coming from afar. Abandoning his initial plan of running away from the village, he decided to follow the sounds of the voices. His feet were carrying him towards the sound of their own accord—he was not even trying to find out the direction anymore. He had been lured out into the woods. His breath caught in his throat as he remembered what had happened the last time he had been in the woods by himself.

He came to a stop behind some tall bushes and spied on some of the town's members gathered around. They were in a heated debate with each other. What had he stumbled into? Was there a secret society within Tamapura that no one had ever heard of?

*Druids*, Mimas whispered to himself, as he watched these mystical beings still talking among themselves, still debating what to do next. *They are druids!*

“We have to send someone by the next new moon,” one of them said. “And since that’s only a fortnight away, we have to select the person today!”

“Yes,” another voice agreed. “We will need to train the selected person for at least twelve days, so we must find them today!”

“Should we cast a vote and decide who amongst us should?” Another one asked.

Mimas shifted uncomfortably in his spot. Where were they all plotting to send someone? And why would the person need to be trained? Were they going into a battlefield?

“The answer is clearly in front of you,” one of the members said, softly. There was a soft, ethereal tone to his voice. Mimas faintly recognized it.

But before he could pinpoint where he had heard the voice before, he heard his own name being said.

“Send Mimas. He is more prepared to face the truth than any one of us.”

“Mimas?” the first voice echoed. “Isn’t he currently on trial? How will he...”

“We’ve been waiting for you to join us for a while, Mimas,” the member who had volunteered him to be sent somewhere said, “You can stop hiding in the shadows now.”

Mimas slowly emerged from the shadows. Some of the members gasped seeing him. Others looked happy to see him.

“You,” Mimas said, recognizing the man from before. It was the same person who had brought him comfort in his jail cell on the first night. Had ensured he got some time with his family. “What is...”

“The time for questions has passed, Mimas,” the man continued, “And now, we must prepare you for the journey ahead.”

“What journey?” Mimas echoed. “And how did my jail cell get opened?”

“You did that,” the man said, smiling.

The man was smiling at him now, as though Mimas did not understand what he had been able to achieve.



“I most certainly did not,” Mimas said, indignantly. “And where are you planning on sending me anyway? Someone said I needed to be trained. For what exactly?”

“Why, my dear boy,” he said, as though he was telling him, “You are going to see the whole world.”

One of the members tutted loudly and said, “Look, we do not have time to waste. If we are sending Mimas, he needs to be trained and we need to give him some of our powers. Or else he will not survive the journey.”

At this point, Mimas knew he did not have a choice. If this group of people had decided they were going to send him somewhere, he would have to go ahead with their wishes. Besides, it might be a good break from being in his jail cell and being alone with his thoughts all day. Although he had noticed recently that he had the power to control his thoughts. Instead of wallowing in misery, he spent time trying to understand the calling that came from within. He spent time trying to figure out—whether proven innocent or guilty in court—what would be next for him.

He had waited for the ethereal being to visit him. But apparently, he had been too busy creating travel plans for him. Mimas now raised an eyebrow at him and asked, “Are you going to tell me what is going on? Without giving me riddles to solve.”

“Is it not obvious?” the man asked, softly. “We are druids. We oversee the town and ensure everything goes

smoothly. We have been watching over you too. Why do you think you can do all the things you do?”

“I have been wrongfully convicted of a crime,” Mimas cried now, furiously. “What games are you playing? You are druids?”

“Yes,” the man said, simply. “I am Shani – by the way. In case you have been wondering what to call me. Now, shall we prepare you for your journey or do you want to waste more time talking about frivolous things?”

Mimas was seething with anger now. However, he knew it would be futile to argue with Shani. He was determined to send Mimas on a journey to see the entire world. The way he spoke about it, it seemed extremely urgent. He sighed and agreed to do as he was told. He had always heard stories about druids secretly being around, and how they looked after the town. But to see them with his own eyes—being told he was one of them—it had been unexpected.

He did not get long to dwell on his thoughts. He was soon being told how to conduct himself during the travel, and what powers to use for which situation, and then he was given a warning.

“Whatever you do, you need to come back by the next full moon,” Shani told him, “Remember, if you are not back by the next full moon, you might never be able to come back again.”

“What do you mean?” he breathed. He thought of Callisto and Ellara and the fact that he might never see them again. A tight knot formed in his chest.

“You might be lost in space and time forever if you do not come back by the next full moon,” Shani warned him. “So even if you want to linger, do not do that.”

It would be twelve more days until Mimas had to leave. If he could open the door of his cell, maybe he could do it again. He would sneak a farewell to Callisto and Ellara before leaving. He hated the thought of never seeing them again.

“That is not a good idea,” Shani said, softly.

“What is not a good idea?” he asked, defensively.

“You know what I mean.”

Unfortunately, he did. How he wished he did not.

## Chapter Five:

# The Investigation

Early in the morning, Surya ventured into the woods where the alleged crime had taken place. He had taken Mimas' advice and done some soul-searching. He did not believe for a second that Mimas had purposely hurt someone—let alone killed them! Something about this did not add up at all. He knew asking the guards to aid him would be futile. This had to be something only he had to do alone. The fate of Mimas' future lay in his hands and he knew he could not let an innocent man spend one more day in jail.

He had borrowed Mimas' bow and arrow from Callisto. She had been surprised to see him at her doorstep and even more taken aback when he asked to see Mimas' weapons.

“Why do you want them?” Callisto asked, raising an eyebrow, “Are you going to plant it somewhere?”

