

## They Will Write Our History In Blood

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# They Will Write Our History In Blood

by [orphan\\_account](#)

## Summary

Taurons live and die by family. Changing a name does not change a man; blood will always out.

## Notes

While the age difference between Joseph and Sam hasn't been stated yet in canon, Sasha Roiz mentioned it in a podcast as being about two years. I've stretched it a little, because the age difference between Sasha and Esai is more like ten. I'm ninety-nine percent sure this is going to be hardcore contradicted by upcoming canon, so take it for what it's worth. Thanks to Yakbites for all the encouragement and the beta action sent from on high, and untold thanks to Kuwamiko for her input, especially since she has no interest in the show. I don't know how you guys put up with me. [Written before the latter half of season one started airing.]

# Chapter 1

1.

There was no signpost designating Little Tauron. You knew where you were going, unless you were stupid enough to get lost, and you knew when you got there. Downtown Caprica City looked the same block to block; dramatic architecture, city streets clogged with cars, near constant construction. Little Tauron was past the congestion. There were storefronts instead of high-rises, markets instead of superstores with self-service kiosks. Houses flanked the streets like a tiny suburb, shanties for people who never managed to scrape the cubits together to move away, or didn't want to.

It was quaint. Familiar, at the very least. Everyone knew his face, if not his name. Joseph could walk out of any store with goods on the promise of paying it back or working it off later. He rarely took advantage, though Sam did when he wanted some new and shiny that The People's Orphanage wouldn't dream of providing. He paid his debts by washing dishes, scrubbing windows, unloading trucks, else Joseph would have told him off, or at least watched him like a hawk when Sam neglected to care.

There were two sides to Little Tauron. A tourist wouldn't notice the difference. Taurons who didn't want to see things for what they were could turn a blind eye, live their lives, keep their heads down. The ha'la'tha inhabited bars and back rooms like a cancer, concealed amongst the normality of shops and produce stands. But once you went further up the streets, past the window dressing, reality was unavoidable. It was blatant; storage facilities, empty warehouses, none of them used for their intended purposes. It was the last place Joseph wanted to go, and predictably it was the place Sam ran to.

Finding him was easy. There were only so many places the ha'la'tha didn't utilize; this one, a condemned meat-packing warehouse where runaways camped out and kids liked to get high. The roof was caving in, but that wasn't enough reason to keep away. The transients dropped off during winter for obvious reasons, but Sam wouldn't let the cold deter him.

Some misguided soul had fenced the building in with chain-link, like that was going to stop anybody. The holes in it weren't easy to squeeze through; his clothes snagged along the way, and the cold metal bit even through his jacket. The graffitied door was locked, probably by Sam, but not barricaded. He had to bust it in, not the first person to do so by a long shot, wood splinters and discarded chains littering the ground.

Sam was in there, silent and sullen, sitting in front of a fire that smoked foul black and smelled worse; Gods only knew what was burning in there. Sam didn't acknowledge him, and Joseph stood there for a while thinking of something to say, but nothing came.

He sat down next to him, and Sam didn't move away, but he was like a statue, barely even blinking. They watched the fire crackle and hiss, Joseph rubbing his numb hands as close the flames as he dared.

Sam speaking was a surprise; it was well before Joseph thought he'd crack. It had only been an hour or so when Joseph noticed Sam was missing, but he must have been in there, freezing his ass off and stewing, for half the day. "They're not our frakking parents."

He kept his voice quiet and even. "I know."

"Don't you care? About what they would have wanted?"

He didn't turn and face his brother to try and say ugly verities to his face; the hunched shape of Sam beside him was hard enough. "I care about you eating more than one meal a day. I care about you going to school."

The same old argument. They'd had it a hundred times. Joseph wanted school, wanted college, and Sam seemed to take it as a personal insult that he wanted it for both of them. The hope of it happening was virtually worn down from fighting for so long, but something kept making him say it.

Sam tossed something into the fire. "I can take care of myself."

Telling Sam that he was twelve, had just turned twelve last month, would send him off. *You're too young, you're not going to be some errand boy for the ha'la'tha, you can do more, be better.* All of them were mines waiting to be stepped on. Joseph avoided them and tossed his own sliver of wood into the fire to watch it spit.

"You want to get rid of me that bad, huh?"

Joseph's mouth thinned into a brittle line, but he didn't take the bait. "Of course not."

Sam stretched out his legs in front of him, heels pressing hard on the concrete floor. His arms were wrapped around his middle against the cold, and Joseph noticed thought ahead and worn two coats, the outermost an old cast-off of his own. The sleeves were too short, ending before the knobby bones of his wrist.

