

Apocalypse

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Umm ... see the coverpage for full description, [here](#). This thing wouldn't let me type it all ...

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0 - teaser

A little teaser to my story, which I have temporarily titled [Apocalypse](#). Ehm ... This is the main character, August, dreaming. um. I hope you guys like it!

He was standing in a dark room. He could smell nothing; see nothing but his skin, pale against the dark. Water was running somewhere, flowing down. He lifted his left hand, looked at the ink on his palm. Lines were spidering out from the letters, vines growing in cut time from his friend's name and the verb. He raised his other hand; tried to wipe it off. His palm was dry. The dark ink crawled under his skin like blood.

A drop of something landed on the back of his hand. It was dark, another drop of ink. It sank into his skin, sending out feelers, vines that coiled around his fingers. He could feel it, cold and black, winding up his arms. Vines, serpents, wings, spiders, long streams of alien runes spiralled over his flesh. Spiralling, creeping, flowing. A drop landed on the top of his left foot, a seed that sprouted, sending tendrils around his ankle. The ones on his arms shot out across his chest; he could feel them spreading over his back, spilling sluggishly down his spine, sticky and cool.

The ink came up over his shoulders, the vines and serpents twined up farther, around his neck, pressing inward, tighter and tighter, up over his jawline and over his mouth, his nose, his eyes. Ink dancing over his skin, slowly eating him away into empty space.

Everything was black now; he could see nothing, not even his own skin anymore. He didn't know if it was because the ink had blinded him, or because it had taken over his skin completely.

The ink had had filled his nose, a sharp, stale tang. It made him want to sneeze, but the ink had plugged his nose and mouth, all that was left of his air squeezed out by the bands across his chest. He clawed at the stuff smothering him, but his fingers met only his own, blacked-out skin.

He gasped, but he was sucking ink. It filled his mouth, sharp and earthy and acidic. He tried to spit it out, but there was nothing save more ink to fill the space, and his empty lungs demanded something to fill them, regardless of what that may be.

He was drowning in ink.

Note: his hand says *Ask Gedric*. Gedric is his best friend. He accidentally wrote it in permanent ink on his hand. So now he essentially has a tattoo on his left palm that reads thusly.

Well ... That's all for right now. This is from chapitre six, *Ink*. Comment if you'd like to see more! xD
-phantom

1 - Science part 01 - Lost

I wrote this one for my Earth Science portfolio piece. This is the first chapter I used, and since it's already on the computer I may as well post it. Part one of three. In the end I had to shorten it, because it was too long for what I needed. And school papers aren't supposed to have any blood and gore.

Lost

August examined the map Oliver had given him. No matter what way he turned it, it simply refused to make sense. He had to admit it: he was lost, though whether by Oliver's lack of map-drawing skills or by his own lack of direction it was hard to say.

He stood in the middle of a vast, alien landscape, reddish-brown sandstone worn by the wind into columns and arches, eerily asymmetrical, monuments to the everlasting yet ever changing forces of nature that shaped the land. Nothing growing, no plants or animals; no sound save that of the ever-present wind whispering over the stone.

August had been walking for hours. Sometimes he would pass or see in the distance one of the huge striped rocks and think that it looked vaguely familiar, but he could never tell for sure. He very well could have been going in circles for all he knew.

He pulled out the map once more. A dot near the bottom labelled Central City, from whence he'd come; an x in the upper left-hand corner marked his destination, just south of a series of inverted v's that were meant to represent mountains, and sandwiched on the other side by a vast forest of stick-trees that were almost comical in appearance. The remaining space, the majority of the piece of parchment, was devoted to this dusty desert. It was almost entirely bare but for a bold, jagged line cutting diagonally across it. He knew he'd be able to find his way if he found the line ... assuming it existed. Knowing Oliver, it could be anything, an obscure science thing or even no more than a slip of his pen. August couldn't read the label scrawled beside it; it was messy even for Oliver.

As the sun was nearing the horizon, August stopped abruptly. There was a huge chasm opening before the toes of his boots, as though someone had sliced the earth with a giant knife the way you might cut a cake. The blond man was pretty sure he had discovered Oliver's line. The river that had carved it out was barely visible at the bottom of the canyon, a faint line of silver-grey reflecting the uniformly clouded sky. It was dim in the daylight that was fast beginning to fade.

