The Shadows of Reality

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Preface

This story is a pure fictional story based on my own imagination, inspired by Yana Toboso's, Black Butler「黒執事」.

I try to give mythical beings a new face and different 'appearance'; not all beings are greedy, evil creatures. Though keep in mind that not all are good either. The eye can only see so much.

Thank you Lizzy for all your support!

Prologue

The mourning sound of angels crying. It wasn't supposed to be raining on a warm day. Creatures shedding dark auras. Demons. Tricksters like them led people, manipulating their simple minds into committing sin. Burning every good thing by merely looking at it. Reapers, divine beings who led souls to their final destination. Balancing life and death. Were there good and bad creatures? Were the angels better than the demons? Both were a necessity. Could the world go on without the three main species? No. If one were forced to choose between good and evil, would the demons be the very definition of destruction or would they be labelled as compassion seekers? Angels wanted everything to go smoothly, perfect and correct. Though even holy beings were flawed. Their strict way of living and throwing everyone who would not obey their wishes directly into the pits of Hell was prove of their supposedly 'good' intentions.

Demons were no better, rampaging through the cities. They break people, bending them until they're satisfied. They take pleasure of a mortal's suffering. Their lust for blood to be spilled was immensely.

Reapers were different, they didn't care whether demons polluted the skies of earth or if the angels threw all of humanity into the pits of hell. Though that didn't make them insensible per say. Their

intention was to guide mortal souls into the afterlife not destroy them.

Death, the one and only who managed to create a species to balance everything.

The Angels' leader didn't approve of the war between the mortals while Lucifer laughed at the bloodshed. Death didn't agree with either of them, he wanted happiness yes, but he also wanted sorrow. Everything that formed the soul of a mortal being. Death was mighty.

Reapers were either created of reborn. The first few were created until Death started noticing the rising numbers in their species. Observing the mortals more closely, he saw that every once in a while after their death, they would wake up. Wake up to a new life, a life that wasn't given to merely everyone. One day he discerned he could control that power of rebirthing the mortals into reapers. He was cautious though. Lust was an infection spread over the human race. It hung in the air like wildfire, complimenting every demon alike. A human reborn into a reaper never retained their memories. Not until one stubborn reaper was born.

Centuries passed and the created, original, reapers died. Murdered in a brawl with a demon or angel. They tried to stay clear of each other, but it wasn't always as easy. Precisely seventeen years ago only one original reaper was left. Aside from Death

himself, one reaper still stood strong among the reborn newbies. A child of Death. Death, as old as time. Chronos. The name of Father Time. The name of the original reaper. A young man of appearance with shoulder length hair bound in a ponytail. Hair as white as snow. His skin was pale and pasty. Eyes as silver as ice. He stood out among the rest of his kind. Reborn reapers always had their hair color as it was as a human. Their eyes were different too. They were a deep green color, a beautiful enchanting shade which gave the illusion of an ever present glow illuminating their face.

The reaper realm, or middle plane, was a lightly guarded place the divine lived in. Their way of living was anything beyond luxurious. They lived a simple life in between their reaping assignments. That was until the demons decided their time was up.

Chapter one
SMALL CAPS REBIRTH

He sensed it before it even came at him. His final breath was taken with a painful gasp. Finally he'd find out if there truly was a light. An agonizing stinging made his breath hitch, his gasps for air ceased slowly.

There was no light. There was no peace.

"Such a pitiful sight." A male voice said from somewhere in the empty darkness. It sounded annoyed. He wanted to cling to life. Fight for it as death took him in its arms. "I'll sooth the chaos in your head." That voice again. It had an edge of wisdom but also that same annoyance that was clearly heard. Was that God's voice? He tried to call out but it was a futile attempt.

"Don't fight it, embrace it." A fading whisper told him. It was barely audible as everything started to fall away. All feeling left his body almost instantly. Leaving him cold and numb. What was this place? Without warning, a loud static sound erupted from all around him. So noisy. What was it that had brought him there? Oh, right. A memory that had engraved itself in his mind's eye kept replaying every time he closed his eyes.

Jordan Caine was a normal boy with short dark brown hair. He was a thin seventeen year old boy who lived a normal life with his parents.

His attention was cast towards an invisible spot in the car before he looked outside through the window where he watched as they passed the same old houses and the same old people. He sat next to his nephew on the backseat who was dozing off in a motion induced sleep. Jordan sighed as he looked at his weary expression and than outside through the window at his nephew's side.

That's when everything seemed to go in slow motion, yet it happened so fast. It was over before he knew it. In the blink of an eye, the world he knew was no longer. Jordan stared into bright lights, just like a deer caught in the headlights of a speeding car. That's exactly what happened, and he was the deer. He felt a rush of adrenaline enter his body as panic started to kick in. Jordan managed to position himself between his nephew and the door of the car.

He took the hit. Jordan wasn't very fond of his nephew, Darryl. He was the annoying little brother he had never had, but that didn't mean he wanted to see the child get hurt. He loved the carefree boy.

