

Chapter 1 -Dusty books, Dusty looks

10 years later, and still nobody knows who killed Sebastian's father. The police had ended the investigation last year.

Sebastian Miller, now 16, sat inside a quiet library inside his high school. It was a private highschool that was heavily funded by the government.

He was the only student inside the library as everyone else was in the cafeteria.

Sebastian Miller sat at one of the tables he knew he should have joined the other students in the cafeteria. But, that didn't matter.

What mattered was his research, his blue eyes searching for answers inside a dusty old book with the smallest font he had ever seen in his life.

He squinted as his eyes roamed the page, reading each line as best as he could until his hair fell into his face. His black hair looked as if he never brushed it.

Sebastian pushed the heavy book across the table with an annoyed expression on his face,dust flew everywhere. Next to him was a small brown notebook with a leather cover. He flipped the notebook open, reading over his feverish scrawl from the past few days.

The history books don't say anything about how the war ended.

"This is going nowhere," he groaned to himself as he buried his head into the notebook, hoping that smelling the pages could give him a clue, or any sort of answer that could help him answer one of the many questions in his head.

His therapist told him he had to find something to distract himself from obsessing on who could have killed his father. He was pretty sure that the therapist didn't mean to find a new unsolved mystery to obsess over.

He picked up another heavy book with yellowed pages. Its cover stuck to the binding with black duct tape on the cover were faded silver words read: *The history of Eriel second edition*. The cover was dusty as if it was never picked up before. As he

was about to read the book, hoping this would be the time he'd get the answers he so desired, an old, croaky voice spoke from behind him.

“What is going nowhere?”

Sebastian turned around to see the old librarian behind him. She pushed her bright red-rimmed glasses to her face.

"Well? Spit it out I haven't got all day," she said, annoyed.

Sebastian wondered if he should just ignore her and not risk angering her. Or he could risk her wrath and ask the question he'd been fixated on all week.

"Well, Miss Acker, I am researching the old war."

The librarian sat at the chair beside him, causing Sebastian to almost choke on whatever perfume she was wearing. It was an overwhelming, cloying smell of white lilies and anise. Whoever told her that it smelled good must have been insane.

He backed away slightly, making an effort to not reveal he didn't find the smell pleasant.

"Oh, Miller, I'm great at that subject! Did you know I lived in that era? Gruesome times it was." Sebastian knew that the librarian lived in those days since she often bragged about it and made every student hear her tales of how she met the king.

She started to tell the old tale once again, explaining how she was sure that the king would have fallen in love with her only if he had not laid eyes on the future queen first. But the old tale wasn't what he wanted to know. He tapped on the old book quietly, waiting for her to finish until she eventually stopped.

"What are you trying to learn about the subject Hun?"

Sebastian felt relief as he spoke out his long-awaited question.

"How did the King stop the monsters? I mean everything is so vague, an incredible child with courage stopped the monster's dark magic... but courage alone can't stop evil! So do you know, Miss Acker?"

The librarian's upper lip curled up in disgust.

"Miller, how dare you question the likes of the king! Shame on you for your act of unappreciative behavior. If the king was weak, we would still be in the dark ages. I should send you to the principal himself!" she scoffed.

Sebastian hunched his shoulders and stood up. He quickly said to her, "Wait! You don't need to call the principal. It was a mistake you see, I just wanted to -"

The librarian interrupted Sebastian's rambling.

“That's enough. Go to lunch. I'm sure your *friends* are missing you.”

The way she said friends made Sebastian cringe from the inside.

Sebastian nodded and immediately ran out of the library.

As he made his way down the hallway, he thought to himself how he could find answers to his question. The only possibility he could think of other than asking his teachers was to find a magical creature who was old enough to know what happened in the war.

He'd beg them to tell him everything, even if it meant risking death. As he passed the lockers, a paper ball hit him in the back of his head. Sebastian turned around to see a blond boy with hunched shoulders and a football jersey. The boy chuckled.

"Well, isn't it the school's freak? Finally got kicked out of the library, did you? It will take weeks to remove your stench." Sebastian rolled his eyes.

"What do you want?" He stopped walking and stared at the guy. He couldn't exactly remember why he seemed familiar, but did it matter?

"I'm just warning you freak, you don't belong here. Nobody forgot what you did to Rhiannon."

Sebastian nodded as he thought to himself, *Okay? What did I do now?* Suddenly it clicked like a light switch turning on: this was Rhinmon's newest boyfriend.

Not wanting to be bothered by whatever new stupidity the football guy was told, Sebastian walked off to the cafeteria.

It didn't seem like a monstrous place like the football guy was going on about. It was more like everyone was just doing their own thing. Inside, the cafeteria had people talking, moving to their tables, and eating food as if it were just a regular day.

He walked in line to await the school lunch. He stared at the other lunch line, the one deservingly named the rich kid's lane.

Sebastian tried some of the rich kid slop a couple of months ago and couldn't tell the difference between them other than it served various junk foods at a higher price.

Stupidity at its finest, he thought. Sebastian's thoughts were interrupted by both the vile stench of a teenager who was recently outside doing sports and a gruff voice.