August was just wondering how he might go about getting to the other side, as he would have to eventually, when something struck him from behind. Even running, a regular person should not be able to impart that much force. A pair of human-like hands clamped themselves across his chest as they toppled over the edge of the cliff, the almost sheer walls rising more and more swiftly on either side as they gained momentum. Nine point eight metres per second squared, not counting air resistance. Funny, the things you remembered when you were going to be diced to pieces on a bunch of rocks.

The blond man struggled instinctively against his captor, though to what end he couldn't have told you, as there was no way he'd survive either way. A bad idea, as it turned out, for his thrashing had thrown them off-balance, and something had set them tumbling wildly, not to mention the row of small, knife-sharp points that embedded themselves in his shoulder. He gritted his teeth as they hit a nerve, sending pain shooting down his arm.

'Akh, ekelhaft!' his captor grunted. 'Kosten na Menskh del!' August felt a queer numbness creeping along his veins, which seemed to be disconnecting his muscles from his brain. His shoulder, however, did not hurt any less. The river, now below them, now above, was either way coming nearer and nearer, the

boulders in it now clearly visible in the swirling, turmoiled waters.

A second away from striking the river, there was a whooshing sound. August feebly twisted his head to see; a giant set of bat wings, thin bony fingers stretched over with a thin, semitransparent membrane that seemed almost scaly in texture, opening like a canopy above them. He wasn't sure if they were real, or a hallucination brought on by pain and the poison that had been on whatever had caused his wound. But then, miraculously, they were soaring parallel to the river, coming just low enough for August's toes to skim the surface of the water. Then they were rising again, the steady wingbeats lifting them back up the canyon.

The winged creature alighted on a ledge carved into the sandstone, at a level that was peppered with caves, probably once underground springs before the river had cut through them, quarried out to make them suitable living quarters for the winged people. A group of them stood there as though they had been awaiting this one. He knew nothing about their culture, but he could tell that the members of this group were powerful amongst whatever hierarchy they had. Each had different hair and wings, and none of them looked pleased.

'Leiterden! Eindreling fange!'

A male with sleek black hair and poisonously green eyes, and wings like August's captor's stepped forward. 'Ja, abveizen de,' he said in a slithery sort of accent rather like the other's, waving his hand. This seemed to be some sort of dismissal, because the one behind August dropped him, bowed with a murmured reply of *verzi-und*, and swiftly departed.

'Vesukhen da?' A male with a lighter, more musical voice spoke. August thought he looked like an angel, with his wavy golden hair, wings feathered in snowy white, and eyes of a clear blue.

'Ja,' another agreed, this one a large male with shaggy dull brown hair and similarly coloured muddy eyes. His wings were like the bat wings of the first, but they seemed to be covered in naught but regular skin, blueish veins visible under the surface of the membrane. He dragged a limp August to his feet, and half marched, half dragged the blond man after the rest of the group as the entire ensemble proceeded into the nearest tunnel.

They came out in a sort of conference room, but not in the sense that a human would think of it. It was dim, the only light coming from a torch mounted on the wall, and thus rather smoky. August was set down on a raised, flat stone in the centre of the room; the creatures gathered around, speaking in whispers.

'Jehzt. Auslndren na vas tun da?' This one looked like the youngest; he seemed smaller in general, but he had a powerful aura. He had relatively short, messy copper hair, his wing-feathers striped gold and black, his eyes the colour of molten gold. Despite his youth, he seemed in command, and the others fell silent upon hearing his voice, which, August thought, seemed both light and dangerous at once.

'Essen da?' the brunett grunted.

A female with dark red hair and dangerous amber eyes waved a hand, hissing in dissent. 'Daemonfres vunsken nicht!' Her wing feathers were reddish-brown, like dried blood, ruffled in her anger.

'Ne, fleisch na seltzen de,' a creature with black hair, crimson eyes, and velvety black wings stated. The female turned on him, but the angelic-looking male held up a hand, and she turned away, shooting them both a dangerous glare.

'Kommen da?' The green-eyed demon demanded, eyeing August suspiciously.

A male on the thinner side with light grey hair and smooth black wings closed his eyes. 'Daemonsprakh redet nicht.'

