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# Obsidian Dreamers

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## Introduction

In the empire of Evarelle, dreams are not simply phantoms of sleep—they are currency, weapon, and curse. Amber-lit city streets thrum with the illusions of the ruling Dreamcasters, whose whispered will can shape memories, ignite passions, or unravel a mind. Their power is celebrated by the noble elite, coveted and feared by all others. To be born a Dreamcaster is to be watched, shackled, and trained; to lack dream-magic is to be considered lesser, fit for servitude or the factories pumping soot into Lys' perpetual twilight.

For seventeen years, Kira has survived in the gutters of Lys: steel-willed, sharp-tongued, always one misstep from a cell or an endless sleep delivered by the empire's Silver Masks. She knows loss intimately—of family, of safety, of worth—yet beneath her defiance, she hides a constant fear: that her own dreams, wild and strange, might one day betray her. In Evarelle, even orphaned hope is a dangerous thing.

But power, no matter how well it is caged, eventually leaks through the cracks. The night Kira's suppressed gifts erupt in a ravenous storm—a maelstrom of nightmares set loose upon the city—her world is upended. Mere survival becomes impossible; she is hunted by the very system that once ignored her. She seeks sanctuary in a rebel undercity where loyalty is as fragile as glass, and trust is bartered with secrets.

Around her, the game of fate tightens. An ancient prophecy, dismissed by the empire's rulers as myth, begins to echo once more through the streets. Dreams and reality blur as Kira is drawn into a conflict far larger than herself. Her companions are misfits and traitors: a royal spy seeking redemption, a Dreamcaster mentor carrying wounds invisible but deep, and a rebel haunted by the shadows of past betrayal. Each carries scars of the dreamwars that shaped their world—and each will force Kira to question her motives, her allegiances, and her very sense of self.

As rebellion threatens to ignite Evarelle and the cost of power demands ever greater sacrifices, Kira is thrust into choices with no right answers. The lines between oppressor and liberator, friend and foe, grow perilously thin. At the heart of it all lies the question: Can one's destiny truly be chosen, or do the dreams of the past chain every soul?

So begins the tale of the obsidian dreamers—of fights won and lost within the mind's labyrinth, of rebellion and reckoning, and of a girl whose dreams may unmake a world or forge something unforgettable from its ruins.

## CHAPTER ONE: Shadows on the Iron Sky

The city of Lys was a perpetual bruise on the horizon, stained by the iron factories that coughed smoke into the sky day and night. For Kira, it was simply home. Not a comfortable home, not a safe one, but the only patch of scarred earth she'd ever known. Her apartment, if you could call it that, was a grimy nook above a reeking noodle stall in the Lower Districts, a place where the sun was an urban myth and the only light came from flickering gas lamps or the occasional, unsettling glow of a Dreamcaster's ward.

Tonight, the glow was particularly unsettling. A faint, pearlescent shimmer pulsed from the district's central spire, a sign that one of the empire's 'Dream Weaver' enforcers was projecting a collective dream, probably a calming, loyalty-inducing one for the weary masses. Kira snorted. Calming dreams were a luxury for the rich in the Upper Spire. Down here, people just wanted to make it through the night without getting conscripted into the mines or picked clean by a stray nightmare.

She traced a grimy finger along the cold, damp windowpane, watching the distant, shimmering facade of the Imperial Dream Academy, a beacon of pristine white stone amidst Lys's industrial decay. That's where the high-born Dreamcasters were trained, their abilities honed into tools of control and coercion. Kira harbored no illusions about what life would be like for her, a nameless orphan, if her own strange dreams were ever discovered. They'd either cage her and force her into servitude, or worse, 're-educate' her until she was an empty shell, useful only for absorbing the residual despair of others.

The thought sent a shiver down her spine, not from the chill permeating her small room, but from a deeper, more primal fear. She'd learned early to suppress her dreams, to bury them deep beneath layers of conscious thought and exhausting labor. She worked at the Ironworks, a bone-jarring, lung-choking job that paid barely enough to keep her fed and housed. The ceaseless clang of hammers and the scorching heat were her lullabies, ensuring she fell into a sleep too deep for nightmares to truly take root.

But sometimes, despite her best efforts, they clawed their way out. Lately, they'd grown more vivid, more insistent. Flashes of impossible landscapes, whispers of names she didn't know, a creeping sense of dread that lingered even after she startled awake. It was like her mind was a locked box, and something inside was rattling the lid, desperate to escape.

A sudden, sharp clang from the noodle stall below shattered her reverie. Old Man

Roric, the proprietor, was probably arguing with a street urchin over a few stray coins. Kira sighed, pulling on her worn, oil-stained jacket. Her shift at the Ironworks started in an hour, and she needed to grab a quick, cheap meal before braving the pre-dawn rush.

The narrow alleyways of the Lower Districts were already stirring. Figures, hunched against the perpetual grit in the air, shuffled towards the towering factory gates. The smell of stale oil, sweat, and cheap synthetic bread hung heavy. Kira navigated the familiar labyrinth of crumbling brick and overflowing refuse bins, her senses alert. You had to be in Lys. A wrong turn, a moment of inattention, and you could disappear, either into the clutches of a recruitment officer or, worse, a shadow-dealer looking for fresh meat for the underground fighting pits.

