

Coastal Sahara
August 26, 1739

The stranger made his way to the trail into the oasis he had observed when he arrived, half expecting he would instinctively levitate and be pushed through the air over the desert by powers greater than his own once more. Not this time. They had made their point, it would seem.

The trail headed due north, so he followed it on foot, warily at first, half convinced it could not possibly be what it seemed. His suspicions were accurate: as soon as he made his way between the first two dunes, it vanished entirely. Satisfied this outcome could only be a good omen, he instinctively shifted his vision to see the unseen and saw familiar distortions in the air and sand, accompanied by many footprints.

Shifting between spheres was a means of travel all Architects possessed, and it was something they could do in the company of others, turning hours of travel time into minutes.

Elira and Talira are the only ones who could do this, he thought as he looked at the footprints. Enough to suggest the entire population of the oasis had made this trip. Seeing this, alarm became intrigue as he stepped forward, following with his own shift of the spheres. In less than an hour, he followed the path to its end, re-entering the present-day sphere of his reality on the coast of the Mediterranean, maybe fifty miles west of where his flight over the sands had begun earlier this night.

He took in several sights at once. Out to sea, two ships lay anchored offshore. The closer one was obviously a slaver vessel, and there were two boats in the water heading ashore, filled with what looked to be very frightened captives.

Coming ashore, not toward the ship, he thought, was the first thing out of place. Then he observed Elira, maybe a hundred feet away, with her husband Meka and what appeared to be the captains of each ship. The manner was casual and comfortable, while her people sat along the beach seemingly enjoying the sea breeze and watching the stars. Children played happily in the surf, while a few adults inspected a number of crates. Looking farther out to sea, he saw the second ship bore an insignia he recognized.

La Providence, he thought. Merchant vessel.

Captain Lucien Marchand had been in service to the Architects for decades. He sailed the Mediterranean, mostly running supplies to Clea in Cairo and Sophie in Paris. It had crossed the Atlantic recently as well, he had heard. That he might be here now, supplying Elira, made sense.

The other man that stood with the captain and Meka, however, was filthy and brutish and appeared very angry to the stranger at a glance. But as he drew closer, he saw the man was completely frozen in time, as if he had been petrified.

She's taken his mind, he thought. Then, looking farther out at the slaver vessel, a quick shift of his vision let him see more clearly. She's taken all the minds on that ship.

The stranger walked toward Elira, and sensing his presence, she excused herself from conversation with Captain Marchand and Meka and briskly strode toward him. Captain Marchand was a mortal man, long since used to seeing things he could not explain and with no desire whatsoever to make the attempt. He continued speaking with Meka, ignoring the petrified man entirely.

“Well, you’ve given me a night full of mysteries, my queen,” the stranger said, his tone both respectful and endearing as Elira came close.

“I hoped it would be you,” Elira said, smiling wide and opening her arms to embrace him at the sound of his voice.

Dressed in dazzling white robes, her hair wrapped in a magnificent gele filled with colors that matched the trim on her garments, her flawless caramel complexion catching the moonlight, she was breathtaking, like Queen Nefertiti come back to life, walking up out of the breath of the sea.

The stranger returned the embrace, offering a kiss to each cheek before she led him back to her companions arm in arm. Introductions were not necessary; both men knew the stranger for the Architect he was.

“It is good to see you, my friend,” said Meka as he reached to embrace the stranger arm in arm, as was the custom of the people of the oasis.

Meka was dressed much like Elira, while Captain Marchand wore the customary uniform of his position. He was gruff around the edges, a man in his early fifties who had seen many voyages,

with a large mustache, bronzed skin, and a robust build. His manner was both dignified and kind.

“Indeed, Monsieur,” said the captain, removing his hat and holding it to his heart. “Too long has it been, but the years are yet kind to you, I see. Yes, very kind.”

There was a wink in his eye that suggested the stranger was one of many oddities common to observe in the service of the Architects. The petrified man was not dead, nor apparently cognizant of anything around him; he would not be contributing anything of value to any conversation.

“So,” the stranger said, smiling as he took in the sights around him once more, “you got me here, and I’m overjoyed to find you and your people all here safe and sound. There has to be a reason I got to the oasis tonight in the manner I did. And seeing the situation here, now that I’ve caught up with you, I give in. I have absolutely no idea what’s going on tonight.”

