

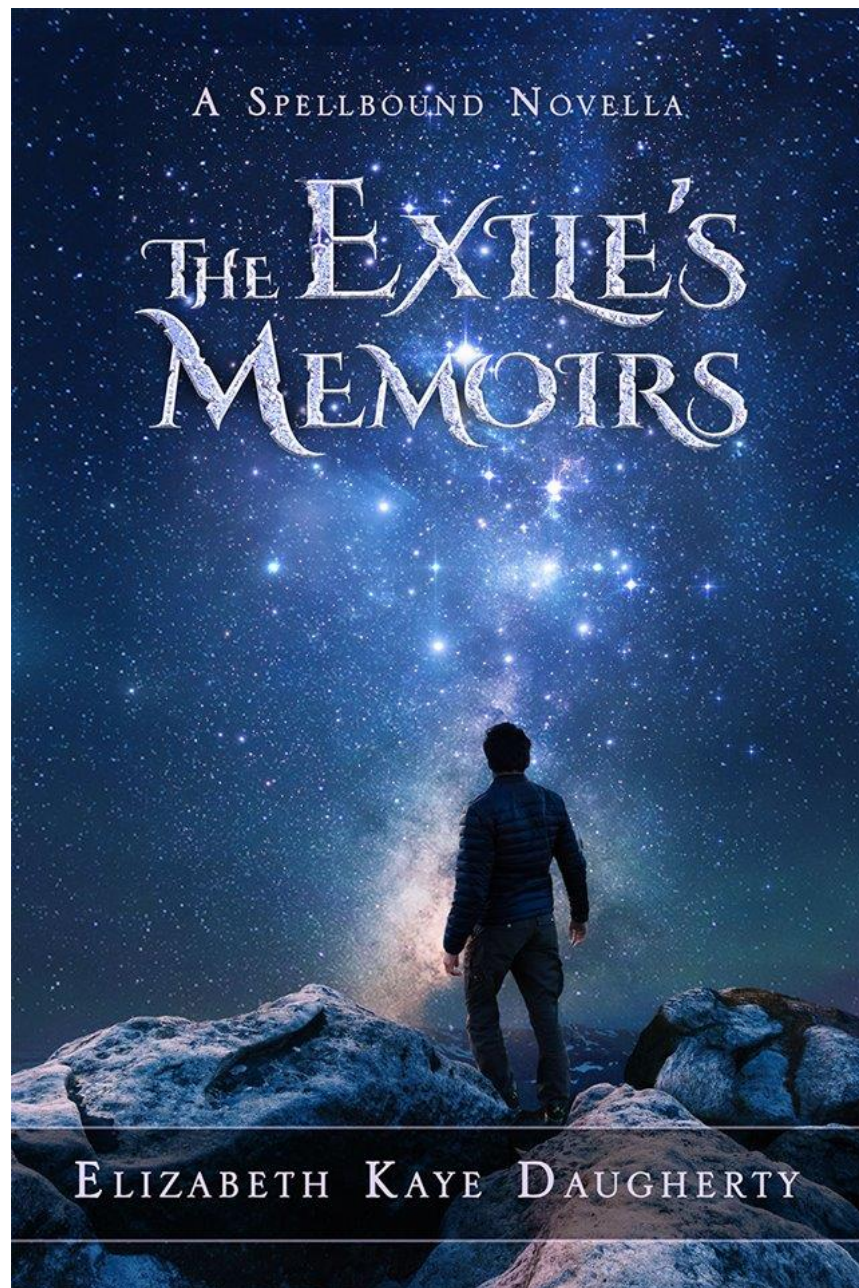
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Developing New Worlds

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Story Premise:

Joseph Starsmeet has lost everything: family, friends, home, even dignity. When his home world of Vista turns its back on him, he has no choice but to find a new one... Earth. But he quickly finds that a man with few prospects and many secrets is no better on the streets of New York City than at home.

That is, until he meets Sophia. But love from different worlds isn't so simple, and Joseph must make a choice. Is there hope of redemption, or will he sacrifice his past in pursuit of his future?

Historical Background Information or Timeline

PREVIOUSLY ON VISTA (currently in no particular order)

Vista was mostly destroyed

Vampire civil war

Werewolves discover and form life around their Pillar

Pixies and Sprites lose their native tongue

Goblins invented new medicines and discovered smelting

Undead were not treated as members of society

Vampires discover religion

Werewolves study the moons

First Centurn

Mages emerge

Territory wars

Infirmary established

Board of Magi

Mages discover religion

Chantrettes created

Recorders established

Extinction of Ogres

Second Centurn

Quarters completed

Espirs established

Terse peace

Primblum established

Rise of the Honorum

Board dissolved, war

Frael and the Apexes

Third Centurn

Peace, rise of Purism

The Vista Academy of Mages created

Economic boom

Two Vistian years ago (or turns, as they are called) Joseph published *The Shadow Magic Compendium*. It was a groundbreaking book that compiled years of research in all things related to shadow magic. Never before had there been such an undertaking, as learning was kept in family units. To Joseph, this was a hindrance to Mages and eventually, he persuaded them to agree.

