

Sekou, The Hunter

by Tom Mathew



Chapter I

There was a time, once, long ago, when man reeled when darkness set its foot on the land. He searched not for light, but for a way to walk through the night without being accompanied by the shadow. He looked to the stars in fear of the blackness beyond.

It is the year 123 CE. Caravans bring their silks and spices from the Far East to the luxury loving urban hordes of the Roman Empire. Elam, Media, Babylonia, Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia and Sardis are thriving as silver and copper coins exchange hands for golden vases and silver ewers. Craftsmen carve subtle flourishes into the handicrafts from

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the Mediterranean. Rome's influence can be seen everywhere in Persepolis. The Achaemenids, hereditary lords and masters of this region south of Rome and stretching out to the Indian Ocean, get their fair share of transit fees across their empire. Every day, the wind brings vessels overflowing with goods.

Man, since he was created, tries to harness the wind. Endless days are spent pursuing this vanity. Like all prosperous ages, he believes he is at his zenith. The citizenry chase after wealth, fame and power. Humanity, in all its complexity, chases the vespers brought in by the sea.

The wind races along the seas. And

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runs through Persepolis and flows up over the hills and cliffs. From these rocks, one can see the hawks flying around Persepolis. Riding the wind, they circle effortlessly. Looking out at the beautiful barren wilderness below their aeries, they look for prey.

The wind circles. Racing here and there. Up. Down. And occasionally a funnel forms. The hawk spreads its wings to catch the air. She is in luck today. The vesper circles up. She will not have to fight gravity fully.

In the forests far from Persepolis, the hawk knows, a demon lurks. The animals know the demon. He occasionally takes their form and flies amongst them. Never the kind beasts.

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Often he would take the shape of the vilest creatures of the land. Snakes. Rats. Wolves. Alligators.

The demon, Mithra, came from an age long forgotten. Thousands of years had passed. Civilizations had passed laws against his worship. Mankind did not talk of Mithra. But his influence could be seen in Persepolis.

A crown of stars appeared where those who worshipped him dwelled. Many would draw stars around their houses, entryways, and chimneys. Others would tattoo stars on their arms or legs. Many would sew stars into their garments. This secret language, or symbology, was utilized to help them hide their murderous

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antics. The hawk knew the truth about humanity. Wherever Mithra was worshipped, devilry would rise. The animals knew what the stars meant. They knew that when stars were emblazoned on horses, human sacrifice would soon abound.

Without much effort the hawk rises to a higher altitude. From there she sees two men engaged in the hunt. How foolish man is, she thinks. Searching forever for identity in the hunt. The hawk knew the truth. There is only predator and prey. Those who cannot hunt successfully become prey.

Sekou looks at his brother. They grimace as they chase the wounded

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antelope. Air rushes by. His brother, Amiri, has a knife in his hand as he chases the wounded beast. Both look at the wounded game and hope that it will not damage its coat. The skin on this animal will fetch a high price as its auburn markings are highly prized by the caravans returning to the Indus Valley.

Verdant trees flowed one after the other. The wind races by their ears. Their eyes focus on the hunt. The competition between brothers is always there. Only one would have bragging rights to the kill. Amiri's thoughts were focused on the material rewards he would gain from securing the animal's hide.

The terrain was foreign to them. The antelope rushed into a stream that fed into a marsh. Suddenly a massive twenty foot alligator rushed out of the stream and bit the antelope right square in the neck.

"By Ahuramazda's beard," Sekou yelled.

Another came out and lunged at Amiri. He stumbled. Sekou jumped toward him with his knife fully extended. His blade went into its thick skull destroying its brain. It died instantly. "Ahuramazda has blessed me with the finest Ionian blade," yelled Amiri. They looked about and saw that scores of hungry alligators were swimming towards them.

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Sekou grabbed his brother. "Run!"

They retraced their steps and returned to the stream that led them to the marsh. Not hesitating, they ran toward the forest as fast as possible.

"Today, we will not be a feast for those monsters," laughed Amiri.

"We will rest, brother. Then we will try again, tomorrow," Sekou remarked.

