

This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places or events are entirely coincidental. Similarities to fictional characters is probably very much on purpose and done in respectful tribute.

THE ELDRITCH TWINS

First Edition. February 14, 2019

Copyright © 2019 Nick Vossen

Written by Nick Vossen

Cover Artwork & Design by Steffie van Grimbergen

Licensed font by Dixie's Delights Fonts

The Eldritch Twins

by

Nick Vossen

This book is dedicated to all the cats that have shared my life.
Present, past & future.

“The world is indeed comic, but the joke is on Mankind.”

- H.P. Lovecraft

ACT I

Last of the Swansongs

I

Quincy simply could not concentrate in class today. He looked around the lecture hall at the colorful mix of people attending today and softly sighed. The philosophy teacher droned on in the most annoying of monotone voices he ever heard, and the lecture itself consisted of the same grasping at straws as ever.

“So, in the light of the events from the past three years... The realms of science, *and* philosophy have changed dramatically.” the teacher droned while standing with his back to class, endlessly writing gibberish on the whiteboard.

The student next to Quincy was clicking his pen over and over, the soft ticking of the plastic made for a nice distraction from the teacher’s buzzing voice, as well as the slow descent into madness Quincy felt by attending the lecture.

“With the existence, and now absence of God, the Almighty Creator, proven... The great philosophical conundrum shifted in its wake.”

Click, Click, Click, Clack. Quincy moved uncomfortably in his seat. He took a good look at his lecture notes and realized that a drawing of a small bunny with rows of enormous teeth would certainly not help him during the upcoming midterms. Then again, what was even considered standard anymore? Daily life itself wasn’t exactly what it

used to be since a few years ago. The fact that he was still sitting here taking lectures was a miracle all by itself.

“Therefore, the great philosophical questions in life are no longer examples of *Why are we here?* We know that now, it was to serve God in all his glory. No, the right existential questions would currently fit more into the lines of *What the hell did we do?* And *How the hell can we get Him back.* Now, if you turn to page threehundr...”

The loud buzzing of a bell sounded through the hall. It was an obnoxious sound but it did just the trick to get Quincy out of his dulling trance and snap him back into reality.

“For the next time I want you all to study chapters five through eight. Afterwards we will discuss the philosophical and moral consequences of having to choose a new God in favor of our old one as, who knows, perhaps we need to be able to sell ourselves as a good and obedient planet to the best possible candidate.”

Quincy rolled his eyes and quickly grabbed his bag. He then straightened the glasses on his nose and made his way towards the door. Towards freedom from the dull classroom and towards the weekend. It was not like he had many plans, but college had been rough on him these past few days and a little relaxation might absolutely do the trick.

Quincy was a strapping young lad. He was merely twenty-one, but he dressed and spoke like a refined gentleman, most of the time. His hair was cut neatly into an executive contour and a dash of pomade really did the trick to get it as slick as possible. He was not

bad looking by any stretch of the imagination, but his smartness often exceeded his social interaction and banter. Often, but not always.

“Hey Swansong!”

Quincy turned around, one of the stereotypical frat house jocks strolled towards him. Quincy wondered what kind of stupidity was going to flap out of his classmate's mouth this time.

“Yeah?” he replied in the most bored of expressions.

“Maybe Great Tharon will be our new God huh. *Wuuuuu hooooo*, can you imagine?” The meathead looked around for his friends to join in on the banter and nudged his head along, giggling like one of those electronic Elmo dolls in the process.

“Look at this nerd. Weirdo!” One of the others joined in. Quincy took a good look at the tall, ugly jock in front of him. He wanted to go ahead and congratulate the buffoon on remembering on of his great-uncle’s stories, and that apparently most of what he had written had turned out to be true. But he decided to let it slide, secretly hoping that something would materialize around the guy sooner or later, making him pee his pants then. That would be neat. So for today, Quincy simply struck where it hurt, the brains.

“Good one, Ron,” he replied, sounding like a true professional in sarcasm. “Say, maybe you could then ask Tharon why you're failing every class.”

Quincy could see Ron's face getting redder by the second, and he enjoyed every last bit of it. The disapproving look from their teacher staring at Ron broke him from the spell and, after the

knucklehead tried to come up with a fitting reply for about forty five seconds, he simply gave up.