Main Characters:

Joseph Sanchez/Joseph Starsmeet

“Joseph The Exile”

Role in Story: Protagonist, Bella’s father, Exile of Vista

Staves: Luminaire

Occupation: Author, co-founder of Mage Academy of Vista

Physical Description: Average height about 6’0”, black hair, can grow a beard but usually clean-shaved, brown eyes with streaks of green in the center, light brown skin, slightly stocky build

Personality: Caring, forward-thinking and open, warm, often sad, prone to dwell on melancholy

Habits/Mannerisms: Somewhat of an alcoholic

Music: Rocket Man - Elton John

Goals: To leave a positive influence on Vista, to settle down with the love of his life

Internal Conflicts: Fear of failure, decision to let himself die

External Conflicts: Betrayal from Reginold, competition with his brother, Lavani wanting to gain his forgiveness, survival against the elements

Bio: Joseph was born in the Mage Quarter, as many Mages of his generation were. He was the second child and son of the Starsmeet family, his father a carpenter and his mother a freelancing alchemist. His brother, older by two and a half turns, urged him to learn new things as they grew together. Quickly, it became a competition between them to see who could learn things

faster: reading, writing, dances and songs, until eventually his brother Richard showed his magic abilities. It is perhaps because of this fierce competition between them that Joseph's skills manifested not long after his brother's, still two turns younger.

After this, their playful back-and-forth became more intense. Richard started to resent his brother's quick wit driven by passion, and started doing things his younger brother simply couldn't, like socializing with the other, older Mages. Particularly girls. Richard reached puberty first, as no sense of desire can force that upon a young Mage, and this came with the natural inclinations of getting older. Joseph could only watch on as Richard grew tall and his voice deepened. Richard was an attractive Mage and found it easy for him to persuade girls his age to spend time with him, oftentimes teasing his Mageling brother for sport. At first, Joseph thought it was a game. But only at first.

The boys' mother, Lissa, started showing an illness around this time. Her physical health deteriorated quickly, barely able to stand for more than a few minutes at a time, and her mind soon after. She would see and hear things that no one else could, claiming to see ghosts in the energy around them. After, she didn't say anything at all.

Things were tense at home, with Richard and Joseph having to care for their mother when their father worked longer hours to make up for the income she was no longer bringing. But that didn't stop Richard from bringing home girls. Joseph's resentment peaked at this time, and when one of the girls took an interest in Joseph while Richard tended their bedridden mother, he took it out of his brother by letting her have his way with him. Richard discovered them, naturally, and forced the girl to leave.

Turns passed, the boys grew and Lissa's health stayed the same, until it declined. She passed quietly, in her sleep. Joseph was the first to know, woken by black energy snaking through the halls. Death energy. No one else saw it, and no one believed him. The chastised him for trying to worsen their grief.

Richard started working with their father. He was old enough, and they no longer had need for him to stay home. Joseph, then, was alone for most of the days. He used the time, the quiet lonesome, to read and study. He inhaled books and became a frequent visitor to the Chantrette where he listened to any chanting stones that he could get his hands on.

The grief and hard work eventually wore on their father, and he, too, passed in the home, sitting in a chair in the living area.

Richard was now the sole provider for their home, but quickly brought in a woman he had been

seeing for longer than any other, named Ethera, to help compensate. Ethera brought her friend, Lavani, over frequently for company. Lavani and Joseph took a liking to each other naturally, and they began a relationship. It lasted for nearly a turn, but then Joseph got the idea to undertake what he felt was a grand idea. He would catalog every shadow Mage spell known to them! He interviewed his brother and Ethera, both shadow Mages, and then set out to convince the rest of the shadow Mage families to work with him. This drove Lavani mad, as she became jealous and suspicious of the time he was spending with other families, other women. Joseph's mission was strictly research, but Lavani wouldn't hear it. They began bickering, and Joseph broke it off with her. That didn't stop her from coming around, though, as she and Ethera were still friends. Joseph felt that it was mostly so she could continue spying on him, and he spent more and more time out of the house, researching the line of shadow Mages and trying to make connections between them. He found none, and it frustrated him. He took up drinking at the Brewer's Corner, both to stay away from home and to vent his complaints.

He decided to publish his work, though he felt it was incomplete. Almost immediately it was engulfed by the Mage community. It lined shelves of nearly every shadow Mage family home, and even some who were not shadow Mages but inspired by his work.

But that was just the beginning of what Joseph had planned. He had learned so much during his interviews and study - he learned that the Mages really knew nothing at all about their own power! There were so many spells, basic, easy ones, that families did not know simply from lack of communication. He sought a way to remedy this and birthed the idea of an institute of learning. He knew, though, that he did not have the funds to undertake such a mission, and instead pilfered his pence in celebratory and miserable drink.

Relations with his brother did not improve. In fact, he felt that he was entitled to seeing more of the pence as he helped him begin it. He also resented the way he treated Lavani, refusing to hear her apology.

Until he was able to get the money for his Academy from the Tenner family; specifically, Reginold. The two became fast friends and worked closely together to build the institute. Even taking Joseph in when his brother, tired of Joseph's persistent drinking and rabble-rousing, kicked him out of the family home. But when the Academy opened, he was betrayed. He had promised Reginold the position of Headmaster if he agreed to overlook his Purist beliefs and accept Halfling students, but he had not and yet was Headmaster anyway. As Headmaster, Reginold barred Joseph from returning to the Academy.

A failure in his own right, evicted from any home he knew, he begged his brother for forgiveness as he worked with the Apexes to continue his work among the other races. This, too, failed, and Joseph was left destitute and ashamed. The Mage Quarter pitied him, at best, reviled him at worst. Joseph followed the rumors of Worlwalkers, a branch of the Honorum that discovered new worlds.

He found them, and plead they take him away. The Grand Magus himself approved it, and took Joseph to New York City.