"Oi Nerd move."

Sebastian rolled his eyes and walked forward in line. He grabbed a blue tray and was served a five-day-old meatloaf. It was a sickly brown and there were smudges of a pale red like the meat had been undercooked.

The smell that came out of it was not exactly pleasant and the texture made it seem like there were humans, rats, and other remains inside of it. Just thinking of what the meatloaf was made of, caused his stomach to turn. He grimaced at the sight of it until someone praising that piece of meat spoke.

"Heck yeah, meatloaf again! My favorite!" It was the same gruff voice from before. *Perhaps monsters did still exist in Eriel*. He walked to the mostly empty lunch table with some kids sitting at the ends of the table. Looking over, he sat in the middle where he didn't have to face anyone

possibly talking to him. The last time he sat close to someone, the kid had chosen to eat all his food with his mouth open. He wouldn't make that mistake again. Sebastian picked at the meatloaf with a fork, trying to find the eyeballs when two people sat next to him, their arms on his shoulders.

"Sebastian!"

He turned around to find his childhood friends, Noah and Charlie.

"Dude we didn't think you'd come!" said Charlie. His brown hair was curly as ever, and a pair of headphones resting by his neck which likely came from his parent's tech business that they hoped Charlie would run someday. Of course, his friend had other plans.

Sebastian always felt a bit jealous of Charlie. It seemed like he had everything going right for him. Both his parents were alive and loved him, he didn't have an older sibling so there were no expectations for him at school, and everyone loved him and wanted him in all their projects, parties, groups, you name it. Sebastian was lucky they were neighbors before Sebastian's stepfather came along to ruin his life.

It was like whoever made Charlie gave him everything perfect, the only flaw about him was that he talked too much.

Whoever made Sebastian probably got lazy, he couldn't think of one good feature about himself, he was too small, his hair was so thick that it was impossible to brush, and he couldn't quite figure out the right thing to say to someone new.

He was sure that he was only friends with Noah and Charlie because of how long they knew each other. He often wondered when they would outgrow him.

"We thought you were going to sleep in the library," Noah said jokingly. Where Charlie was all about the arts, Noah's hair was the beginning of how chaotically different they were. He was a goalie for football and wanted to go to college doing football, or soccer if you lived in Ias Tan.

Sebastian shrugged. "Yeah, well I tried to do some research and may have accidentally insulted the king."

Noah gasped. "Not in Miss Acker's face?"

Sebastian nodded.

"Oh, no, Sebastian's dead. Miss Acker is going to break into your room and cut your neck!"

Charlie said dramatically, raising his hands in the air as if he were an orchestra conductor.

Sebastian rolled his eyes. "Yeah, right. What will she do next?"

"She'll eat your liver at night!" Charlie shouted.

He took his hands out as if he was going to grab him. The boys laughed at the stupid joke. While they laughed, Sebastian wondered if he could convince his friends to go into the deep dark web to look for answers.

Once again, his thoughts were interrupted when two more boys sat on the opposite end of the lunch table. Sebastian looked curiously to see who the two strangers were. But it was just Dylan, Noah's older brother, and some other person that didn't spark Sebastian's interest.

“Dylan! Has Coach Wilson made you run twenty laps yet?” Noah asked.

“Hardy Har Har. Surprisingly, no.” He said easily, ignoring the other two boys before he faced them as if remembering that now they existed too. “Hey, Charlie and Sebastian, still doing each other's homework?”

Sebastian shrugged, picking at his meatloaf again.

“You mean I do Charlie's homework while he plays on the computer? Yeah.”

Charlie practically jumped out of his seat.

“Who's your new friend?”

Dylan patted the bigger kid's back. “ Oh, this is...”

Sebastian stopped listening to the conversation as he got distracted by a girl with golden blonde hair.

He stared at her while she was walking to her seat. Sebastian had heard her name was something generic like Charlotte, or maybe it was Caroline either way he noticed how pretty she appeared in math class, she was always around other girls and was right in every question. He was sure she was his new crush for the week.

As he watched her sit down, he heard her shout aloud to the girls around her.

“Is that little freak staring at me?”

Sebastian quickly stared at his meatloaf, wondering if eating it would maybe make him die of food poisoning. This show could be over. Instead, he felt both of his friends punch him in the arms.

“Dude, you got a crush on Cora?”

“Man, Cora out of all the people!” Noah asked Sebastian, a smirk across his face.

“I heard she gets asked out once a week,” Charlie added.

Sebastian was pretty sure everyone was staring at him, laughing, or insulting him. So he stared at his disgusting meatloaf instead. Charlie dared to grab him in a headlock and Sebastian, too weak to fight back, just let him do it. He was probably the weakest in the whole school.

“You should ask her out... like right now.”

Sebastian shook his head.

“She called me a freak, and like you said she gets asked out by every loser in school anyway,”

Noah pointed at him.

“ But you're the smartest kid in school, and Rain Miller's brother.”

Rain Miller, Sebastian's older brother, was considered a bad student by everyone in the school who knew him. Rain used to question the teachers, the etiquette of the school, and the whole government as a whole. Their mother was so worried he was going to get himself arrested. Thankfully that never happened or else Sebastian would have been homeschooled. Probably because he dropped out.