Quincy marched outside, satisfied.

The View from Lakeshore Drive across Lake Pontchartrain was especially stunning today. Even though taking the bus back to his apartment was usually a lot faster, on days like this Quincy definitely enjoyed walking back home. He loved to trample along the carefully paved pathways and to take in the nice green stretches of grass to the north of the Drive. Today however, he decided to walk straight home instead of taking his favorite detour along Milneburg Lighthouse. The slight breeze blowing into town from lifted his spirits a little bit, but for most of the walk back, Quincy was lost in thought. It was at the intersection of Lark and Marigny that Quincy saw someone approaching him just from the corners of his eyes.

“Hey man. Could you perhaps spare some change? Maybe a dollar? I want to get me a sandwich or summing. Please help a guy out.”

Quincy sighed turned around to face the battered old man. He was wearing rags for the most part and used old dented tin cans as knee protectors. He looked incredibly low on personal hygiene, his beard was long and tangled and he had the most crooked eyes Quincy had ever seen. On a more peculiar note, he was also very transparent. Literally.

“Look, Old man Walters...” Quincy shook his head. “We’ve

been over this, man. You are dead. A ghost. Gone. You don't need any money. You've been dead for as long as I can remember."

The old man looked puzzled. He clearly tried to find the right words to reply and Quincy was hopeful that perhaps he had finally gotten through to Walters to leave him alone. The old ghost then finally replied.

"You wanna buy some porno tapes? C'mon man, I only need a few dollars."

"Ugh! See this is what I mean." Quincy rubbed his forehead and sounded annoyed. "You've been gone so long, we don't use tapes anymore. We now have DVDs, and with the internet I can't even begin to tell you how redundant tapes are and... Wait, why am I even having this conversation?"

"No tapes then?" Walters replied disappointingly.

"Move into the light or something, Walters. I'm done here." Quincy replied as he doubled his pace to shake off the, somehow still horribly smelling, apparition.

A few years ago Quincy would be absolutely mortified to bump into a real life ghost in the streets of New Orleans, or pretty much anywhere else. Strangely enough, ghosts are most likely some of the least troublesome things you could encounter nowadays.

It all started about three years ago, when in the deserts of Egypt a giant obelisk, comparable in size to the Empire State Building in New York, erupted from the ground seemingly overnight. Many experts were baffled and could not possibly find an explanation for their so-called latest *Wonder of the World*. It was

only when the discovery of writing was made upon the face of the obelisk many, many feet up that made the world truly go into shock. The writing upon the obelisk, when translated from such languages as Ancient Sumerian, Latin, Biblical Hebrew, Sanskrit, Old English and Navajo revealed that the message on its surface was from God itself. The message entailed that God, while having enjoyed being our species' keeper and creator for these past Millennia, simply could not handle the responsibilities and damage control expected of Him anymore. The message further stated that he, the Almighty God, ruler and creator of the Earth and all of its creatures and marvels, was disappointed and was leaving.

Naturally, skeptics and believers alike raved upon hearing it and for the first couple of months it was generally perceived as a giant prank, however unlikely it was to pull off. However, soon after all hell started to break loose on Earth and the general population started to take the Obelisk's message seriously. You see, the last thing that God warned humanity about was that in His absence, the amalgamation of absolutely everything terrible in this known universe, and others, will probably be either heading for (or waking up on) Earth. Now imagine Mankind's surprise when not only did they find out God really existed, but had abandoned them on the day He revealed himself. Then there was the small footnote about the entire world going down the toilet faster than humanly possible.

It started slowly at first. People reported feeling uneasy in places they always perceived as comfortable. Then, slowly but surely, reports came in of strange sightings of unknown creatures. People reported sightings of ghosts, zombies and vampires, but also

of angels and demons. The scientific world was turned upside down, many experts in pretty much every scientific field were left baffled. Suddenly, every single supernatural creature or beast imaginable was as real as the morning sunrise, and it literally shook the world's foundations. Some of the supernatural occurrences or visitors were benevolent or even friendly, but others were out for blood.