“What? No, Callisto, I am on your side. I have to prove his innocence. It is not enough that we believe him. You know how the courts are!” Surya explained, frantically. “And I need the weapon to prove my theory.”

She nodded and disappeared inside the house. She emerged minutes later, holding Mimas' bow and arrow. She felt sad handing it over to Surya, it had almost felt like the old days when she would get her husband's bags ready before he went off to hunt in the wild woods. She had warned him not to go out that day. She had never been able to explain why she had felt that way. Something had warned her first, and she tried to warn him. But her husband had laughed it off...see where they were now!

*When he comes home, Callisto vowed, I am going to make sure he adheres to every single warning I give him.*

"Do you know what really happened that day?" Callisto now asked Surya.

The attorney sighed and said, "I have an idea. I will have a very hard time proving it in the courtroom if I cannot find any concrete evidence to back up my claim."

Callisto nodded sadly, "I keep hoping this is all a terrible nightmare," she confessed, "that when I wake up, he would be back home, and it would be that morning all over again."

"I am sorry," Surya said, softly. "I will try my best to find a way to bring your husband back home to you."

"Thank you," Callisto said, her voice barely a whisper now. "That is all I ask."

Now Surya was standing exactly where Mimas had stood, behind the bushes, with an arrow aimed at the same spot where Mimas had let his arrow loose before. He listened carefully. There was no one around. He did not hear the sounds of hooves or footsteps, nothing crunched beneath someone's feet. Knowing there was no one in the way, he let the arrow fly. He heard a faint '*thwack*' as it landed on the ground. Then he took off running towards the direction of where the arrow had lodged itself in the ground.

He stopped when he saw where the arrow had landed. Something did not add up. He checked again. Then he sat down heavily on the forest floor when he realized what had happened.

The arrow had missed the mark it had allegedly hit.

It had flown further ahead.

"How is that possible then?" Surya wondered. "I knew it was a frame-up, but this is making less sense to me."

"What do you think you are doing?" a voice boomed through the forest, making Surya almost jump out of his skin.

"Councilman Shukra," Surya greeted pleasantly, as he recognized him from his days in court. "What are *you* doing here?"

“This is a crime scene,” the councilman thundered. “How dare you trespass here?”

“I am not trespassing,” Surya said, in a polite but firm tone. “I am figuring something out for my client. I am an attorney and I have every right to investigate the crime scene.”

“Not unless you have permission, you do not,” the councilman’s voice grew even louder in anger.

Surya was surprised. It was thoroughly out of character for him to be hanging around a crime scene, and reprimanding Surya for just doing his job. He immediately decided he needed to know more about the councilman’s motives and movements.

“What are *you* here, councilman?” Surya challenged. “You are neither the defendant nor the prosecutor. Do you not need a permit to be here?”

“I am a councilman,” he thundered. “I do not answer to courtroom lawyers like you!”

“Well, I am an officer of the court,” Surya challenged him, more bravely than he actually felt. “And if you cannot tell me *why* you are here, I will have no choice but to report you to the serjeant. He can decide if you need to be here or not.”

Instantly, the councilman’s attitude changed. He had not expected Surya to be good at his job. Surya was after all, extremely young and quite new to the business

of law. The councilman wondered if he could be bribed or threatened. He would have to dig into his life to find out. *Everyone had a weakness*, councilman thought, *he just needed to find it out to exploit it.*

“You do not have to say anything to the serjeant,” the councilman said, through a forced smile. “Can we keep this encounter between us?”

“Well, the serjeant knows I am here,” Surya said, matter-of-fact. “I did get my permission before I came down here to investigate, you see.”

The councilman glared at him and then stalked off. Surya made a mental note to visit the tavern that evening and find out everything he could about the councilman. He was a long way from home, and it could not have been a coincidence that he was hanging around the same place as the crime scene!

\*

During visiting hours, Surya went to see Mimas. He looked different from how Surya remembered him.

“Jail seems to agree with you,” he said, startled. “I thought you were not guilty?”

“I am innocent,” Mimas said, smiling slightly. “I am just experiencing a different kind of freedom from behind these iron bars.”

Surya did not know what to make of him. Lately, Mimas had started speaking in riddles. Sometimes those



riddles flew right over his head. But today, he had a breakthrough in their case. He had enough evidence to get Mimas a brief respite from the jail cell.

“I have good news for you,” Surya said, excitedly. “I know for a fact you could not have done what you are being accused of. The mathematics does not support it at all!”

“Excuse me?” the prisoner asked, shocked.

“You are innocent, and I know how to partially prove it. So, they might allow you to go home for some time. You will be with Callisto and Ellara. Is that not good news?”

“Some time is not good enough, Surya,” Mimas said, coldly. “Even if I get out here, people will look at me and wonder. I need you to prove my innocence.”

“I am trying my best...” Surya said, indignantly. “Can you not understand what a huge break this is in the first place? You should be celebrating!”

“I will celebrate when you can prove that I am completely innocent. You know I am innocent and you will figure out how to prove it.”

Surya sighed loudly. Before his very eyes, his client had gone from a man possessed to a man who had a lot of calm and wisdom. He wondered what had happened to Mimas to become this version of himself.

\*

*Madhupathika*—the town’s mead path tavern—was abuzz with people drinking, talking, and exchanging pleasantries. Surya sluck into a corner, to stay out of sight. He had come here with the sole purpose of gathering information. Soon enough, Durvasa slipped into the seat opposite him.

“Ah, attorney,” he said, pleasantly. “What brings you here?”

“I need information,” Surya said, in a conspiratorial tone.

“And I need a drink,” Durvasa said, not lowering his gaze from Surya.