"But I can't stay with you because you're too chicken to go to the ha'la'tha--"

"Those people can give you a home." Any home the ha'la'tha could give them wouldn't deserve the name, and Caprica had made it abundantly clear that a poor twelve year old wasn't going to live in a shack with his even poorer older brother, not even when Joseph reached legal adulthood. "Our parents would have seen us split up before they saw us in debt to the ha'la'tha."

"They're *dead*. It doesn't matter what they would have done."

He nearly choked. Twelve year old shortsightedness. "Sam," he tried, trying to tip toe around calling him a hypocrite, "I thought *you* cared about what they would have wanted."

That shut him up. Joseph watched the side of his face, the tic in his jaw, the nose he hadn't quite grown into, waiting. "They're not splitting us up," he said finally, voice small. "I swear to Mars, I'll go to the Guatrau if you even think about letting them. Frak, I'd go to Canceron and become a street performer before I'd live with some akatadektos."

The Estorgs were a nice couple. They had money, which made them seem nicer. Meryem brought Joseph in to meet them and prove it, because she knew there was no chance of Sam going anywhere without Joseph's blessing. They smiled and shook his hand and said all the right things, but their eyes moved past him like he was barely there. They'd lost their daughter, and they wanted this vibrant, excitable twelve year old orphan to live in her repainted room and fill up space at the dinner table. Joseph was fifteen, and he was about as personable as a rag, so of course they just wanted Sam, quick, distracting Sam. They'd give him a room to himself, their money and influence so Sam would go to college whether he liked it or not, and Joseph would stop in on holidays and send letters.

Or Sam would run away like he had, and crawl so deep into the ha'la'tha that he could never come out. He was serious about going to the Guatrau. Joseph wouldn't be able to stop him. Losing him to that life was far more indelible than his running away to Canceron.

"Wouldn't running away be the same as us being separated?"

"You'd come after me," Sam said, fierce with conviction.

There was nothing to say; it was the truth. He'd follow Sam and live like a fugitive in Little Tauron or whatever place would have them. He'd run again if the government tried to hunt them down. It was high on the list of worst-case scenarios.

"You'd make a horrible street performer," Joseph said eventually. "You'd quit after a day."

The corner of Sam's mouth quirked. He shifted closer until they were touching and secured his jacket tighter around himself. He knew he'd won.

There was a heavy, guilty weight in Joseph's stomach, twined with sick relief. He didn't have the heart to argue for something he didn't want, and realizing exactly how selfless he *wasn't* made it even worse. He didn't want Sam to live with the Estorgs. He didn't want to spend the next three years whiling away his time like an inmate inside the orphanage without his brother. Even if it meant Sam was nestled in a safe cocoon of the upper class, far away from Little Tauron.

The police found them a few hours later. Sam had all but fallen asleep against Joseph's side, and when they came in he didn't fight them. He watched Joseph sleepily while they were walked outside and thoroughly dressed down. Joseph did most of the talking and Sam did his best to look appropriately contrite.

When Meryem was called to come pick them up, they were standing together by the police car, Sam still tucked close to Joseph's side. She sat through paperwork and the cop's continued lecture; Joseph could see through her veneer of polite acquiescence to the irritation and impatience beneath. It made him want to laugh, but he stayed blank-faced.

When the cop was finally driving away, it was the three of them. Joseph and Sam were a united front, and Meryem's arms were crossed tight over her chest, her coat fluttering in the frigid wind.

She turned her narrow-eyed glare on Sam, who leaned in even closer to Joseph. "You don't get to do that again."

"Sorry," Sam said.

Meryem sighed, shoulders slumping. It put him off balance. Joseph was expecting fireworks, but she only looked tired. "By the Gods, what were you thinking?"

"We're not splitting up," Joseph said quickly, louder than he'd meant to.

Meryem just looked at him. "Yeah, I got that." Sighing again, she waved a hand. "Go get in the car. If we're lucky we'll get back before dinner." She went around to the driver's side and unlocked the door, back still stiff, and Joseph knew Sam would be lucky to see sunlight before his next birthday.

Settled in the back seat, Sam looked out the window as they passed through Little Tauron back into Caprica City, smiling.

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END 1/5.

My crappy Greek translation tells me that "akatadektos" is some version of "snob."

# Chapter Two

## Chapter Notes

Well. Caprica was canned. :| I don't even have something meaningful to say; the show was finally, finally finding its feet and it's been cut down. SIGH. Such is life.