The young copper-haired creature lifted a hand. 'Jerdeiner na Menskenfer redet da?'

They all looked at one another. No one spoke. It seemed that either no one knew the answer, or no one was willing to volunteer.

'Nichtzen da?' Again, no one spoke. He rolled his molten-gold eyes. 'Vas tun da?' he asked again.

'Menskh na gefngnis werfend,' the female suggested offhandedly. The younger one nodded, as though she'd stated something obvious.

He raised a hand again. 'Vhlen na. Meinung na artei da?' All of them raised their hands save the big one with the mud-brown hair. August thought it looked suspiciously like a vote, and he would guess that he was the subject of said voting. 'Dieder, ne.'

The brunett looked down disappointedly, muttering, 'Ich na Menskh du vnskhen essen.'

Now that they had reached a conclusion, they were quick about putting their decision to action. They dragged August once more to his feet, and all of them proceeded to storm out of the chamber, not counting the big one, who shuffled after dejectedly. Down the passage they went, the tops of their wings either scraping the ceiling or getting pretty close. They threw the blond man into a dark room, where he lay, incapable of more than the weakest movements with the aftereffects of the venom. There was a grinding sound as the heavy stone door was pushed back into place.

'Human?' a voice rasped from the darkness; weak, but very definately speaking the Common language. August's last thought before he passed out was the fact that he wasn't alone in the cell.

When August came to, there was a piece of cloth tied around his shoulder like a crude bandage. He tried sitting up. He still felt a little dizzy, but at least he was capable of moving. His head felt fuzzy, like he was drugged, and he couldn't seem to string two coherent thoughts together.

'Hey,' the voice from earlier croaked. 'Human should lie down.'

August slumped back to his elbows. 'Whahappen'd?' he asked. It was dark, but a faint torch-light snuck in through the cracks around the door. It was impossible to tell whether it was day or night. His internal clock was completely thrown off.

He blinked, faint shapes beginning to appear in the swirling dark, barely illuminated, darkest grey on black. He looked blindly in the direction of the voice, eyes probing the darkest corner of the prison, but to no avail. The chinks of torchlight that outlined the door were too weak to reach that far.

There was a scraping as a brick was pulled out on level with the floor, and a crude bowl of unsymmetrical sun-baked clay was pushed in. The light of a torch streamed in, and for a second, in the relative brightness, the cell's other occupant was visible. August gasped as the light hit him, catching him at an eerily unnatural angle, as it came from the same level as the floor.

His cellmate was one of them. The winged people. He had long, tangled black hair and glowing crimson eyes with those same heavy eyelids. His face was more pointed, and he was thinner, though that may have been because he was on prison rations. His hands were chained behind his back, the chain then running to the wall, where it was embedded securely in the stone. His wings had long, black feathers, but there was something odd about their shape; that being closer to bat wings. There was a small mark centred under each eye, like raindrops turned upside down.

Then the brick scraped back in, and he could no longer see the creature.

'What's wrong, human? You look like you've seen a ghost.'

'You ... you're one of those ... winged *things*!'

'Ha, that's the best thing I've ever heard them called. And no, I'm not, or why'd I be in here?'

'But ... you have wings!'

'Hmm, s'pose I do. But that don't make me one of the 'winged things'. I'm here 'cause I'm *Zhar-ptitsa*.

The only reason they keep me alive is for entertainment.'

August found himself curious, despite knowing that this creature was probably dangerous, and might try to use him. This creature could tell him anything, and he wouldn't know whether it was the truth or not.

Knowing this, he still found himself asking, 'What kind of entertainment?'

'Well ... they lock you in this cage, and all watch ... it's a huge arena. Then, they open this door ... and put some nasty beastie in there with you. You lose, you're beastie food.'

August shook his head. The creature's wording was hardly eloquent; but then, he wasn't one to talk, not being too good at that himself. He reached for the plate of food, at which the creature hissed and, probably due to the fact that his hands were bound, kicked August's hand away.

'What? Don't I get some?' It looked like dried strips of meat. What kind of meat was impossible to discern, but either way, August was too hungry to care.

'No.' The eyes that glowed a faint, glimmering garnet flickered from the plate to August's hand.