“Call for it,” the attorney said, coldly. “I am not ordering your drink for you.”

“Live a little, attorney,” the town gossip said, laughing. “I do not think I have seen you here since, well... since you passed out of law school.”

“I have to keep my head on straight if I want to win my cases,” Surya said, coldly.

Durvasa gestured to the man waiting tables to bring them two tumblers of the famous honey mead. The man brought them their order and scurried off. Durvasa took the first sip and made a loud satisfied sound.

“Ah yes, attorney, how can I help you?” he asked, dramatically.

“What can you tell me about Councilman Shukra? I ran into him in the woods today, and he was not happy to see me.”

Durvasa’s grin broadened and Surya knew he would leave the Madhupathika tonight with the vast knowledge of Councilman Shukra’s whole life!

## Chapter Six:

### The Journey

In the forest clearing, the Elders had gathered with Mimas. Tonight, miraculously, he had found his cell door ajar. He had learned from his previous experiences not to question the will of the Divine. He had joined them as they prepared to begin their ritual.

A part of him wondered if he should use this opportunity to grab his wife Callisto, and daughter Ellara, and flee this village. Take them to wherever they were planning to send him and start life anew.

*But what have they done?* He thought miserably to himself, *my wife and daughter are innocent. Their only fault is to be my family. This is my journey, and mine alone.*

As he stood there watching the Elders prepare the ritual that was going to send him hurtling through time and space, he wondered what awaited on the other side. He knew he had been put into this world for a far bigger purpose than the one he was currently experiencing.

“The toughest of swords are forged in the fire,” the elderly man said kindly, smiling at Mimas as the flames in the fire they had started roared loudly, “Mimas, are you ready to take the next step of your journey?”

Somehow, Mimas knew the Elder was not talking about the journey he was about to undertake, but his journey of life. Their eyes met and without exchanging a single word, he knew what the Elder meant. He was talking about his overall journey as a whole. He managed a weak smile.

“I have never felt more ready for something in my life,” he said, aloud. In his head whispered, *I cannot wait to see what other lives I will get to experience in this lifetime.*

The elder woman who had been drawing symbols on the ground beside the fire invited Mimas to step into the circle she had created. He took his position and smiled at the group looking back at him with the utmost curiosity. Some of them knew what was going to happen, while others could only guess. Only the eldest Man knew for sure what he was about to experience.

“Good luck, Mimas,” he said, smiling at the man, “You are going to come back with the knowledge that will save us all.”

“Are we in danger?” Mimas asked, urgently. “And how will I get back to this time again? Please tell me!”

“You have to come back by the next full moon,” the Elder warned. “Otherwise, you will be stuck in another time for a while.”

“But I can come back?” Mimas was beginning to panic now. While he knew he had little to no say over

what was currently happening to him, the thought of being stuck in another time where no one knew him was daunting. Even though he had been framed here, he still knew people who believed him and believed in him. It was comforting for him to be here. “There will be a way back to here again. Right?”

The Elder man smiled. “If you really wanted to come back again, you will find a way. For now, you must go on this journey.”

Mimas stopped fretting and let his body relax. Now that he was sure he could find a way back, he felt more confident about leaving. He thought once again of his little baby and his wife. He knew if he did not clear his name soon, they would bear the scars from his wounds for years to come. He had to make things right.

If this way the only way to do it, then so be it.

The flames grew higher and brighter and engulfed him. The Elders stood around him, holding hands and chanting a mantra. The fire roared a final time and died down.

The spot where Mimas stood was now empty. They congratulated themselves on a job well done. From behind the bushes, hidden from sight, Mimas’ attorney, Surya, witnessed his client being sent off into the unknown.

\*

## **Year - 2020**

When Mimas opened his eyes, he was immediately struck by how different the world around him looked. He was standing in the middle of a road. Before he could orient himself, someone loudly honked, and a car came hurtling out of nowhere! He dived to the side to save himself from being run over.

Everything looked so different. There was no greenery around. Just a winding road, and concrete jungle. He decided to take the same path as the one that the car had driven off in. He wondered despite looking so congested, why the roads were so empty. It looked deserted.

Like the forest once had looked that fatal morning when he had let his arrow fly without thinking to check if the noise he heard was made by a man!

Mimas shook his head, trying to get rid of all the thoughts that weighed down on his mind. He knew he had arrived at the intended time and place. But he was surprised he had not run into a single human being yet.

Then as if the Almighty himself were listening to his thoughts, he saw a man dressed in a uniform riding on a modern-day two-wheeler catch up to him. The man was wearing a white sheet over his nose and mouth. He frowned, scanning Mimas from top to bottom.

“Sir,” he said, bringing his two-wheeler to a halt. “Why aren’t you wearing a mask?”

“I beg your pardon?” Mimas asked, taken aback.

“We have a strict protocol now, Sir. Given the circumstances, we require everyone who is stepping outside to wear a mask!”

“I do not understand what you are talking about,” Mimas said, confused. “What is a mask? What circumstances?”

“We are in the middle of a global pandemic, Sir!” the authority figure nearly barked. “You are either going to get the infection or end up being a carrier for the same!”

Still, Mimas was not able to comprehend what was happening around him. He continued to stare blankly at the authority figure. He in turn was beginning to lose patience with the man who looked like he had been dressed from the wrong century!

“I am afraid I really do not understand.”

“Perhaps if I threw you in jail for a night, you would understand better!”

Mimas winced. He had already escaped one jail. If he ended up in another jail here, he would end up failing his mission and letting everyone down. So, he tried the only thing he thought he could do.