There, Joseph lived homeless on the street. He was helped by a man called Rodney, for a time, getting the fundamentals that he needed, until his friend was arrested. Joseph was alone and suffering, no better on Earth and no longer hopeful about living. He did not wish to return to Vista, where he would die in shame, and instead would kill himself on Earth. It was no better than he deserved. A woman stopped him, named Sophia, and began spending time with him. Joseph fell in love with her, gradually, believing she was the kindest Human in the world.

When the Worldwalkers eventually took him back to Vista, he found that the Academy was soaring and he was showered in profit. He was still co-founder, despite being unable to enter the grounds. He was able to pay off his loan to Reginold entirely, and still have enough left over to take him back to Earth.

There, he escaped the Worldwalkers and showed Sophia what he really was. He was taken back to Vista criminal, but subverted punishment by requesting exile. The Grand Magus considered and eventually accepted.

Joseph came back to Sophia, who took him in and taught him how to live in her world. They married a few years later, when she finished her schooling as a nurse, and Joseph took up writing submitted articles for pay. It wasn't much, but he was able to contribute to their home outside the reservation that Sophia had grown up on. He changed his name to Joseph Sanchez, a name that Rodney had put on his fake identification years ago.

Sophia learned she was pregnant, and Joseph learned that he was sick. Very sick. He had developed cancers all over his body. He refused to see a doctor, fearing that they would discover he was not Human, and the Worldwalkers would kill him, Sophia, and their baby. Because Sophia was a nurse, she was able to care for him largely at home when he eventually was too feeble to care for himself. By then, their baby was born. A girl, named Bella.

Joseph's cancers did not ebb. Nothing seemed to be able to treat him, at best the chemo or radiation would slow the growths, but they never disappeared.

Joseph died in their home, in his bed, where Bella had woken to find him. He thought perhaps she followed the Death Energy, the way he had when his mother died. She watched him, quietly, pulling herself onto the bed, and they looked at each other as he died holding her tiny hand.

Reginold Tenner

Role in Story: Antagonist, Joseph's friend

Occupation: Tenner Loan Office Representative in training, Headmaster of Academy for Mages

Physical Description: Moss-colored eyes, black hair(In youth)slicked back hair, upright posture, narrow build (Older) shaggier hair, loose curls and strands, slightly hunched, weathered light skin, boney

Personality: Considers himself superior by lineage and status, nostalgic, intelligent

Habits/Mannerisms: (In youth) nervous and uptight, (Older) favors grand flourishes

Goals: Carry on his grandfather's Purist beliefs, make the Academy successful

Internal Conflicts: Carries major guilt over what happened between him and Joseph, shunned by his family

External Conflicts: Making a respectable name for himself after his family accosted him and refused to let him take his place with the Loan business, Purist beliefs

Bio: The Tenner family lineage can be traced back to the Emerging as one of the largest family units that first became. They made wise fiscal decisions in the wars that followed and hoarded their wealth. But they were not totally selfish with it. As civilization settled, they originated the idea of loaning pence to those less fortunate with the idea of being paid back, then paid for their services. This quickly took off, even before the Primblum was erected. Reginold's parents were proud of their lineage, as every Tenner before them was. But they did not

want children, they were business-Mages. They barely even liked each other, the longer they were together, but their position in the business was stronger together. They had Reginold simply because they had to. They wouldn't live forever, and someone had to take over the business when they were too old.

But that did not mean they had to raise him. Reginold's mother, the blood-line Tenner, was raised by her grandparents, and so, too, was he passed along to his grandfather. Reginold bonded tightly with his grandfather, closer than he ever did with his parents. And, truthfully, his grandfather found the young boy fascinating and charming. It made him regret not raising his own daughter, and so he made up for it by giving Reginold all of his attention. He also imparted his beliefs on impressionable Reginold. His Purist beliefs. Reginold grew up believing it was noble and natural to want races separated. They instilled Mage pride in him. Reginold was a confident boy, and this confidence permeated into his coming-of-age turns. When he was barely outgrown his Mageling days, he met a beautiful young lady, Milta. Their tryst was brief, yet resulted in the birth of a little girl they named Razz.

Reginold's parents were furious with him. Milta was from a common family with no wealth to their name. Having her in the family lineage had no benefit, bringing her in as Reginold's partner was unacceptable. As it was, Reginold and Milta did not want to bond and be together forever. They were still young, there was no need to rush into bonding. They barely knew themselves. When Razz was born, instead of leaving the burden of raising a child to a poorer family, the Tengers agreed to take her in if Milta gave up claim to her. Milta agreed, and the baby Razz was formally adopted by the Tengers.

As punishment for the trouble he'd caused, Reginold's parents revoked his claim to the family business. His parents were young enough that they would see the girl raised to adulthood before they passed on, and she would take over as the head of the Tenner house then. Reginold was devastated. All his life, he had been taught that his place was to be inherited at the head of the house. He would, instead, be a meaningless no-one.

Then, Reginold learned of Joseph's plan to create an Academy, and saw an opportunity to redeem himself. He supplied Joseph with the funds, his own personal money and not an official Tenner loan, in exchange for joint ownership. They raised up the Academy, together. During construction, Reginold's grandfather, the Mage who had raised him from a baby, died. Because of this, he felt that the Purism he instilled within Reginold should not be spurned. He would carry it on by making the Academy a place for true Mages only. This caused a major rift between himself and Joseph, and Reginold came out on top as the Headmaster.

Role in Story: Bella's mother, Love interest (Joseph)

Occupation: Nurse

Physical Description: Brown skin, soft brown eyes, round, heart-shaped face (Youth) curvy build, hair to mid-back (Older) round, soft body, gray strands in her hair, hair to lower-back

Personality: Talkative, curious, overwhelmingly kind, funny, open, very relaxed and laid back.