'But why not? There's surely plenty for us both.'

His companion hissed again. 'Fine. Take it if you want. But remember, hands are bound, so can't be help if you start dying.'

August froze, hand halfway to the plate. '... what?'

The winged creature rolled his eyes. 'Meat poisoned, stupidface. Or maybe drugged. Don't know what effect is on humans, but makes me sicker than anything you've ever seen.'

'Oh. Do they ever give us food that isn't dr - wait. How do you know it's drugged?' He knew he should be suspicious of this creature, but somehow the other came across as likeable, a fellow prisoner. August, being a kind, happy-go-lucky person, wasn't at all good at disliking people.

'I can smell it on there.' August leaned forward to sniff, and his dark-haired companion laughed at him.

'Of course, weak human nose not able to smell.'

August frowned at him, and he laughed. 'As to *Adan's* other query ... no, don't always poison. Even *menskh* can tell, because then it's rotten. Stinks like hell.'

'So let me get this straight. It's either poisoned, or rancid.'

'Quite right. I suggest you dump that down the privvyhole, so they'll think we ate it. They won't feed us for another couple of days after this, but it's better than being drugged.'

'A couple of days! What, are you mad?'

'Of course, there is always the matter of that thing in your pocket. It smells like food.' The glowing irises narrowed. 'You will share, right?' Suddenly, the voice was not quite so friendly.

August felt himself flushing. He had forgotten about the travel-bread in his pocket, that Kitsune had given him oh so long ago. And, quite honestly, he was not too keen on sharing.

'... fine. But I don't have that much. I-'

'Sedho!' the creature hissed.

'What-?' August was cuffed in the face with the wing. It made his lip bleed. 'Ow! What was that for?'

'I said, shut it. They're coming to take us to the arena. Leave the food in your pocket here, lest it be powdered during the fight.'

'How do I know you won't take it?' the blonde man hissed.

The eyes rolled at the ceiling. 'Hide it at that end. I'm chained, remember?' He jangled them for extra effect. 'Just hurry, before they open the door. Then it's too late.'

August hid the leaf-wrapped parcel amongst a pile of rubble. He opened his mouth crossly, but the door grated open. No time, it seemed. He was grabbed roughly and shoved out of the cell; another of the creatures went in to undo the chains binding his companion. They were then dragged along and out into the daylight.

August looked up at the cliff walls. <<scientific description whoooooooooooooooooo>>

The pair of them were shoved into a large cage. More of the winged creatures filled the stands of the amphitheatre. August was quick to notice that the creatures kept to their own groups. Few mingled with what appeared to be other ethnic groups. Some even looked like they were openly taunting those of another group; making racist jokes.

His fellow prisoner - what had he called himself? *Zhar-ptitsa* - seemed to read his mind. 'They don't like being forced to live in one place all together. Different tribes don't get along. But then, Demons in general don't get along.'

There was a rumbling sound, and a heavy stone block grated aside. The creature emerged; a huge, poisonous-green serpent. August stumbled back, but the demon ran forward, wings unfurling as he threw himself at the serpent's head. August wasn't dazed long, however; he soon yanked a rusted blade out of the ground, running at the snake with a savage bellow. He swung the blade back, but the blunt sword barely cut the venomous green scales. It was like trying to cut down a hundred-year-old tree with a steak knife.

August glanced up. The creature was quite ignoring him; it was more than occupied by the demon. His cellmate was flying around its head, striking it with wings and anything else he could get close enough. Then it whipped its tail out of the hole, flattening the demon against the cliff wall. August jumped up onto a thick coil of snake, and ran up its body. It was drawing its head back, preparing to strike. Long white fangs glimmered poisonously, just waiting to plunge themselves into flesh ...

August didn't quite fancy his chances as a human alone against such a beast, so he did the first thing that occurred to him. He held the sword up over his head in both hands, and brought it point-first down into the length of serpent just before where he was standing. It might not have noticed his earlier hacking, but anything will notice a foot-long piece of metal being inserted into its flesh.

The serpent writhed, and the blond man was thrown off, despite his valiant efforts not to do so. The rusty sword, however, remained lodged in the thing's neck. Now unarmed, August picked himself back up. The good news was, at least the demon had gotten free. The bad news ... the snake was now focused on August instead. shoot.