As they rested, they heard wolves growling. Sounds of ferocious barking followed by a banshee whimpering resounded through the trees. They

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got up and walked toward a clearing. They stood agape at the awesome sight. A pack of gigantic wolves were attacking a soldier garbed in chain mail and armor. The man had a blue aura around him.

Two wolves had gotten hold of his legs. Another was lunging toward him from a rock outcropping. The soldier pulled out a short axe with a blue glow (it appeared out of thin air) and started hitting the two wolves at his legs. The wolves whimpered, but did not bleed. This fact got Sekou's attention. Black magic! The glowing man turned toward the lunging wolf and stabbed him with a shiny blue sword that materialized in his hand.

Sekou stared. Amiri stepped forward. He wanted the wolves' fur. "Stop. This is black magic. These are not wolves," said Sekou.

"Black magic? You have to be kidding. These are pack animals. I want their fur, Sekou," whispered Amiri as he slowly ambled closer to the battle.

The wolves glanced toward Amiri. The leader of the pack motioned to one of his weaker relatives to attack him. A lone grey wolf with glowing red eyes obliged the pack leader.

The demon leaped at Amiri. He drew his knife back and stabbed deep and hard into the neck of the grey wolf. No blood. No bone. Nothing came out

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of its neck. His blade came out black and brittle. The wolf opened its jaws wide open and bit into Amiri's knife wielding arm, ripping it off completely. Blood rushed out of Amiri's stump.

The alpha male, looked at the wounded human. He bayed "my kill" to his brethren. The smaller grey wolf fell back. It walked away from Sekou's brother. With ghost-like steps, the alpha-male lunged at Amiri and gouged his neck completely. Amiri's severed head rolled onto the grass. The ferocious black wolf looked around. Suddenly, the grey wolf ran back into the pack to attack the glowing man.

"Hunter," yelled the mystical soldier. He threw a glowing axe into Sekou's

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hand. Sekou grabbed it and attacked with berserker rage. He cut the grey wolf in half with one clean stroke. Subsequently, two brown wolves lost their heads to the blue axe.

The leader of the pack stared intently. He lunged at Sekou and bit him in his right arm. Blood poured out of his wound. Sekou dropped the glowing axe. He lunged forward and picked it up with his left hand.

The black wolf kept gnawing at Sekou's right arm. "Man blood, the sweetest of all." Every twitch the wolf made sent agonizing pain into Sekou's brain. He hacked at the black wolf's neck with the glowing axe. He kept hacking at the wolf. After five

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successful swings, the black wolf's head fell off. Sekou screamed at the carcass. He stood over his kill and spit at it. "Ahuramazda be praised."

The sun raced above. Everything blurred. He fell onto the wolf's corpse. Today he knew Amiri and he would feast at Ahuramazda's palace, surrounded by golden ewers filled with shiraz's of infinite sweetness. Veiled, bejeweled dancing girls would embrace him and love him as he communed with the divine force that created Darius the King.

The sun, moon and stars were moving about in their daily dance. Sekou's breath grew faint. The wind blew over his open wounds. He was going to

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die the way he had always dreamed as a boy, in the glory of the hunt.

Darkness.

Chapter III

"Why me?"

Sekou asked himself, "Why did the God of Antioch pick me?" He stared into the verdant plains of Arabia. Tara looked on as well, but she was looking for prey.

"Persepolis is near," he yelled and ran off into the direction of the great city. Tara followed. Sekou felt indomitable. A force powered him. He could not understand it. The beast and he were one. Together they ran through the hills. They swam across large tributaries.

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Through the forests of the Arabian peninsula they trekked.

Night soon enveloped them. A blood red cloud encircled the moon. Tara howled at the ominous sign. Sekou looked into the sky. The stars could no longer be seen. A foul stench wafted through the air. A normal person would retch at such a stink.

Sekou looked at Tara. Her eyes were glowing blue. She stuck her tongue out to taste the wind. It was thick and red as it rolled out of her mouth.

Shiny blue wristbands appeared

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suddenly on his wrists. He screamed in agony as the divine energy of the cosmos flowed through him. Tara did not blink at the transformation taking place in front of her. The white wolf's fur glowed blue in the night.

