

CHAPTER TWELVE LAPIS RUSSIA



Lapis was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

As a little boy, after being read a fairy tale at bedtime, he'd wake to see his room transformed into the scene of the story. Spending summers in the country, he learned all the birds' names: partridges, swifts, trogons, kingfishers, pheasants, gannets. A voracious reader, Lapis liked to play football with his friends, dye Easter eggs with onion skins and beets, go on sleigh rides in the Winter.

He grew up with music, his father a music teacher, his mother a violinist with the Philharmonic. For Lapis, the musical notes, tones and melodies came into his head as colors. Instruments or voices, whether an orchestra, choir or someone whistling a tune, Lapis heard colors. Synesthesia.

When he was ten, he entered a local singing competition and won the grand prize. When one of his teachers suggested he make a record, it was an overnight sensation. A European tour was planned for the following year.

One evening Lapis' grandfather took him aside. "Before you leave, Lapis, there's a story I want to tell you."

"A little girl is walking home. As she turns the corner, a boy appears out of nowhere and grabs her, trying to steal the package she's carrying. She starts crying. Another boy turns the corner and sees what's happening. He grabs the bully, tells the girl to run home, taking off his belt to tie the bully's hands together. Then...a man turns the corner. What does he see? A boy tying up another boy who's yelling. The man grabs the boy, telling the bully to run away. Remember, Lapis, things are not always as they seem."

Lapis never forgot. Things are not always as they seem.