He picked up a rock, being the only thing in sight, and lobbed it at the beast. It didn't seem to have much effect; on the contrary, it only seemed to further annoy his poisonous green foe.

August dove out of the way as a section of serpent that was over a foot thick swung in his direction. He rolled back in the opposite direction as the fangs came dangerously close to his head. The demon, blocked from reaching August by a roiling mass of snake, threw rocks at the thing, shouted obscenities in what sounded like at least two other languages besides those that August knew, but the snake, angered by its injuries, had eyes only for the blonde man. It seemed all was lost when, as though by some kind of miracle, the sword landed a foot or so beyond the reach of August's left arm.

He lunged for it just as the thing's tail struck the earth where he'd been not a moment before. He shut his eyes as shards of stone rained down on him. He grabbed for the sword, his fingers wrapped around the blade near the hilt. Luckily it was not as sharp as his usual sword; that would have sliced his fingers right off. As it was, his palm was barely scratched. A normal person might then have worried about tetanus from the rusted metal, but August was quite beyond the point of caring. He flipped it into his right hand. The snake was coming at him again, this time to deal the final blow with the fangs. August grasped the sword with both hands, the blood on his left making it slide slightly, and held it point-up. As the snake brought its fangs down, he thrust the blade up, into the roof of its mouth. The sword might not have been long, the entire thing was shorter than his arm, but it pierced straight through the roof of the snake's mouth and out between its big yellow eyes. Blood sprayed down over him, he could smell it in the air like rust and salt as it soaked through his hair and shirt, making his hands slide off the blade that he no longer needed.

It lost control of its muscles, falling down on August, but it didn't matter. He'd won. The demons in the stands were roaring, shouting in their native tongue, excited by the excess of blood and gore. He raised a fist in triumph, grinning through the blood that spattered his face. A mistake, as it turned out.

Because it was only then that August noticed the length of ivory-white protruding from his arm. A fang. And a split second later he felt the poison creeping along his arm. This poison was not like the previous one; that had been intended to sedate. This poison was designed to kill. And it looked like it would be successful.

He collapsed to his knees, trying not to move. Blackness was clouding his vision, as his own heartbeat

spread the poison. What an irony, that the thing that kept him alive would be the thing that killed him ... Then it was receding, as though something was drawing the contaminated blood back out. He couldn't see, the pain was numbing. Wasn't dying supposed to be painful? If this was dying, then it wasn't so bad

...

There was nothing but blood. It was all he could smell, all he could taste. He was submerged in its stickiness. It was in his eyes, and if blood had made a sound then surely he would have been able to hear it too, but as it was there was naught but quiet; the crowd, the voices speaking demon far-off, like there were feathers in his ears.

And then, everything was gone, spiralling down into cold, empty blackness.

2 - Science part 02 - Spider

Part two of the Science paper. See part one if you're confused. Note: this is a later point in the story, so if it doesn't make sense ... hey, you were warned.

Spider

August woke up in the cell. His first thought was that he had died and was in the afterlife, but he quickly dismissed that. Firstly, if he were dead, surely he would not be caught in a cell again. And secondly, his arm hurt like hell.

He pushed himself up groggily. There was another crude bandage around his left forearm. 'What ... happened?'

'Stupid Human, you poisoned yourself on fang. I saved your @\$\$\$. I say, Human don't taste very good at all.'

'But ... I saved you too ... right? That thing had you. We're even.'

'Fool. Demons immune to poisons that kill the Humans. Snake's poison couldn't kill Demons.'

August frowned. 'Fine. I owe you one.'

The demon snorted. 'You owe me more than one. You stink. Human needs a wash. Or several.' August was struck by a sudden similarity to something Kitsune had said, back when he lived at the complex in Central and was the company's heir.

It was then that the whisper on the back of his hand distracted him, like the soft touch of a feather. He twitched his hand, but the feather persisted, twirling up his arm and back down. He giggled uncontrollably at the tickling sensation the feather imparted. 'Hey. Keep your wings to yourself!'

'Eh?'

'Don't be stupid. I can feel your feathers on my ...' But then he realised that the touch was on his right hand, and the wall to which the demon was chained was on his left side. He lifted his hand, shivers suddenly running along his spine. He lifted it up so the chink of torchlight fell across it.