“Sir, I do not wish to go to jail. But please believe me. I have no idea what you are talking about. If you



could help me navigate this world, I would be extremely grateful.” Mimas said, sadly.

The man looked at him for half a minute, clearly contemplating whether to believe him or not. His kindness and empathy won in the end, and he said, “Why don’t you hop onto my bike? I will take you back to my home. Perhaps once you have a hot meal, a hot shower, and a fresh set of clothes you will begin to feel more oriented.”

“Thank you,” Mimas said, gratefully. “That is very kind of you.”

He accepted the help that was offered to him, promising himself that if he ever got an opportunity, he would pay this kindness forward.

\*

By now, Mimas had gathered that the man who was helping him was called a policeman. They were similar to the guards they had back home. He did not know how much he should share with this kind stranger. A part of him wondered if the ‘policeman’ was just putting on an act to get Mimas to let his guard down.

“Come,” the man said, kindly, as he turned the key to the door and walked inside, “I’ll show you where you can take a shower and change.”

Mimas had been wondering how could there be a shower indoors. He was curious about everything in this

timeline. He had gathered from his conversation with the generous policeman that he had arrived in the year 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic. A virus had spread all around the world, resulting in a complete shutdown of the world.

“Some people can work from home,” the policeman had said, grimacing slightly. “But first responders such as myself do not have the luxury. So, unless it’s absolutely necessary for someone to step out, we’ve been telling them they shouldn’t step out.”

Mimas was quiet as he thought back to the jobs all of them had back home. If he was forced to work from home, how would he have managed? He was a hunter. Hunters could not sit idly at home, hoping for the world to provide for their families. His wife was a gatherer. Even she would have had to venture out into the world – no matter how dangerous – in order to provide for the family and to make her trades in the town market.

“How are they managing to live?” Mimas asked, quietly, “You know, the hunters and the gatherers?”

“Oh, you mean the farmers?” he asked, sadly, “It was always a sad life for them. This pandemic has made things even worse! Every day we receive news of...”

His voice trailed off as his radio buzzed with a check-in call from his station. Mimas pondered to himself how the situation could be made better. He could not believe he had stumbled into the twenty first

century, and yet some things remained as backward and as rigid as the years he had experienced in his life.

Tamapura had evolved into a thriving township. He could spot the similarities between the now and the then, but in certain ways Tamapura was as ancient as the day Mimas had taken this journey into the new world.

“Mimas?” the policeman said, in his soft tone, handing him a change of clothes and a towel. “Right through here is the shower. You can freshen up there and change. After that, let’s get you something to eat and figure out if someone can help you.”

Mimas did not have the heart to tell this man that no one in this timeline would be able to help him. He needed to fulfill his purpose and head back home before the next full moon. Or else, he would need to figure out another way home.

He entered the room that the policeman had pointed to and looked around. He realized almost at once that they had figured out indoor plumbing. They did not need to go outside the house to take a bath anymore. He smiled at the small perks of living in 2020.

\*

Even as the policeman, whose name he had learned by now was Ajit, helped him navigate 2020. Mimas’ mind stayed with the plight of the farmers. He wondered what he could do to make their lives better.

He was convinced that he had been sent into 2020 to find a way to help them. He wondered how the people of Tamapura were reacting to his absence. Had he decided he could not wait to find out the results of his trial and run off? Or was Surya passionately defending his honour? He also thought about the Elder Man. The one who had helped him escape from his prison cell and come all the way here.

What was going on? He knew it was something bigger than just the Elders in the village deciding on a whim to send him into another time! There were too many mysteries surrounding him in both the timelines now. He sighed to himself.

He decided to ask Ajit when the next full moon was so that he could prepare accordingly. As he walked past the pictures adorning his hallway, Mimas noticed something from the corner of his eye. Thinking he must be mistaken he turned back again.

There was a painted portrait of his attorney, Surya, hanging on the top of the cluster of photographs. He leaned in further to make sure his eyes had not been deceiving him. Right at this time, Ajit stepped into the hallway as well.

“Oh, I see you are admiring the portraits of my ancestors,” he said, smiling. “That one in particular, he was one of the first in our family to work in law enforcement.”

“Yes, he is an attorney,” Mimas said, without thinking. Then he realized his mistake as Ajit stared at him, in utter confusion.

“What do you mean *is*?” he asked, suspiciously. “Okay, I already had a hunch that you are not from here. But I thought it was another place. Are you telling me you are from another time?”

Mimas hesitated, contemplating whether to tell Ajit the truth.

# Chapter Seven:

## The Year 2020

### Year – 2020

“Wait, are you telling me you have *time travelled*?”  
Ajit asked for what felt like the billionth time.

He was finding it hard, with his police training, to actually believe in the woo-woo of it all. But he had seen Mimas in his old-timey clothes. He spoke with a diction that only the oldest living generation had traces of in their words. The evidence was overwhelmingly in support of Mimas’ claims.

“Are you telling me that you have met my ancestor?” the police officer of this century could hardly believe what he was hearing.

“Yes, Ajit,” Mimas said, quietly. “Your ancestor, Surya is...well was my defence attorney. He was trying to help me clear my name.”

Ajit narrowed his eyes suspiciously, “Why were you arrested?”

“For a crime I did not commit,” Mimas told him shortly. “Surya had found evidence that I had been framed. We are supposed to go to my hearing next week.”

“Next week?” Ajit said, his head spinning. “Oh right. Your next week. For me, it has happened hundreds of years ago.” He waited a beat and then asked, “Should we find out what happened at your hearing?”

“I doubt there would be any records of that,” Mimas responded, slumping his shoulders. “Besides, I do not wish to change the past. Everything in the future will be affected. I just want to lay low, until it is time for me to return home.”