Habits/Mannerisms: Fondles with her hair, can be nosey and butt in

Goals: To help all people, to be a good mother

Internal Conflicts: Blames herself for Joseph's death, forcing him to come to Earth, lonely and misses her husband

External Conflicts: Depends on Bella for her happiness, wants to keep her daughter safe

Bio: Sophia was born on the Allegany reservation in New York state. Her father was a pediatrician and medicine man, though he didn't practice the latter much. Medicine men had become something of a relic that he hoped to restore and honor. She grew up around a family that loved and helped each other, despite the difficulties that came with living on the reservation. She attended high school off-reservation, and that is where she made most of her friends. Her father's love of healing carried through her, and at first she wanted to become a therapist to help heal mental wounds. She quickly found, though, that this profession was less about helping the common man, and more about helping those who could afford her services. She strayed from

it, and instead went to nursing. That way, she could help anyone and everyone in more ways than one.

Thanks to many scholarships and grants from her tribe, she was able to go to New York University in New York City, and completed her degree.

While she studied, however, she kept her love of helping strong. This was most apparent when she found a man preparing to hurl himself in front of a subway train on her way back from class. That man was Joseph “Sanchez,” and she quickly took him in as a friend and ward. She was compelled to help him through his tough time and get back on his feet.

But their interaction did not stop there. Sophia began to cherish the times they would see each other and made it a point to volunteer at the shelter he stayed at. She grew fond of him, which developed into love.

She was not expecting him to show up, one day, dressed well and able to shower her in luxury - he was just a man on the streets months before! - and she was expecting even less for him to perform *unthinkable* feats with magic... which then ended in another uniformed man whisking him away and literally disappearing into thin air.

Joseph was not a Human man at all. He was a Mage, a being from another realm, and he was in love with her.

After much back-and-forth with his home world, Joseph was permitted to live on Earth with her under the condition that he wear an Exile’s Chain to keep his powers in check. It was a huge adjustment, one that Sophia had never prepared herself to make, but she made it all the same. She taught him how to read and write English, to interact with the modern world, and how to blend in. They faked his identity and were married. That marriage gave them a beautiful daughter, after some fertility issues that lead to doubt they would ever be able to conceive naturally. But things were not meant to last. Joseph got sick and eventually died, under her care. She blamed herself, feeling that he got so sick so quickly because of the Chain that cut him off from “energy.” She could never forgive herself for failing Joseph, the man she loved more than anything, but she could give everything to their daughter instead.

Supporting Characters:

Kaspar Louis

Kaspar is the older than Joseph and Reginold, despite his appearance being that of a middle-aged Mage. He lacks an organic form, comprised entirely of energy. He is a ghost, which is how he has outlasted the others. In life, Kaspar was the shadow Mage on the Board of Magi, and he died as such. Along with the rest of the Board, he was murdered in the Manor that they ruled from. Death has softened him and shown him the error of the Board's ways. They were thirsty for power, Kaspar was guilty of many, many deaths to serve their power-lust. After coming to terms with his death, and the wrongs of his life, Kaspar made it his objective to teach others so that they might not repeat his farces. As the Manor crumbled around him, he allowed visitors to see what had once been and told them all the Board's secrets. He became a staple of history and sat with anyone who would listen to his recounting of the past he had witnessed.

Rodney Winks

Rodney lived a fairly normal childhood and adolescence, but even then, others described him as twitchy and suspicious. His father left when he was little, and his mother struggled to provide for him. Rodney thanked her, in turn, by obsessing over his missing father, stalking his every step and forcing himself to see answers that were not truly there. His exploits eventually made him believe that his father was captured by the government, because he knew something that he shouldn't have, and Rodney was determined to find out what it was. He left home at the age of 15, working odd jobs and being caught up in a crowd that entertained his delusions. He travelled across the country, then, with musicians and prostitutes and the hippies of the 60s and 70s, even found himself in Woodstock. Eventually, he sloughed off his born identity and favored a false one, his first step in living "off the grid." He wound up in New York, where the group he was travelling with dumped him, and stayed there for nearly a decade.

Cornelius Brightstar

Music: Last Hope - Paramore, Things Happen - Dawes

The Grand Magus of the Honorum himself is a Mage shrouded in ambiguity and fantasy. The title of Grand Magus is coveted as highly as Apex or Title Espir, with as much responsibility and twice as many secrets. By all accounts he appears to be your average early-thirties Mage, tall and well-built with a trim waist, dark hair and golden eyes, square face. He is very sexual, and refuses no one into his bed. But as the Grand Magus, he is fearsome. The Honorum is a place where magic taboo is tested, regulated, even discovered. Every step Cornelius takes is measured and calculated, carrying the weight of the entire world with it.

Leodites Gray

The Apex of Mages during Joseph's time.Leodites was a shoo-in for his election, his fatherly demeanor endearing to all. He dresses with flair, known for enchanting lights to the ends of his long beard. His rulings are just, and he is known for having a heightened ability to ferret out right and wrong. Crime underLeodites' leadership in the Mage Quarter and even in the Slums reached

a record low. However, Leodites had many confrontations among the other Apexes, even accused once of being a Purist. The other races did not care for Leodites, especially as the rumors were never confirmed. Leodites made it a point not to acknowledge the growing whispers, believing that feeding into the discussion either way would only make things worse.

