

Raven Nothing

Raven Nothing

by

Som Paris



Aqueduct Press
PO Box 95787
Seattle, Washington 98145-2787
www.aqueductpress.com

This book is fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2020, Som Paris

All rights reserved

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020940263

ISBN: 978-1-61976-171-1

First Edition, First Printing, October 2020

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Cover illustration courtesy Ruby Rae Jones
www.rubyraejones.com, @ruby.rae

Printed in the USA by McNaughton & Gunn

Acknowledgments

To all the lovely folks at Aqueduct Press for making this story happen: Kath, Arrate, and Timmi.

Also to the patrons who are the backbone of Sete Outeiros, the free trans and queer nature retreat: Catarina Clöwe, Debbie Ash, Ethan Tidwell, Janelle Worthington, Sheryl C Garfio, Sophie Labelle, Danny McManus, and Shaun Coley.

Y'all have made many magical moments possible for so many people from around the world.

www.patreon.com/somparis

*To Andru and Ioa, without whom
Raven would never have lived.*

Chapter One

The Mermaid

This time in waking's yawn, when dream shadows tend to grow solid, generally turning into a bed, walls, bookshelves, and cuddly dragons, they instead formed an ice-cold nightmare. Her thick, wet clothes pinned her down, and cold brine flooded her mouth as the ice block beneath ploughed up to the surface of the water. Her eyes fluttered open, confused at the dark sky, confused at the violent waters, and confused at the frozen bed of ice on which she had woken.

When she raised her head, all she could see was an ocean with great chunks of ice bobbing all around, some the size of tables and others, houses. No, this was not the warm loft bedroom in her father's house in Vauxhall, where she would stay up late scheming to break into the house library; nor was this her friend Kaitlyn's room, where the girls would lie awake long after they had been told to sleep, giggling and pretending their bed was a boat and they, Viking adventurers or Chinese junk explorers or East African fishers-cum-pirates.

Her sodden clothes were freezing leeches. Just yesterday she had borrowed this thick tartan skirt and green coat from Kaitlyn—the school would never have issued her with the girls' winter uniform.

Clothes, cold; hair, cold; the ice-crystal bed she lay on, cold; the air in her lungs, cold. Only one thing was warm:

something beneath her, something sunk into the ice itself. She moved her shivering leg aside and picked at it, dislodging it from the crusty crystals: a coin. Her shaking fingers tried to hold it still enough to inspect its carved figures: the rough outline of a giant bird with outstretched wings and, on the other side, a rampant bear.

The trembles and shivers grew into great heaves that made her ice-block-bed bob and clack into its neighboring ice blocks. With a frozen nose and burning eyes she tried to keep calm and survey her surroundings. At some point in the horizon, the white ice stopped bobbing up and down. That must be firm land. Icy land. In that direction lay mountains. There was no sun; perhaps it had already set; everything seemed darker now than moments before. A shriek from the sky brought her eyes up just in time to see a bird swoop overhead, its purplish wings stretched out wide, just like the figure on the coin. As it soared so high above, circling in and out of the darkening clouds, Raven began to feel a warmth return to her insides, and the great heaving shudders of her body subsided into normal everyday shivers. It was the coin; the warm coin in her hands spread hot relief throughout her shocked body. She wiped her tears aside to look around. All was ice, distant mountains and darkening sky, and every minute was darker still. There was nothing else out here.

But no, there, behind that tall chunk of ice, wasn't there something? A little figure darting and weaving about. There, it had jumped onto another floating chunk, and wasn't it now peering back at her, desperately trying to hide? But a field of white ice is no place to hide something that was not white.

Apparently, after a few minutes of staring and watching, he decided that Raven was safe enough. He ventured out, moving cautiously towards her. With one agitated eye on the sky, he hopped from one block of ice to another, each one a little closer. He was young and black like her, dressed in oiled leather,

and he kept peering up at the sky nervously, as if something just awful might be up there. He stopped one ice block away. She rose, and they stood a moment on their bobbing slabs staring at one another, he and she, she and he.

“Where am I?” Raven asked, her voice scratchy.

“You’re a girl?” His face screwed up anxiously.

“I’m a girl,” she asserted automatically, almost defiantly.

“You’re not a mer-wer?” he insisted, cautiously.

“A mer-wer? You mean like a mermaid?”

