

Chapter 2

Date: Monday, February 9, 1987

Narrated by: Sasha Beauna

It has been several years since I last saw Samuel. Time hasn't been the kindest to him. Weight hangs heavy around his waist. His heart struggles along. His straggly gray hair recedes high on his forehead. Heartache and loneliness drag him down.

I wish I didn't need to trouble him, but I can trust him to handle this exactly as I foresee it. Samuel is spotless. Over the forty years that I've known him, I can think of no instance where he crossed or wronged anyone. He is the one to handle this huge shipment of tainted blood.

It's unfortunate that so much tragedy surrounds him, though. What a shame, lost your wife while you gained a son. It must be torture accepting such circumstances.

What is Joseph messing around with? Is it a picture frame? A picture of Samuel and someone. Possibly his son. Whoever it is, why is Joseph so intrigued by them? He handles the damn thing as if it were a photo of Jesus, himself. I've never seen him behave in such a manner.

Look, his hand trembles!

At times, he is still the rude field slave that I *changed* so long ago.

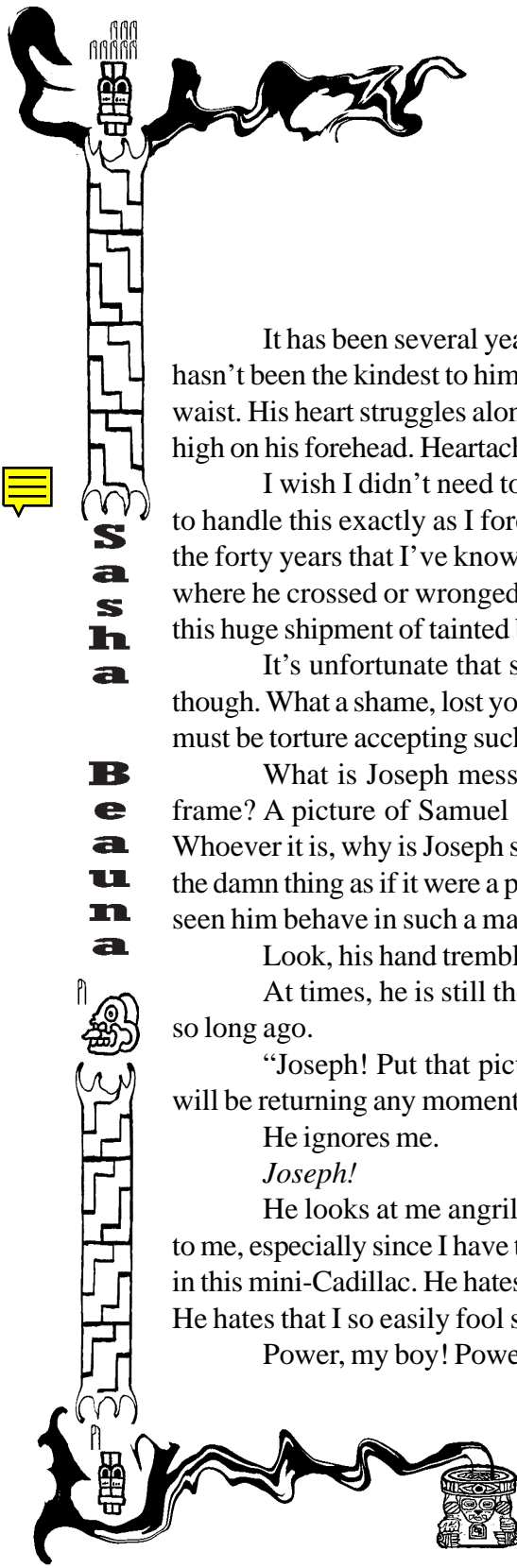
"Joseph! Put that picture back on Samuel's desk. He will be returning any moment."

He ignores me.

Joseph!

He looks at me angrily. Hah! He still hates answering to me, especially since I have taken to spending my public time in this mini-Cadillac. He hates pushing me around in this chair. He hates that I so easily fool so many.

Power, my boy! Power!





So don't test me, Joseph!

Sweat slithers from his wide smooth brow.

Yes! Feel my power. Know that I can do much worse.

My blood in you shall boil till you explode.

"Sasha, you need to see this," he sharply remarks.

Joseph!

"Madame, please look at this," he insists, "and you will understand the need."

"Well, bring it here then. You know that I can't get out of this chair while we are here in Samuel's office," I remind him.