“Of course,” the policeman agreed.

They finished talking in the study. Ajit led Mimas to the guest room and showed him where everything was. He hesitated for a minute, and then said, “Look, I know we don’t know each other. But can I offer you some advice for the time you are here?”

“Yes,” Mimas said.

“You have come to a very difficult time in our history,” Ajit said seriously. “The world is dealing with a global pandemic. They are still trying to figure out a vaccine for the same. It is not safe to wander about in the streets, especially, if you are not wearing a mask. So, until it is time for you to go back home, I suggest you make the most of my home. I have been told my ancestors built it. So maybe there are books in the library that might come of use to you.”

Mimas smiled at the worried face of the young man and said, “I am happy that you are sharing your concerns with me, Ajit. Be assured I will not be a menace to you as you patrol the streets tomorrow. I understand it is hard right now.”

“I am sure life was very hard where you are from as well,” Ajit said kindly. “This is just a different kind of hard.” Then he brightened up and said, “But there are some perks. Have you heard of televisions and the internet?”

\*

## **Medieval Ages**

Back in Tamapura, Surya sat at his office desk, trying to understand what he had seen the night before. He could have sworn he had seen all the village Elders gathered together, dancing around a fire. He was sure that he had seen Mimas standing there for a second, and then gone in the next. He blinked his eyes.

Had he blinked at the wrong time? Was his mind playing tricks on him? He had been at the Madhupitika right before he had come excitedly down to the jail to give Mimas the good news. Only the unearthly glow coming from the forest clearing had lured him there. He was not too sure that the Elders did not know that he had borne witness to their rituals.

He could have sworn the man who had been the leader had looked back and met his eyes directly. The



Elder had non-verbally tried to dare Surya to speak up. But his head had been buzzing with the dirt he had gathered on Councilman Shukra, and he had a new defence strategy in place. He just could not believe his defendant was suddenly taking a one-way trip out of the town he had been fighting so hard to stay in!

“Is everything okay, Surya?” asked one of the people he worked with. “You have been staring in space for the last half an hour.”

“Just a tough day in court coming up,” Surya mumbled. “I just need to go follow up on a hunch.”

It did not look like his colleague believed him. However, Surya did not have time to think about that. He knew the jailors were under some kind of spell and would not let him go see Mimas in his cell. It was to cover up the fact he was not even there. His only way of proving it was to get Callisto to request an audience with her husband. He set off to see her at her home.

\*

Surya could not help but feel bad for Callisto when he saw her from a distance. She was sitting outside on the lawn of the humble house, holding her daughter, Ellara, in her hands. There was a faraway expression on her face. Surya wondered if that was how he had looked to his colleague. He cleared his throat loudly as he approached, to give her some time to gather her thoughts. Callisto did not seem to care.

“Callisto,” he finally called when he was within her earshot and said, “May we speak for a minute?”

“Of course,” Callisto said, at once, adjusting her child and sitting up in her chair, “What can I do for you, Surya?”

“Have you heard from Mimas at all this week?” he asked, quickly. As though saying her convicted husband’s name fast would take away the pain it would no doubt inflict on her.

Callisto flinched when she heard his name but her voice remained steady. “No, I have not heard from my husband. But seeing that he is in jail, I doubt they let him send notes back to his family.”

“Do you wish to see him this week?” Surya pressed on, “I cannot imagine how hard this has been on you and Ellara. She is so tiny too!”

“Mimas does not want to see us,” Callisto said sadly. “I had gone to the first hearing. He had yelled at us so loudly. I do not think he wants to see him in the state that he is currently in.”

“He is innocent,” Surya assured her at once. “And I have the evidence to prove it. But in order to do that, I need to meet with him. The guards are not letting me through. Please, Callisto.”

“What would you like me to do about it?” Mimas’ wife was shocked.

Her husband had told her quite flatly that he did not want her or Ellara to be exposed to the toxicity that took place in courts. His life, his choices, his characters—everything would be ripped apart. Even if Surya managed to get him acquitted, no one would see him the same way as before. He could not bear the thought of that being his wife and daughter.

“I want you to request an audience with your husband,” Surya said urgently. “If we move quickly, we might be able to get an earlier hearing date, and end this nightmare once and for all.”

“But he said...”

“Callisto, I am desperate. And this is for Mimas. Believe me, if I had any other option, I would have pursued it. I am out of ideas. Unless you request to see him, I cannot pass along the message that I have for him.”

She thought for a beat and then nodded her head in agreement.

\*

Mimas lay awake in the new bed, in this kind stranger’s house in 2020. He could not help but think again about the poor farmers who had been affected by the pandemic. His thoughts travelled to his beautiful wife, Callisto, and his daughter, Ellara. He wondered if he should go home just to bring them back to 2020. It

was not the ideal world he had hoped for. But it seemed to be a start.

“Maybe I can decide by the time the next new moon rolls around,” he told himself, as he drifted off to an uneasy sleep. “I will know my place in this timeline and can figure out if Callisto and Ellara should be here with me.”

# Chapter Eight:

## The Startup

### **Year - 2020**

In 2020, Mimas watched the news on the magic box that Ajit had called a television. He had even loaned him a mobile phone to keep in touch while he went on duty. The phone constantly buzzed with notifications about the great tragedy that had befallen the world. He wondered if the Elders had accidentally sent him to the wrong timeline.

“Everything is just so sad these days,” Mimas muttered to himself, as he changed the channel. He came to the next one. The woman inside the box was talking about how bad the situation had become for the farmers.