“Mermaid? I don’t know.” He shook his head. “But I don’t think you’re a mer-wer; you look like a girl.”

“I’m not a mermaid, I’m a girl, my name is Raven,” she said, her hand out towards him.

He stared at her hand and took a step back.

“I’m Adap,” he said, bowing slightly. “What are you doing here?” That worried look in his eyes returned. “You don’t look like you’re from any of our villages.”

“I live in Vauxhall.”

“Boxball?”

“In London.”

“Lumdim?”

“I think it’s far away.”

His eyes jumped back skittishly to the sky. “We should leave. I saw grissics when I was fishing. Can you row?”

She shook her head no.

He hopped away, and the world became a little darker still while she waited for him to return, but the bird still circled above, its wings dwarfing an already big body, they stretched out the breadth of the sky like she imagined a dragon’s would. Adap appeared tugging a narrow red boat behind him, weaving it through the sea alleys that had momentarily opened up for him and could close up again at any moment.

“Get in.” He nodded at the boat.

It wobbled as she put two shaky legs in and then, wide-eyed, slipped onto the floor.

His nervousness was infectious, and she found herself looking upwards to stare at the sky. What was up there?

At first he ran alongside the boat, pulling it between the jostling blocks until they reached an iceless patch of water, then he leaped in and paddled up and down over the choppy waves towards the coast. The light was dying, and the water seemed so deep and dark. Trembling bitterly from the damp and cold, she clutched the coin tightly, her only source of comfort. The clear stretch of water between the ice pack and the stony beach was thin, but Adap had turned the boat to row parallel to the coast so that now the sea ice was to her left, land ice to the right, and the deathly dark water on both sides.

Within moments a wooden wall appeared out from a twilight mist, and a sudden chill made her look behind.

“What’s that?!” Raven cried out, her shivering, shaking finger pointing up at what looked like a tiny white bit of cloud in the sky that was moving as fast as they were.

“Where?” He turned, his eyes wide open.

“There!” She pointed.

“Grissics,” he hissed between breaths, rowing harder.

Raven could no longer see the big bird that had been circling her. The grissics, a swarm of silvery white shadows in the sky, too long to be birds, too fast to be cloud, too translucent to be anything else, grew as they neared, flying low now, just above the water. The boat lurched against the shore, and the boy and girl leapt out together. Her heart pounded as she ran, almost leaping with each footstep, in a sprint to the gate. The grissics were very low now, swooping and rising, every time a little closer, and Raven felt coldness around her heart.

“Don’t stop, don’t stop!” he yelled, pushing her forward from behind. Her feet carried the momentum, stumbling over the last few rocks between her and the gate. Two women stood,

one on each side of the gate, their mouths opening and closing as if shouting at something invisible in front of them. As Raven neared she heard what the wind had robbed from her: they were singing furiously, angrily.

“Too close!” One of the two smacked Adap hard on the back of the head. Raven thought she could see the grissics hurtling away, dissipating into the night as the gates were shut and latched with a giant beam.

“I’ll not sing for you one more time.” The woman swung at Adap again, but he’d already moved away. “Your own blasted ma can sing for your safety if you won’t be in when the fires are lit.”

The other then rounded and pointed a finger at Raven, scowling: “What have you brought us here then?” Some reddish saliva dripped from the side of the old woman’s mouth.

Adap led Raven quickly away while strangers around the fires pointed and clucked and laughed. Away from the gateside crowd, a few meters into darkness, he nodded to a doorless hole in the wall and said, “Hide here,” glancing around to make sure no one saw. She stumbled forwards, hands out and open.



Shouts continued to echo outside the hole in the wall, though, to Raven’s relief, they were diminishing a little now, and, soon enough, as her pupils opened to the darkness, piles of skins and barrels of who knows what began to emerge from the shadows.

Adap was gone; she was alone. She began to shake again. What was happening? How could she be so far from home? Where was home now in relation to this place? She may have bragged to her friends that she would disappear on an adventure to the Great Wall of China or to the Mars colony, but right now she would undergo their jeers just to be safe and warm back in her house at Vauxhall with her father staring down at her disapprovingly. She would give anything to be

chided by him for leaving a mess in the kitchen or for finding the key to the locked library once again and stealing in to flick through the forbidden books. Anything.