Horaz Brewer

His father made Brewer's Corner what it is. He was forced to, much as Horaz was, because of everything their patriarch sacrificed to create it. Horaz never complained of this, finding it comforting to not have to think about what his future would hold. He grew up knowing only the life of crafting alcoholic drinks and customer service, immersed in the fine nuances of such things. He is a shadow Mage. He has a wife and daughter; his daughter is also a shadow Mage like him. They live underneath Brewer's Corner, in the three-room basement that Horaz himself grew up in, neighboring the small brewery and cask storage.

Richard Starsmeet

Richard is the oldest of the Starsmeet children. Richard started to resent his brother's quick wit driven by passion, and started doing things his younger brother simply couldn't, like socializing with the other, older Mages. Particularly girls. Richard reached puberty first, as no sense of desire can force that upon a young Mage, and this came with the natural inclinations of getting older. Joseph could only watch on as Richard grew tall and his voice deepened. Richard was an attractive Mage and found it easy for him to persuade girls his age to spend time with him, oftentimes teasing his Mageling brother for sport. The boys' mother, Lissa, started showing an illness around this time. Her physical health deteriorated quickly, barely able to stand for more than a few minutes at a time, and her mind soon after. She would see and hear things that no one else could, claiming to see ghosts in the energy around them. After, she didn't say anything at all. Things were tense at home, with Richard and Joseph having to care for their mother when their father worked longer hours to make up for the income she was no longer bringing. But that didn't stop Richard from bringing home girls. Their mother passed in her sleep. Richard apprenticed under their father, and he became a decent carpenter like him. He married a woman, Ethera, and they had a daughter together.

Lavani

Young, plump, and beautiful with dark hair and bright eyes, we meet Lavani as Joseph's clingy ex. Lavani has never been comfortable on her own, always following close on the heels of her friends like Ethera and Richard. She is a primal Mage of average ability. She is Sabaist, and believes very strongly, finding some comfort in the energy knowing of her. Ethera has largely taken Lavani under her wing, seeing how sensitive and easily wounded she is, and tries her best to keep the young, needy girl from getting hurt romantically.

Ethera Starsmeet

Beautifully combined in black and white, with long dark hair and pale skin, the only color one would find on Ethera are her purple eyes. She wears her purple shadow Mage robe over her favored sleek black dresses, but only when she must. She met Richard through friends, the way Richard

met most women, and was drawn to his wit, sense of duty, and high standards. She has her soft spots, but otherwise has a mean streak and sharp tongue. She marries Richard, and the two have a lovely daughter. Ethera's family has strong shadow Mage lineage, but the Starsmeet line is varied, and their daughter turns out to be a light Mage.

Locations:

Brewer's Corner

Founded two generations prior by Ottis Brewer, the bar sits on the corner of a cluster of buildings in the Mage Quarter. It is modest in décor and space, which attracts many who seek a laid-back atmosphere and affordable wines and other brews. Brewer's Corner specializes in herbal and fruit-based brews, crafting each barrel individually and by hand. Every season there is a new special along with several other staple menu items. The lights in the place recently upgraded to energetic, which shows that business thus far has been a success. The Brewer's Corner is easily becoming a success story in the Mage Quarter.

The Manor

Previously home to the Board of Magi, where power-hungry Mages led their people into battle and were ultimately destroyed within its walls, it is now a place of study and growth. Repaired and given a second life as the Vista Academy of Mages through tireless efforts by Reginald Tenner and Joseph Starsmeet/Joseph Sanchez in the 3rd century.

Its foundation is stone and wrought iron. The main building is square shaped, each corner and outer wall pointed with high towers. It is five stories high. One of the walls that blocks off the courtyard displays glass murals in four colors, green, yellow, purple, and blue, in respect to the four magic schools. The back of the Manor overlooks a cliffside, perched above the Eternal Lake, named for its spring direct from the Maelstrom which provides all of Vista with its water.

The Mage Quarter

The Mage Quarter was completed in the second century, or group of one hundred turns, made mostly of stone and wrought iron. The gray of cobblestones is broken by orange lamplight along the streets and from the many, tinted windows that line the face of each wall along the streets. This Quarter was finished first, as the Board of Magi saw its construction to the letter. The top of the Quarter boasts the Six Season Tower, a six-sided pillar of windows and wood and stone that overlooks the square. The only Sabaist temple is in the Mage Quarter, and it is connected to a tunnel that weaves under the mountains that border one half of it, which leads to the end of Vista. Attached to the Mage Quarter is Lowgarden, where those who refuse Mage and Vistian lifestyles gather to farm and craft by hand instead of with energy.

New York City, NY

A bustling metropolis bursting with history, architecture, art, and people. The story begins and sprawls gradually away from Central Park. There are many nights spent in homeless shelters, like the men's shelter, and the NYC Homeless Shelter in Harlem. Joseph also spends much of his time below ground in the infamous subway system, particularly along the yellow, red, and green lines. From the glamorous, crowded sidewalks to the cramped, dirty alleys fraught with crime, then back to the lush greenery of the Park, all under the watchful shelter of the skyscrapers and looming buildings, Joseph sees much of this city and its underbelly.

Additional World Information:

Purism

There are several sects of purists, but at their core the message is the same: races are to be divided. It varies from race to race, and it can change inside different races, even on a case by case basis. The major movement opposes the Council of Apexes as it operates currently.

Purism: races should be divided. Mixing and unifying is abhorrent.