Sekou turned into the wind. The hunt had started. The stench of death was in the air. Mithra, the Dark Lord, was roaming the plain. "I am coming for you!" screamed Sekou into the night. Tara howled. "This night, Mithra, you will taste the holy blade of Sekou, the Hunter!"

Tara ran ahead of Sekou. Her

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subsonic hearing picked up the screams of a mother yelling for her missing child. A woodsman was searching the fields next to the house for the missing boy, Shiva.

The mother asked her neighbors, "Where is Shiva?"

Everyone looked at her in fear. They did not know where the missing boy had run off to. The father looked perplexed. They had put him to bed. They locked the doors. And yet the child was gone.

Tara looked around. Then she sniffed the air. After a few circles around the house, the white

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wolf caught onto the scent of the man-child. She yelped at Sekou. He followed her into the dark.

Ten miles away, Tara dropped onto her stomach. Sekou fell flat onto the tall grass. They crawled up into a clearing in the woods. They found the child.

A black star was drawn in coal dust on the floor. In the center lay Shiva, bound. Surrounding the boy was the coven of Mithra's minions. Thirteen men and women were bamboozled to become part of this cult. Dressed in black robes, they were chanting blasphemies in the ancient Gomorrah language that only

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the Dark Lord understood. And there in the center was a twenty foot behemoth with large seven foot horns. Each horn spiraled into a sharp point. His skin looked like the leathery skin of a crocodile. His eyes glowed red.

The coven opened their robes to reveal sharp knives. Each would take part in the rite of *Immortalis*. The Dark Lord promised them immortality for delivering them the soul of this chaste victim. Their chants grew louder as they came closer to the boy. Mithra, let out a bellicose laugh, for he would soon taste the blood of a specific genotype that

would keep him alive forever.

"Enough!" yelled Sekou. "There is no immortality. Mithra is lying to all of you. Faith in the God of Antioch is the only immortality you will ever know."

Tara leaped at the coven. She ripped one man's arm off. She spit out his arm and jumped onto another's neck. Her jaws bit right into his jugular vein, severing it.

A blue bow appeared magically in Sekou's left arm. He pulled back the bow string. In less than a blink of Tara's eyes, six arrows with a blue glow flew into their marks as if

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they were divinely directed. Five to go.

"You!", Mithra yelled. He noticed Sekou's blue wrist bands. "Do not speak blasphemies to my followers. Do not turn your back to me, Africa. I will take care of you like I did the Nazarene."

The white wolf jumped forward. She stood over the man child. Snarls and barks came toward the remaining minions. Her saliva dripped onto the floor.

"You dare come at me with your white magic!" yelled Mithra. Shiny blue shurikens suddenly appeared in

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Sekou's hands. He hurled them at the standing black cloaks. Each hit their marks. Each cloak fell to the ground and formed a pile of black coal dust.

Mithra looked on as Sekou revealed a shiny blue blade. "I will teach you about blood and fire," yelled Mithra. "I have ruled the Hindu Kush for five thousand years. I will destroy you Sekou. That I promise you!"

The demon (from a time when man could not even walk on two legs) shed his robe to reveal a hideous frame that would make a corpse turn in disgust. He raised his hands

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at Sekou and a monstrous bright orange flame shot at him.

Sekou's wristbands released a blue force field. This magical field repelled the flame away from him, Tara and the man child, Shiva. Tara, stepped away from the child, doubled back and ran right towards Sekou. She jumped over him and lunged at the Dark Lord. Her jaws opened as she neared his leathery head. The blood lust glistened in her eyes. As she closed in on her prey, Mithra disappeared in a foul cloud of brimstone. What was left were a few dozen dead vipers and coal dust. The battle was over.

Tara's eyes returned to normal. The blue wristbands on Sekou's arms disappeared. The magical blue bow and shurikens were nowhere to be found. Coal dust was everywhere. "Tara, these devils worship coal. They are now coal," laughed Sekou at the immortality Mithra's minions had achieved.

"Little man, how are you?" Sekou smiled at Shiva. He picked him up and carefully wrapped him in some swaddling. They trekked the distance back to the woodlands where they could return the baby back to their parents. Tara kept a close watch in case Mithra's hordes reappeared.