A woman appeared at the hole in the wall and threw down a bundle at her feet. "Change," she grunted, her eyes dull and dense.

Raven stood and stared at the bundle, confused, and the woman repeated the one-word command.

When Raven didn't budge, the woman raised her crow's beak hand and began tugging at Raven's sodden jacket. Raven recoiled. The woman's gnarled fingers caught hold of Raven's school skirt and, as she backed away, it slid half-way down, and Raven was left exposed in the middle of the frosty room. The woman's hands rose to her own mouth, and she fled.

Raven, blushing and shivering, slipped out of her wet clothes. The air turned bitter cold all of a sudden, and Raven felt like her legs and arms had gone numb and her heart would stop pumping. Was she gonna die of cold now? Was it those grissic shadows again? The coin with the bird and bear glimmered on top of her clothes. Raven lunged for it, and the freezing edge of the coldness faded back. She'd better keep the hot coin in her palm while she changed. These skins the woman had left were nothing like the neat stack of dry clothes in her own attic wardrobe. She stuck her head through a hole but couldn't get the rest of the garment down anywhere. Maybe if the legs went through these two holes.

No. An arm here?

No. She wrapped the two pieces around her and managed to tie them in such a way that they wouldn't fall off.

How could so many things be so different all at the same time? She slumped to the floor and didn't try to hold back the tears. This wasn't fair; she wanted to be gone from this. Ice and gates and old women that pawed at you and ripped your clothes off. What had those white things been? Those...

grissics? And that singing? And most of all how does one get home? Surely not back out onto the ice. There was no door to London there.

Once when she had spoken out too many times at church school, she'd been locked in a book cupboard, and there she'd read about a little girl who walked through the back of a wardrobe into a snowy land where she had tea with a bookish man-goat, but there were no wardrobes on the frozen ocean, and this did not seem like the kind of place where one had a nice cup of tea with anyone, goat-legged or no. Long streaks of white that hid in the darkness as sure as the clouds do and make you want to eat your own beating heart, yes, those they have here. Raven would prefer a goat man and a cup of tea any day. The author had been good enough to give the girl a wardrobe full of warm fur coats to put on before venturing onwards. Normal coats that anyone would know how to put on, not skins that were sown up so oddly you didn't know which hole was which.

If she was going to do more than just wait, she would have to find something to do other than just sit here and cry for herself. When had tears ever helped for long in the past? They never changed her father's resolve as he snatched volume after volume away from her.

"How many times have I told you never to enter the library?"

And as soon as his back was turned, the tears would follow, but so would Raven's curiosity once everything quieted down again. She'd scour the house, find the key, and return to those white pages, each volume a musty reminder of her mother's lost love. *An Arcane History of Meteorological Abuse*, *The Perpetual Twilight of Community*, *A Universal Guide to Knowledge Trees*, *Everything a Growing Girl Needs to Know about the Soviet Union*; the library was the one place where Raven felt loved again.

"He," he would say.

"She," she would reply.

“He,” he would insist.

“She,” she’d cry.

“The Good Pastor says that God made you a He!”

Her sharp tongue may have wormed spells over her small group of schoolmates and acolytes, but it never dented her father’s faith in the Good Pastor’s words. Let’s play knights and damsels, Kaitlyn would cry out. No, let’s play Communists and Capitalists, Raven would insist, duly organizing them into bands of commissars and corporate executive officers. Amongst the screams and running bodies and feuding frenzy, she’d calmly walk. “I nationalize you.” She’d wave her wand at a capitalist. “You can join us or sit out the game.”

In stepped a large woman with fierce purple paint swirling round the gaunt lines of her face. She moved heavily, as if it took a great effort to lift each leg, and swung awkwardly from side to side as she neared where Raven sat with her arms crossed. “It’s cold here,” she said matter-of-factly. “Haven’t the ice-pinchers crawled in and eaten your toes? We must find you another place to sleep tonight.” Over her robes lay bead-covered strings with charms and little bells dangling around her neck.

“I’ll stay here,” Raven said.

“If you stay,” she replied hoarsely, “someone will cut your throat tonight.”

“Why?” Raven’s eyes opened wide. “Who?”

“I do not know, but I have seen it.”

“Where am I?”

The woman glanced around. “This is nothing; I will take you somewhere with warmth.”