Exactly one year after the discovery of the Obelisk, a war broke out in Egypt. It was not a war of feuding countries, crazy presidents or malevolent dictators, rather it was the first war for mankind's survival. The war to delay events of such magnitude that they would border us on the brink of extinction. From beneath the Valley of the Kings an old giant entity rose up named 'Alghuurl: *The old, tired and hungry*', and crawling from the hot desert sands with him were tens of thousands of crab-like vicious monsters. Alghuurl was an especially nasty specimen of Elder Giant, a race of huge stone-like humanoids that presumably went extinct, or at least left the Earth, billions of years before humanity was even considered a thing.

The nations of the world banded together and a global army was formed to combat the entity. Ultimately it fell, although rumors persist that it was simply trapped into a separate reality. Thousands died in the fighting and from the ashes of war two distinct organizations rose to power. The first was the Global Defense Force, consisting of only the highest ranking, most elite soldiers in the world. They were tasked to respond to any incident with a threat level higher than five or in so-called Type 1+ Awakening events, but

more on that later.

The second was a mysterious shadow organization called the Haven, among outsiders mostly known as the men in black, or not known at all. Their operations consisted of a more secretive approach and they were often spotted in places where supernatural occurrences were reaching their peak, albeit it far sooner and much less out in the open than the Global Defense Force.

After the Kraken wars, as they were later known, and the arrival of the GDF and Haven organizations, the Earth went through what probably could be considered the most peculiar of changes out of all of them. Humanity actually accepted their fate and adapted their current state of affairs. Simply put, they went along with their merry lives. The faculties of natural science rejoiced with the coming of uncountable new specimens in flora and fauna, and those delving into the realms of quantum mechanics really started to pick up the pace on their research after dealing with the one or two Dimensional Shambler incidents.

Quincy stopped daydreaming. He was apparently so engrossed in thinking over the events of the last couple of years in his head that he had apparently been staring at his front door for a good number of minutes already. He was snapped out of his daze by his neighbor. Mrs. Silverstein was a terrible old lady with blue frizzly hair, nasty orange skin, just about three teeth left and she sported the worst kind of bad breaths. She was cheerfully breathing into Quincy's right ear, asking how his sister was doing. After exchanging theoretical pleasantries Quincy quickly shut the door

behind him, leaving the old lady standing in the hall. He shook off his jacket and flung it dexterously towards the coat-rack. Checking the contents of the fridge revealed nothing interesting, or at least, *edible* interesting. Thus, Quincy took up the liberty to decide that he and his twin sister Lilly, whom he shared the apartment with, would simply have to order out. That is, if the pizza delivery guy was going to be on time now. The last time they had ordered pizza the guy that usually delivers on this block had apparently fallen into a whirling pocket dimension created by a real joker of a Pooka, which resulted in the pizza being delivered the actual day before it was ordered. Quincy kicked off his shoes and rested his feet daftly on the living room table, picked up the remote control and turned on the news.

“So what else is new...” he mumbled and held his thumb firmly on the channel-changing button.

There was a wall of sound inside the pet-shop that was almost unbearable to sit through for any stretch of time, let alone eight hours a day. The constant screeching, barking, meowing, scratching, slurping and general total absence of anything resembling a relaxing atmosphere was oppressive. Along the walls were cages full of colorful creatures ranging from simple domestic house-pets to dangerous looking slimy things. To the right-hand side of the store was a wall of pet-supplies, carefully placed and priced with care and precision. It was *the* place to be in New Orleans to get exotic pets and the line of customers often went around the block,

just as it did today. In the back of the store was a small desk and registry and behind it sat a girl. She had half-long curly hair, pink cheeks and a fair complexion. Her eyes were as blue as the ocean, and her smile was especially captivating. Still, there seemed to be a lingering darkness about her. She was often distant or dreaming, much to the dismay of customers. Some old women who used to frequent the shop always whispered to each other how the girl had an 'old soul' and was 'dispositioned towards the arcane', whatever that meant. She seemed extremely stressed out and the sweat was dripping off her forehead as she tried to juggle the constant stream of phone calls, as well as the people who had been standing in line for so long.

"Ma'am, you have to listen to what I am saying," she spoke into the phone, trying not to yell. "Primordial Wurms need to be released in the desert approximately three months before reaching adulthood and... yes? Yes I know they are cute Ma'am. But... Ma'am. *Ma'am*. Please listen, they *will* have a tendency to eat people. U huh... No it doesn't matter if they are raised with love and care... Ma'am. Please Hold." The girl cursed quietly and pressed a blinking red button on the telephone device.