Sebastian was pushing Charlie away from picking him up and taking him to Cora when the bigger kid spoke.

“Wait, Sebastian Miller?”

“I mean there is only one Sebastian Miller in this school, but there is a Toni Miller, a Daniel Miller, and a”

“Yeah, we get it there are lots of Millers who are unrelated to our best buddy,” Noah interrupted.

“Isn’t Sebastian that kid who forced his ex-girlfriend to get drunk and tried to strangle her?”

Sebastian looked at Dylan with disbelief.

“What the heck man are you telling him?” Dylan just shrugged.

The bigger kid smiled grimly. “I don't believe it, of course, you think that small-looking twig could even get a girlfriend? I mean look at him, he is a loser.”

Charlie stood up. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“You know perfectly well what I meant.”

Noah almost leaped across the table. “I’ll turn *you* into a twig!” he yelled.

The cafeteria turned into a yelling match between the four boys. Sebastian slunk underneath the table and waited for the fighting to end like a coward. The blond kid eventually left the lunch table and Dylan followed. Sebastian got out from under the table when the bell rang. The trio left the cafeteria.

“So, that happened,” Charlie said.

“Yup, meet up at my house tonight?” Noah asked them.

“Yeah sure.” They both said, the trio parting ways to their classes. As Sebastian walked up to the third floor, he kept thinking about how he was a freak. Was it because he was having fun with his friends? Was it because he spent too much time at the library, looking for the answers to what could have happened to his dad and now the war?

Sebastian made his way into the history classroom, sitting at his desk by the cabinets in the back. His desk was covered in crumpled research papers which made everyone know it was his desk. Reaching in his pockets he pulled out a gear and a screw stuck together, he spun it on his desk as if it was a spinning top. The history teacher spoke to everyone about today's history lesson, the world of coal mining, and how it was the main resource of Eriel.

Sebastian raised his hand to ask a question. Which was an annoyance to everyone else who just wanted to get the lesson done and over with. The short stocky teacher twitched his gray mustache “Yes, Miller?” Sebastian flipped his notebook reading his notes.

“Ah... yeah, um I wanted to know if there were any other ores in the mine?”

The teacher clapped his hands together, happy to hear that at least one student was interested.

“ Great question, Sebastian and yes, there is.”

The history teacher started to list other ore mined. As he did so, Sebastian looked up at the door to see bits of smoke coming out from it. He assumed someone was either smoking or strangely cooking something by the door.

He knew it obviously couldn't be a fire, since the whole school was covered in brick, and had a water system so any fires would be put out. The fire alarm would go off anyway. He flipped his notebook to a blank page and started to write every one down. When the science teacher flew into the room, her eyes watering, she screamed. "FIRE! GET OUT! NOW!"

Chapter 2—Happy time at the burning school

Students scrambled out of their seats, pushing and shoving each other out of the narrow doorway and heading outside to safety and some, in their desperation tried to jump out of the windows before getting pulled away.

Sebastian looked around at the classroom, he tried to calm his breathing and remember the fire drill which was pretty hard with the students screaming it looked like they forgot about the drill themselves.

He dashed out from his desk and ran out of the classroom to only be greeted by students shrieking at the door and someone pushing him to the ground. He could feel a goose egg forming at his head as he stood up.

"I'm never going to get to the end of this when I get back home." He grumbled. Sebastian attempted to follow students around to find the staircase but most of them were either running into different classrooms or attempting to leap out the windows. The teachers called out to students to follow them, even grabbing them. A teacher, one with lengthy hair, patterned dresses, including circular glasses sprinted to Sebastian, seizing him by the arm. With raw panic in her voice, she yelled

"What are you doing lounging around, boy! Can't you see there is a fire! "

Sebastian let out an immediate "Yes," The teacher let go of his arm, running off to stop a student from beating a student with a chair.

Sebastian's eyes darted left to right, fearing if he closed his eyes for a second he would be hit with a chair. He trailed to the staircase, followed by his more seemingly sane classmates. He could see hundreds of bodies gathered together trying to escape the fiery school building.

"So that's why everyone is trying to jump to their deaths." He stated to himself. Sebastian was weighed down by dread, the fires could reach the staircase and burn everyone alive, he turned back striving to find a faster way out of the school, he hoped he could probably invent something that would send people out of the window saver, when the bigger kid from lunch stood above him looking menacingly at him.

"Going somewhere?"

He shoved Sebastian against a girl with mousy brownish hair, the girl spun around to see Sebastian trying to get up from the floor next to her.

"Ew creep!" She hollered going as far and stepped on Sebastian's hand, the bigger kid laughing at the sight. When Sebastian got up he noticed that the smoke was thickening,

"Great.." he mumbled.

Eventually, after what felt like hours of walking, Sebastian made it to the second floor relieved that the fire didn't spread to the staircase. A girl covered in flames raced down the hall past Sebastian, he wanted to help her but didn't know how. It punched him in the gut knowing how unhelpful he was in this situation, a dreadful question popped into his mind. *What if Noah and Charlie didn't survive?* He shook this thought out of his head as his survival mattered at the moment. More students were jumping out the windows, the teachers were dashing out the hall's dragging each other away from helping the students.