“This night has been in the forward memories of our house for centuries,” Elira said. “Now that it is here, and I know it is on my life path, not a descendant’s, it feels strange, but also right to be here now and own up to it.”

The stranger gave Elira a look that acknowledged the profundity of what she had just said while conceding he was no closer to understanding than before she offered that answer. Then he looked over to Elira’s people with his vision shifted to see the unseen. As they began to rise and move in the direction of the boats carrying the captives ashore, he saw they carried supplies,

food, water, clothing, while projecting a blue-green aurora above them as they moved.

She's rescued these people, that much is clear, the stranger thought to himself as he took in the scene unfolding before him. Her people are gifted healers to project that color continuum. But that doesn't explain... His eyes met both Meka's and the captain's, and both men looked back smiling.

"Be at peace, my lord Architect," Elira said, taking his arm. "You are here tonight because we are going to move the stone."

CHAPTER TWO:

NUTS & BOLTS

Two weeks go by fast when you're planning an event. Unless, of course, the event feels like being swallowed by a black hole: staring into an abyss and never really getting there. Kelvin felt like he was staring into an abyss. The proposal for speed dating with Scions was just one of his crazy, out-of-the-blue ideas, and he had never expected Simbotek to respond.

He knew what to do; he just wasn't sure he wanted to do it now. He was working all day, every day, skipping the gym, and eating garbage in preparation for the premiere. Kelvin had worked alongside Ben for Bill Waters, a now-retired promoter, for almost three years as his cashier, office assistant, and graphics guy. Bill had given Kelvin his email list when he said goodbye, telling Kelvin, "You have everything you need to do it if you want to."

Kelvin loved being creative. Being the promoter, not so much. He was painfully shy, socially awkward, and sexually undefined.

Lucky for him, he had Serena and Jason, two very social, very professional close friends who looked out for him in every way since college. They were both very busy with their careers now, so he waited a week before calling them so that if they said they couldn't make it, he would understand.

The callback from Serena came around 10 a.m. on Thursday. The event was the following Tuesday.

"I'm so sorry for the delay getting back to you, sweetie," Serena said. "Of course we can help out."

Serena worked for a PR firm, Elson & Parker, during the day. Her career was on the fast track, and nightclubbing was becoming far less a part of both her and Jason's lives.

"Simbotek is 100 percent sponsoring you? Honey, I'm so proud of you! They are a great company. Did you know they are a client of ours? I met Julie Watkins at a trade show earlier this year. She's super smart."

"I saw on your website they're a client the other day," Kelvin replied. "I didn't know when I sent the proposal. That's great you know Julie. I was hoping you could be her guide. It's gonna be a strange crowd, with clubbers and Silicon Valley types participating and observing."

Serena giggled. "I'll do my best to get the corporate types to unwind. It's sort of my specialty. I saw the artwork and I like the name, Reflex. Super cute. So you're booking what, a DJ? Dancers, for a lounge vibe?"

“Exactly,” Kelvin replied. He was awake when she called, but still in bed, Salem curled up next to him, paws over his eyes. Getting up out of bed now, he continued while getting dressed. “The tickets are mine to sell, but half are reserved for the BEAU promo code, and those sold out right away,” he said as he pulled on his trousers.

“Money in your pocket, babe. Time to get you some wheels,” Serena continued. “So you’re going to sell the rest to Bill’s mailing list? Yeah, that will be an interesting mix of people. Beau does matchmaking for gay, straight, everything, right?”

“Yup,” Kelvin replied. “Ben said the pansexual nature of Bill’s after-hours crowd was probably a selling point in the proposal.”

“Hate to stereotype like Claude’s crew,” Serena said, “but what about the after-hours crowd’s drug use...”

Kelvin rolled his eyes and cut her off.

“Claude’s crew were jealous of Bill’s success and always put that out there, labeling it a ‘druggie thing.’ Bill’s events were pretty clean. I never saw an ambulance there once, just people doing molly when the bar wasn’t selling booze, and the crowd shifted constantly. People get a wild hair up their ass to go out and party all night, mostly, and the regulars would shift every six months. People have lives and get jobs. I think this list is fine to market to. After-hours does not equal Club Meth.”

“Makes sense, my party favor days are behind me,” Serena said. “I think what I was really thinking is what a ‘see or be seen’ little scene this will be. Silverado holds what, 500, and you’re doing two rounds of 100 for the speed dating. That leaves room for a

couple hundred gawkers commenting about everything they see, or think they see, because they want to.”

