

CH. 1 *YOU ARE MY DESTINY*

Pleasantly full from the celebratory meal of boiled millet and roasted guinea hen, the young man dashes headlong through the brush making his way from the bustling activities of his village. Weaving through oddly shaped foliage covering the dense green rainforest floor, he rushes very quickly over lush vegetation, careful to look where he steps with his bare feet.

The last time he'd sought out this secret place of meditation, the rhythmic hum of forest creatures busily navigating their world, combined to lull him into a false sense of security.

The young man temporarily lost his fine tuned sense of awareness as he listened to those creatures gathering up the seasonal energy needed for procreation and survival.

"If we humans follow the example of all creation, we would be so much better off," he muses. Nostrils flaring from the scent of heat rising over the damp earth, he realizes the subterranean creatures existing below ground are doing the work necessary to keep the soil cleansed and refreshed. The young man of eighteen seasons looks to the heavens and thanks the Creator for endowing him with the ability to appreciate the many gifts with which mankind has been given.

He is acutely aware that this legacy allows for deeper understanding of how the cosmos moves in universal harmony.

Gazing up at the trees, some draped with unusually shaped vines and hanging foliage, he cautiously approaches a canopy of twisted and bent baobab trees making sure they were not camouflaging any coiled venomous serpents.

"Many a good warrior has lost his life through one puncture from a poisonous snake," he thinks, using his machete to hack through the tough overgrowth that had dried out making navigation difficult. The young man does the same deep perusal of the forest floor as he steps with crunching sounds upon the dense fragrant plant life that covers the ground.

"One must respect and revere nature and be always vigilant," he whispers as he raises his eyes to the trees once more.

"No snakes here," observes the young warrior, reaching a clearing that reveals a large expanse of soft grasses blooming with sweet smelling orchids and wild flowers covering the landscape like a soft down blanket.

Returning his machete to its leather sheaf that drapes his strong muscled chest, the handsome young man presents a broad dimpled smile revealing even white teeth set against very dark and prominent features. The young man feels an intense sense of elation when he approaches this secret place.

Just beyond the next grove of trees lay paradise as far as he is concerned. Making his way beyond the trees, he pushes branches and tangled vines away to reveal one of creation's greatest glories. Before him unfolds an abundance of sweet flowering plant-life whose aromas ride the misty air with perfect quintessence. The young man has deep respect for the transformative nature of world in

which he lives.

He eagerly settles down upon a comfortable place in the undergrowth where he can relax in quiet repose to contemplate his future.

"This is the golden time of evening," thinks the young warrior. The sun sent its dappled rays through the trees to settle over the area bringing quietness, peace, and calm to the warrior and to the Great River on whose banks he rests.

Surrendering to the peacefulness of this lush paradise, he is carried away by his deeper thoughts. Settling against a cushion of leaves he soon enters an entranced state as the river's babbling and lazy waters begin to tell their ancient story. "Take me where you will me to go," he implores. The soothing sounds of the water soon become one with the rest of nature and a low hum encompasses the area sending the young man into a nether-world in which he is only slightly aware that he is suspended somewhere in time.

The young warrior's dark sensuous eyes begin to lower and close as he fingers the rough tribal markings slashing across his left jaw line. The ridges are uneven in some areas and smooth in others. His elders gave these markings to him when he'd reached his majority three summers ago. They tell the story of his family, and indeed, the all-encompassing saga of his people; their connection to the universe can be traced through these special markings.

The young man in repose finds peace in his mind and tranquility in his spirit. He is only slightly aware that he is suspended between two worlds as an ethereal light surrounds his glistening physical form and an enveloping mist caresses his ebony skin like the hands of a skillful lover.

The ancients begin speaking to the young warrior in a cacophony of voices; male, female, young and old. They tell of legends in which the spirits of his people flew from their earthly forms at night to commune with the Light of the Universe, only to return to their bodies by day's light with whisperings of ancient truths meant only for the ears of enlightened elders.

He is told of the super-sensitivity of his people; how they came to be in tune with all of the creatures of the Earth and great ocean-sea.

Indeed, the ancients could read the heavens and planets using only the naked eye! These ancestors passed along to all their generations the tools needed for surviving in a complex and ever evolving world.

The waters of the Great River rise up and are no longer calm and babbling. They become choppy and troubled as they crash angrily against their banks spraying the warrior with hard droplets.

His breath comes in short shallow measures and his soul stirs with anticipation as he starts to channel his destiny. The ancients speak to him of faraway places populated by humans who are very different from his people.

They warn the young man of the dangers posed by some of these strange people. The ancients urge the warrior to carry a message of wariness and caution to his people as some who walk among them will be their betrayers. They speak of general danger in the land and upon the mighty ocean-sea.