“They are torn between keeping their crops for themselves or selling them to have some kind of income,” she was saying.

Mimas had not been able to shake the conversation that he had had with Ajit from his head. When he had casually mentioned how difficult the lives of farmers had become over the years. It was worse right now. They were in the middle of a global crisis. There was a food shortage. Not everyone could afford to hoard their

food supplies. It occurred to Mimas that while everyone was caught in the same storm, some were weathering it in a cruise ship, while others were hanging on to their dear life on a lifeboat.

“Maybe we should do something,” he told Ajit when the policeman returned home after serving his hours on duty. “How can no one want to help the farmers? Especially the ones here locally.”

“Because everyone is too busy trying to save themselves,” Ajit said, sighing. He put his feet on the table and relaxed on the sofa, “But I would like to hear ideas on how we can better help the farmers. Believe me, it is heartbreaking to answer the calls about yet another farmer who either succumbs to his weakness or decides to go out on his own terms. His poor family...”

Mimas stared at Ajit for a minute. He bore such a strong resemblance to Surya. He finally voiced a thought that had nagged him since he had discovered their familial bond.

“How come you did not become an attorney?” Mimas asked. “I thought you would have wanted to follow in your ancestor’s footsteps.”

“Well,” Ajit said, slowly. “I did think about it. I mean, half of my family on my father’s side are lawyers. They did manage to make a name for themselves. But I wanted to make sure that I catch the actual bad guys, you know. It is hard for an attorney to

believe in black-and-white thinking. But as a police officer, I can do exactly that.”

“Surya would have liked you,” Mimas said, smiling at Ajit and his no-nonsense approach to life. “He is an attorney, yes. But his thinking is quite black and white. He never believed in living in the grey. Unlike my prosecutor.”

Ajit laughed, “I am sure my ancestor would not be thrilled to find out I became a police officer. If we are to believe history, policemen and lawyers famously do not get along.”

“Exceptions prove the rule, Ajit,” Mimas reminded him, smiling. “Now, can I tell you about the idea I had to help the farmers find some kind of balance in this cruel twist of fate?”

“Of course,” Ajit said, at once, opening his eyes and sitting up straight. “I will try my best to help you out with the idea too.”

\*

THUD!

Callisto’s fist came down hard on the table of the guard who was refusing to let her go see her husband. She had tried everything—begging, pleading, asking for just five minutes. But the guard just would not budge from his position. In frustration, she had banged hard on the table he was sitting behind.

“I demand to see my husband,” she almost yelled in tears. “I know no one believes he is innocent. But you cannot keep me from seeing him.”

“Control yourself, woman,” the guard shouted back. “Do not cause a scene here, or I will have you thrown in jail too. You can be neighbors with your husband. Your daughter will be dropped off at the orphanage. Is that what you want?”

“How dare you threaten a grieving woman like that?” Callisto asked him, her voice quivering with suppressed rage. “You know I am barely hanging on by a thread. It is normal to ask to see my husband.”

“Your husband has requested privacy,” the guard said shortly. “I know you believe we do not treat our prisoners fairly. But trust me, woman, we are not letting you see him as per his wishes. Not our own. They get very few rights in there. Do you want me to violate the ones he has the right to exercise?”

“Do not play these mind games with my client,” Surya said emerging from the shadows. “If she wants to see her husband, you are legally required to convey that message to him. If he still refuses, then we will go.”

Surya’s eyes were ablaze with anger. The guard did not argue with him. Instead, he disappeared into the back, no doubt to Mimas’ empty jail cell. Surya had not been able to bring himself to tell Callisto what he already knew. He needed concrete proof before he



could confide in her what he had seen. Because if he did it without proof, she would have him committed to the asylum. Given how Surya had constantly stepped on everyone's toes since he started practicing, he knew half the town would be more than eager to follow her lead on the same.

“Thank you,” Callisto said sobbing. “I did not know how much more I could take of that before I would snap.”

“You cannot snap,” Surya reminded her urgently. “Please. Everything depends on your ability to see things through. We are all counting on you.”

“All of you?” she asked with a chuckle. It was as though she did not believe it anymore. Mimas had pushed her away too hard to keep her safe. He was afraid Mimas had risked losing her for good.

The guard appeared again and said, “He says he does not wish to see anyone. Even his super-hot wife.”

He smirked a little while saying it. Callisto almost took the bait as she violently stepped towards him. Surya jumped in front of her and kept her from getting herself locked up.

“No, this is not why we came here,” Surya said urgently. “Come with me now, Callisto. We have to talk. It is very important.”

She calmed down instantly and followed Surya out of the town's jail. Surya led her to the forest clearing where he had seen the ritual taking place. Callisto stopped dead in her tracks as they entered it and asked, "Is this some kind of joke?"

"Of course not," Surya told her in an assuring tone. "It is my way of trying to make you understand something I suspect you know. Or have known for a while."

"You are scaring me, Surya," she said apprehensively. "What are you talking about? Is Mimas okay?"

"Callisto, what do you know about the Druids?" Surya asked flatly.

The stunned look on her face gave him all the confirmation he needed. Callisto had always known about this. She had just pretended to turn a blind eye towards what had been going on with her husband. She had just wanted him to be safe. She did not care about the means as long the ends were justified.

Surya took a deep breath and asked, "Mimas is not here at the moment, is he Callisto? If you want to save him from being branded a convict all his life, you need to tell me where I can find him."

Callisto sighed and said, "It is not the question about where he is, Surya. He is here. In Tamapura. You

need to find out *when* he is. If you want his name cleared in this timeline.”