“But where are we? What is this world? Who are these people? Who are you? Where are we?”

The queer expression that passed over the woman’s face confused Raven.

“Tashliqaaq.”

“Tosh Lee Cock?”

“Tashliqaaq.”

“Tashlecock. What kind of place is Tashlecock?”

“No place.”

“Am I dead?”

“No child, it’s real. It’s just no village anyone would want to come to. There’s nothing here.”

“Why are you here?”

“I live here.”

“But you seem important, you have loads of...” Raven picked her words carefully, “lots of nice jewelry and stuff.”

The woman smiled. “I’m nobody in no place. I was born here. Come.”

“How can I trust you?”

“If it was me that wanted to kill you, we wouldn’t be talking.”

“But you might have made that up to hide a different danger.”

“You’re a smart little thing, aren’t you?” The woman smiled. “A smart girl,” she added with extra special emphasis, and Raven saw recognition in the woman’s face.

“What is your name?” Raven asked.

“Taak Taak, and yours?”

“Raven.” And Raven saw that expression again, but stronger. What was Tock Tock seeing? Why did she look at her like that?

Taak Taak raised her lantern high enough to see the whole of Raven’s body. “Now, just look at you. If you want to be seen as a decent girl, you’ll have to learn to dress right. You’ve got it all on back to front, upside down! Take it off, and I’ll show you how to do it right.”

Raven blushed and pulled her furs tight around her.

“It’s alright”—Tock Tock put a tender hand on her cheek—“I know you’re a crossover—it’s why I came.”

Raven blushed again, but allowed Tock Tock to slip her furs off and undo all the straps on her oiled clothes. After Tock

Tock had turned everything around and tied her up properly, she said, “All right, now take it off and do it again yourself.”

Raven only hesitated once with the first garment before she realized it was inside out—the rest was already easy.

“Now we’ll go,” Tock Tock said, leading the way into the night.

Raven thought on what she had said. That’s why I came, Tock Tock had said. There was one to tell her father when she saw him.

“John,” he’d say, “you were born John and John you are.”

“Raven,” she’d reply, “I was born Raven and Raven I am.”

“Your mother and I named you John.” He always used her mother against her now that she was gone forever and couldn’t contradict him.

Well then—Tock Tock came to save a crossover. John would have had his throat cut tonight, but Raven survived.

Outside the world had gone completely dark, and most of the bodies had moved to other parts of the village. She heard only the lapping of waves against stone and the gentle knock of ice against ice in the ocean beyond.

Both women tensed as a body ran towards them from the darkness.

“Adap!” Raven cried out when she recognized his face.

“Ma said you can sleep with us in our house,” he said, smiling at her.

“Oh, what a relief!” Taak Taak clapped her hands. “Go with young Adap.” She placed a hand on Raven’s shoulder. “I must find my place, and I’ll leave you to find yours. I’ll visit in the morning,” she said and lumbered off, down into the darkness and the wind.

“Come,” Adap said, his fingers in hers once again.

Raven’s shoes were wet, but she didn’t say anything; she just kept digging her toes into the ice on the path. If you dug your toes into the ice, acting as if the land was flat and not a slope

as it really was, then you slid a great deal less. Houses made of big blocks of ice nestled into the contours of the hill. Each one had a window on top, and, as Raven and Adap climbed through the village, she could see the rooftops glowing faintly in the white night. It was a picture that she knew very well, and she tingled with the sensation of suddenly being thrown into the frozen world of a photograph.

“We’ll go along the upper rim,” Adap said, “and avoid the center.”

She pulled her furs in tightly around her to keep out the wind. Sticks were laid across the paths, but even so it was slippery, and she had to concentrate hard on her steps to avoid sliding or falling. They climbed high fast, and the sensation of being in a photograph made her feel giddy. She knew this place, from a book in her mother’s library, but...that wasn’t possible.

The darkness was almost complete now, and a great wind multiplied the cold intolerably.

“What have we here?” A slick, low voice surprised them. A dozen long-haired creatures stuck their noses out from the darkness of a stable, and, on the rickety bench in front, a man sat eating berries from his palm, spitting red onto the moonlit snow. The beasts looked like giant hairy water buffalo who hadn’t eaten for weeks. Each had a dirty pair of wings folded up behind and mournful eyes that blinked away the flies. Whatever those berries were the man was chewing, their red juice was all caught up in his moustache.