Out of nowhere, he could hear someone shouting his name.

"Hey Sebastian what are you just doing just walking there, you crazy." Sebastian turned around and saw Noah running towards him, he grinned "Noah! You're not dead!"

Noah looked confused "Dead? Why would I be dead?"

"Uh never mind."

Sebastian watched the teachers and noticed that the teachers were walking the same way.

"What the?" He questioned,

"Hey Noah, come see this ." Noah looked at the teachers

"Uh okay ? They are probably looking for students who got trapped or stuff."

"You're probably right but isn't it strange how they aren't helping out the students who are jumping out of windows?"

Noah gasped " They must know a secret way out!"

Sebastian tilted his head " But why are they going by themselves?"

They followed the teacher's path. " How peculiar.."

Sebastian muttered as he noticed they were going into the hallway, he felt a hand on his shoulder,

“ Hey Noah, is there something wrong? Why are you touching my shoulder?” Noah looked confused.

“Uh dude, I’m not touching you. That's weird.”

Sebastian widened his eyes, maybe the person who started the fire found them or maybe it was a teacher. He turned his hand to see the disturbing kid staring at him.

" Um hi?" Sebastian nervously spoke. The kid patted his hand on Sebastian's shoulder.

“Sup. So did the famous genius Sebastian figure something out?” He looked at the teachers “Ooh something with the teachers perhaps?”

Sebastian felt uncomfortable by this kid's attitude. Like he was suggesting something dangerous but he couldn’t pinpoint what.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” he lied

The disturbed kid smiled and grabbed Noah by the arm “Oh? Then I suppose you don’t know what I’m talking about when I say I’m going to throw your friend in the fire.”

Noah looked even more confused “What?! No, don't throw me in the fire!”

Sebastian clenched his fists tightly “Let him go. I’ll tell you okay.”

The kid smirked and let Noah go

“We are following the teachers because we suspect they’ve found a different way out. Although we don’t know why they aren't taking student’s with them or that it is certain.”

The kid laughed “Oh wow you are smart. Okay then let's go.”

Sebastian went to say something insulting to him, when a screech disrupted both their thoughts reminding them they are in a burning building. They followed a tall old teacher down a corridor, passing several classrooms as they wandered down the hallway. It seemed as if the fire and smoke were increasing. The teacher entered the chemistry room, which was full of flames.

Sebastian and the blonde kid glanced at each other as they walked into the smoking room. Noah raised his eyes

“ Hey get back here, are you really going to run into fire?!”

Sebastian waved to Noah to come over to them

“ Come on.” he whispered loudly

Noah sighed “ If you die Sebastian, I am going to replace you because your mama is going to be so sad, she’ll be like oh my poor Sebastian why did he die in the fire why didn't he listen to his awesome friend and she will give me your room.”

The blonde kid groaned “Tell your whiny friend to shut up nerd.”

Noah gasped “Whiny?!”

As they entered the class, they could see the teacher disappearing into a normally locked closet, all the desks were pushed to the side burning to a crisp next to the tables was some burned-up object. Sebastian could recall sitting in class, hearing how no students were allowed in the closet as it was full of dangerous chemicals and how it wasn't the school's fault if they got injured. Sebastian always thought it was the school's way of getting out of a lawsuit. They walked into the metal closet.

There weren't any so-called chemicals inside, on the doors, there were empty light brown shelves on the sides. In the middle were metal stairs, you couldn't see the bottom of the stairs, only dim yellow lights.

"So this is what the teachers are hiding." The kid announced

Sebastian muttered, "yeah I guess?"

He started to walk down the metal stairs, the stairs creaked as he walked, he noticed the stairs seemed to curve,

"HEY!" Called out, the blonde kid Sebastian turned around.

"Yes?" The kid stepped on the first step.

"You think I'm going to let some nerd be the first one out of this inferno? HA!" Noah was looking out the door to see if anyone was following them.

Sebastian rolled his eyes.

"And you are? " He pointed his hand at the blond kid. "Some outcast kid who found his chance to finally be superior over something, sorry I could care less ." Sebastian continued to walk down the stairs.

"You are as inferior as the rest of us. You should just keep quiet all day and let people bully you. Because nobody cares who you are. I mean look at me, I go to this school every day ignoring people like you, pretending they are so superior, everyone here thinks I am so smart because of my grades but truthy I’m worried sick that I’ll never know what killed my dad, heck

I'll probably never be like them. If he was here he'd probably be out of this mess already. My brother would have even."

"Great story. Don't care." The blond kid huffed

Noah sighed, " Please don't fight with a fire trying to kill us."

The kid slowly walked behind him and Noah closed the metal closet following behind. Walls were normal school white brick, deeper they went, the walls turned to cobblestone with holes in the walls that looked like ancient lights hung there with bits of wires sticking out of its sides.

