

Book Sample-

CHAPTER ONE 'The Nameless City'

I must see Nester,' said Joh, feeling as always, that Nester alone could offer him something, some kind of relief from his anxiety. He got up and headed for the stairs that led down to the street. As he strode down the curved staircase he ran his fingers along the cold marble railing and thought if he stayed in this place much longer, his own heart would become as cold as the stone railing.

Joh stood on the front door step and looked about. The streets were packed, the sun having decided to remain out after a succession of sunrises. The citizens were enjoying a clear, mild day and everyone seemed in good moods, laughing and sparring with each other in their broken down half world. Joh simply saw it as madness, with half-built houses, two-legged chairs, bottomless glasses and inhabitants that for the main, defied description. One-legged four-eyed frog-things were common, and two-ended, mixed animals abundant. Cat-Dogs and

Bird-Cats were the worst, spinning like tops in desperate hope of tearing their opposing ends to pieces. No one bothered to explain to them that if they did succeed, they would die. Everyone simply knew that biting your own bum was a feat not many could accomplish and left these poor abominations to do their best. Monstrosities of form roamed the streets, mostly in peace, communicating if they could, one way or another, and taking for granted their individual limitations.

Joh was lucky in a way. He was a human boy in just about all respects except for one- he had no face. In the Half World, this didn't seem to make a difference. Joh could somehow speak and be heard, see clearly, and his hearing was perfect. But to him he was still a faceless child- a 'nobody'. Being human, he longed for parents and the loving arms of a mother. Without a face, who was he? This was his personal pain, and he alone in this abomination of existence, felt trapped and unfulfilled.

After a short trek through the busy streets, he finally arrived at Nesters' and thumped on the rickety wooden door. Old Nester was fairly deaf, and the vibration of the thumping more often than not alerted him to a visitor's presence.

‘Coming!’ a rather musical, siren-like voice resounded.

The door creaked slowly open. ‘Ah, Joh. Please come in my boy.’ Nester shuffled aside, closing the door behind him. ‘Did you enjoy the sunrises today?’ he asked wistfully.

‘The first three, maybe,’ Joh answered distractedly, with other things on his mind.

‘How many times have I told you my boy, we must learn to accept what we are given here.’

Joh found a seat amongst the stacks of books, clothes and endless collections of memorabilia. Nester took one look at him and sighed, knowing that Joh needed more than a bandaid this visit. He struggled to a plush half-covered armchair and eased back into it with a grunt.

Nester was an old man, seemingly perfect physically. Once a powerfully wise wizard, Nester had lost his powers as a result of a sorely interrupted dream. He retained all of his knowledge but had not one ounce of power in the Half World, destined to remain without the one thing that had made him complete.

He leaned forward, the folded fabric of his grey robes falling loosely on either side of his delicate frame. Nester had kind, deep blue eyes

and his long beard and hair was a wispy silver-grey. There was a certain understanding within him that made Joh feel better just being in his presence. He was as close to family as Joh could find.

After a moment of complete silence, Nester spoke. 'Look Joh, I do know how you feel. Look at me, this wand of mine is no more than a stick. But what can I do, what can *you* do?'

'We are by nature, aberrations. We are dreams, given life by our dreamers. The fact that we are not complete is not anyone's fault, it's simply what we are and here is where we must remain,' explained Nester. 'At least we *have* life.'

Joh sat forward. 'But what a life. I know some have gone to the Dream World from here. I have heard of it.'

Nester shook his head. 'You know how rare that is? To dream the same dream twice and the second time to complete it, in every detail.'

'But why not me, Nester? Why can't it happen to me?' Joh said with frustration. 'Who am I, and who dreamed me? Surely there must be a way to find out...I want a mother, I want a family.'

Rising to his feet, Nester shuffled over to Joh and sat beside him. 'My boy, this Half World

is where we belong. We are incomplete, and that is the way that most of us will always be. This is our lot. You must learn to accept it, for your own sake.'

Joh lowered his head for a moment, struggling as always with Nester's words. He then looked up, his demeanour hardening and changing to one of indignant rebellion. Then, with emotions rising...

'I'll never accept that. I am a boy and one day I'll have a face. Then I will be complete and I will have a mother, and a family...just like any other boy...just like a real boy...'

Joh stood up and looked at Nester with immeasurable anguish in his eyes, then dashed out of the shack and into the streets, sobbing uncontrollably. He ran all the way home, thrashing his way through the bustling streets, and then threw himself onto his bed, confused but determined to do anything to change his intolerable circumstance.

Nester remained seated in his shack, stroking his long silvery beard and feeling helpless and saddened by his friend's pain. Suddenly his expression seemed to transform and he began to scour the bookshelves around him, his mind sifting through the knowledge

that he had acquired, hoping to find something, anything that could help.

The sun was now setting for the fourth time. In the familiar surrounds of his bedroom, Joh had nodded off and when he awoke, was a little bit more clear-headed, but still feeling the frustration that had launched him out of Nester's house, emotional as always. But how else could he feel? Without eyes he couldn't even cry real tears, further adding to the frustration of his situation.

Rolling over onto his back, Joh felt a cooling wisp of a breeze against his smooth contour-less face. He looked up and browsed the dome-shaped ceiling of his room, following the smooth lines that flowed down from its apex and below to the arched columns that supported it. The structure was all solid marble, white with soft pink striations. If it weren't for the crumbled ruins beyond his room, one could have thought that it was complete. But like all images within this 'rack and ruin' world, nothing was complete, finished or even working. He often imagined that a nice little Greek boy had dreamed up this home for him, so that he could be comfortable. He then thought that the boy

could become a friend and drop by just to play. Unfortunately, this was pure fantasy.

With a deep unresolved sigh, Joh struggled to a sitting position and looked out upon the soft hues of dusk. In the Half World the days were so totally uncoordinated and erratically repetitive, that it was always difficult to know where you were, when to sleep or do anything. He'd heard that in the Dream World days were just like on Earth, and he thought how wonderful it would be to know that the sun would come up just once and set just once. Completed dreams could happen at any time during the day or night, but because the dreams were complete, the lives of those dreamed followed a normal rhythm, and life was free and uninhibited. If only that were true in the Half World.

Standing up, Joh yawned, mouth-less. Seemingly resolving himself to the status quo for now, he decided to visit Errol to take his mind off everything. Surprisingly, the dusk was now transforming into evening and with the street lamps now lit, Joh wandered outside and walked slowly down the street towards Errol's home. Turning a corner, he was all but bowled over by what appeared to be a large two-headed

lizard with more than a dozen legs, each foot sporting a shiny red gumboot.