“You must be the crossover that appeared on the ocean.” The man leaned over on the bench to look at Raven, who had half hidden behind Adap. “Come, let’s have a look at you.” His teeth were stained pink and his eyes, almost yellow in their light brown. He smiled even bigger. “A crossover washed up on our wretched beach. Well, well, what will the officials have to say about that? Where are you from, crossover?”

“London,” Raven answered.

“Never heard of it.”

Her heart sunk as he responded. She had hoped when he’d said the word *official* that here finally might be someone who knew something.

“What’s your name?”

“Raven.”

His eyes narrowed instantly.

“Well. Well. Interesting.” The man’s hand extended out slowly towards her. Nestled in his sweaty, stained palm lay a small pile of dry red berries.

“Eat one,” he said.

She was so hungry; her hand went out, but at the same time she looked to Adap’s face. He was frozen in fear. She hesitated, her hand quivering in the cold, inches away from the berries. Adap shook his head, and she drew back again.

“The day is coming,” the man said staring darkly at Adap, “that if you don’t eat you will die.”

Adap backed away and Raven followed, nodding politely to the man before turning and running to catch up with him.

“Who was that?” she hissed. “What did he mean?”

But Adap’s head was down, and he was scooting around the paths as fast as he could.



An aromatic cocktail of sea salt, oil, and sweaty leather made her want to sneeze. Whale-like ribs swept down the sides of the walls. Raven felt like she was walking into a giant stomach. “Come.” A woman standing by the raised platform waved to Raven. “You’ll stay on the dais,” she said, placing one hand on the platform next to her. Raven climbed up. A bench ran ’round the edge, and on one side lay an old man who stared vacantly at the roof. The woman continued standing there examining Raven carefully.

“This is my mother.” Adap touched his mother’s shoulder lightly and then extended a hand towards Raven: “Mother, this is Raven.”

Raven watched closely this time, and sure enough, the mother’s face changed as soon as Raven’s name was uttered.

“What does Raven mean?” She braved the question.

Adap’s mother touched her own forehead and said nothing but bowed politely.

“I want to go home.” As soon as the words came out, Raven hated them. Her voice sounded so small, so pathetic.

“Where is home?” the mother asked.

“London,” Raven replied. She knew there was no point mentioning Vauxhall. On hearing the word *London* the mother’s face was as blank as everyone else’s. It meant nothing. Every time they asked the question London got farther away.

“Where is Tashlecock?” she asked.

“Nowhere,” Adap’s mother replied.

Raven heard the bitterness.

“That’s what Tock Tock said, but it must be somewhere.”

“Our village is on the shallow coast where no one should live. No sea hunting—no layavathons ever passing through; we’re far from any earth herds, and the fire beasts aren’t worth hunting. The people here are poor and poorer every day.”

Raven shifted uncomfortably on the floor; she didn’t like the way Adap’s mother looked at her, as if blaming her for being the penniless guest of a poor family in a poor village.

“That reminds me,” Adap interrupted, “I saw an albintross where I met Raven.”

“An albintross!” His mother frowned. “And you didn’t bring it down!?”

“There was no time,” Adap’s voice rose. “She was there and it was late...there were more grissics again. There’s so many more grissics every day now.”

His mother's eyes dropped to the floor, and the oval chamber fell silent. The walls were painted blue like a deep summer's sky, and the white bones in front reminded Raven of those beautiful plates that were all blue with white raised figures around the edges: the ones that were kept up high on the kitchen dresser, the ones they were never allowed to use.

"Albintross?" Raven asked. "Is that the bird that was flying overhead?"

Adap nodded.

"So why do you live here then, if it's so bad?"

"It is our home," Adap's mother replied.

"But why does anyone live here?"

"It wasn't always bad," Adap said, still standing beside his mother. "There were once mines and factories and work enough for everyone so you didn't have to try and live off the empty sea."

"Mines and factories! Here?"

"No better place to put them than in the wastes." Adap echoed his mother's bitter tone.

Raven bit her tongue; would it be rude to say that she had thought them too primitive for factories and mines?

"My son is talking about things from a very long time ago," the mother spoke again, "and the rich families still have good things of tin and plastic. Though every time the trader partners come, it seems the village has less and less. We're selling off our plastic heritage piece by piece."