Kelvin smiled. “Exactly!” he said. “Which is why I need you and Jason.”

Serena and Jason attended Bill’s Red Light event religiously when Kelvin and Ben were both working there. They were Kelvin’s eyes and ears, and they worked together marvelously well. Serena wanted Kelvin to come work for Elson & Parker’s event marketing team, but Kelvin had so far declined her attempts to recruit him.

“And you expect me to lease out my hunk of a womanizing, soon-to-never-be husband as well?” Serena responded, half-laughing.

“It will be fun, the three of us,” Kelvin said cheerfully.

“Mmm-hmm,” Serena said, accepting that his response meant more than it seemed at face value.

“Okay,” she continued. “We can both be there. I already texted Jason at work, and he already said yes while we were talking. Who are you using to book the talent?”

“I asked Delphine. She works out of the Atlas now with Ben,” he said cautiously. “She suggested Kira Narice for the DJ, a male dancer named Chaz, and a female named Adele dressed conservatively, and Renaissance.”

“Renaissance? Ouch. She’s beautiful, but so intense.” Serena sounded only mildly hesitant, a common reaction to Renaissance,

as she was often perceived as rude. “Well, she is professional and entertaining. I’ve hired her for a couple of movie premieres.”

Renaissance was a popular drag personality in L.A., beautiful as a man or a woman, East Indian, with some of the most cutting-edge costumes, wigs, and makeup seen anywhere in Hollywood. She often handled guest lists at events and was known to be very strict about it. She worked with Maury Vista, another Atlas freelancer, on costumes. If Delphine was selling her as a package deal with dancers, that meant costumes for both Renaissance and the dancers designed by Maury were included in one fee.

Kelvin thought quietly for a moment, clearly sharing Serena’s caution, and finally concluded, “She’s a safe bet.”

“Okay, sweetie,” Serena said. “Keep me informed. I’ll talk to Jason about it tonight. Gotta run. Real work calls. I love you.”

“Love you too,” Kelvin said, and hung up.

He grabbed his earpiece off the desk and put it in his ear as he walked out and headed to the kitchen in search of something to eat.

“Elaine?” he said out loud. “I’m sorry. I should’ve pulled you in. I just talked to Serena. She and Jason will be there to host, and Serena agreed with Delphine’s suggestions, so when the time comes, can you print out a little schedule of what’s happening when that day for me to send to everyone working?”

“OF COURSE, MY LOVE,” Elaine replied, with nothing to add.

Kelvin grabbed a pint of Ben & Jerry's from the freezer and stood in the kitchen, leaning up against one of the chairs, thinking about everything. He loved the planning; he loved the creative side. He didn't love the idea of being a promoter. Luckily, the artwork displayed the Simbotek logo almost as large as the REFLEX masthead, and the ticket link read ReflexPresents.com. His actual name was nowhere to be found beyond his social media posts. People in the industry, especially the pansexual mixed-club crowd, knew Kelvin as the face of Bill's after-hours events for years. Clubs that could open and start selling alcohol at 6 a.m. were few and far between in L.A. Sure, there were underground things happening in warehouses, but reliable after-hours spots were rare in L.A. People had pleaded with Kelvin to take on and continue Bill's event when Bill retired, but Kelvin was shy and not that enthusiastic. After-hours events could only be so creative, since they had minimal setup time and there was always something before that ended at 2 a.m. that could really mess things up.

The speed-dating idea he thought would work well for people who had careers, gotten older, and were more serious about finding someone. He liked the name Reflex because it was something you did automatically without thinking. The 3D transparent guy and girl in the artwork were photos of real scion projections provided by Julie. Bottom line, tickets had sold right away — just about six the first day, then 20 the next. Now it was clear they would sell the 200 participant tickets within a day, and Julie had sold 150 of the observer tickets in no time at all. There was a good chance all 300 observer tickets would go and no tickets would be available at the door, but Steve was always one to not

turn people away. He would turn up the AC and add a bartender and push it beyond anyone's comfort zone. Kelvin had brought that possibility up to Julie so they were prepared to demand no more door entries if necessary, especially with the technology known to generate more heat.

Kelvin stood in the kitchen for a while just thinking it all through a few times. Salem rubbed up against his leg wanting to be fed, when he heard Ben come in the front door.