The young heart pounds erratically as the warrior senses a heretofore unperceived and chilling danger that shakes him to his core. He is painfully aware that this lurking danger will bring torment and certain death to his people.

"How am I to prepare for this horrible fate if I don't know what to look for?" he implores.

"Just know," the voices of the ancestors speak as one, "you have been endowed with a spirit of survival."

"Your generations will traverse the great ocean-sea to take root in a new land and you will survive through great struggle," the ancestors intone, still as one.

"Ya-Ya." The warrior hears the sound very faintly at first. He then becomes aware of a more drawn out and sensuous "Ya-Yaaaa," that sends a scintillating thrill coursing along his spine. A deep sense of euphoria replaces the feeling of dread.

His heart slows to a normal pace as fragrant mists swirl around his body covering it like a protective mantel.

A gentle smile tugs at the corners of his full lips and his cheeks give way to two deep dimples that broaden his countenance into a wide grin.

The wind whispers “Ya-Yaaa” once more as a lone raven shrieks in the distance. The young man feels himself being drawn into the center of a pair of beautiful eyes the color of darkest violet. The eyes are deep enigmatic mysterious pools just like the waters of the Great River on whose banks he lay in repose. The warrior feels a magnetic pull toward those deep pools.

“Not so fast young warrior,” he hears very faintly in the back of his mind. But it was too late. He cannot fight the magnetism drawing him into the depths of those deep dark pools.

“Her eyes are deep like the Great River....” Tunde shakes his head to clear his thoughts from the direction this encounter seemed to be going.

“Concentrate man!” he thinks, admonishing himself for his wandering mind.

He’d almost said the words out loud to Oni Derricotte, his relatively new client at his fitness center, Oasis on the Nile.

As a personal trainer he had often felt the pull of an attractive sister. But this was something quite different. This woman was yanking on his soul with her smoldering glances and flirtatious smiles.

“You know what you’re doing, don’t you?” he said telepathically. He heard the faintest of whispers, “you know I do Daddy.”

“What did you just say Oni?” he asks, still trying to clear his head. “I said you’re pushing me like my daddy, acting like this is some kind of boot camp.” “I thought you were supposed to be a personal trainer, not a personal torturer” she laughs.

Personal training, actually, is Tunde Muhammad’s for-fun-play-job. Even though physical fitness is important to him, this is not his serious, make-ends-meet, day job. He enjoys engaging in personal training as a way to cool down from the world of business and finance.

Tunde and his group of friends, family and personal investors are looking to invest in business endeavors on the resource rich continent of the mother Africa.

The Black to the Future Investment Group does not seek to rape and exploit Africa’s wealth of natural resources as many European countries have done in the past.

Tunde and members of his investment group have taken it upon themselves to learn the history and steep themselves in the culture of various regions of the continent. They seek advice and counsel of the eldest trade ministers from the regions they approach about investing; for it is these elders who have the gift of touching both the past and present.

They were aware of past atrocities which have been principle in undermining the economic and political well-being of much of the entire continent.

“The elders know well how to heal the landscape my brother” his friend and one of his closest confidants, Malachi explained.

Tunde is also a historian by training; “a true griot,” his friend Taj says, which is what gave him the idea for investing in the Alkebulan, the ancient name for Africa, and he enjoys teaching history courses part-time at the local community college.

His professions give him ample time to travel and research Black culture and history in a way that is personal and meaningful for him. The study of history truly gives him a sense of identity and provides a connection to his earliest origins.

Tunde bid Oni goodbye at the front desk reminding her to make an appointment for the following week. As he shed his clothes and headed for the shower, he thought back to their exercise session. He couldn’t believe he had lost his train of conscious thought and that she had followed him in his musings to the point where she answered him when he spoke to her telepathically.

“This woman is my destiny,” he spoke out loud in a way that called up the ancestors, “otherwise, how could she have responded to me in such a sensual and evocative manner?” “It’s not as simple as you think son” came the distant strains of his ancestors.

Tunde heard all of these utterances in his head and they still had a tendency to shake him up. Even

though he had been assured by his seeing auntie Lulu, that these thoughts and visions were quite normal for people who had been granted, the gift of psychic sensitivity and vision.

As a very young man, Lulu would counsel Tunde to “go with the flow” of what he was hearing and seeing. “You see son, she’d said, “these abilities come directly from God, our creator, but many people in our culture have not been handled with the necessary care required to help them accept and use their gifts.”

Tunde’s eyes and ears would stay focused on his Tatu Lulu when she spoke to him about his gifts. “That’s why you see so many of our people on street corners talking to themselves and everybody thinking they’re crazy,” she said.

“That’s what happens when a people lose awareness of who they really are.” Lulu implored Tunde to “always use your gifts for the good.”