There, on his hand, was a big, shiny, eight-legged black smudge. His heart skipped a beat, and he shook his hand with a soft scream: 'Augh, Spider!' he squeaked.

'What? Hold still! Don't squish it!'

August, who had been trying and failing miserably to shake it off, froze in terror. The spider whispered down to the ends of his fingers, where it dropped to the cave floor on a gossamer thread. The blonde man let out a breath he hadn't realised he was holding.

He heard the demon whispering to the arachnid in what sounded like the demons' tongue, though he didn't catch the individual words. He shuddered. He hated spiders with a passion. He had no idea why, but every time he saw one he froze up, too terrified to get close enough to kill it. How the demon could be so calm was beyond him.

'Hey kid. We escape tomorrow.'

'What? I'm not a kid!'

'How old are you?'

'Twenty-one.' The demon snorted. 'What's so funny?! How old are *you*?'

His cellmate snickered, as though laughing at a private joke. 'Wouldn't you like to know.'

'Alright. So what's the plan?' August grumbled. He was still annoyed about being called a child.

The demon grinned. August could see his teeth flashing in the dark. 'Just wait and follow my lead. But you should sleep, Human.' August slumped to the ground. After lying in the dark a while, he rolled onto

his back, turning his face to the demon.

'What's your name?'

'Hah. How Human of you. What is a name, really?'

'Come on, we're friends, right? I'm August.'

'Friends? Maybe ...' he sounded doubtful, but continued, 'well, I don't have a real name. I forgot it a long time ago, if I even had one in the first place. But my ... *friends* call me Shruikán.'

Satisfied, August rolled back over, promptly drifting off. *Shruikán ... that's a weird name ...*

'Hey, Alphonse! Get up, they're almost here. You might want to grab those foods of yours; we won't be returning here.'

August sat up, stuffing the leaf-wrapped packet into his pocket. 'Did you call me ... *Alphonse?*'

'Your idea,' the demon reminded him.

'It's *August*, not Alphonse.'

'Whatever, Agate.'

The demons came in, one of them grabbing August, the other two going to unchain Shruikán. August noticed that his captor, too, wrinkled his nose. Demons, it seemed, had a very keen sense of smell. Maybe Kitsune No, not a chance. His former bodyguard didn't have wings, for start.

The demons threw them into the cage, the door clanging shut behind them. August noticed that the arena was even fuller than yesterday; the leader-like demons were present in the uppermost tier.

'Leiterden,' He heard a voice cry in demon above the crowd's noise. 'Menskh na kampfh de.'

The Zhar-ptitsa sniffed the air, then promptly pulled something out of his pocket, taking a huge bite of it. He offered it to August. 'Want some?'

'What ... Is that an *onion?*'

The demon glanced down at it, shrugging. He did so oddly, more of a movement in the wings and shoulder blades than the shoulders themselves. 'Yeah. What of it, Ariel?'

'It's *August*. And you must be mad, eating a raw onion.'

'Well, you'll regret it.' He took another bite as the stone scraped aside.

It was then that a wall of the worst stench August had ever smelled struck them. It was like rancid meat, bad eggs, vomit, rotten broccoli, and burnt feathers all at once. Now he knew why Shruikán had been eating raw onion. Smell and taste were connected; his intent had been to kill his sense of smell. August's sense of smell wasn't close to that of a demon, and it still made him want to puke.

The demon broke off a piece of onion, offering it once again. 'You sure you don't want it, Australia?'

August didn't bother to correct him, silently taking the piece of onion.

August's first sight of the thing was hair. Long and matted, far too dirty to discern the colour. Its body was slung between five long, hairy legs, each of which ended in a club-like foot. The wild, tangled fur obscured everything else: its eyes, mouth, and any other external organs were completely concealed, if it had them at all.

Under normal circumstances, August would never had eaten an onion raw. He didn't particularly like onions. But these circumstances weren't normal at all, and anything that would white out that stench was fine with him. He ate the piece of onion, popping the entire thing into his mouth at once. It burned his mouth and made his nose and eyes run, but the onion still tasted good in comparison to that vomit-inducing stench.