The kid walked up to Sebastian. " We must be down in the basement about now. " Sebastian replied " Probably." The teens reached the basement, Sebastian jumped off the stairs. The basement smelled like smoke and mildew. There was a bit of flame in the roof pipes that traveled their way underground, lots of wires traveling down to dim blue light, along with cut wires, voices talking to each other quietly near the light.

Sebastian walked towards the blue light the closer he got he could see the outlines of teachers grabbing crates, boxes, and anything that was on four white plastic tables. Noah followed him and whispered " What the heck?"

The teachers rushed out a ladder where sunlight was poking out two teachers went back in the basement collecting more stuff. The blonde kid ran to Sebastian

"Hey! What are you doing? They could see you," Sebastian shrugged

"So what."

" So *what*? Are you crazy? They will spot us, who knows what!"

Sebastian smiled "Their teachers, what can they do? Give us detention?"

The kid laughed. "you're crazy," Sebastian shrugged, while Noah was keeping quiet and trying to see what the heck the teachers were doing.

"Did you hear something?" A voice said nearby.

The kids stared at each other. The blonde kid panicky looked around, in a dark corner was a huge crate. It was near a table with stuff on top of it. There was also a single water bottle on the table. The blonde kid tugged on Sebastian's arm pointing at the crate and making a ducking motion with his arm. Sebastian ran to the crate, jumping inside and Noah followed him. The blonde kid sat beside the crate. Two teachers walked past the crate.

" You're probably imagining things Langa," Spoke to the older teacher they followed. The younger teacher sighed "you're probably right. " He picked up a computer off the table, wires were still plugged on the outlet and laid on the ground.

As the teacher went to move, his shaking hand made him slip the computer which bumped into the water bottle with his elbow. The water bottle fell to the ground, spilling the water on the floor. "Oh darn it ."

The teacher placed the computer back on the table, he leaned down to grab the water bottle to see inside the crate and see Sebastian peering at him. The teacher pointed his hand at Sebastian and Noah " you." he took a deep breath as his hand started to shake even more "You stay here, I'll help you leave just stay right."

Sebastian and Noah looked at each other like oh crap.

This was much bigger than they had ever imagined.

"Langa, what's taking so long ." The teacher looked up, pushing his red hair out of his face. "Nothing, just drop a water bottle, that's all," the blonde kid looked in the crate, "we should go now."

Noah jumped out the crate, Sebastian was about to get out of the crate when the second teacher cried out

"Students grab them you fool!" The older teacher grabbed a gun from his pocket and started shooting at the crates Sebastian jumped off the crate to be grabbed by the blonde kid. They ran into a supply cabinet full of mops, buckets, anything a janitor may need as a backup.

The blonde kid clapped his hands together "Okay the teachers are nuts and want to kill us."

Sebastian sat down on the floor and placed his hand on his chest in which he felt his speeding heart "perhaps something illegal? " he suggested

Noah slapped himself in the head, "It's like spy gear, top secret government stuff, man if Charlie was here he would have millions of theories about it. " he laughed "Remember how he said that the teachers were secretly turning the students into aliens, maybe that's it."

Sebastian shrugged.

The bigger kid replied. "Yes probably but what could be so illegal that they would hurt students? I don't think it's government related, the government is too good to bother with students." Sebastian thought of the answer thinking back to what is the most illegal thing in the whole country.

He spoke out loud his answer. "Perhaps it's something to do with magic, why else keep it hush-hush. "

"Yes! That has to be it. ``Noah said a bit too loudly, Sebastian covered Noah's mouth and pointed a finger to his own mouth with his spare hand

“Be quiet you moron, what do you think... Kid whose name I don't know.” Sebastian gestured to the blonde kid

"Will, my name is Will. It does make sense. Why is it so secretive but what are they doing that's so magical? What I can see is its technology based. Maybe the teachers are hackers or something to do with money?"

Teachers walked near the closet. "What do we do when we find the students?" the teacher with a shaky voice asked.

"We make them quiet," said the old teacher with a booming voice. Langa the redhead teacher made a whimpering sound. "But they don't know anything. I mean they can live can't they? They're so young."

“They know enough to be a nuisance.”

Sebastian looked out from a crack of the closet door, wondering if he could find something that would help them escape. He could see the older teacher seemed to look more military trained than a redhead. He stood properly with his head pointed high, and clearly a gun in his hand. The gun seemed to have a name printed on the handle but he couldn't make out what it was.

It slightly reminded him of his father, and how he would act at his job.

The redhead teacher was holding his arms and barely made an attempt to look for them, it looked like the teacher was almost as old as the three of them.

The older teacher turned his head looking at the closet. "Ah, now I know where our little rats are." he made eye contact with Sebastian.

Sebastian gasped and closed the door “They know where we are.” he said.

Will grabbed Sebastian's arm. "You two run, I'll slow them down, get out of here."

Sebastian went to speak "Don't try to argue me I'm bigger than you, don't worry I'll follow you out."

"Now who is the crazy one?" He replied.

The boys ran out of the closet, Sebastian and Noah ran towards the ladder, Will to the teachers picking up a box as he did so. Sebastian noticed a small notebook with green leather on the table that seemed to glow in the blue light. He stopped for a moment to pick it up.