IN COMMEMORATION, this is chapter two. I'm bummed I have to wait until the DVD release for "Dirt Eaters," which is probably the episode that would have Jossed this beyond words, but maybe for the fic's sake that's for the best?

2.

The shine of the secretary's pumps perfectly matched the glossy surface of the huge oak desk she sat behind. She clacked her way into the dean's office to bring him coffee and then back out, which was when Joseph noticed her shoes. There were no magazines he had interest in reading, and he would have been too distracted even if there were, so his only options were staring at the wall or checking his watch repeatedly. The secretary noticed whenever his eyes flicked to her, and she gave him a sham of a smile that stretched her lips plastic until he looked away.

At half past three, forty-five minutes after his scheduled appointment, she leaned forward over her behemoth of a desk and called his name. "Dean Helgate will see you now." She didn't look at him again, not when he thanked her or when he walked past her to the door.

Inside it was dim, the entire office a monument of wood and books. He thought he could make a pretty solid guess as to who was responsible for the oak desk.

Helgate looked over the rim of small silver glasses. "What can I do for you today, Mister Adams?"

"I'm here to discuss my application," he said, and sat down in the nearest chair, since Helgate didn't seem to be in a particular hurry to give instructions.

"You're not the first rejected applicant to ask for an audience." He took off his glasses and looked down down at his computer display as though reading from a script. "I'll tell you what I tell them; we're a private university, and the pre-law program only has a certain number of spots." He looked up at Joseph then, his eyes a watery blue, not nearly as severe without the thick lenses.

"How many spots, if you don't mind my asking?"

"One hundred and twelve. As you can imagine, we receive applications from all of the colonies, from which we select the very best. Your test scores are impressive, but so are

everyone else's."

It was practically a recitation of the rejection letter he'd received a week ago, albeit with a much more blunt and personal touch. "I received the Delphi scholarship," he pointed out.

Helgate glanced at his display again and flicked through Joseph's file. "Yes, I can see that you did."

"If my current credentials weren't good enough, what exactly do I need to do achieve, here?" His recommendations were respectable, one from a speech and debate professor at Kobol College, which he'd nearly killed himself getting. His test scores were in the ninety-sixth percentile, far above the requirement. His transcripts couldn't be helped; he had no record of his schooling before the age of ten, and up through his second year of high school, his grades dipped and rose erratically. The peril of an orphan. Joseph was lucky; some of them didn't even graduate.

"My advice is to reapply next year. Expanding your extracurriculars would be beneficial, but there's no way to know what will or won't give you an advantage. Next year's applicants may be even more formidable."

"I'll keep that in mind," he said, squeezing the handle of his briefcase until his knuckles strained white.

He knew how it would go. A hundred and twenty personifications of excellence would apply, transcripts flawless, most of them able to pay their way in. Joseph would be turned down again and have to go off-planet to frakking Libron. He'd been accepted *there*.

"Is there anything else, Mister Adama?"

That name was like the pluck of a string; his whole body tensed and vibrated. "It's Adams."

He didn't even blink. "Oh, yes." He paused. "I had wondered if it was an error."

His name was signed and stamped, officially, legally Joseph Adams. Joseph Adama shouldn't exist, let alone be haunting his law school application. "No, it's not an error. I changed my name."

"You're from Tauron originally, yes?"

Adama wasn't the most telling surname. Joseph only became Adams because he didn't want anyone to ask the question, or have to answer it. He didn't know whether he'd lie or tell a half-truth; he was Caprican now. He wondered what else had found its way into his file.

"Yes. I don't see how that has any bearing on this conversation." His voice came out steady, though he felt knotted up inside, strangled by anger.

"I was curious as to why you changed your name." Joseph's silence resounded in the space between them, though the dean did not react to it. "Libran offers scholarships to victims of the Tauron Uprising, as I understand it."



Joseph stood up, briefcase banging against his thigh, and stiffly directed his words to the bookshelves looming behind Helgate's head. "I've taken up enough of your time. I'll show myself out."

He had the whole furious walk back to the Lev to silently rehearse any number of things he could have said, would have said, if he didn't know that next year his pathetic desperation would compel him to reapply. It wasn't until he was sandwiched between a mother and her three children and a man in a business suit that resembled a well-tailored version of Joseph's own thrift-store clothes that he realized how gutted he felt.

