

Dawn of the Known

by R.A Xando

Prologue

Knowing the future was a lonely life.

Her true love searched deep in her eyes one day when she avoided his gaze and saw that she knew the exact hour that their love would die, and so it died. She shook her head at the floor. "I'm so ashamed I looked ahead. We might have gone on for years and rekindled what we had."

"I still have it," he swore, "but you saw a future without me. You should never have doubted my love, Ahman. Now live with it. I won't!" He left suddenly with a finality she had not foreseen and that chilled her heart.

"I know too much about what will come," she confessed too late to empty space. As he walked out of her life forever, she vowed to turn her burden of seeing into a gift for humanity. Over the years her many prophecies came true with unerring accuracy. She became revered as a goddess, but she never forgave herself for asking the question that had killed her own love. She never forgot the personal curse of knowing the future.

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Seven hundred and fifty years later.

The circular room had no apparent openings. Sixteen gowned and hooded white figures sat in a circle around a simple marble obelisk that rose in the center. The four-foot shaft capped by a four-sided pyramid of clouded crystal throbbed with dynamism. They all believed that Ahman Dorian's spirit somehow lived within the spire and the hour was at hand for her return after thirty generations. They knew it to be true, for Ahman herself had foretold the day and hour of the momentous event.

A low chant reverberated without end: "Dor-i-an, Dor-i-an...."

A priestess stood a respectful distance from the oracle to summon the holy visitor in a nervous but rehearsed speech. "Today is the day, mighty Ahman. We, your servants, built your pyramid. We built this sanctuary to receive your presence. We dedicated our lives to study your teachings. We are eager to hear your counsel and follow whatever course you ask of us."



She displayed to those present a palm-size golden disc. Breathing stopped as she balanced it on the tip of the obelisk and with a deft twist of the wrist set it spinning. Like magic the disc continued to spin in place until it merged with the arcane mechanism and unlocked its soul. The crystal pyramid on top of the shaft pulsed expectantly until a sudden brilliance shot upward and swirled around. The unearthly wraith projected above the obelisk slowly coalesced into the form of a woman dressed in a robe like theirs. Light reflecting off the pale green walls revealed the face of a regal lady somewhat older than the last recorded images of Dorian, yet there was no doubt she was indeed the one of legend. Her eyes darted furtively about trying to focus or comprehend, all the while unaware that she was being observed.

“Dorian ... Dor ... i-an,” they choked out more slowly and not quite in unison. The figure stared into the darkness to locate the sounds, scratched her chin to jog memory and at last thought to lower her gaze.

“Today is the day, mighty Ahman,” repeated the priestess with awe, “and you have appeared before us as you prophesized.”

“Yes ... I have,” Dorian spoke from a distant daze and shook her head to clear her mind to full awareness. “It works!” she blurted out. “Can you believe it? I am speaking from my time and seeing you in yours. How many years has it been? Do you know?”



“You vanished from our world over seven hundred sun cycles past,” answered the leader, perplexed that the divine one needed to ask like any human.

“That would be about what I....” She suddenly recalled the gravity of the moment. She wanted to laugh, to cry, to love, but she must keep her dignity in order to keep the faith of her followers. “My children, I thank you for building this pyramid to my specifications. It was an immense undertaking that took centuries to complete. It was a test of your willingness to follow without question what must be done. You passed the test and have reached the beginning.” She faltered because she knew this beginning was, in truth, the beginning of their end.

Only seconds passed before she heard, “What must we do next?”

“I thank you for gathering to hear my final prophecy. I looked into the far future, I know not when, and saw that which I could not reveal until now. You were not ready in my time. Today you must be. With deep regret ... this is so difficult to put into words, but ... your world will end. Complete and utter destruction will rain down from the skies in a cataclysmic storm without precedent. As related in the sacred Qut'rin, the Reckoning was set in motion by the

Creator at the dawn of time to test mankind. The Reckoning is no myth. I have seen it destroy our world in a vision. It cannot be stopped. Our beloved Nib'ru will be flung into space, and without a sun there can be no life.”

She paused for them to ponder her countless predictions that had come true during their lifetimes and to grasp the finality of the most appalling future imaginable. Shock and denial on their faces soon gave way to resolve. She saw they would not go quietly without a fight, and she was proud of her race. Their determination proved themselves worthy of receiving the slim help she had come to offer - the gift of hope.

“I looked further into the future, past the Reckoning, until I found hope for your survival. Never give up hope! I saw our descendants on other planets. I saw champions from our future travel back to our world and to our time. They shall appear among you as a sign of the coming end. They shall be known as the Known. Seek them in the stars on habitable worlds. Seek them in the future, for the Known are not of your time.”

Both mystified and energized at any chance to survive, no matter how bizarre it first seemed, they accepted the challenge in their hearts and chanted once more, “Dor-i-an, Dor-i-an.”

The priestess swore, “We will find the Known.”

“You must prepare. Prepare and the Known will come bearing life and hope. I will help you train a brotherhood of watchers who can search for the Known wherever they may be in time and space. I will help your men of science build airships to reach the Known. Here are plans for both and much more to prepare for your survival.” A scroll of drawings on thin metal somehow passed from her dimension into their world, fluttered to the floor and slowly rolled open to a drawing of a disc-shaped aerial craft. “Your world will end, this is certain, but your children will live on if preparation is made for the coming of the Known.”

The leader gathered up the precious plans and vowed solemnly, “It shall be done.”

The image of Dorian flickered twice and blinked out. Somewhere in time Ahman Dorian drifted back into lonely but peaceful meditation to await her next visitor.

The Known.