The woodsman and his wife were overjoyed when their child Shiva was returned. The father asked, "What is your name?"

"My name is Sekou," he replied.

The woodsman asked, "And whom do you pray to?"

"I pray to the God of Antioch," said Sekou. "He has no name."

The God of Antioch stood over them as dawn arose. The world learned the name of a great African warrior. That day the legend of Sekou, the Hunter and Tara was

born.

**No, this is not the end. We are at
the beginning.**

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Chapter II

The wounded warrior looks at him. He touches Sekou's head. Then he touches his chest. His left shoulder and then his right shoulder are touched. "Armageddon."

"What are you doing?" asked Sekou.

"I am blessing you. I am preparing your body to receive the blessings of the God of Antioch."

"My body hurts," he yells.

Sekou grabbed his body. The pain is intense. The world is revealed by the

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glowing warrior without filters to him. Memories of ancient civilizations long since dead are transplanted into his cerebral cortex. Now he knows why the holy men he saw in his youth stared out into space.

He looks at the aged warrior. The warrior looks at him. "Thank you," said the old warrior as he dropped dead. Ancient muscles desiccate instantly revealing a blue skeleton. Wolves ran out of the forest towards the blue skeleton and Sekou. Fear races through Sekou. The blue skeleton suddenly stood up. A third eye opens on its forehead, revealing to Sekou that the old warrior has achieved enlightenment.

"Do not be afraid," the skeleton motioned. "I am not dead. My Master wants me to heal you."

The skeleton put his blue bony fingers onto Sekou's head. Words not heard for ten thousand years echoed through the forest. Sekou's body quickly heals itself.

"My journey has ended little man. Yours has just begun," said the blue skeleton. "I will now return to the Master."

"Master?" asked Sekou. "What is your God's name?"

"I do not know. He has no name," said the skeleton.

"Your god cannot match the power of Ahuramazda," exclaimed Sekou.

"Ahuramazda? WTF. Your Persian deity is no match for the God of Antioch." He looked at Sekou. "You are young. You still have time to learn."

"Do you know how to pray?" asked the blue skeleton.

"Absolutely!" Sekou asked, "Am I not a servant of Darius the King?"

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"Great Ahuramazda, the greatest of gods, he created Darius the King, he bestowed on him the kingdom..."

The blue skeleton interrupted Sekou, "Ahuramazda? OMG. You do not know how to pray. Let me teach you what I learned in Antioch."

"Please kneel," requested the blue skeleton.

Sekou kneeled. "I will show you how to pray. The prayer is simple.

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

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Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen."

Sekou repeated the words and said
"Amen." An invisible blue force field
enveloped him. Ancient Aramaic
sounds emanated from the hills. The
sacred sounds of the universe. The

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sound waves embrace him. Strengthening him. He felt rejuvenated. His mind felt alert and his heart was cleansed of animosity to his fellow man.

"Rise. Rise Sekou, the Hunter," exclaimed the shiny blue skeleton. "Now you will battle evil throughout the Achaemenidian Empire."

Sekou asked, "How will I do any of these things? And with what army will I fight these men?"

"Oh. Yes. I am sorry. I forgot. You will need weapons," muttered the dead warrior's glowing blue bones. He snapped his bony fingers.

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Solid blue bands instantly appeared on Sekou's wrists. Each wristband had a star on it with unfamiliar symbols all over the stars. Sekou did not understand the meaning of any of the letters.

"I do not understand," said Sekou to the skeleton.

"Let me show you. Start at the top. Then go to the center. Go from left to right with your right hand. Then move your right hand back to the center of the star," said the warrior. "When demons appear, the blue wristbands will appear."

"Rise up, young hunter. Look toward Antioch and say the prayer I taught you. The God of Antioch will help you find meaning and inner peace. As He reveals your powers to you, you will have even more questions."

"But I have no questions," said Sekou.

"You will have them, hunter. You will," said the skeleton.