The worst part of it was that he didn't know if Helgate cared if he was a dirt-eating Tauron. Joseph didn't know if his application was really outclassed, if the scholarship -- enough for tuition and books, not enough to cover things like transportation, or clothes, or eating, other incidental things like that was a drop in the bucket. And all the loans in the worlds could be taken out, but that didn't mean he could even *use* them.

There was *one* university worth a damn on the whole of Caprica, one where he could go through the program, live in a shack, eat what he could find, scrape by, and still feel like it was worth it at the end of the day. All the cubits in the worlds wouldn't make him accept a place in one of Libran's endless sub-par schools, stuck working for the Inter-Colonial Court System for the rest of his miserable life, instead of doing the work he wanted to on Caprica.

The Lev dumped him unceremoniously at his stop, three blocks away from the apartment he shared with Sam. Shared with Sam in theory only; even at the beginning, he was always off hanging in Little Tauron, and used the apartment as storage for his clothes. Sam was why he needed to get into Apollo University; Sam wouldn't come with him to Libran, wouldn't go anywhere, even if it was for Joseph. Not if it meant leaving behind the ha'la'tha.

It was raining, the sky sleet-gray, which meant it was going to storm before the day was over. He walked the three blocks, gray suit blending in with the sky, the concrete, with the ugly industrial buildings that defined this part of town.

His apartment was up six floors, and the elevator was always out. He had twenty minutes to climb them, peel off his suit, eat something, and change into his work clothes. He was scheduled until midnight, and then he'd be able to stop by the grocery and pick up the week's supplies.

Sam had been there. His empty cup was sitting on the counter, because he always forget to put it in the sink, or because he enjoyed deliberately pissing Joseph off. He rinsed it out and put it away. There was a note on the counter, *guess you're out*, and the nonchalance made his chest tight all over again.

He could leave Sam to the warehouses and shady businesses of Little Tauron. He could pack his stuff, leave his disgusting apartment building, board a ship, go to frakking Libran, and live his life if not how he wanted to, then at least with a measure of control. Frak Apollo University and everything it represented.

He could sever all of his ties, never have to be called Joseph *Adama* again.

Live his own life.

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Little Tauron during the middle of the day felt surreal. The cover of night would have been a comfort. He felt suspect, and the people milling around living their lives and enjoying the sunny day were out of place.

Everything was essentially as he remembered it. Joseph's last real sojourn to Little Tauron was close to three years ago for Sam's birthday. The streets hadn't changed; some buildings had been repainted, two or three businesses gone under and replaced with something else, but otherwise it was like stepping into *deja vu* and not snapping out of it.

The Guatrau could be anywhere; Joseph didn't have the first clue where to start looking. His lieutenants, on the other hand, liked to waste a lot of time playing cards and shooting pool. There was a pool hall teeming with them; even during the dead hours of the middle of the day, they'd be gathered like flies.

No one was guarding the door, but a few men sat at tables reading newspapers, not remotely trying to look inconspicuous. When he was younger, Joseph used to talk to some of the lookouts, not realizing what they were. He remembered being ten and the impossibly tall man who showed him his gun and how to cock it, how to hold it. Joseph soaked it up like it was a science lesson. It was the first and only time he'd handled a gun in his life.

He recognized Cronus' face from the news - it was fairly unmistakable, a scar above his right eyebrow and a tattoo slashing across his neck. The footage was usually of him leaving the courthouse, cleared of all charges after fingerprints mysteriously vanished from evidence they'd indicted him with. He was high up enough for the Guatrau to ensure his protection; that was good enough for Joseph.

The table playing Triad next to Cronus gave him bold-faced stares when he came closer, but not Cronus himself. He just stubbed out a cigarette and lit up a new one as soon as both hands were free. "Sit." He sat. The chair was rickety, lurching left. Joseph shifted to try and compensate but it just tipped again. "What's your name?"

"My name is Joseph Adams," he started, gritting his teeth over how awkward he sounded. "I need a favor."

He blew smoke over his shoulder. "Eat." The platter he pushed at Joseph skidded on the wooden table. Cheeses, meats, hearts and kidneys, gristle and sinew. The smells were familiar, the same he grew up with before coming to Caprica and eating bland, mass-produced cafeteria fare. It didn't look unappetizing, but eating was the last thing on his mind.

"Thank you, but I already ate." He leaned forward, dropping his voice. "I need to see the Guatrau."

Another billow of smoke, but this time Cronus didn't take the courtesy of blowing it away from Joseph's face. "You can ask favors of a man, you can eat at his table. Didn't your *momma* teach you no *frakking* manners?"