The sound of metal hitting metal and bones being crushed filled his ears as he felt the car being swung to the side. He felt something hot on his arm and the peculiar yet strange sensation confirmed that it was some sort of liquid substance. Water? No. Blood. It hurt. Everything hurt. Why was he hurting so much?

It wasn't an instant death. That much was clear. He didn't know if Darryl survived, nor did he know how his parents were doing. All he knew was that he suddenly found himself in a strange place.

"Time doesn't heal all wounds. It leaves scars." That voice again. This time it sounded amused and he could almost hear the owner smile.

"Who are you?" Jordan finally found his voice. It echoed through the blackness that surrounded him.

"Are you awake than?" The voice asked still amused. Jordan frowned deeply. There was so much confusion. When was this all going to end? He briefly wondered if he was going mad. The voice in his head wasn't any he had ever heard before. At least not as far as he could recognize it. "No. You think you are dreaming, or...wait. You assume you are *dead*." The voice said while it sounded like it was having a hard time keeping itself from bursting out laughing. "I cannot blame you." It said shortly after, all amusement faded as the world seemed to give way.

The blackness surrounding Jordan was gone in a matter of a heartbeat. Funny thing that. A heartbeat was something Jordan wasn't feeling, nor hearing at the moment. He truly was dead. Jordan looked around as a whole new world opened up to him. It felt surreal, as if he wasn't there.

"Not many humans go through this." The same male voice from before told the confused boy who was still looking around. He was in an alley. The cobblestones beneath his feet were wet from the rain even though the temperature felt normal.

"What do you mean?" Jordan asked as he looked around nervously. If 'not many humans' were supposed to go through this, why was he? What was different about him? As more time passed, Jordan

started to think he imagined the car accident. The fear that swept through him crept into his bones. But even if he imagined all that. It didn't explain why he was in an alley.

"What just happened to you can be explained as, you have been reborn. Your destiny now is to serve Death and help keep the balance between the living and the dead." A simple and short explanation from a voice whose owner didn't seem to have a physical appearance. Though, that wasn't entirely true.

Jordan felt like laughing. How was he supposed to believe all that? He had that same joyous moment as if someone just told him the best joke he'd ever heard. He laughed.

Jordan laughed until he turned around and finally got to meet the man behind the voice. There was one last laugh that wanted to be heard but instead, it died on his lips. He was met with a definitely unamused faced man. He was well set, not too thin and not too sturdy. His shoulder length white hair was tied back neatly, bringing out his seemingly glowing eyes. Nevertheless, those very same eyes were so dull, it made Jordan's chest feel empty. What was it? Time. His eyes were the only thing that betrayed his age. He wasn't as young as he looked, he appeared to be somewhere in his mid-twenties, yet he almost seemed ancient.

"Who are you?" Jordan asked looking unsure for a moment. It started raining but he couldn't feel it. Odd. It wasn't wet and neither was it cold. "*What* are you?" Jordan corrected himself anxiously. A smirk

made its presence known on the white haired man's lips as he took in the questions.

"My name is Chronos," The man said holding his head up high. "And from now on I will be your tutor." Chronos continued as he stepped closer to the much younger boy before him. Jordan shook his head and took a step back. A step that made his dubiety and repudiation apparent. How could a stranger expect him to accept it just like that? "You are wasting his time, let me show you something." Chronos said as he turned away from him and started to walk away. Jordan took another step back, noting how Chronos said 'his time'. Whose time exactly? He was reluctant to follow the stranger.

"How did I get here?" Jordan asked. The question had popped into his head and as soon as the thought had processed he'd felt the dire need to voice it. "Where is my family?" He asked. He watched as Chronos stopped dead in his tracks. The white haired man never turned around as he said the following, devastating words,

"They are gone. I have already collected their souls." Jordan's world fell apart at these words. They echoed in his head, replaying again and again like a broken cd player. His legs gave out and he fell down on his knees. As grief took over his body, he felt his head growing heavy. Gone. They were gone. And Darryl? Was he gone as well? How did his sister take it? Her only son who was left in the care of her parents for only a weekend, dead. Did he die too? Was Chronos actually Death who helped him cross

over the Greek mythology's 'river Styx' and to Heaven or Hell? His thoughts immediately jumped to the few things he had read about Greek mythology and death. The name Chronos is the name they gave father time, while Hades was the ferryman. He crossed people over the river named Styx, though not without a price. Then there were Thanatos, Hypnos, Mors and Letum. Which were four of the numerous names given to the personification of Death himself.

"You are getting close." Chronos commented. Jordan looked up shocked, could he hear what he was thinking? "I know what humans are thinking, but know that you are not fully human. You are still changing." Chronos explained leaving Jordan to drown in his overwhelming thoughts of grief, confusion and shock. It was all too much to take in. Too much information Jordan didn't want to know. Or at least not yet. Chronos still had not turned around to face him. Tears were forming in the younger boy's eyes as he took everything in, silently grateful that the other's back was turned towards him.