"Ah, your majesty has risen," he said teasingly.

"And eating healthy," he added, watching Kelvin spoon the rapidly melting Ben & Jerry's into his mouth.

"I overslept," Kelvin replied. "Stayed up staring at artwork for the video screens until 4 a.m., got nowhere, and finally crashed."

"Doesn't the venue have Resolume? Just drop the logos in and the auto VJ does the rest of the work," Ben asked.

Kelvin made a face. "Silverado? We're lucky to have a single tech for lighting and sound. But yeah, Greg Richese is making MP4s for us. Just need to make sure they can be read by Silverado's system. Resolume doesn't like MP4 and records as .MOV, so I have to go in and convert in Media Encoder for them to read and display correctly. It's a shame Greg's stuff is all really high-resolution custom work made in old After Effects and newer AI models. It loses something when you're stuck with ancient MP4."

“Of course, yes. What was I thinking?” Ben agreed, opening the refrigerator and pulling out ingredients to make a protein shake.

“Ivan told me there’s some corporate mixer going on upstairs at the same time as your thing, by the way. I’m sure Steve will have him doing double duty. He’s so cheap.”

“Oy,” Kelvin groaned. “I’m starting to regret suggesting we do it there. He never shares when other stuff is going on and it makes it impossible to coordinate.” He thought for a moment, then said, “Well, if it’s corporate and using the side entry, it should be well behaved and little nuisance.”

“Actually, I thought it was very smart of you to go there, though maybe not for the same reasons.”

“What do you mean?” Kevin asked

“Well, I know you’re prone to feeling nostalgic, Kelvin. Steve was pushing you to try and keep Bill’s after-hours going because he knew Claude would likely grab that crowd since his Sat nights at Atlas stay open to 6 a.m., and that’s pretty much what happened. We have corporate EDM the third Saturday, so Bill’s old first and third Saturday after-hours just got sucked right up.”

“You didn’t want to do it for good reason: being a promoter of smaller events can get really ugly if you don’t have religious loyalty from your crowd. Bill was brilliant. He managed to do it right, bring in new faces, and his crowd weren’t fanatic freaks

clinging to him to be in some sort of imaginary spotlight. You like the creative side. Guys like Peter Benjamin are all on ego trips, and it's like that everywhere. The big EDM shows are corporate, but the mid-size ones with all the genres, races, and sexual preferences? They can be brutal. Remember, Julie said this was an experiment. Simbotek is used to doing trade shows and occasional displays at stadiums like SoFi or the Coliseum. Nightlife is new to them. Think about where this is going to go with Julie, not Steve."

That speech almost sounded rehearsed. Kelvin nodded in agreement. Mulling all that over in his head, he instinctively responded, "And?"

"And," Ben repeated, just as he was about to blend the shake, "I told April about it. I think she's gonna come."

"You what?" As the sound of the blender drowned out Kelvin's voice.

Ben's timing was always uncanny. He waited to finish the shake before responding. "One ringy-dingy, two ringy-dingies. Elaine paging Elaine. Rational mind required."

The light in Kelvin's earpiece flashed, but before Elaine could say anything, Kelvin yelled, "Silence! I'm tired of you using Elaine to get the upper hand on me. This is serious. That's a total conflict of interest. I asked you to come help with tech because I knew Julie's needs and Steve's tendency to be cheap and overbook

events would be an issue. The Atlas is Silverado's competitor. Promoter drama is bad enough. Venue owner drama is worse."

"When the owners are a pair of social outcasts hooked on coke dying to be popular, yes, that's true," Ben replied dryly. "Steve and April are in a league of their own and they've sent each other biz before. So I'll rephrase that. April saw the advertising and asked me about it. So calm the fuck down. This isn't some top-secret Simbotek release party, and Steve isn't worth throwing yourself on the fire for. Nobody is. Why are you so afraid of April? She knows who you are. Every time I've tried to introduce you to her when you're at the Atlas, you run away like a little girl."

The light on Kelvin's earpiece indicated Elaine was listening but still saying nothing.

"I... well, yeah, you're right," Kelvin said, notably more calm. "I'm sorry. Actually, I was thinking a few weeks ago how intimidating April is. I sort of idolized her back when the Atlas re-opened. There were pictures of her in magazines sitting in a director's chair. I thought that was a really cool way to present a club owner like a director, all the focus on it being so state-of-the-art, the ideal event space, and an African American woman behind it all. I've always been shy to talk to her because she has all those big EDM contracts on Saturdays, all those corporate events, movie shoots, mini trade shows..."