"Sebastian, look out!" yelled Will.

He turned his head to see the older teacher with a bloody nose and the redhead teacher was on the ground with a red puddle on the floor. The older teacher was pointing a gun at Sebastian. Sebastian's mind went blank with horror. He stood there like a deer in front of headlights.

Will made a face that could be read as "seriously".

"Ah, Miller. Nice to meet you again, too bad I must kill you now." The older teacher said he pulled the trigger on his gun.

Noah pushed Sebastian out of the way and the bullet went towards Noah. Noah fell to the ground and wouldn't get up. Sebastian felt like he couldn't breathe "This isn't real." He muttered, it couldn't be real, he didn't just see his best friend get shot, no this has to be a bad dream caused by bad sushi or something.

Will ran off towards the older man yelling to Sebastian "Run, you fool." Sebastian snapped out of it and ran to the ladder, he started to climb up the ladder ignoring all the sounds that he heard.

As he was at the top of the ladder he took a curious glance and saw the older teacher push Will against a table. Will fell to the ground covered in water and started to violently shake.

The older teacher pulled out his gun pointing it at Will and fired at him. Sebastian felt his eyes water as he looked away. The older teacher watched Sebastian climb up with a cruel smile. "Run while you still can Miller, but I will find you and I will kill you."

Touching the grass with his hands, his tears dropped to his cheeks he stood up, Sebastian looked at the horizon he saw two big trucks driving off into the city he started to run before he could even have a thought.

Sebastian ran far away to a farm. There was a huge hole in the blue fencing, made of electrical rods, it was a smart a.i that only responded to the farmer. The fencing was so blue you couldn't even see the smoke from the school.

He sat down next to a blooming cherry tree. He knelt his head on his knees and wept. The notebook that traveled along with him finally escaped him.

Chapter 3 - Dinner surprise

Everything seemed to be tranquil; the only noise you could hear were the trees blowing in the wind. Sebastian could probably pretend that the previous events were some kind of bad dream, that is if it weren't for the stench of smoke coming off his clothes. As he was sure he was safe he out of nowhere he heard someone speak with a southern accent.

“What are you doing in Mah farm?”

Sebastian looked up to see a middle-aged man whom he assumed was the owner of the farm. The man held a shovel covered in rust, in his other hand was a plastic bag. Standing up quickly Sebastian hastily spoke “I was just passing through “

The farmer man appeared more irritated with him.

“Passing through is more like stealing my crops. Get out of here boy before I give you a whooping that would even make the toughest man cry. “

Sebastian didn't want to bother the farmer, he picked up the book off the ground and ran off while saying “Yes sir. Sorry, sir. “

As he ran off, he could hear the farmer grumble, “And tell your no-good friends to take their trash with them!”

He ran out the huge technological doors of the farm that were wide open for anyone to walk in, as he ran out the doors slammed closed behind him. The loud noise made him jump, he turned around seeing the once blue doors and walls, now red, signifying they were now locked. As he walked off, he could have sworn a “click” of a camera turning on. Above the door was a sign saying “Meadow Grove farms.”

Soon Sebastian was at the main part of Florest, the city was enormous and ear-splitting . He took a stop from walking home to look at cakes at the window of a bakery. The cakes were beautifully decorated as it wasn't done by human hands. He could smell something sweet cooking from inside, making his mouth water. But he didn't have any money with him to buy one.

A bell rang from beside him, bringing him back to reality.

He turned his head to see a curly redhead girl walking out of a flower shop. His eye caught a bouquet of orange flowers in her basket, and her hair, which appeared to be something shiny, was waving at him.

I'm going mad, he thought to himself.

As Sebastian walked down the street to his home he noticed how ordinary everything was, the usual click of a camera, the Koshers outside tending to their yard. He heard that their daughter was supposed to be coming home soon.

“Sebastian!” Called out Miss Monge, a short old lady who spent her life making sweaters and keeping her cat out of mischief.

Sebastian walked towards her, she kept pointing at a twisted pecan tree, pecans hung on the branches waiting to fall down. “Oh I’m so glad that you came by! Mew mew is stuck on that tree again.”

Sebastian walked towards the tree, already understanding what she wanted from him. He looked up and saw the crabby old Siamese cat hissing at him from a branch.

He picked up a basket that Miss Monge used to pick up the pecans with. “Do you have some rope nearby?” He asked.

“Yes, Mew mew just adores playing with rope.” Miss Monge replied. She walked inside her house and shortly arrived with some long rope.

Sebastian tied the rope on the basket handle and threw the basket around the branch, the cat hissed at the basket and scratched it. “Oh dear please be careful, Mew mew doesn't like to be scared.”

The cat climbed into the basket and Sebastian lowered it down and went to pick up the cat but as he did that old Siamese scratched him. “Oh dear you startled him, that's all. Mew mew doesn't normally scratch people.”

Actually it was known that Mew Mew didn't like people who weren't Miss Monge and was pretty mean but Sebastian didn't tell her that.

