

An Excerpt From  
**Like a Seagull**  
By Caleb Eno  
Word Count: 2257

The wheelchair buckled with each impact. The iron enforced wooden frame cracked and splintered. Kale struggled to hold on as he descended uncontrollably into the ravine. Branches and thorns cut at his skin and tore his tunic. Narrowly, he dodged a few trees on the way down. This was not the escape he had planned on making. Through the dark and the blurred scenery he could see little. Then the right wheel caught a protruding rock and bore him into the air. The chair landed forcefully on its left side, crumpling the iron ring. Kale flew to the ground, thankfully hitting damp dirt and grass. He had reached the bottom.

For long minutes he lay unmoving in the cold foliage. He heard only the sounds of the forest and the distant babbling of water. Carefully, Kale raised himself to his elbows and rolled his body to get a look at the trail far above. He could see no torches or evidence of the search party. Perhaps they had completely missed his fall and continued along the trail. Trusting to that hope he turned to examine himself. The light of the moon and stars falling through the tree leaves showed evidence of numerous cuts all over his body and tunic. He could not tell if his legs had been injured, but then he hadn't had feeling in them since the accident. The chair lay in bent and broken pieces a few feet away.

Kale shifted himself around to get a look at the immediate area. He was in a light collection of trees at the bottom of the ravine. In one direction, the forest closed in and grew very dark. The other way the ravine widened out and exposed the purple-blue stone of which much of the island was composed. The sound of water came from that direction, probably a stream. Of the two, it seemed the more inviting choice. Kale began to pull himself through the underbrush towards the sound of the water.

The soft ground provided little purchase for the tedious movement required to crawl. Time dragged on until Kale, panting heavily, made a final pull onto the exposed blue stone. After a moments rest he got his bearings. He could now see the source of the water. Only a few feet from him, a wide circle had been cut into the rock. On the opposite side of the circle from where Kale lay, a stream formed a gentle waterfall.



He exerted the extra effort to bring himself to the edge of the drop off. The hole was roughly the height of two men. The bottom was covered in grass with flowered bushes around the lower rim. The waterfall poured out into a raised pool, also cut out of the rock. Kale stared in wonder at the scene. He had never heard of such a place on the island. The smell of the flowers and the fresh water calmed his rushing mind.

A rustling sound below drew his attention. There, sticking out of a bush, was a pale white face staring back at him. Kale yelled in shock. The figure covered her mouth with one finger. Kale froze mid-yell. If anyone heard him down here, he could never hope to get away. Both waited in silence. Nothing could be heard but the gentle pouring of water.

“What are you doing here?”

Kale, who had been scanning the forest for signs of movement, jumped slightly and looked back down at the figure. She stood outside of the bush now, slivery hair flowing about her white tunic. Her face reminded Kale of his younger sister, but the hair and the way the moonlight played upon her made her seem slightly transparent.

“Well?”

Kale, distracted by her appearance, forgot she had asked a question. “Huh?”

Chuckling, she asked again, “I said ‘What are you doing here?’”

“Oh, I...” Kale thought of the voices he’d narrowly escaped only moments ago. “I... I was hiding.”

Her face brightened, and she spoke excitedly, “You mean like hiding and looking! I love that game.” She danced around the grass. “Are you very good at it?”

“Um, no. I mean, yes. That’s not what I meant. I’m hiding from people who want to hurt me.”

She stopped her dancing and looked gravely at him. “Why would anyone want to hurt you?”

“Because I...” At that question, all of the pain of the last five years returned to him. Being unable to perform even the most menial of tasks. The ways that the townspeople looked at him. How Elder Riten spoke down to him. His own frustration of being unable to run and



climb like the other kids his age. For the fourth time today, he cried. And then yelled.  
“Because I’m a broken, worthless nothing!”

The girl watched Kale as he cried. After a moment she closed her eyes and began to sing softly. It took a moment for Kale to notice. The ethereal sound of it distracted him from the weight of the day’s events. As she sang, the bushes lining the circle began to form small glowing orbs all over them. The song grew louder and the orbs began to dance. They shifted from bush to bush like fireflies.

She came to the conclusion of the song and the orbs faded away. She folded her hands, and looked at Kale.

“Do you feel better?”

With a deep breath, “Yes.”

“Good. Now, why do you think you’re broken?”

Kale felt the feelings of worthlessness wretch at this stomach, but the memory of her song kept them at bay. “Because I can’t use my legs. I can’t help anyone or do any of the chores around the village. Most of the other boys are already helping their father’s at their jobs, but I can’t work anywhere, much less my father’s smithy.”

Even at a distance, Kale could see her staring deeply into his eyes. “Do you want to be well?”

It took a moment for the question to sink in. “More than anything in the world. But Healer Marcus said that I will never get better.”

“I can make you well.”

Kale stared at her and held back a laugh.

“Why do you laugh?”

“I’m sorry. It just sounded ridiculous. I told you I can’t be healed.”

“Have you ever seen anything like my song before?”

“Well, no.”

“Then what’s to say I couldn’t heal you?”

She had a point, but Kale still dared not believe her. “I don’t know.”

She look at him sincerely, “Come to my pool, Kale, and you will know.”