"Y...you, what are you? What...what am I turning into?" Jordan asked in a shaky voice. He didn't want to know the answer but if his future depended on it, he needed to know. Who was he supposed to be than?

"I am a grim reaper, and you were chosen to become one too." Jordan wanted to laugh and cry both at the same time. It sounded too absurd to

believe. Myths weren't supposed to be taken seriously. He held his head in his hands as he refused to let Chronos see he was crying. Without ever hearing a sound, Chronos soon sat kneeled next to him. "Do you want me to explain what we are precisely?" Chronos asked the younger boy. Jordan trembled from the sobs he so desperately tried to hide.

"Please." Jordan pleaded as a loud sob escaped him. "I want to know everything." He said at last. Jordan didn't look up, missing the satisfied smirk playing on the grim reaper's lips.

The air around the two beings was chilly but the weather wasn't to blame. Jordan sat in an alley with a stranger who claimed to be Death himself. Not that he said it in these particular words, but it came pretty close to it.

"We are grim reapers." Chronos told him once more as he stood up again. Chronos reached out into the air, it didn't take long for a scythe to appear in his waiting hand. Jordan, who had been looking, stared with wide disbelieving eyes at the metal weapon resting in the stranger's hand. "Every reaper has a scythe, we use it to fend off demons and collect the souls of the dying." Chronos explained as his scythe vanished again. "Death is one of the greatest among us, together with the original reapers, though there are no original reapers left, Death refuses to make more." Chronos sat down and crossed his legs as he seemed to look straight through Jordan. The older reaper's last phrase

confused Jordan. He was being vague with the subject at hand. Jordan wanted to ask him what he meant and with a careful "um," sound, he managed to catch Chronos' attention successfully. His silver eyes flickering to his forehead rather than his eyes.

"What do you...mean?" He asked holding his breath anxiously.

"There are two kinds of reapers minus Death himself. The first few reapers were created by Death and the others were reborn, just like you. They woke up to a new life, though they never remembered anything from their human life." Chronos said the last bit thoughtfully.

"What is the difference between the two reapers?" Jordan asked, growing curious. He still didn't believe anything he was told. It was more like a bedtime story. Only this time, he didn't know where he was and he had the distinct feeling that he was far away from his bed.

"The originals each had a unique power, something the reborn did not have. If you would happen to come across one on the road, you would not be able to tell him apart from a reborn reaper." Chronos explained. Jordan hoped it was a story to make him feel better. A story full of magical beings that would never exist in the world Jordan knew. "Sadly all originals were killed. More often by their own madness." Chronos said with a sigh. Jordan silently wondered why it would matter. If the originals died, it seemed the reborn could handle

everything perfectly without them. Come to think of it, it didn't explain why Death wouldn't make more.

"Then why does…*Death*, not create more?" Jordan asked quietly. Talking about Death as if he were a person ignited a strange yet familiar chill through his body. For some reason it felt right, but in another Death was not a person. Death was where people were, they simply died.

Chronos' expression was void of emotion. He stared hollowly through Jordan's head. His -now reaper- eyes seeking contact with the other's.

"Because of one mistake a created soul can turn destructive. The unexplained power they possess would gradually drive them to the point of losing sanity and leave them carelessly fighting demons, somehow transforming them in a new kind of hybrid between reapers and demons. They are called 'dreapers' but they are thought to be dead. Luckily not many turned into these monsters." Jordan felt the crisp air move around them. It became cold, almost freezing. His breath escaped in gusts of air as he watched how the rain turned into snow. "It is time to leave." Chronos said standing up again.

"Leave? Where to?" Jordan asked. Panic kicked in as he looked wide eyed at the man before him. If this was truly happening, why did he remember everything from his human life? Chronos said reborn reapers shouldn't, why did he? Why him? New questions floated in his mind as his doubt about the grim reapers' existence began to fade. Did

he accept it this well because he was one himself? Did he feel the difference in his now supposedly immortal body? Jordan did feel stronger, but as Chronos said, he was still changing.

A bright blueish white light formed itself before Jordan's eyes. He held his breath and stared wide eyed at Chronos' leading hands, leading the light into a perfect oval shape. "This is a portal, it is used to travel between realms." Chronos explained while turning to face Jordan. "Follow me." He said before stepping into the light and through the portal. This made Jordan want to run, run as fast as he could. He wanted to run away and never look back. But that wasn't an option. He had a feeling that if he chose to run now, Chronos would always be there. Follow him everywhere he'd go.

Jordan stood up and took cautious steps towards the bright, blinding light. Once he entered the energy based portal, the strangest feeling flooded through his body. His limbs grew heavy and his insides seemed to be tearing themselves apart, yet there was no pain. Only discomfort. The unpleasant sensation left as sudden as it had come, leaving him in a completely different place. He took a deep breath and looked around in silent awe. He found himself on a grass field with the sun beating down on him. "This is the reaper realm." Chronos' voice sounded from somewhere. Jordan was too captivated to know where the sound came from. The only thing he knew was that it was Chronos'. Every doubt Jordan felt before vanished like ash in the