"Good afternoon, *Nawlin's Exotic Pets*, Lilly speaking."

"Hey lady!" a man shouted from the row of people. "How about you help us first, huh? We've actually taken the time to come to your store ourselves!"

"In a minute!" Lilly yelled towards the mass of people putting the horn back to her ear.

"No sir, we do *not* sell kittens for feeding purposes. Every cat we sell nowadays will require a comprehensive background check from the potential owner for current or past ownership of Cerberi... *Hello?* Sir? Ah damn it all!" Lilly threw down the phone. "Next in line!"

"Hey there lovely, now I'm pretty sure you could help a man out with his... snake problem can you?" The man standing in front of Lilly was utterly gross, he looked dirty and his skin was flaking off in more than one spot. Furthermore, his breath could bury a thousand ghouls back into the ground.

"Sir. Please step back, I am *very* busy and I am certainly not in the mood for this kind of crap." Lilly rolled her eyes and tried looked past the man for the next person in line. The man's eyes shot over to her name tag and his face eerily twisted into a crooked grin.

"Hmm Swansong, huh? Perhaps you can sing me something as well, sugar,' the dirty man licked his lips and his drool was dripping down towards the register desk. Lilly's eyes looked sternly and she leaned in towards him, she started whispering.

"How about... *corpse walks into pet-store and messes with the wrong girl* then? You sick freak, get the hell out of the store!" The man was clearly taken aback, but he wasn't about to take no for an answer. With incredible speed he lunged over the registry and tried to grab Lilly by her collar.

"Listen here you little shit, That's no way to treat someone

who fought for this country, fought for the entire *world*! I'm the reason y'all are still alive today. I deserve to be treated with respect."

he hissed at her like an alley cat.

Something in Lilly snapped. All of the noise coming from the shop was drowning out. From the loud screeching of animals to the commotions of the people in the back of the row. With lightning fast and nimble fingers she grabbed the man's hands and pulled his fingers backwards. There was a loud crack and the man screamed from the top of his lungs.

"Listen up, scumbag. "I've seen all the crap the world can throw at me, *I* was there, too. Nineteen at the time and as fragile as I could be." She lowered her head and glared menacingly into the man's eyes. "But I remain unbroken. Do you think you can waltz in here and act like you can do anything just because *you* survived some tentacled freaks and ten-thousand others did not? You're a disgrace!"

Some of the other customers were now becoming visible agitated as well, luckily for Lilly, most of them seemed to express their disdain for the dirty man, and angrily stood by Lilly's side. The man was not listening. His crooked fingers were as red as blood and, burning with pain and anger, the guy went on a rampage through the store. He was running around and yelling, knocking over food trays, empty cages and even some of the other customers. Eventually, to the shock of everyone present, he took a tumble and smacked his head against the cages holding Carnivopods.

"Oh! Oh no!" Lilly just realized the full extent of her actions.

“Uh, don't panic! Grab a net, anything!” Lilly looked around at the group of customers still around, she panicked.

As she predicted, it was already too late for a net. The broken cage door slowly crept open and the man's unconscious head was swallowed whole by a small gelatinous, octopus-like creature with three rows of razor sharp, buzz-saw-like teeth between its tentacles. In the ensuing panic that erupted, the mindless noise of the animals in the back of the store kept growing. Eventually though, the Carnivopod, apparently satisfied, slowly crept back into its cage. Meanwhile, At the height of all the chaos, Lilly's boss just decided to come back into the store from his lunch break and stumbled upon a panicked mob and a twitching man on the floor with his skin half-ripped off his head. Lilly swallowed hard and tried to keep her chin up.

“I can explain everything,” she said through gritted teeth.

At that moment a giant Macaw leapt from its cage above the register and took a pretty big dump of number two all over the balding head of Lilly's boss.

Quincy was half asleep when he heard the door slam shut. He jumped up from the loud noise, but was relieved to see it was just Lilly coming home after her workday.

“Dang, you scared me,” he said, rubbing his eyes. “How was your day?”

“Well...” Lilly threw herself onto the couch next to her brother. “Next to the usual stress of huge crowds and being

understaffed, a guy got his face chewed off by a Carnivopod today. Apparently my boss blamed me for provoking him." she grunted.