At hearing his name a lump caught in his throat. He looked at her, thoroughly bewildered. She returned his puzzlement stoically.

“But I could never get down there. It’s too far.”

“Why don’t you try the steps?” She pointed to either side of him. To his left and his right, following the curve of the circle, were two flights of steps carved out of the stone. Somehow he had never noticed them.

“What’s your name?”

She smiled, “Eliana.”

Kale pulled himself over to the edge of the steps. With an effort he gathered up his legs and put both of his feet onto the first step. Step by step he lowered himself down, manually moving his legs ahead of him. It was a slow progression. The injuries sustained on his fall burned with the effort, but he eventually reached the ground. The grass felt gentle to his scarred hands.

Eliana sat on the grass next to where he lay. In her sweet little girl’s voice she whispered, “You did a really good job.”

Now that they were close, Kale examined her in depth. Her face did resemble his sister’s. They both had the same chin. But the eyes betrayed her age. Eliana seemed at once young and very old.

“Are you real?”

She chuckled. “What a funny question.”

“I mean, you’re not a dream are you?”

“Maybe you’re my dream.”

It was his turn to laugh.

Her eyes caught a glimmer of moonlight off of the waterfall. “Let me prove it to you then.” She grabbed his hand and wrapped her fingers in his. “See. I’m real.”

Her starlit smile captivated him.

“So, do you want to get well?”

“Yes.”



At once she stood up and walked over to the pool. Without hesitating she stepped with bare feet into the water. "Come into the water."

He crawled to the edge of the pool.

"But I'm dirty and bloody. I'll muddy it."

"Come," she insisted.

He climbed over the edge of the pool. The water was cool but not cold. She directed him to sit under the waterfall. The gentle stream cascaded over his body.

"Drink." As Kale did so, she began to sing again. The lights returned to the bushes. As she sang, they began to swarm around her in a whirlwind. Then, as a subtle change came over the music, Kale realized the song had become about him. The orbs flew towards him and began to spin around the waterfall. The pool radiated with the lights and a great wind, filled with her sweet, sad notes, blew about him.

The light grew so intense that he could see nothing but the water and Eliana. He felt his body become weightless. Amidst the music and the wind, he heard her voice, distant but clear.

"Be well."

The light grew in intensity and blinded him. Just before the light overwhelmed his vision, he thought he saw Eliana's arms become wings.

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Kale's vision slowly returned. Far above he saw a wide expanse of blue sky. Though disoriented for a moment, he realized that he was lying on his back. He pressed down with his hands to find sand. Shocked, he sat up. He was on the beach. Waves rolled in over the sand a stone's throw away. He no longer wore a tunic, but neither did he bear any mark of the fall.

As he tried to process what had happened he reached down to scratch his leg. He immediately pulled his hand back. It hurt. Barely daring to believe it, he flexed what he remembered to be his toe. It moved. He flexed the other toe. It moved also. A surge of feeling flooded through his veins.

Tentatively, he pulled his knees up by themselves. They responded without argument. Excitement swelling within, he attempted to put weight on them. They bore him. And, for the first time in five years, he stood.



The wind brushed past his face. He could feel the sand rub against the ball of his foot. Then, being unable to contain themselves any longer, his legs dashed for the sea. Kale breached the ocean and felt the water splash over him. The waves pressed against him but he stood, unmoving. He could feel strength growing in him.

A seagull flew overhead towards the beach. Like a race horse finally free of the stables, he gave chase. At first his legs were clumsy and the sand rubbed his soles. But with each step he became more sure. A deep, supernatural power welled up within him. He pushed himself to run faster. The sand beat like a drum as he gained speed.

The seagull flew quickly but Kale gained. A new power had grown in him. His legs carried him farther and faster than any man could run. The sand no longer burned as his body willed it into submission.

He saw, in the distance, a tree had fallen across the beach. Gathering his wits, he prepared to jump. The leap sent him flying into the air. For a moment, fear seized him, but his new legs knew what to do. He fell into a perfect front roll and landed on his feet, still at a run. Kale stared back and saw the tree obscured by a cloud of dust and sand. Turning forwards, he raised his arms and let out a great yell. The seagull called with him.

His journey took him to the Watch House, a great rock on the corner of the island where his people had long ago built an overlook to scan the horizon for ships. His feet, now firmed and toughened by the same power that had restored him, paid no mind as he raced over the rocky surface and climbed to the ancient building. The little-used house stood at the base of the final summit. Kale climbed with unmatched skill to the top of the glistening purple-blue stone. A small spot of grass and a single sapling met him when he arrived at the flattened surface. He grasped the small tree with his right hand and caught his breath.

Looking out from the summit, Kale could see the whole island including the small settlement he called home. Smoke rose from the cooking fires in the clearing. The other mountains around the island offered an appealing contrast to the greens of the forest and the tans of the beach. The wind blew harder way up here. His loin cloth flapped in the force of it. He took a moment to examine the changes his body had taken on. The fat developed from being trapped in the wheelchair was gone. The muscles had toned all over his body.



Of all the joys he ever expected out of life, this surpassed them all. Eliana, whoever she was, had given him a beautiful gift.

The seagull which he had chased flew past him. Smiling he whispered to the wind.

“Thank you, Eliana.”

The seagull called.