"So you're not one of the rich ones?" Again Raven regretted her question as soon as it left her lips, but just as she was ready to ask another, to break the awkwardness, the mother replied.

"We survive." Adap's mother turned her back to begin cooking, but as she bent down to pick up a pan she groaned and put a hand behind her on the small of her back.

"Let me." Adap stepped in, leading his mother to sit on the bench where she massaged her own back. Adap turned

back to the kitchen and out from a covered pot appeared a fat tuber that looked like a parsnip. He beat the tuber to a pulp with a bone and then sliced the frayed threads into a pot of oil, counting out ten little dark berries and pouring them in too.

“Those aren’t?” Raven blurted.

“Of course not,” Adap replied, not turning his head away from the cooking.

“What are the red berries?”

“They come from the red tree.”

“What’s so special about the red tree?” No one answered. Raven turned suddenly to Adap’s mother, asking, “What do I call you?”

“Raaqit.”

“Thank you for letting me into your home, Rawkeat.” She tried to remember the polite constructions her mother had taught her, for she had had little use for them in her London life.

The mother bowed again, ever so slightly.

Raven turned back to look at the old man snoring on the bench. Why had she not been introduced to him?

Adap placed a little bark bowl in front of his mother and another next to Raven.

The oil mixture had been stained black by the berries, but the tuber threads were still white. It felt a bit like eating hair, and Raven had to force her stomach not to throw it all back out again.

“What do we do?” Adap asked after he had gulped down his own stringy bowlful.

“I don’t know.” Rawkeat’s voice seemed tired, far away, small. “If only one of the shamans would come, they could take her away with them.”

“A shaman hasn’t been through here for fifteen years,” Adap noted.

Rawkeat sighed.

The light in the room changed as the clouds shifted and the moon shone through the skylight, creating a patch of brightness on the floor.

“Shall I massage the hurt in your back?” Adap asked his mother.

She waved him away with one hand. “If you put half as much care into hunting as you do to looking after me, we’d be the best fed family on the Shallow Sea. Let us find our place.” Her tired voice sounded like it came through from a different world. She and Adap both climbed atop the dais and sat side by side with crossed legs and hands resting in front, fingers interlaced.

When Raven just sat looking at them curiously, not moving, Rawkeat turned a surprised eye to her. “Aren’t you going to find your place with us?”

“My place is far away from here,” Raven replied.

“Well,” Rawkeat sighed, “do as your custom commands.”

The silence was awkward. Raven felt like she couldn’t shuffle or cough or even move an arm to scratch her nose, or else she might disturb Rawkeat and Adap from whatever it was that they were doing.

After half an hour, Rawkeat rose. “Go to sleep now,” she said, “both of you.” Adap pointed up to the bench and Raven climbed up, but, though there was plenty of space on the long empty bench, he himself crawled beneath it and pulled a fur over his head. The old man, whoever he was, didn’t need to be told to sleep; it seemed he did little else.

All the things that make night night were foreign. In place of London’s drunken shouting and blaring ambulances, Raven heard the wind scream over the village. Through the icy skylight, in place of dull street lamps lay a shocking darkness pierced by the dazzling pin lights of millions of sunstars unfathomable distances away. Was this place she was in now, was this on her Earth? Or would one of those distant stars be

the burning yellow ball she knew as her own sun? She used to taunt her friends with philosophical questions; flaunting a superior intellectuality she thought she had because she would read, from her mother's library, impressive tomes that talked about discourses and evasive truths and inevident meaning. She always had big words and big ideas to bring back to her friends, but now the simple question—why am I here—suddenly made her head hurt because she couldn't even give a literal answer. Why was she here? She could name things she had heard and seen, nothing more, like a three-year-old cataloguing the big wide world: she thought of the little red berries that stained that man's teeth, the ice and the horrible monsters that had chased her into this village, the coin that was still warm, though not so hot anymore, resting in her pocket. Was she really the same Raven if all of the things that made up her life were gone? Where was defiant Raven, the willful steerer of her little band?

“Do you know any magic? Have you a song? Can you make an ecstasy spell?” Adap whispered up to her after the lamps had been put out. He couldn't see her, but she shook her head, and a few tears rolled down the side of her face.

“Quiet now,” Rawkeat murmured.