Racial superiority purism: Our race is the superior race and the others should be treated as our lessors

Border purism: Each race should operate completely independent of each other, segregated from the whole and left to fend for themselves

Bloody purism: The other races should be exterminated systematically so that our is the only one to walk Vista

Passive purism: Coexistence with other races, but Halfling children are bad

Atmosphere

The Cape is Vista's "atmosphere" which shields it from the harsh energies of the Void surrounding it. This also enables weather and gives the illusion of night and day. Two moons are grappled in its gravitational pull.

The Cape makes up Vista's sky, which reflects the outside Void's lights and colors. It shifts often, coming and going as easily as waves on the ocean. The seasons are indicated by the changing colors in the sky, as they've come in fairly regular and predictable patterns over the past centuries.

Types of energy

- Universe energy
 - The energy that permeates the universes in differing quantities. Earth's universe is precarious and perfectly balanced, its energy must not be altered. Vista's is the opposite - flexible. This energy does not exist in the Realm Between.
- Dead energy
 - The energy that exists outside of the attainable realms. No one knows what this energy is like, but some have claimed to see it manifest around their loved ones when their time came; nothing in their claims renders any proven truth.
- Soul energy
 - The energy that creates living beings "souls," or "essence." Often seen as light or miasma, tends to hold its shape as the body it currently or previously occupied.
- Glancing energy

- The effect of using magic in the Earth realm. Tends to manifest as weather or environmental changes, unexplained events. This energy cannot be manipulated directly or controlled.
- Functional energy
 - The energy intercepted directly from the Void that powers the lights, pumps, and other “electronic” things in Vista wirelessly on demand
- Void energy
 - High concentration energy that exists in the Void that Vista is nestled in. It is so potent and tightly packed together that the only creatures able to live in its conditions without being immediately vaporized are dragons.

Energy characteristics

- Colors
 - Green: earthy, nature, life
 - Blue: liquid, rainy, icy
 - Red: high magic use and potential
 - Purple: herbs, potions, glass
 - Black: evil, mystery, death
 - White/Clear: diluted, airy
 - Gold: high human/manmade
 - Pink: calm, serene
 - Yellow: common during enchantments
- Traits (Usually has at least two)
 - Smells
 - earthy
 - foul
 - aromatic
 - stale
 - smoky
 - sweet

- Electric
- Sparkle
- Slow moving
- Moving easily/quickly
- Swirling
- Light and airy
- Stars
- Faded coloring

Property

The Racial provinces belong to an underling of that race's Apex, called a Pupil, who is delegated for the Apex's racial work. They "own" the real estate there.

In residential buildings, it is owned by the individual Vistian once the total pence value is paid. There's no interest charged by the Primblum, but the price is a little high hence why families spend generations in one home.

Public buildings are owned by either the Espir (Holdinghouse), Chantrette (Chantrettes), or Recorders (Paperhouse). The rest belong to the Primblum but the business itself belongs to the owners or founding Vistians themselves. So, in the Tenner's case for example, the building itself follows the rules of the Primblum (like no smoking) but they can conduct the same business from home without those limitations. Only businesses that really require a separate building from home use these public buildings, like restaurants and bakeries, because the building is never fully paid off, the rent does go lower with each turn of good payments though. Businesses that have separate buildings from home that do not require it, like staff enchanting businesses, are considered very successful for the extra space, therefore pence, they possess.

I don't have images of Joseph and Sophia, aside from Joseph in the cover, but I do have their daughter!



Story Synopsis:

There are three main parts of the plotline: Joseph's time in Vista, Joseph's time on Earth, and Joseph's life after he goes into exile.

Joseph is refused a loan from the Tengers to make his idea of an academy and goes to drink his sorrows feeling that all is lost. Reginold approaches him, and they meet with Kaspar Louis, the ghost currently residing in the ruins of the Manor, where they want to build the academy.

Reginold helps Joseph to complete the necessary steps to achieving their goal. In the meantime as construction goes underway, Joseph makes himself a friend to Reginold. He also drives a deeper wedge between himself and his brother, who feels that he is doing nothing to better their family. He is kicked out of his childhood home, and goes to stay with the Tengers.

The patriarch of the Tenner family dies while Joseph is living there, and he attends the funeral. This gives him an idea for the academy and for his friend Reginold, that he believes will help. He offers the position of Headmaster, which had been assumed as Joseph's, to Reginold with the condition that he allow Halfling students to attend. Reginold and his grandfather were Purists, and Reginold is apprehensive. Still, he agrees.

When the Vista Academy of Mages finally opens, it is discovered that Reginold did not accept any Halfling students. Joseph is upset with him, and they have a major falling-out in which Joseph is banned from returning to the school. He will still collect some profit, as co-founder, but will never be allowed back.

Heart-broken and betrayed, Joseph meagerly begs to come home, and then begs of the Apexes to give him a chance to continue his dream. These ventures fail, as they don't have the backing of a prominent family, and Joseph is again crestfallen.

Joseph tracks down Worldwalkers and the Honorum, who agree to let him flee to Earth for respite. While there, he lives homeless and is helped to get stable footing by a zany man named Rodney. But, after imbibing with his friend some illegal absinthe, Rodney is arrested, and Joseph is alone again.

Joseph resolves to kill himself after a harsh New York winter, but is stopped and saved by a woman named Sophia. She gives him kindness and compassion, she helps him see some hope again in the world. That hope, however, hinges on his growing love for her.

Joseph breaks the laws of his world to be with her and makes a case for his own exile. He throws himself at the mercy of the Honorum's justice, just to live in peace in a world that will never know him.

