

## *Ashkelon's Time Shift*

Avram Carthalion arrived at the hallowed halls of the great historical archives in Itanos, the capital city of Eleria. Expecting to visit the great libraries of history in scroll and book form, Avram was instead led into a large but secluded hall away from the great libraries where inside, a female elder greeted him. She appeared to be of the same age of his aunt, with graying hair and a few wrinkles, but the similarities in appearance ended there. Her skin was dark, a stark contrast to his fair skin and had long, thick hair that was braided down her back.

“Avram Carthalion,” she announced happily. “I have heard much of you. Tell me, when you agreed to come here, what did they tell you?”

“My uncle told me that I was being offered an apprenticeship to become one of the greatest scholars in the world,” he answered politely before admitting, “Although he has a tendency to exaggerate.”

“Good, very good,” she said approvingly. “Your tempering of words is understandable, but your uncle spoke the truth, Avram. I am Imani Akachi. You uncle told me so much about you, that I had to meet you personally. Please, come with me.”

“Where are we going?” Avram asked.

“You’ll see,” she replied as the two walked through the long hallway to an even larger chamber that upon entering it, Avram could not believe his eyes. The massive halls were arrayed with large paintings portraying various narratives of the history of Ashkelon. From this studies, he recognized a few of the events depicted, but for the most part he did not.

Avram spent several seconds gazing upon the wondrous images until something peculiar caught his eye.

“Mistress Akachi,” started Avram. “Why does that painting branch off into three different ones, and why do some of them stop, while that one is being continued by those artists?”

“Excellent,” noted Imani, holding off her answer at first as she led him to her private study room where arranged on the tables and walls were a series of what looked like oversized maps and star charts.

“Avram, time may be linear between the past, the present, and the future, but there are certain moments in time where more than one possibility occurs, like streams that break apart from a river that may flow to an end, or return to the river further downstream, or perhaps even create a new river on its own,” explained Imani. “Ashkelon’s own timestream is no different.”

“What are you saying, Mistress? That...” stuttered Avram in disbelief.

“That the history of Ashkelon has changed, only you are not aware of it. At least, not yet,” continued Imani. “A blessed few, however, have the ability the see multiple time streams at

once. Sometimes we can change it, but most of the time we cannot. I believe that you share this same sight.”

Initially, Avram looked into Imani’s eyes in astonishment as she spoke, and yet, everything she said started to make sense. Although a young scholar charged with recording Ashkelon’s history, there were times he wondered what would have happened if things were different, realizing now that those things really did occur, albeit in another timeline.

“We are going to play a game,” explained Imani. “I am going to ask you a series of names, places, and events, and you are to write what your memory recalls.”

Avram nodded and for the next several minutes, he wrote down a series of facts and events that he had recorded for the historical archives at one point in his young career. Upon completion, he had the paper filled out with fresh ink. Upon review Imani smiled, pulling out a scroll for him to compare for himself. Avram’s eyes and mouth widened when he compared the document on the left that he had just written, while on the right was the document Imani gave him; both documents were in his handwriting.

*Janus Apyrus is a young knight who successfully defended Promethea from border raids by orcs and goblins. He is married to the female warrior Jenira Safire.*

*Janus Apyrus was an ignominious failure, dishonored and stripped of his rank and title for his incompetence before being brutally slain in an ambush. His estranged wife was murdered with his unborn child.*

*Faeric was a knight who heroically died defending the city of New Valerian in Solisia from the Dark Elves.*

*Faeric Stormreaver is a supernatural warlord who devastated the land and was a bane to all life on Ashkelon.*

*Lady Melisande is a wizard adept in Promethea. Tilina Brightmoon is one of its valiant defenders.*

*Lady Melisande and Tilina Brightmoon were murdered by Faeric Stormreaver during a bitter civil war that ripped Ashkelon apart.*

*Master Ultim and Tayla Ironforge rule the city of Stormhaven as a beacon of strength and hope in Solisia.*

*Ultim and Tayla were murdered shortly after their wedding, setting the chain of events leading up to the civil war that destroyed Ashkelon.*

*It is a time of peace in Ashkelon.*

*A great cataclysmic war raged among the arch mages that devastated what was left of Ashkelon.*

“How is this possible?” asked Avram.

“Great magic exists in Ashkelon,” answered Imani. “Immune to the effects of shifts within time itself, it would seem. What you wrote on the left is what is happened as you know it now, and on the right, appears to be something you wrote that happened in another time, or perhaps something that happened parallel to events occurring now.”

“But, how did this change? It wasn’t by us, was it?” said Avram.

“No, my guess is that it had something to do with Alderik Einarion, a great archmage that had survived the great cataclysm that would have destroyed Ashkelon. You see, Avram, the universe goes beyond just Ashkelon, but other places that others like him have visited: Mirrodin, Oranos, Ulgrotha, Ravnica, and so many more...but at the heart of it all, is a place known as Dominaria. According to one of the records, a great shift in time and space occurred in Dominaria, apparently affecting multiple realities beyond itself. For us, here, in Ashkelon some appeared to have gained redemption, and for others, their stories and life paths are yet to be rewritten, it seems. Our job here, of course, is to record them all. Do you understand?”

Avram nodded solemnly, containing the excitement stirring in every bone of his body. His uncle was right; he really was going to become one of the greatest scholars in Ashkelon.