Sebastian went back walking, and walked towards a pretty expensive looking apartment building, passing the rather snooty people he walked into the apartment building. He was greeted by the warmth of the heaters. He walked into a small elevator which had a little old lady inside. She always gave cookies to Sebastian ever since he moved there 3 months ago, although he never learnt her name.

“Hello, sad little boy, you seem sadder than usual.” She spoke to him with an accent he couldn't quite make out where it was from. He stared at the floor, he said “It was a rough day at school.”

The elderly woman placed her hand on his cheek. “You’ve seen death. I can see it in your eyes, the first sign of grief. “

She sighed. "I have seen it as well, shame when young people experience such sadness."

Because of her warm words He turned to the old woman and hugged her.

Choking up on his words he whispered out "I'm scared."

Hearing the elevator doors open he let go of the old woman and left the elevator before she could say something else to him.

He wiped his face, removing any signs he was crying.

Before the elevator doors closed he could hear the old woman saying "I'd be scared if I had that monster living with me."

Sebastian walked all the way down the hall stopping at his apartment door.

He twisted the silver knob for surely it was unlocked but no matter how much he tried the knob tragically was locked. He knocked on the door and dreadfully waited for whoever heard to greet him. The door started to open up and his mother greeted him at the door holding a crying baby. Orange hair draped on her shoulders, her eyes were puffy and red as if she was crying. Immediately she went to hug him. "I thought you-"

Sebastian laughed although she could hear the pain in his laughter "I'm fine" "His mother gasped and touched a bruise on his head. "Mom, really I'm fine, let's go inside."

They both went inside that apartment and sat down on a red sofa, his mother wiped her face with a tissue. "When we heard of the fire, I was so scared, and when you didn't come out of the buses, I thought you were-" His mother started to weep again.

"Well, I'm fine so uhm..." How was one supposed to act when your mother is crying? Sebastian didn't know. Was he supposed to hug her? Say something? What? "What did Giancarlo say?"

"Oh your step-father said I was being too emotional and that you're man enough. But look at you, my poor baby who hurt you?" She touched the bruise on his head again.

Sebastian frowned "I just fell, I'm alright. Is he here?"

"Your step-father is working in the study."

His mother handed him the baby. "Watch her please. I gotta go make dinner" "As she handed Sebastian the little baby she left the room immediately "Man, you are one ugly baby," Sebastian said, looking at his half-sister.

Strange noises came out of the infant's mouth as if she was trying to speak. "Come on beastly, Let's go to my room."

Being in his room felt safer than being out in the open, anyone could walk by, ask him questions. insist he talks to people, or insult him. Yeah no, he did not have the patience to deal with that today.

His bedroom was small and cramped with gray walls and white trimming, the room was cleaned recently more than likely by his mother. He knew his step-father wouldn't clean anything, that was a *woman's* duty so to speak. On his door was a poster saying vote for Sebastian for class president, it was drawn by Charlie while Noah did all the marketing, he didn't win however, some girl named Elizabeth something won the election, he couldn't remember why. Then again it was middle school so how important could it be.

He sat on his bed, laying the infant next to him. She grabbed a toy squid with button eyes from the bed and started to chew on the fabric leg. He took the notebook out from inside his school jacket, he also took off the smelly jacket and threw it into a white laundry basket.

It's strange to think a book could cause someone's demise. How could a simple small object hold Sebastian's interest for that short time? Sure, he was called a nerd but seeing this book and knowing what events it has caused was like some kind of Grimm fairy tale. For a split second, he thought he was the chosen one; this was his destiny to figure out the mystery of the sacred notebook of death.

No, that was stupid and sounded like something Charlie would make up.

He looked at the notebook in the dim yellow on his lamp, the silver vulture.

A silver vulture was the symbol of Erel. Apparently, it meant resourcefulness and opportunity, the two things needed to survive in the world. Well, there were actually three, Constant vigilance and something else, he slightly forgot the lessons his father would tell him when he and his brother were little.

Fear took over Sebastian's rationality, what if he didn't want to open the notebook up? What if he wasted Noah and Will's Life for absolutely nothing? But again, the whole effort of opening the notebook would have been wasted if he never opened the darn thing.

He opened the book cover with every intention to read when abruptly he heard heavy thundering footsteps near his door. That wasn't his mother. He quickly slammed the book close and it under his blankets before the door slammed open with his stepfather storming in his room.

“So, you're alive I see.” he spoke in displeasure.

Sebastian didn't speak a word, and just stared at the floor. His stepfather looked at his bed and saw that the baby was laying there, he quickly grabbed the baby and harshly spoke “And what are you doing with her?”

Sebastian rolled his eyes as he heard this a million times.

“Don’t you roll your eyes at me boy!”

It felt like whatever Sebastian did or said to Giancarlo it was an act of defiance, he thought when Nora was born his stepfather would have been happier, but he only seemed to be even angrier at Sebastian. He wasn't even sure why Giancarlo hated him so much, although he had to suspect his grandmother didn't help with Giancarlo liking him.

Three years ago Sebastian's grandmother visited him, she saw how Giancarlo was treating him and his brother so she did the most unlikely thing and slapped Giancarlo. Unfortunately that only landed her in a nursing home where she died peacefully the next year.