"THE LACROIX FAMILY IS LEGENDARY BOTH IN L.A. AND NEW ORLEANS!" Elaine finally chimed in.

“Put her on the guest list, plus whomever she cares to bring,” Ben added. “Your club name is cute, and a lot of eyebrows went up when people saw that Simbotek logo. You’re gonna have lotta gawkers, media, and I don’t just mean Billy & Michael.”

“That’s what Serena said,” Kelvin replied. “She and Jason are going to play hostess with the mostest for me so I can camp out in the booth and watch it all go down.”

“Great. Those two are so good for you. You’re lucky to have them. But you shouldn’t hide. Treat Beau like your partner. I talked to him yesterday and he seemed just as nervous as any human being doing something entirely new. Serena is pretty, Jason’s a hunk, and they’re both smart as a whip, madly in love, and they love you. You guys function like extensions of each other when you work together. If two get tied up, one was always free when you worked for Bill. You were lucky to have them. Serena knows April, so make sure she or Jason introduces Julie to April.”

“Steve probably won’t like that.” Kelvin replied.

“Steve didn’t propose this party. YOU drew Julie’s interest, Kelvin. You did. Julie said this was an experiment, a place for her tech to function in a venue outside a cordoned-off corner at a trade show. Think forward: the more people you and your staff introduce Julie to, the more comfortable they’ll be doing this kind of thing again.”

Everything Ben was saying made sound strategic sense to Kelvin. “Ok, yes, agree on all points, but this is still starting to feel like a conspiracy.”

Ben shrugged his shoulders and said, "Think of it more like an insurance policy. Size-wise, the Silverado is an okay choice. Tech-wise, it's not practical. Those plasma nodes are going to require excess power. Julie wouldn't be willing to go there if they hadn't run through some practice run in-house. But Atlas is way more tech-savvy and will be a handy second option. You asked me to assist. I'm giving an honest opinion. That Simbotek logo is going to attract a who's-who of gawkers, Kelvin. You need to be prepared for that."

"I am. I mean, I see it. It's going to sell out. And I talked to Delphine today. She's booking Kira to DJ, and a male and female dancer to keep the gawkers happy and drinking."

Ben shrugged. That sounded good. Delphine was a reliable talent booker. Her voice was borderline magical; she could talk the cheapest promoters into buying a piece of the Brooklyn Bridge if she wanted to. She was honest and fair and just so happened to work out of the Atlas as well, as an independent contractor. April used her for all the big mega-contracts.

"And who's running the door?"

"Renaissance, and apparently she's already asking Delphine to replace Kira with Claude," Kelvin replied, as if he were letting the cat out of the bag.

"Yrrrch," Ben replied. "I understand you stressing a little better now. Renaissance runs a tight door. She's entertaining and professional, but she can also be rude. She does all of Claude's parties and is overly loyal to him. I think she's in love with him."

They want to come, work an event at Silverado just because it's Simbotek? I'm sure," Ben said, almost talking to himself, and shook his head.

He turned to face Kelvin, arms crossed. "I can't make up my mind about Claude," he said. "If he's just hardworking and shy or the arrogant prick, some people make him out to be. All those French-speaking staffers of his from Montreal are cool, but the people that cling to them are shallow as fuck. Claude plays all over the world, has the most desired schedule anyone could hope for in L.A., and Delphine is pushing for him to spin a weeknight speed-dating gig at Silverado?" Ben laughed. "Crazy."

"You know what? Let him have half of it. Just make sure Kira's name is as large as his on the advertising."

Kelvin digested all he just said and replied with a shrug. "I hate all that politics."

"Everyone says that," Ben said. "It's worse with some than others. The really bad ones April gets rid of fast. That, more than anything, is why she has a fearsome reputation. You're in it for the creative, Kelvin. As long as you keep your focus there and recognize people believe what they want to believe, what they need to believe, what's easy to believe, and what belief works in their favor, you'll do all right."

"**EMPHATICALLY AGREE,**" Elaine chimed in out of nowhere, it seemed.

“I believe in you guys,” Kelvin said, swallowing the last of the Ben & Jerry’s. “That’s all I need.” He turned and went back to his bedroom, fell onto the bed, and started flipping channels.