"Oh man, are you okay? But wait. Provoke him?"

"He came onto me first!" Lilly shouted in defense. "It was another one of those veterans gone insane. I kinda broke his fingers, but still!"

"Broke his fi..."

"So I probably got fired today," she continued, ignoring her brother. "Boss is not sure yet, he's understaffed as it is."

"Damn..." It was all Quincy could muster.

"The guy's chewed up face, it was an accident, he did that to himself. I saw the same stuff he did, and I'm not crazy, am I?"

Quincy looked her in the eyes and chuckled.

"It's okay. These things just tend to happen nowadays, it's not your fault."

"Thanks," she smiled. "How about you then, how was *your* day?"

"Same old smack, different day," he twirled a drink coaster around on the table in front of them. "Teacher is a ripe old idiot and lectures themselves border on mania nowadays. I'm thinking about changing majors, start studying at my own pace."

Lilly straightened herself.

"Well," she said. "Not everyone is as smart as you," she smiled as she gave him a little nudge to the shoulder, making him laugh.

Both of them shot upright as the doorbell rang. Quincy stood up and paced over to the door.

"Oh yeah. I hope you don't mind but I ordered some pizza for us. We forgot to do groceries again." he looked back at her.

"There is never a time when pizza is *not* a good idea," she answered, overjoyed.

Quincy was pleasantly surprised to see that their regular delivery guy, Tom, was back doing his old rounds again.

"Hey! Good to see you again, we thought you'd stop doing this route forever."

"Well, you'd guess that getting trapped by one of those little trickster bastards would do that to a guy, but here I am," the guy answered sarcastically. "Gotta make a living somehow, eh."

During the exchange, Lilly had crept up towards the door and now took the liberty of taking the pizza out of Tom's hands.

"Thank you, Tom. You're the best! Bye!" she grinned and fluttered back into the room. "Quince, pay the man!"

"Isn't she in a good mood?" Tom watched Lilly sink into the couch.

"I guess... considering..." Quincy looked slightly confused.

"Oh, by the way." Tom continued. "I caught your nasty neighbor stealing your mail again while I was downstairs. Here, I managed to snag it for you."

Quincy cursed the old woman softly and thanked him. The two made some small talk before Quincy paid and saw him off. Quincy shuffled back to the couch and plopped down next to his sister who

was already gorging herself on the food.

“Whash daath?” she mumbled with a mouthful of cheese, pointing at the peculiar gray envelope in her brother’s hands. Quincy ripped the top of the letter and eyed over it. “Apparently it’s a letter from a notary office about some kind of inheritance.” Lilly swallowed her food and looked at her brother in confusion.

“An inheritance? From who? And why now?” She was puzzled.

“No idea... Are you up for finding out? We could go there tomorrow if you’d like?”

“Well, It’s not like I have to go work. The pet store’s kind of closed for... renovation at the moment, so...” she looked mischievous and laughed.

“I’m not exactly dying for my next couple of lectures, either,” he chuckled and finally picked up a slice of the pizza he’d been craving for all day.

Life at the moment... Quincy thought, considering everything... yeah, still pretty good, he decided.

II

Agent Reyes stepped through the elevator doors with sweat piling upon older sweat that was dripping off his brow slowly. His usual slick-back hair was greasy and pointy and a slight five-o'clock shadow stubble adorned his normally clean shaven face. His right leg and left arm twitched nervously and his mustache itched eerily in the wind of the underground fans that were set up all around him.

The architect for the secret base prided himself of the fact that giant metal fans were the way of the future, as far as eerie hideouts go in a dystopian, slightly post-apocalyptic-like future. Unfortunately for him, it was his favorite thing in the world that eventually got him killed. Once, on a hot summer day, he had the misfortune of wanting to set the fan dials to a nice big breeze to keep the base nice and cool. He had mistakenly dialed the fans all the way towards the wrong side, basically *sucking like a hurricane*. Thus the architect got himself in an accident that most people would deem gruesome, as well as 'very chunky', according to some eyewitnesses. Eventually he was remembered by the organization by having his name immortalized on the brand new safety feature toggle that now adorned the control console.