'Alice, take left!' the demon shouted, running right himself.

'Zhar-ptitsa na essen vas da?' one of the demons in the stands cried. August was almost glad he didn't understand. That made it easier to ignore.

He grabbed another rusty sword (there seemed to be rather a lot of those: Shruikán also had one) and charged at the foully-stenched beast. However, they hadn't been fighting long when a shadow began to

fall across the amphitheatre. He squinted up at the noon sky. A shadow was just beginning to pass over the sun. He counted back to the last time he'd seen the moon: a few days ago the moon had been a waning crescent. It was a solar eclipse, an event in which the moon passes between earth and the sun, and thus the moon is new, because the other side was lit by the sun. Also, August remembered that the new moon was in the sky during the day, though it could not be seen as it was not lit by the sun. But the strange phenomena's distraction didn't last long. They were soon brought back to earth by a roar from the creature. The sky continued to grow darker as the two prisoners faced off against the beast. August glanced up at the sky again. The sun was obscured completely save the corona, the outermost layer of the sun that looked like little more than a flare of light. But then even the corona was gone. Wait. That wasn't right. Even in a total eclipse the corona remained visible. But then he realised that the dark was caused by a figure crouched on the cage's top. It was dressed entirely in tattered black, with long black wings. But when it shifted so that the sun was behind its right wing, August realised that this wing was like a shadow: he could clearly see the ring of corona through it, though it was a bit dimmer than it should have been. The figure placed hands to the bars, and there was a bright flash of black-violet lightning. The air seemed to shimmer with energy, and the bars began to move, twisting out of shape. August watched, mesmerised, as they bent and twisted, like a giant, invisible hand was crushing them. 'Hey! Andromeda! Time to go.' The demon grabbed his elbow, snapping him out of it.

4 - 'Naners

My mum wanted to take a bath. So despite it being absurdly late ... I wrote this, because I'll be staying up 'til she gets out anyway, and I've wanted to get something more up for quite a while now. This scene prob'ly won't make it into the finished product, so here it is. I wanted to write a scene where August and Gedric switch places for a day. It got boring after a while, though, because I'm tired and couldn't think of anything to happen. So that's why it just kind of trails off.

'Hey, August!' Gedric pounded his friend on the shoulder. 'Guess what?'

August frowned. He was trying to do his homework. He hated math with a passion, even more when he didn't get it. Like now. 'Someone painted little pink hearts on all your underwear?'

Gedric ignored him. 'I have a girlfriend!' August could tell he'd been bursting to say those words.

'That's nice,' August droned, his head full of variables and other shoot.

'She has long hair that has the cutest little curls at the ends, and it's as dark as a raven's feathers ...'

'You must really like her,' August commented dryly. 'That was waxing poetic.'

The dreamy smile slid off Gedric's face, replaced by a look of sheer horror. 'Oh!'

August couldn't help but laugh at his friend's expression, despite valiant efforts to hold it back. Clutching his sides, he lost balance and fell off his chair.

Gedric kicked him, not hard enough to damage anything, but hard enough to hurt. 'It's not funny! I promised I'd meet Bella tomorrow for lunch, but I've got duty!' He glanced down at August, who was rubbing his side where Gedric's boot had come in contact with it. 'Hey, August.'

'What?' August said, looking up at his friend, flourite eyes wary.

'You have tomorrow off, right?'

August sighed. It could've been worse. 'There's no way they would fall for that. We don't look that much alike.'

Gedric rolled his eyes, which were pure green. 'Aah, you'd be surprised how unobservant they are.'

August frowned up at his friend. Gedric's eyes were pleading.

'Fine,' August acquiesced. 'This girl had better be something special.'

Gedric grinned, holding out a hand to help August up. 'Don't you worry. She definately is.'

August stared his friend in the eye. 'You owe me. And if I get caught, no way in hell am I covering for you. Got it?'

Gedric's grin widened. 'I knew I could count on you.'

August just made a little noise.

~*~*~

Gedric came by his room before dawn the next morning. He let himself in. August was sprawled in a rather silly position on the bed, still asleep.

'Hey, you lazy bumb. Get up.'

'Mmmph,' August told his pillow. 'Z'till night.'