“Mom gave her to me, she's busy.” Sebastian murmured.

His stepfather shouted, “Your mother knows full well that she can give Nora to me!”

“Maybe if you weren't so much of a jerk she would.” He muttered “What did you say boy!” And with that his stepfather slapped him in the face.

He heard his stepfather leave the room, slamming his door behind him, and collapsed on his bed.

It was the same old thing over and over again. “Maybe I should have ran away when I had that chance.” He mumbled. He rubbed his cheek and took the notebook out of the gray bed sheet. He stared at it before putting it under his pillow, it didn't seem smart to read it with Giancarlo around.

Not when he can just walk right in and snatch the notebook from him. He'll probably accuse Sebastian of being a criminal and send him somewhere far away.

“Sebastian, dinner.” his mother yelled out from the kitchen.

Sebastian stood up and walked out of his room.

He walked into the kitchen, the wallpaper was a bright yellow with brown cabinets. The glass dinner table was in the middle of the room, Nora was sitting on a baby chair chewing on a plastic fork, his step father was sitting down ignoring his daughter, he was reading something on his laptop while his mother was giving food to someone. He didn't see who it was, but he had a hint on who it was.

“Rain?” he asked .

To only see it wasn't Rain.

But instead it was Rhinmon, his ex-girlfriend, and the rumor starter.

“Sebastian, it's so lovely to see you again! I just missed you!” she said in a soft tone. She had long blond hair that draped over her blue and yellow sweater. She turned her head and looked at his mom . “Thank you Mrs. Descoteaux for the lovely food.”

On the table was potato salad and slices of Irish stew pie on plates next to every chair. Sebastian awkwardly picked up his food and sat on a chair that was some distance away from Rhinmon.

Rhinmon was a snake, she would pretend to be nice to you but when she finds out you can't help her achieve her goals she will tear you down.

His mother smiled, "Thank you Rhinmon, so why did you come by on short notice? "

Rhinmon shrugged “Oh you know, the fire. I was so scared to go home so I came here!”

The step-father smiled gently, an expression Sebastian never saw towards him,“ Of course a little girl like you must be terrified , so how have you been?”

Sebastian started to pick at his food, he felt like he had no appetite .Rhinmon laughed. “oh you know , school , I've been trying to convince my boyfriend to be in the m.p.s he is a football player you know, he would do great for the field!”

Giancarlo smiled “ The m.p.s force is a very difficult job, few consider it.”

Rhinmon replied “Oh I agree I would have considered the field for myself but I doubt a woman is great for that kind of hard-labor.”

Giancarlo shrugged, “Who knows, maybe you can be the first woman in the job.”

Sebastian was taking a sip of water as his step father said this, he started to choke on his drink .

His mother got up from her chair and patted his back , Giancarlo stared at Sebastian as if he was doing something rude.

As Sebastain stopped coughing , Giancarlo asked “ Do you have anything to say.”

Sebastian shook his head , “Sorry I drank too fast.”

There were women working in M.P.S or properly known, The magical protection services. The service did not protect magic, it protected mankind from magic. Giancarlo must have been too self-centered in his little group to take notice of his co-workers.

Giancarlo stared at Sebastians plate “Stop picking at your food and eat.” Sebastian placed his fork down. “ Sorry I guess with all the excitement I haven't been all that hungry.”

Giancarlo interrupted “ Nonsense , no son of mine should be a coward . Now eat.

Sebastian rolled his eyes and looked at Rhinmon “Hey so why did you lie that I got you drunk.”

Rhinmon gasp “Really?! You know I’d never say anything like that. Somebody is just likes rumors, it’s highschool, Sebastian get over it.”

Sebastian rolled his eyes, “Yeah just highschool, Well tell you boyfriend to leave me alone.”

Rhinmon smiled “Ohh I see you’re jealous. Move on already.” She laughed

Sebastian tightened his grip on his fork “What! No that isn’t it why would I be jealous you’re the one who chea-nevermind.”

Sebastain looked at his mom , “Could I be excused?” His mother told him he could leave.

As he left the kitchen he could hear Rhinmon say, “Sebastian is still a big baby as always.” He left to his bedroom before he could hear more of the conversation.

He turned off his lamp and sat on his bed, he could feel his guilt eating him alive. It was his fault Noah and Will were dead wasn’t it? Maybe if he never followed the teachers nobody would have followed them as well. Sebastian laid down on his bed and wondered if he could actually go to sleep. Then he remembered that thing the shrink told him when his father died. “Write down all your thoughts and you’ll feel better.” Or something like that. It sounded dumb at the time, after all how was a piece of dead tree guts supposed to bring his father back. He still thought it was dumb but it might let him sleep at night. He turned over and opened the drawer at his end table. He grabbed a yellow memo pad and a random pen and started to write down;

Dear stupid piece of paper,

I killed my best friend. Rhinmon is still on her bull-

He frowned and crumbled up the paper, throwing it on the floor. He flipped back in bed and wondered if he would finally sleep.

Or maybe he will finally wake up from this terrible nightmare.