\*

In 2020, Mimas excitedly shared his idea with Ajit. He wanted to make a platform through which both farmers and clients would benefit from each other. They would not have to depend on middlemen with hefty fees to have their crops and harvest go to the right person. With everyone’s newfound fear of what they were consuming, it would be easy to convince people to switch to a farm-fresh diet.

“It is hard to believe that you have been here all of five minutes and you already have an idea for a startup,” Ajit said, excitedly. “And I do like the idea. My partner’s son is a tech wizard. Let me invite them over tomorrow and we can go deeper into how to go about launching our startup.”

“Our startup?” Mimas echoed, surprised.

“Of course,” Ajit said, happily, “You need a financial backer. I am more than happy to be that for you, especially for your prototype.”

## Chapter Nine: The Dilemma

True to his word, Ajit introduced Mimas to the people who would help him create a means for the farmers to sell their produce without incurring a loss. Ajit even advised Mimas to think about how else he could help the less fortunate who were distraught due to the working conditions brought about by the global pandemic.

“The drivers,” Mimas said, suddenly in the middle of the night, when he had stayed up way too late obsessing over how to bring justice to those whose fate had dealt a cruel hand.

He could sympathize with them because he too had been dealt an equally cruel hand. He no longer knew what kind of a world he would be going back to, once his purpose in this timeline had been fulfilled. It felt like his own personal Eureka moment.

Ajit smiled at his house guest’s enthusiasm and said, “I am glad you were sent to our time. I am confident that with your contribution, we will be able to make a difference in the world.”

Mimas looked pensive and then said, “My grandfather used to say that everyone is put on this

world to fulfil their destiny. Maybe this had always been mine.”

This new world that Mimas had been living in for the past few weeks looked nothing like the world he had been catapulted from. However, in many ways, it still was the same. Justice was delayed. People still got away with petty crimes. And there no longer was a weekly town meeting holding everyone accountable for their actions.

He thought about how close-knit the community of Tamapura used to be during the time he lived there with his wife and daughter. Of course, things had not gone in his favor. But he was sure someone had been out for his blood. He had never been one to sugarcoat his feelings. Maybe he had ticked someone off the wrong way. Or maybe he had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. Mimas shook his head firmly.

Now was not the time to throw himself a pity party. He knew the Druids had chosen this particular time for him on purpose. He could feel it in his bones that he was doing the right thing by launching an app (or that is what he swore Ajit had explained to him countless times) that would be for the greater good. Especially for the farmers. His heart had gone out to them in their plight.

“Callisto would have faced the consequences of the restrictions too if she had been in this time,” Mimas had reasoned with Ajit when the latter questioned him about

his true intentions. “I am trying to honour my wife as well. Believe me, the money of this time will not help me when I return. Even if I make a big name for myself, I still have to go back and face my demons from when I came.”

“About that...” Ajit said haltingly. “I know you told me to leave your case alone. But I went digging through all the old archives. It is quite surprising how far back the history of Tamapura goes you know...”

“Cut to the chase, Ajit,” Mimas said coldly. “Did you find out the outcome of my case? Despite me telling you explicitly not to go digging for answers.”

“C’mon,” the young policeman argued. He looked so much like Surya in that moment, for a second Mimas could not understand who he was talking to. “I have been spending almost a week under the same roof as you. I got curious. I wanted to know what they accused you of, and if...”

“...If I was guilty,” Mimas said shortly. “I do understand that, my son. I just did not want the history to color your judgement of me.”

“Actually,” Ajit admitted quietly. “It did quite the opposite.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean even if you find a way to go back, I do not think you should. And if you do go back, you should

bring your daughter and wife here. Start over. Build a new life. The one you knew is over. It is beyond a shadow of doubt that you are innocent. But the courts do not seem to look at cases that way. Especially not in the time you are from. You...”

Mimas grimaced and said, “You have already said too much, Ajit. I do not want the past to create a burden for your future. Please, do both of us a favour and do not go digging into the history of my life. Or, of this town.”

“But...” Ajit tried to protest.

Mimas held up a hand to silence him and said, “Let us focus on launching our...app...was it? Like I said I was sent by our ancestors to fix what is broken. When the time is right, I will return. And I will face the consequences of my actions.”

“You are straight up insane,” Ajit said, shaking his head. “But you are also right. We need to focus on launching our app to the market. Too many people’s livelihoods will depend on it. Including yours, if you change your mind about staying behind.”

Mimas and Ajit never spoke about the past again. They focused all their attention towards the future. Sometimes when his thoughts were idle, Mimas would think about his beautiful wife, Callisto, and his adorable daughter, Ellara. He wondered if they had realized he had gone off into another time. If the people of

Tamapura were going insane, trying to figure out his whereabouts.

He knew the Druids could cast a powerful spell. So, he reasoned they might have created a decoy for him. Maybe the decoy would get to spend the rest of his life with Mimas' family or in jail. It all depended on how well Surya was able to spin the story in their favour. He smiled to himself. At least Surya was still there. He would be able to see through the smokescreen that had been put up. He would ensure his family remained safe.

"Maybe Ajit is right," he said to himself. "Maybe it is time for me to go home and bring my family to this time. Life is never going to be the same for me in the time we are originally from. Maybe this is why I was sent to this time. Because they knew I would not be able to figure out the way forward if I remained in that time. I am so glad that the Druids found me when they did."

He lying on the bed in Ajit's guest bedroom with his eyes closed. Flashes of the time when the Druids had surrounded him came before his eyes. The eldest male leader, he had a familiar aura about him. Mimas had never noticed it before. The crinkle in his eyes, the dimple on his chin. Everything about him seemed oddly familiar.