The blue skeleton touched Sekou on the forehead in the manner he told him to touch his wrist bands. Tremendous energy flowed from the dead warrior's blue bones into the frame of Sekou. The old warrior's tracking experiences and battle

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techniques became part of Sekou's memory. The blue skeleton's neuro-muscular patterns transferred into the RNA of Sekou's ribosomes. Through the biological process of translation, this genetic data flowed freely into his neurons, tendons and muscles.

Sekou's muscles grew massively. His quadriceps got larger. The sinews between his arm muscles separated. His latissimus dorsi became more pronounced and serrated. A blue glow appeared around him. He was an awesome sight to behold.

"Rise Sekou," the skeleton motioned.
"Tara!"

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A ferocious white wolf, nearly the length of a horse ran out of the forest. She came and kneeled before Sekou, the hunter.

"Tara will be your companion. She will guide you. She will be your friend in the darkest of nights. When the stars are dark in the sky, she will guide you through the night," explained the dead warrior's skeleton. The she wolf let out a blood curdling bark.

"Sekou. Tara. You both now walk a path that no hunters before you have traversed among the Achaemenidians. You will be the sworn enemy of Mithra

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and his infinite demons," bellowed the dead warrior's skeleton.

Seeing Sekou's confusion, the old skeleton decided to explain to him who Mithra is. "Mithra reins in the night. The Dark Lord searches for the souls of children who will threaten him in the future. He can smell their genotype. All the dark recesses of Persepolis are home to him. You will battle the dark forces that Mithra controls. You will stand up against Rome. You will battle the dragons of the East. You will protect the progeny of Darius the King and his vassals, " said the blue bony cyclops.

Sekou asked, "How will I find

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Mithra?"

The skeleton answered, "Wherever there are abandoned children, you will find the Dark Lord. His minions will be on the lookout for male children with a certain genotype. Throughout history, this genotype is only created when the radiation from the North Star hits the unborn fetus within the thirteenth week of its gestation.

This is the genotype Herod was looking for. This was the genotype that Ramses was looking for. This is the genotype that must never be given any credential or knowledge. No wealth will be accorded to this genotype."

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"Why are you telling me this?"

"Sekou, you have this genotype!"

"Why boys? Why not girls," asked the hunter.

"I do not know. One day, you will meet me again. Maybe then I will know the answer," said the bewildered blue skeleton.

"This specific genotype is common among the disappeared. One day you will learn about chromosomes. Each of the children who get kidnapped in Persepolis has a similar chromosomal

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pattern.

"Families rise, Sekou. Envy ensues. Families fall. Mithra feeds off this rise and decay in all civilizations. He feeds off the love that parents have for their children. He takes advantage of their uncertainty. Uncertainty leads to fear. Fear of the unknown is what Mithra preys on.

"When you approach Persepolis, you will see that children are stolen from homes. No one knows why. The constabulary does not know why. The king does not know why. The parents will be bereft. Soon they will get paranoid and neurosis will ensue. Then they will blame God.

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"Mithra destroyed Carthage. He will soon destroy Rome. He will destroy the East as well. But here, along the Arabian peninsula, we must be wary of his growing power. Many are attracted by his promise of immortality. Many will lose their souls chasing that delusion. The only immortality any human can have is faith in the God of Antioch.

"Trust your king. Trust your laws. They will help you when you think all is lost. This is a civilization after all. When Mithra appears, the blue wristbands will reappear. My bow and axe..." The skeleton corrected himself. "Excuse me, your bow and

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axe will also appear. Your weapons can only be used against the Dark Lord. With respect to the fools and criminally minded, you will have to use your wits. Leave them to their folly. Do not engage them. Your mission is to protect this land from Mithra.

"The Achaemenidians built a capable administration. Others have improved it. Let them do what they are paid to do. As for human corruption, not even the God of Antioch can prevent that.

"Sekou, I am tired. It is time for me to leave you. Tara will be your companion. Goodbye Sekou, The Hunter," said the blue skeleton. He turned towards Antioch.

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The blue skeleton's voice whispered into the sunlight. "Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust." His remaining eye closes. His blue bones slowly disintegrate into the wind. A blue iridescent glow rises among the myriad colors of the morning sunrise, racing towards the heavens.

Light.