"Yes, Madame."

Within half of a breath, Joseph stands behind me holding the picture over my lap for me to see.

Such a good servant. He has been so faithful for so long. God, how long has it been?

Hah! Well, I *turned* him just before Lincoln freed the Negroes. Hah! How ironic. Joseph simply traded masters. From labor to blood. Maybe that's why Joseph has been so easily controlled. He has been a slave his whole life. He knows nothing else.

"See, Madame! See!" he declares.

"So what? It's a picture of Samuel and his son. So put it back."

Now!

"Please, Madame, stop that. I've told you before how much that hurts. Please just look at Samuel's son," Joseph declares as he wipes the sweat from his flushed face.

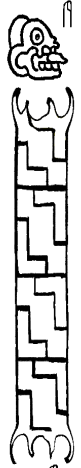
Though irritated by his insistence, my eyes glance down at the picture. Instantly, I see what consumes him as I look at Hamilton's son.

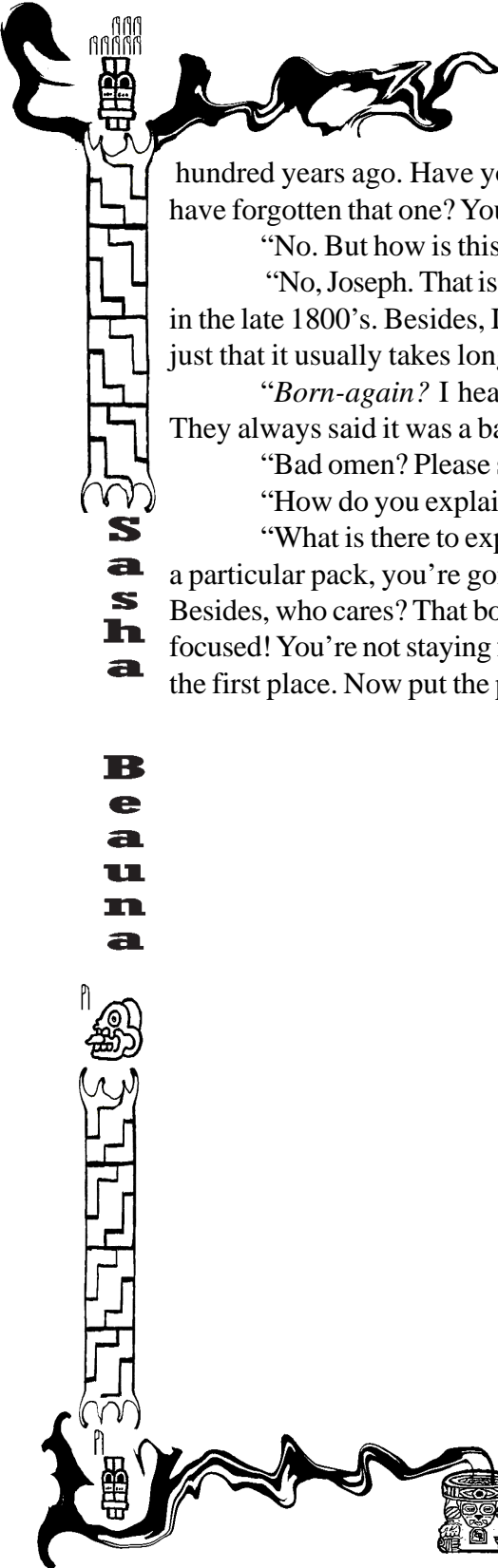
"It can't be. Not already," slips from my lips.

"What do you mean? Not already?" Joseph anxiously asks. "Is it or is it not Alex?"

"Of course not. You killed Robin's lover over a

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hundred years ago. Have you killed so many people that you have forgotten that one? Your first one?"

"No. But how is this possible then? That boy is Alex."

"No, Joseph. That is not Alex. You destroyed Alex back in the late 1800's. Besides, I have seen this happen before. It's just that it usually takes longer for a face to be *born-again*."

"*Born-again?* I heard *the others* mention that word. They always said it was a bad omen."

"Bad omen? Please spare me your superstitions."

"How do you explain it?" he questions.

"What is there to explain, Joseph? You pick pups from a particular pack, you're going to get duplicate-looking dogs. Besides, who cares? That boy is the least of our concerns. Stay focused! You're not staying focused. That's what got us here in the first place. Now put the picture back."