Then a memory he had long buried burst into his mind. Someone was playing peek-a-boo with him when he was just a toddler. He had been laughing and giggling at the silly game. A sharp voice from behind



yelled, “Why are you wasting your time playing with the child? Should you not be at work?”

“Playing with children is good for their development,” the man who had been playing with him said happily, “It is fine. It is good for the boy to spend some time with his grandfather.”

*Grandfather.*

Mimas’ eyes flew open in horror. He knew at once who had come to him and had sent him hurtling through space and time into 2020. He just did not understand why his own grandfather would do such a thing!

## Chapter Ten:

### The Return

“And we will be live in 5...4...3...2...1...”

The small, controlled group of people in Ajit's living room cheered loudly and celebrated as they saw the app they had built come to life. Almost immediately, the downloads skyrocketed. The same thing happened for the app they launched for the drivers who would be instrumental in helping haul the fresh crops around to those who would be placing the orders.

“Congratulations, Mimas,” Ajit said happily. “It looks like you were able to do successfully what you had been sent here to do.”

Mimas nodded, words failing him. He had already been feeling overwhelmed by the kindness that had been shown in this time. In 2020, Ajit had become one of the champions who rallied around him and believed in his vision. From the time Mimas was from, barring his family, only Surya had shown him that kind of support. It was befitting that the two men had been ancestors. He still could not wait to go back and tell Surya all about how amazing it had been to see his legacy carried on.

He thought about his grandfather too. Mimas would have a lot of questions for the man when they finally meet. He remembered that it was only during the new moon that he could attempt to go back to his former life. Secretly, he had started preparing for the ritual. It would only be for a split second that the two worlds would connect, and Mimas would be able to pass through time and space and journey back to where he had come from. He knew he needed a clean break from 2020 and had to disappear without letting Ajit get wind of the fact that what he was planning it.

It was a good thing that coincidentally the new moon happened to be on the same day as the launch of their new app.

\*

Callisto sat cross-legged in the forest clearing, waiting for the Elders to find her. She had closed her eyes and stayed in a meditative state. Then she heard the rustle of leaves and the sounds of footsteps.

She called out more daringly than she felt, “I know my husband is not here. You have sent him somewhere. I just merely wish to know when he would be back.”

“On the night of the new moon,” Mimas’ grandfather said. “And you can open your eyes, child. You are fooling no one.”

Callisto’s eyes fluttered open at once. She glared at the old man and said, “He better come back to this

family in one piece. You cannot just have him at your beck and call.”

“Oh, but he chose this life,” the old man said in clipped tone. “If you have any desire to keep him in your life, I suggest you accept that. And, dear, please stop leaving my great-granddaughter unattended whenever you are running around town indulging in these schemes. The world is not a safe space for her.”

“The world is not a safe space for my husband either,” Callisto said angrily. “And yet, you have sent him God knows where...”

“Mimas is fulfilling his life’s purpose,” the old man said shortly. “You can come back here at night, with my great-granddaughter of course, and greet him yourself. I assure you; he is fine.”

“I wish I believed you,” Callisto said shortly, and left.

\*

On both sides, they got everything ready. Mimas had created his spell circle in Ajit’s backyard. He started his chanting to get the fire to roar like it had done before. But he knew he alone would be no match for the magic required to pull something like this off.

The Elders had gathered around on the other side of the veil, chanting and feeding the fire. Callisto stood in a corner, with Ellara in her arms. A little far away

stood Surya, watching the whole scene like it was something out of the books he had been reading secretly instead of his study material.

Something definitely was moving because a little portal appeared connecting the two times. Mimas found it frustrating to both hold the portal by chanting and trying to pass through it as well. He took a step forward and the portal seemed to move back.

On the other side, Callisto waited with bated breath, wondering what was going on. She could see that the spell that had been cast was working. However, there was no sign of her husband emerging through it. She clutched her baby even more tightly and wondered what was going on. She wondered if this really was a final goodbye to her husband.

Mimas started feeling weaker as the magic got drained out of him to try and keep the portal between the times open. He tried his best but he could not push through. In this time too, he made a grave mistake. The Fates refused to cooperate with him.

Finally, his strength left his body and he collapsed to his knees. He raised a hand before falling face forward on the grass where he had been trying to open the portal.

“MIMAS!” Ajit yelled as he saw the final moments of what had happened.

The tiny portal was still open, and for a second, Ajit felt like he was staring at himself in the mirror. But before he could react, the portal closed. He hurried to Mimas to help him sit up.

“I was...I was...” Mimas gasped, as he tried to catch his breath.

“Go home, I know,” Ajit said, gently, “I know. Who could blame you for trying to do so?”

Mimas managed a weak smile.

On the other side, Surya was startled to see his doppelganger. He turned a horrified face towards the Elders who realized their magic had failed to bring Mimas home. Then he heard the heart-rending screech that escaped Callisto’s mouth.

“He will come back,” Mimas’ grandfather assured Callisto. “Have faith, child. He will find his way back to us again.”

Mimas barely had any strength left to stand on his feet. He leaned heavily against Ajit and said, “I missed my opportunity to go back to my time. I hope you allow me some time to figure out what is next for me.”

“Of course,” Ajit said, letting Mimas put his weight on him. “Whatever you need.”

“Maybe it is all for the best,” Mimas mused. “Let me learn the ways of the world in 2020, and I can go

back and bring my family here. This could be our fresh start.”

Mimas’ app had given the farmers a second chance at life. Perhaps, this was his shot at redemption. Maybe, just maybe, this was how Mimas would get his fresh start.