Silently, Joseph reached for a wedge of cheese. It was pungent, sticking to the roof of his mouth. "I'm eating at your table," he said. "I'm asking you a favor."

There was a twitch of muscle at the corner of Cronus' mouth. "Better." He took a gible and chewed thoughtfully. "What is it you want with the Guatrau?"

"All due respect, there's a reason why I'm going to the Guatrau."

Cronus' eyes narrowed. "There's a reason why I'm asking, smart-ass. We get a lot of outsiders who want things from the Guatrau. "

"I can imagine."

"Cubits, mostly. You know what I tell them? Play the frakking lottery."

"I don't want cubits." He took a gamble. "I'm not an outsider." His Tauron might have been a little shaky, so long without use except inside his head, but it was more than understandable.

The plume of smoke that came was slow, a long exhale. Cronus was almost smiling again. He gave Joseph a long look up and down, taking in his suit and his shiny shoes. "Joseph Adams, huh?"

Joseph smiled back, faking it with everything he had, and shrugged.

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It was late. Even the constantly yelling couple in the apartment upstairs had succumbed to the inevitability of sleep. He would have gone and passed out if he hadn't felt so frakking strange, like he was crawling out of his skin. The whole night, the trip to Little Tauron, *that* felt like a dream. If he tried, he could convince himself it had been, and that he was newly awake and bleary in the pre-dawn silence of his apartment.

Except for the message on his machine, the one he hadn't bothered to delete. His boss demanding to know what the frak he was thinking, and if he pulled that bullshit again he was out of a job. That was harder to ignore. He played it again, feeling the whir of the tape rewinding under his finger to the button.

His suit was another reality. It was loose and wrinkled from wearing it too long; it didn't do the cheap material any favors. Joseph had the jacket and tie off and draped across the back of a chair, but cigarette smoke and something else, less distinct but intrinsically Tauron, clung to him like a cologne.

He peeled the whole suit off and was sitting on his couch with a beer -- at five in the morning, but at five in the morning no one was awake to judge him -- when he heard Sam's keys working in the door. Joseph didn't get up.

Sam's hat was dipped low over his eyes, but Joseph could still read them. He was wide-awake and wanted something, wanted it *immediately*, impatience quickening his walk. He towered like something out of a horror film, standing while Joseph stayed on the couch and looked up at him expectantly.

"I hear you've been to the underworld. You handing out morality pamphlets now?"

It made him laugh. The beer he was swallowing caught for a moment in his throat. "Yeah, it's my newest crusade. Saving the wicked, one sorry bastard at a time."

Sam shook his head and went into the pathetic four by six space that passed for the kitchen. He came out with a beer but didn't drink it, letting it dangle between his long fingers. "So what's your game? You stop by to try and find me?" Joseph snorted. "Yeah. I hear from somebody that my *brother's* in town, is he thinking about joining the family? Imagine my frakking surprise."

"Maybe I am. Better health benefits."

Sam's lips pursed. He was less than amused. "I don't get you. Years go by, and suddenly you decide to take a day trip?"

Joseph figured punching a hole in the balloon of Sam's umbrage would be the best way to shut him up. "Apollo turned me down."

Sam, finally lifting his beer to drink it, stopped with the bottle an inch in front of his face. Different expressions, minute and invisible to anyone who hadn't grown up beside him, crossed his face in quick succession. He finally settled on something that passed for casual impassivity. "I'm sorry, Joseph." The conversation suspended between them, silence loaded because they both knew he didn't care about Joseph's academic pursuits, except. Except. "You going to that one on Libran, then?"

"Why, you gonna miss me?" But he was already done with pretense, and he figured getting it out would mean it took up less room in his head.

The message from Helgate was long gone, erased almost as soon as Joseph walked in the door and heard it. The sound of his grudging voice, the false civility in every word, it made Joseph's blood roil with encompassing, fierce victory, and incredible shame. *Mr Adams, I've just been informed that a spot has opened up, and you are welcome to it. Please come by the admission's office in the morning.* The timestamp said the call came at ten - on a weeknight. Not exactly during business hours. The Guatrau worked fast.

He wished he'd kept the message, now. It had a lot more impact than, "Don't bother writing any goodbye letters, I start the program this fall."

Sam's brow creased. "I thought you said you *didn't* get in?"

"I didn't."

"Then what the frak are you talking about? Libran?"

"I didn't get in. I went down and talked to the dean --" he swallowed the rest of his beer "-- and he said, Mister *Adama*, try again next year."

