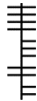


M.M. Verdegaal

FLOCKS

Book one of the Emrise trilogy



Epelwaerd Publishing

‘Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it.’

Roald Dahl

For Mum. It started with you.

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Prologue

January, 2096

If anyone is out there...

This is earth. 5 billion people live here. They are about to become empty vessels. Please help.

For as long as there have been humans, people have been able to create. These people usually stuck to themselves because those who couldn't create, the Flocks, couldn't grasp how these creators could make it rain or how they could heal a person with just a touch.

After the Roman Catholic Church had killed thousands of innocent Flocks in an attempt to eradicate those with special abilities, the creators retreated from the public, stuck together and passed their knowledge on into a much smaller circle. Those who already could create now learned even more. In the sixteenth century, they started calling themselves the Illuminated, those who were enlightened.

Nowadays, the descendants of those first Illuminees have quite the advantage compared to the old days. They are born in an environment where their natural ability to create is stimulated, nourished and encouraged. While the Illuminated still live concealed amongst the Flocks, most aren't as secretive about their abilities as they were a hundred years ago. They want the Flocks to grow and evolve as well.

There are individuals amongst the Flocks who are able to create, in however small a way. Over the span of many years, they

evolve. These people, creators born in Flock families, are called White Lights. White Lights are catalysts among Flocks, inspiring them to evolve as well. By looking for potential White Lights and helping them, the Illuminated aim to raise mankind to a higher energetic and spiritual level.

An ever growing group of Illuminees, the Dissonaunts, do not want the Flocks to learn how to activate their creating potential. They refer to atomic energy, genetic manipulation and many other inventions that were eventually abused by Flocks to kill or gain power. Their leaders' decisions lead to war, genocide, severe climate change and the depletion of the planet's finite resources.

Teon Scand, leader of the Dissonaunts wants to create a world where Flocks can no longer destroy themselves and their planet by removing their ability to think, act and decide. Free will however is essential for evolution. Without it, a person can't choose how to act. They can't develop or evolve and thereby slow down the entire evolutionary process, eventually reversing it.

If Scand succeeds and eliminates the free will of all Flocks, he will cause the devolution of mankind.

By the time you read this, I will already be gone. It took me too long to see. Please, I don't want to have forfeited my life and not have done anything to stop it. If there's anyone out there who can help, billions of souls are counting on you.

Soren

Before she could change her mind, Soren sent her message into the aether. It was a long shot but it was all she could do. Her body had shut down long ago and the nothingness was already pulling at the last shreds of consciousness she had left. She was tired of fighting it. It was time to give in.

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Arrival

May 2094

There was a flash of light, a crack of thunder and suddenly, her body hit the cold, damp earth. After the initial shock of the hard landing, she tried to move but found she couldn't, her muscles failing to respond to the commands of her brain. A deep voice – a flicker of a memory – flashed through her mind. *The paralysis will only be temporary. A mere side effect, part of the aftershock from your transition.*

She was disoriented, feverishly trying to work out her location. Her surroundings felt strangely familiar but completely different at the same time. It smelled like a forest, an earthy, fresh smell that came from a combination of half decomposed leaves, light spring rain and fresh green seedlings. Even in the dark she could see several elm trees around her, shrubs and bushes in the lower vegetation and feel some weeds brushing against her face, but it didn't sound right. There were noises that she could not place, they were unlike anything she'd ever heard before, unnatural. A grumbling sound that was constant, low and barely audible, its source coming maybe a mile from where she was. Then a louder noise came from the sky itself, sounding like a blazing hot furnace, the flames roaring and blasting past her, warning not to come closer or risk certain death. Eventually that