Reyes took a deep breath and knocked softly on the double office doors. He tried to avoid contact with the two bulky men

guarding the door. One on each side, they were nearly identical. They wore the exact same all-black suit as Reyes did, wore the same black shades and had the same ear-piece. However, something about them seemed off, in Reyes' eyes. He just couldn't put his finger on it.

“Reyes! Quit moping around and get your ass in here, pronto!” a voice from the intercom cracked.

An automatic lock opened from within the office doors and Agent Reyes stepped inside.

The lighting inside the small office was abysmal. Most of the interior was actually veiled in total darkness, save for a small illuminated world-map with several glowing red dots over on the right-side wall. In the center of the room, a desk stood drearily. Behind the desk sat a fat man, dressed in all black with his face obscured by the creeping shadows. Upon the first time he entered, years ago, Reyes had realized that the problem with the room was not a need for better lighting, but the presence of something that swallowed natural light. He never stopped wondering what it was exactly that was wrong with his superior's office, but he never had the guts to ask. A shiver went down his spine.

Then the man spoke, in a slightly off-putting, gravelly voice. “I assume, Agent Reyes, that the letter you were sent to retrieve has been intercepted as planned?”

‘Well... uhm...’ Reyes began. ‘The problem is that my agent, Mrs. Silverstein, she... uh...’

“Out with it, Agent Reyes.” the man groaned in displeasure. Reyes broke out in an uncontrollable sweat again.

"She failed to retrieve the letter as requested... sorry... as ordered, Sir." Reyes peeped.

"Hmm... Disappointing, Agent Reyes," the fat man tapped his fingers slowly on the desk. "I am afraid that my faith in you has proven to be false. I will have to re-assign the case to one of your peers."

"No! Hold on! Please." Reyes stumbled. "The bugs we planted are still active, we can tail them tomorrow when they..."

"I don't like to break away from protocol," the fat man interrupted. "It's very simple, Agent Reyes. Retrieve the package and return it to me. Do not cause unnecessary harm or backlash, Reyes. Only if every and all negotiations fail... then the Swansong twins must die."

Agent Reyes swallowed hard.

"Yes sir."

The notary office was a rather beautiful building from the outside to look at. Dated back to the time of the first French colonies, it was remarkable. There were wide arches at the bottom of the building, each sporting widely curved windows on the floor above them. The balcony railings seemed like they were made from solid silver and gleamed in the sunlight. The building was a mixed batch of architectural influences as the top half had a much more Gothic feel to it. There were even some gargoyles, a classic staple in eastern-European architecture, looking down from the broken clock tower that loomed at the very top of the building. One of the

gargoyles was scratching itself behind the ear like a dog.

Quincy and Lilly quietly admired the stunning building before heading inside. They were eager to find out what this whole inheritance thing was about.

The inside of the office looked like the exact opposite of the pretty exterior. It had more in common with a hospital than anything else. The walls were adorned with white plaster and cheap plastic chairs filled an empty waiting room. At least, it appeared empty until Lilly and Quincy turned the corner and found an exceptionally old man firmly asleep in his wheelchair. To the right of the waiting area was a boring looking reception desk with an even more bored looking man behind it. The man slightly tilted his head downward, looking over his wonky reading glasses at the two youngsters that just walked through the office doors.

"Please state your name and reason for visiting."

Lilly carefully maneuvered over the recently mopped floor tiles towards the desk and caught herself on its edges just at the last moment when the inevitable moment of slipping had come.

"Lilly and Quincy Swansong," she stumbled. "We've received a letter concerning some kind of inheritance, but our parents died years ago. There must have been some mistake."

"Oh no. No mistakes at all," the man looked disinterested. "I'm pretty sure there aren't many *Swangsongs* around anymore. Besides, we've gotten exclusive instructions from your parents to, in the unfortunate event of their premature passing, withhold your inheritance until the day of your twenty-first birthday. Which is..."

"Which *was* about three months ago," Quincy interrupted as he slit towards the reception desk.

"Ah, yes," the man replied as if caught in a dirty act. "Do excuse our late tidings. Inheritances and insurances are pretty busy now that people seem to be dying a lot more. All these supernatural causes... The whole thing needs investigations, I mean the paperwork alone..."

"Get to the point, Mister-" Lilly took a good hard look at the man's nametag. "Bracken... Brackenwha... you know what, never mind."