Sam's annoyance wasn't feigned. "Shit." Joseph made a noise of agreement and clunked the beer down on his table, next to an army of empty take out containers and newspaper

classifieds. "Do you -- I know a few people --"

Joseph snorted. "What, is your little family going to break the dean of Apollo University's kneecaps? Thanks but no thanks." Sam looked like that was exactly his plan, and he was still fairly certain it was a *good* plan. Joseph smiled and shook his head. "But I got in, remember? He reconsidered."

"What, did you make your case? Dazzle him with that big brain of yours?"

"I went to the Guatrau."

The look on Sam's face was priceless. Joseph really should have known it was coming. He would have gotten out his camera.

"You did what?"

"I went to the Guatrau." Joseph started undoing the buttons on his shirt, the cuffs, slipping the material off. "Nice guy. A real people person." Remembering the Guatrau's face made him want to sink into the carpet. He'd felt like a bug pinned under a microscope, and he had to look back without flinching for hours.

When he put his back to Sam, he let the fresh ink speak for him. It was on his left shoulder blade, barely a smudge, tiny edges raised and reddened. Sam's speechlessness was unnerving -- it happened so rarely -- and it was the second time that night Joseph had managed to elicit it.

"Bino." Sam's breath stirred the back of his hair. His fingers were quick to investigate, pressing carefully outside of the design, chasing goosebumps across his skin. "You really did it."

"Yeah." He swallowed around a sudden lump in his throat. "I did."

"Joseph." Sam's forearm anchoring around his shoulders was sudden and startling that it nearly tipped him off balance. Sam hauled him in, Joseph's back pressed flush to his front. Joseph realized Sam's chin was at the nape of his neck, digging in slightly. "Frak."

The brush of Sam's lips on his shoulder was dry and light, and he wasn't sure whether he should focus on that or the fact that Sam was starting to squeeze him to the point of discomfort. He squirmed, trying to look back over his shoulder, but Sam was unmovable. It felt like the line of buttons on Sam's shirt were digging imprints into his flesh.

The second kiss was lingering, and it was how Joseph realized it was a *kiss*. He nuzzled his face close to Joseph's hair and inhaled; Joseph stood still and stared unseeing at the front door across from him, stunned.

"Adelfe mou," Sam said, tone hushed. He put his lips to Joseph's skin again, trailing up the blade, and he tightened his arm around his chest one final time before pulling away. Joseph teetered at the abrupt change, finding his own balance again.

His shirt was on the floor, but he was too distracted to lean over and pick it up. Sam stepped out from behind him and came near his side, rubbing at his mouth. He looked as worn out as Joseph felt, now that the fervor that compelled him to the apartment was gone. "You all right to drive home?" Joseph asked instinctively, and it felt awkward that it was the first thing out of his mouth.

He knew what the ha'la'tha meant to Sam. It wasn't a surprise. It *was* a surprise, an unpleasant one, to realize how long ago he'd lost the ability to read his brother. He didn't know it would bring them back to being children, slippery hands clasped tight while they hid in a basement on Tauron, and then when they huddled together against the terrifying newness of Caprica. Joseph had forgotten what it was like to have that brother.

Sam shook his head, mouth quirked. "I'm always good to drive." He flashed to memories of Sam driving them both through pouring rain on winding roads in the middle of the night, always while setting presets on his radio, or eating a sandwich -- or still drinking a bottle of booze from a paper bag. It was more than second nature to him.

"Yeah, I know." Joseph shrugged, the motion reminding him he didn't have a shirt on. He bent and grabbed it, shaking it out; he had to stop himself from folding it. "You want to sleep here? I think you're overdue for your monthly stay."

"No, I've got to work in a few hours."

He didn't have and didn't want any clear idea of what Sam did for a living, but he had a feeling it didn't involve loitering in pool halls all day. "I'm going to bed. Lock the door behind you, hey? I don't want to wake up to find one of the frakking neighbors on my couch again." The landlord wouldn't pay for the busted lock or the splintered door frame, and the police didn't follow up after the initial arrest, but it hadn't happened again. The deadbolt he'd installed since ensured it probably wouldn't.

The empty beer bottles clinked as he gathered them up, heading into the kitchen. He didn't hear Sam leaving, and when he came back out he knew why; Sam was still standing in the same spot, his hat cradled in his hands.

"Sam?" Sam's face didn't change. Joseph stepped forward a few feet, concerned. "Are you --"

"Morpheus bless your dreams, my brother." Sam dipped his hat onto his head, hand closing around the doorknob, and he was gone before Joseph had the words to answer. The lock snicked into place behind him.

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