He spends his remaining days with her, numbered as they unknowingly may be. Being cut off from the energy that strongly permeates his home world makes him susceptible to illnesses that he hadn't heard of, and he quickly becomes riddled with disease. The cancers he forms inevitably take his life, but not before he brings into the world a daughter who will carry on his legacy.

Story Excerpt:

Joseph stepped into the low light of the den, a square room diagonal to the dine-in kitchen, with an entertainment center with one of the televisions he'd seen before alongside shelves decorated with beach items - driftwood, sand dollars, shells. A squat table stained dark sat in the center on top of a mauve and blue rug, and before a pale blue loveseat and matching plush armchair.

Sophie sat in the chair, back to the hall that stretched away from her. When she heard him, she started and turned. Her eyes found him in the dim glow from the lamp on the white end table between her and the loveseat, and she found him breathtaking even without the spotlight he deserved.

She'd never seen his face clean-cut before, exposing his angular jaw and showering her in his deep gaze without interruption. His skin was so smooth and bronze, like he was made of melting copper. She felt just as hot.

But she couldn't focus on the way the powder blue silk collared shirt stretched across his chest and shoulders, or how the dress slacks rested on his narrow hips. She could tell that he was thinner than he should have been for his body type, but the months on the street hadn't merited many nutritious meals for him. She had to concentrate on what to do next, the idea she'd been playing in her mind for the past few weeks.

"Oh, hey," she greeted as she rose. Sophie tucked a loose bit of her hair behind her ear.

Joseph's whiskey colored eyes followed her from sit to stand. A smile pulled on the corners of his mouth before pursing into a more serious expression. "Thank you for letting me use your shower, Sophie. I feel much better."

"Of course!" Sophie popped her usual bright smile. "What are friends for?"

Friends. How fleeting they'd been in Joseph's life. He pushed the thought of how imminent his departure from her would be, and wished that she hadn't said that. He cleared his throat, and Sophie picked up on how uncomfortable he'd become rather quickly. Joseph shuffled like he was headed towards the door, opening his mouth to excuse himself and gather the duffel bag that held his whole life inside, but Sophie took faster steps to intercept him.

"Wait, before you go!" She held out her hands, long fingers splayed. Joseph stopped at her command, back straight in a manner that she repeated when she was sure he was planted. Her cherub face smiled in warmth. "I want to give you some things."

Joseph's heart fluttered, and so did his corresponding laugh. He waved his hand in protest, "Oh, Sophie, no! I can't! You've already done more than enough for me."

Sophie laughed and shook her head. "Really, it's not much! Promise."

She gestured for him to follow, and Joseph did when she dismissed his refusal. He took a few steps around the armchair and end table, to where Sophie had stacked a few papers and folded a black tie the same soft material as the shirt she'd given him. Sophie bent at the waist and gathered them up in her hands. "Okay," she breathed as she lifted them and turned. "I've been gathering

these ever since we first got lunch together. They're job applications around town and upstate. The tie is for you to wear while you're at interviews, with this outfit you have on. I know people in these places, and I've written my phone number in the references on all of them so they know."

Joseph took the papers and tie from her, eyes widened and jaw slacked. "Sophie..."

Sophie waggled her finger over the papers in his hands. "There's also directions to the nearest homeless shelter I want you to stay at. That's how they'll contact you. But you have to fill out the rest and turn them in! Do it quick, before you get too scruffy again!" She warned seriously, but punctuated with a coy smile and eyes that glittered.

Joseph laughed, wholeheartedly and with shaking nerves. He didn't care that it was pointless to give these to him, it was the gesture. Joseph only had a few more days left on Earth, less in this city, but Sophie had no way of knowing where he was really from. She'd seen something in him, though, that he hadn't in his entire time on Earth, and for longer on Vista. She thought that he was worthwhile, that he showed potential and promise. That he could be something bigger than himself.

Somewhere inside, Joseph had seen the same thing. He could remember when it was the loudest part of his soul. But, somewhere along the way, it had become muted. And perhaps Sophie was exactly what he needed to bolster its volume again.

"Sophie... Thank you," he said in a throaty, low rumble.

Sophie drew her hands back to herself, the wide grin narrowed and became bashful on her round face. A sheet of dark black hair wrapped around her shoulder and fanned against the side of her face. "You're welcome, Joe." She reached out of habit to push her hair aside, and before he could stop himself, Joseph reached to grab at her hand and stop her. She was so beautiful with her hair in a halo, that he couldn't bear to let anyone touch it.

But they both froze before he could touch her, the warmth of the still moment disrupted by a frigid breeze. He clenched his wrist and shut his fingers over his palm, but Sophie's fingers lingered at her jaw and never bothered the stray hairs. Her cheeks flared red, but the heat didn't touch her shaking core.

Neither blinked. They held their breath.

A heartbeat passed, and they eased with nervous, breathy chuckles that tumbled into lungfuls of genuine laughter. Joseph looked back to his papers and tucked them to his chest. "I..." he laughed once. "I suppose I should hurry, then. I'm not getting any less bearded."

Sophie nodded, eyes closing gratefully. "Yeah. I guess not."

Joseph wrung his fingers on the paper and turned on his toes to head back for the door, but stopped shy of an exit. "I have a question, though, first?"

Sophie opened her eyes and looked at him urgently. "Yes?"

Joseph pointed over her shoulder. "What is that?"

She jumped and twisted around to look where his finger extended, eyes falling down the far wall and landing on the Polaroid camera she'd left on the coffee table. "Oh, that's my camera!" She took long strides over to it and the scattered strips of film around it.

"A camera, huh?" Joseph followed her a few steps in and peered over the table at it.