"Yes, if you would please follow me."

The receptionist led them to a small room, only filled with a table and three chairs. Again, like in the waiting room, the whole atmosphere was clinical and depressing. Lilly and Quincy sat down, and it wasn't before long that a tall, but very thin man in a business suit slithered his way into the meeting room. He held a suitcase in his hand and a shiny golden pen in his other.

'Ah, majestic! The Swansong twins in the flesh. Now did you two know you are pretty hard to track down? The last in the lineage of the great writer himself! Or should I say, the great prophet?" The man chuckled to himself, but stopped after seeing the confused faces in front of him. "Ahem. Right. Now, let's not dally about. If you could both please sign this form here, and here, oh and here and then finally... there."

The man guided Lilly and Quincy through the process of making sure that everything was in order and that they *were* in the fact the

right inheritors that came to claim the package. He then opened his suitcase and revealed two envelopes and a silver key. The key seemed old but was still remarkably beautiful. The top half was carefully smelted with markings that were embedded with turquoise and the bottom half was as sharp and clean as any modern key could be. There were also two envelopes, which looked worlds apart from each other. One was still very white and neat, the writing on the front said *Quincy and Lilly*. The other envelope was crumpled, yellowed and seemed to have sustained water damage on at least one occasion, it was addressed: *To the descendants*.

"That key is a pretty one isn't it!" the thin man sounded like a slimy salesman. "Anyway, I will leave you two to it. Take your time to sift through your letters if you'd like. You may do it here in private, or you can go. But, in case of the latter, please do not forget to notify Mr. Brackenwulf, the receptionist, of your departure so we may clean and lock this room back up. Good day, Mister Swansong, Miss Swansong."

The man left the room and Lilly and Quincy sat there for a moment simply staring at the two letters in front of them. Few words were exchanged since the thin man left, but the twins had agreed that the first letter they would open would be the clean white one, as there was no doubt it was from their parents. Quincy took a deep breath and ripped the envelope open. He started reading aloud:

*To our dearest son and daughter,
If this letter reaches you, it means the incredible burden has been*

placed on you of us having to leave this world before our time and before we could personally hand over the artifact and letter enclosed in this inheritance. Know that the old letter reveals a terrible truth and secret that you must keep with you until you can pass it on to your children, or until the time has come to act. Although we hope, and pray, that never to be the case.

Whatever the case, never give up.

*All of our love,
Emily and Tobias Swansong*

Lilly carefully moved the yellowed old envelope between her fingertips.

“That’s so sad. I mean... it makes me so sad.” Her eyes were full of tears.

Lilly looked at Quincy, who also had a hard time dealing with the letter. The twins had lost their parents to a plane crash on the day of their sixteenth birthday. Together they swore that they would withhold from ‘celebrating’ their birthdays from that moment on, and traditionally saved the day to remember their parents.

They both sat silently for a while, until they noticed that a lady in cleaner’s outfit was standing in the doorway, looking at them irritably. Her hair was a mixture of vague red and bubblegum pink, both hair-colors for which the lady was at least thirty years too old.

“Y’all done?” she rasped.

When she spoke the twins noticed that incredible amounts of spit managed to fly out of her mouth. A record, surely, Quincy thought as he somehow admired the lady's feat.

"Actually." Lilly started, "We still have a letter to read so..."

"So... Yeah..." Quincy chimed in.

The red/pink headed lady proceeded to place her broom in the door opening and started tapping her foot slowly in the doorpost.

"Fine. I can wait."

Lilly and Quincy threw a quick glance towards each other and stood up in unison.

"We can just... you know... read this outside." Quincy wove a fake smile on his face that made his sister laugh.

Lilly nudged him on their way out of the office.

"So... this old letter seems important, huh?"

"Yeah, we're going to need to read this in a place with a lot more peace and quiet," Quincy added.

"How about the end of the world?"

The 'End of the World' was the loving nickname for an exceptionally tranquil spot near the Mississippi where the river itself and the Industrial Canal met. The twins sat down by a particularly nice spot near the riverside where they were treated to a great vista stretching out all across the riverbank and beyond it.

From the middle of the river, a group of Devil-fish stuck out their heads to investigate the visitors of the riverbank. They were not Devil-fish in the way that the majestic *Mobula mobular*, a near