Event day came and started early, at 9 a.m. The day before, Elaine had made the schedule for everyone and sent it out, asking every recipient to confirm they saw and read it. Ben saw the event as the career breakthrough his roommate had been waiting for, so he coaxed Maury Vista to come and add some of his signature decor to the room. Maury, like Delphine, was another contractor who worked out of the Atlas but freelanced at other venues.

The schedule for the day was as follows:

9:00 a.m. Load in: tech, decor.

Noon Lunch

3:00 p.m. Lights and sound check

6:00 p.m. Staff arrives

7:00 p.m. 1-hour social on dance floor & lounge

8:00 p.m. Round 1 speed dating, DJ Kira

8:45 p.m. Break

9:00 p.m. Round 2 speed dating, DJ Claude

9:45 p.m. 1-hour social on dance floor & lounge

11:00 p.m. Event ends, load out

12:00 a.m. Staff departs

Ben let Kelvin sleep in a little longer and was up making breakfast: waffles, bacon, and American fries, expecting the smell to wake his roommate up on its own. Kelvin wandered into the

kitchen in boxer briefs, his arms crossed over his body, looking both very tired and grateful.

“Smells great,” Kelvin said, yawning. “I woke up and had another dream about that stranger at the subway station sitting next to me, but this time he was talking to me in another language. It sounded like Latin. The only word I caught sounded like: Via.”

“Handsome strangers, eh?” Ben said, finishing more American fries. “And here I thought Elaine was more your type,” he teased, handing him a plate.

“Nothing like that. He’s definitely good-looking and charismatic, but not a sexual vibe at all, thank God,” Kelvin replied, making a slightly repulsed face. “No, he feels more like some distant relative, like an economics professor I wouldn’t be surprised to see out at a club.”

Ben thought for a moment, chewing, then said, “Well, maybe he’s your fairy godfather, come to tell you not to spend all the money you’re going to make tonight.”

“I hope so,” Kelvin laughed.

“Well, there you go then,” Ben said, happy he accepted his interpretation without countering for a change. “Chipper up. Here, this is an extended-release Adderall, 30 mg. Take it with your breakfast. It’s going to be a long day.”

“It’s not like meth, is it?” Kelvin asked. “I never know what I’m doing when people are handing me, be it pills or bumps of little white powders.”

“Meth?” Ben laughed. “Zombies aren’t good hostesses as a rule. Nobody in the biz that does that lasts long. April doesn’t drug test, but she can usually peg the people with coke and meth problems and weed them out fast. That pill will just keep you from getting tired. College kids use it to cram for exams. It’s not molly. You won’t tell the mail lady you love her.”

“Are you ever going to let me live that down?”

“No, never. Eat up. We’re going to be there all day.”

“And you’re going to need time to come home and clean up today, don’t forget,” Ben said, looking at Kelvin’s phone on the kitchen table. As he spoke, he noticed a curious screensaver on it: nothing but eyeballs appearing, looking around, then vanishing. Curious, he picked the phone up and said, “OUCH!”

He dropped the phone, shaking his hand. “That thing just shocked me!”

Kelvin looked at Ben’s shaking hand. “That tattoo on your wrist, it... I swear it just... it glowed!”

Ben seemed as annoyed by that observation as he was by the apparent shock. “Metallic ink. An old family recipe.”

Kelvin wasn’t sure what he had just seen, but he accepted the answer rather than annoy Ben further.

“Okay, okay. I’m waking up. I’ll be ready in 15,” he said, swallowing the last of his waffle and making his way back to his bedroom to shower.

He hopped in the shower, lathered up, and didn't bother washing his hair—just wet it enough to pull a brush through his multicolored mop. By the time he stepped out, the day had already caught up with him.

He slipped the earpiece back in as he headed for the door.

“Elaine?”

“I'm here.”

Kelvin hesitated, hand resting on the doorknob.

“...What does 'Via' mean?”

There was the faintest pause.

“'Via' is Latin,” Elaine replied. “It translates to 'way,' 'path,' or 'road.' It can also imply a method of reaching something.”

Kelvin frowned. “A path to what?”

“That would depend on context,” Elaine said evenly.

Kelvin stood there a moment longer than he meant to, realizing that dream he had didn't feel like context. It felt like direction. Taking that into account, he stepped forward into a day that would change everything.

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