Sophie nodded, thinking how where he'd come from must have been really bad if he wasn't even familiar with a camera. "I had some extra time next semester to take a photography class, for fun. I love taking pictures, especially pictures of my friends."

"Can I see?" Joseph asked, eagerly. He'd seen pictures, especially after all his time on Earth, of real people during real points in the past, but he'd never known anyone who took them. At least, not that he was aware. He wasn't entirely sure how they worked, they didn't have cameras on Vista, but they fascinated him.

Sophie nodded, smiling as he set down the applications so he could take the tiny plastic-paper squares. He was so engrossed that it made her feel silly. "They're not any good, I was actually going over these with Lori last night, to see which ones were worth keeping." She blushed again, this time hot and flustered. Joseph's eyes were locked on them, and she was torn between being excited to show him her art and longing for his gaze to be back on her. "It's just something I do to pass the time."

Joseph held the pictures gingerly, the sheen reflecting tiny block patterns of light so he had to turn them away from the glare to get a good look. There were so many faces he didn't recognize looking back at him, each one smiling or in the middle of some mundane daily activity that humans often did: eating, sweeping, there was even a painter. But, mostly, they were Sophie's friends who had all looked into her Polaroid and smiled for her.

They were people he'd never seen, and people he'd never know. But, they were encapsulated for a moment in the frame, a wink in time preserved forever. And he could see them, the tiny sparks of their personality woven into the threads of energy in the air.

Sophie turned the Polaroid camera over in her hands, the curved lens shining in the dim light from the lamp. "I'm a humanitarian, that's why I do it."

"Humanitarian?" Joseph repeated, still shuffling the pictures in his hands to get a good look at each one.

Sophie looked absently into the lens, thinking more and seeing less. "People are *so* interesting. And each of us is important for the future. There's enough goodness in humans, and we have to remember that. So... I take pictures of the things that are good about people, in case we forget. In case I forget."

Then, she flipped the camera up in her hands and snapped the button with the lens facing Joseph directly. A bright flash filled the room and made Joseph motionless as he stared into the massive eye of the Polaroid.

Then, it was over. He'd never had his picture taken before.

The camera made a mechanical whirring noise and Sophie smirked mischievously as it fed out another square film. She giggled and grabbed a corner of the picture. With practiced motion, she shook it from her wrist with a few snaps. She extended it face-up so Joseph could see the image as it formed from darkness. “See?” Joseph blinked rapidly to get rid of the odd spots that almost reminded him of the energy he could see back home, not wanting to miss anything. “Something good.”

Joseph watched with open mouth as his own face appeared in the murky blackness to stare up at him, and the negative space filled in with his surroundings. The shadows from the loveseat were dark, but the white and blue walls were soothing. His expression was... pure. It was the only way Joseph could describe it, though it wasn't a word he'd often use to identify himself. He was both amused, frightened, and content in one perfect instant. Wide shining eyes, eyebrows pinched ever so slightly to give him the faintest crease slightly off-center of his forehead, and the delicate curves of a bemused grin on his lips.

Joseph laughed and Sophie took the picture back. “That’s definitely a keeper,” she said over her blush.

“How did you do that?” Joseph inquired like an excited child, quickly closing the gap and standing near enough that she could breathe his scent in.

Sophie tried not to act flustered as she propped her camera up in one hand. “You just...” she indicated the lens, “remove the cap and set the shutter, then aim this at what you want to get a picture of. Then you push this button here.” She looked up at him with a subtle shrug. “Simple. I’ve been doing it since I was a kid.”

“Oh?” Joseph raised his eyebrows, locking his eyes on Sophie’s chocolate pair.

He moved quickly, shooting his hand from its place curved around the pictures he held and grabbed the Polaroid swifter than any pickpocket. He jerked it back and quickly whipped it in place with the bowl-shaped glass lens only a foot or so from Sophie's face.

The bright light and shutter sound blew again, but faded as before.

Sophie gasped deeply. “Hey!”

Joseph jeered, laughing, and held the camera up high, keeping a careful grip as the little mechanisms within eased a new picture into his palm. She reached up to try and take it back, but there was no way she could have gotten it even on her toes. Joseph was over six feet tall, and Sophie was only five and a half. “No fair!”

Joseph nudged her a little, the sensation of his skin brushing against hers making his nerves tingle, and snatched up the picture. He shook it in the air as she'd done moments ago, then brandished it for Sophie to see as it developed.

Begrudgingly, Sophie smirked and looked at the thin square of film as it took on its colors.

Sophie’s dark eyes came through first, glossy and round as they looked directly back at herself. Her hair was falling around her round cheeks, heart shaped face betraying something other

than complacent surprise: she was happy. There was a glimmer in her that she could feel more than see as she looked at the stolen moment of history.

“See?” Joseph repeated her, cooing velveteen. “Goodness in the world.”

Sophie’s mouth felt impossibly dry, like she’d never be able to swallow again even though she gulped at the air now. She forced herself to compose, and shot Joseph a playful look that she wasn’t sure masked the racing of her heart. She tossed her hair over her shoulder with a turn of her head and winked. “Keep it.”

Joseph paused, not having expected to hear that. “Really?”

Sophie nodded and grinned. “Yeah! You took the picture. It wouldn’t be right for me to put it in my collection.”

Joseph felt his grip get heavy, like he was holding a thousand pence instead of a small picture. He smiled without meaning to. “Okay.” He pulled it close, like he might tuck it into the breast pocket of his robe out of habit, but then slid his hand into the pocket of his new pants.

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