Gedric walked into the bathroom, filled a cup with icy water from the sink, and poured it over August's head. The blonde man sat bolt-upright, sputtering.

'If I'd remembered how early you had to get up in the Guard, I'd never've agreed,' he muttered blackly, drying his face on his sheet.

The bed bounced slightly as Gedric climbed up onto it, opening the cabinets near the cieling where August's slothes were kept. He rummaged around for a bit, eventually selecting a tunic with borders

almost the same green as his eyes. By then August was almost completely awake.

Gedric removed the tunic he was wearing, plain cotton in the red and gold of the Guard, and handed it to August.

When he'd finished dressing himself in August's clothes, Gedric spun around, posing like a Greek god on his friend's bed. 'How do I look?' August threw a shoe at him.

As soon as August had finished lacing up Gedric's boots, the two men left for the mess hall. It was the usual soggy cereal stuff, but August ate anyway. So far, they were good. Hopefully, none of Gedric's other friends would be on duty today ...

They left the mess hall. Gedric winked and left through the complex's main entrance, flashing August's ID card at them before they could card him. August sighed and continued to the training yard alone.

The yards smelled of dust and stale sweat. A few men sparred or went through drills, but most of the off-duty Guards were still in bed, or taking it easy. Several men on Gedric's shift were already milling around. No one seemed to notice that he wasn't Gedric. He had been sure he would stand out like a sore thumb, but here he was, blending in like he belonged. Of course, he had almost joined the Guard himself, so it was no surprise he felt at home.

More men meandered in; August's chance of being discovered grew less and less. Finally a bell rang. Those who were on duty that morning lined up; the others ceased practising or talking. The man in charge read off the day's positions. August saluted when he read off 'Monnaghan', which was Gedric's surname. He was paired with a guy by the name of Braveheart. The guy, who was standing at the other end of the line, looked at him suspiciously. Oops.

On the way to their post, Braveheart ran to catch up with him. 'Hey! Aren't you Pyrite? Where's Gedric?' August sighed. 'He's on a date with his new girlfriend.'

Braveheart laughed. He had black hair that hung in his dark eyes, and skin that was tanned, but not too dark. He was about as tall as August, and a bit more muscled. 'Hah. He's playing hookey, then?' the man snickered.

'Yeah.' August glanced at him. Braveheart looked a couple years older than he and Gedric were. 'You gonna report him?'

'As if! I been tellin' him for ages he needs a good girl. I'd cover for him any day.'

'So, er ... Braveheart?'

The raven-haired man snorted. 'Call me Emmett. Braveheart makes me want to vomit. I think me parents must've been mad.' August had to agree. Who in their right mind would name their kid Braveheart? Maybe several hundred years ago, but now ...

'What do we do all day?'

'Guard.' They had reached their post on the wall.

'That's it? We just stand here?'

'More or less ... ya, you got it.'

August sighed. 'If nothing happens, what use it the Guard?'

'Supposedly, as a precautionary measure.'

'We're here on the odd chance we might get attacked.'

'Yep.'

'Am I ever glad I ended up not joining.'

'You said it ... but what else is there for folk like us? We can't all be adopted rich boys.' His dark eyes flashed in amusement.

August shrugged. No wonder Gedric had wanted out. He thought again ... this girl had better be something really special ...

I really like that guy, Braveheart. I just made him up on the spot, but ... I like him none-the-less. I was

thinking of Murtagh when I wrote him. Emmett was the first name I could think of.

On another note, I found these on LiveJournal. Thought it would be fun ...

1. Pick one of my characters, any one (even if you don't know their name and I've only drawn them somewhere before).
2. I will tell you the origin of his/her name.
3. I will tell you random facts surrounding his/her creation.
4. I will give you a random fact of his/her backstory.
5. I will give you a random fact of his/her forestory.
6. You may ask me up to ten questions about the character (but if a question is too spoiler-y I may not respond).

Just be sure that the character is mine. Example: August is Teacup's. And I advise you not to ask about Braveheart, because like I said, I just made him up, mostly because I wanted to use the name 'Braveheart'. It was once Gedric's before he had one, then Teacup changed it to Monnaghan, which does sound better. But the character does NOT have to be from Apocalypse; it can be anyone. So yeah. Have fun.