She reached Roric's stall, a steaming, fragrant oasis in the urban desolation. "Morning, Kira," Roric grunted, his face a roadmap of wrinkles, illuminated by the flickering gas lantern above his pot. He slid a bowl of thin, steaming noodles across the counter. "Rough night for some. Heard tell of a few Silver Masks patrolling closer than usual to the Outer Walls."

Kira picked up her chopsticks. "More conscriptions?" The Silver Masks were the empire's enforcers, their faces hidden behind polished silver visors, their movements silent, their presence chilling. They were the physical manifestation of the Dreamcasters' will, rounding up those deemed 'undesirable' or 'expendable' for various imperial projects, from dangerous mining operations to serving as cannon fodder in the distant border skirmishes.

Roric shook his head, stirring his broth. "Naw, not just that. Word is, they're looking for someone. A 'wild talent,' they called it. Someone whose dreams are...uncontrolled." He lowered his voice, leaning closer. "Said there was a tremor in the dream-current last night. A ripple strong enough to register even through the Academy's wards."

Kira's hand froze, a noodle halfway to her mouth. A tremor? An uncontrolled dream? Her heart hammered against her ribs. She forced herself to swallow, to appear nonchalant. "Propaganda, Roric. They always make up bogeymen to keep us in line."

He eyed her skeptically, but let it go. "Maybe. Still, best be careful, lass. Lys has a way of swallowing up those who stand out."

She nodded, finishing her noodles quickly. The food tasted like ash now. A wild talent. Could it be her? She'd had a particularly vivid dream last night, a kaleidoscope of shattered glass and roaring winds, of whispers that felt less like sounds and more like a physical force tearing through her mind. She'd woken up gasping, the air in her room suddenly charged and heavy. She'd dismissed it as a particularly bad nightmare, a consequence of the exhausting week. But Roric's words...

"I'll be careful," she said, pushing the bowl back. "Thanks, Roric."

She paid him with her meager coins and stepped back out into the pre-dawn gloom, her pulse quickening. The thought was a chilling possibility. If her dreams were truly manifesting, truly powerful enough to be detected by the empire's sensitive instruments, she was in profound danger. The Silver Masks weren't just looking for a 'wild talent'; they were looking for a threat. And in Evarelle, threats were either controlled or eliminated.

She hastened her pace, trying to lose herself in the growing stream of workers. The clanging from the Ironworks grew louder, a percussive reminder of the life that awaited her: endless, grinding labor, a life lived in shadows and dust. But now, those shadows felt different. They felt like they were watching her, waiting for her to stumble.

As she turned onto the main thoroughfare leading to the factory gates, a sudden, blinding flash of light erupted from a side alley, followed by a guttural scream. Kira instinctively ducked into the recessed doorway of a deserted storefront, her eyes wide.

Three figures emerged from the alley, dragging a fourth. They wore the distinctive, gleaming silver masks and dark cloaks of the Imperial Enforcers. The man they were dragging was young, barely older than Kira, his face contorted in a silent scream, his eyes wide and unfocused. As they pulled him past, a faint, flickering energy emanated from him, a distortion in the air that made the gas lamps hum erratically.

A Dreamcaster. Or rather, a latent one, a 'wild talent' who had been caught.

One of the Silver Masks spoke, their voice metallic and flat through a voice modulator. "Subject is unstable. Dream-signature matches reported anomaly. Prepare for extraction."

Unstable. Anomaly. Kira understood the unspoken meaning: dangerous. They would take him to the Academy, probe his mind, dissect his power, and then... she didn't want to think about what 'extraction' truly meant for those deemed too difficult to control.

The scene played out in a terrifying tableau as the early morning crowds froze, their faces a mixture of fear and grim resignation. No one moved. No one spoke. To intervene was to invite the same fate. Kira's breath hitched in her throat. She could feel a resonance from the young man, a faint, desperate psychic plea that brushed against her own suppressed awareness. It was like a chord struck deep within her, a response she couldn't explain.

As the Silver Masks hauled the struggling man away, disappearing into the maze of alleys, Kira remained hidden, trembling. The city lights seemed to dim, the sounds of the Ironworks fading into a distant thrum. The cold that had permeated her bones deepened into a chill of pure dread.

She couldn't deny it any longer. The tremor Roric spoke of, the 'wild talent' they sought... it felt too close to home. That dream last night, the unsettling charge in her room, the sudden surge of the Silver Masks into her district. The pieces clicked into place with horrifying clarity.

It had to be her. Her dreams were breaking free. And now, the empire knew.

Kira had always lived in fear of being noticed. Now, it seemed, her greatest fear was about to be realized. She was no longer just an orphan struggling to survive in the industrial squalor of Lys. She was a 'wild talent,' an 'anomaly,' a hunted thing. The shadows on the iron sky had eyes, and tonight, they were watching her. Her life, already precarious, had just shattered. The question wasn't if they would find her, but when. And what would happen when they did? She had to run. But where? And how far could a girl run when the entire empire was built on the very magic that was now betraying her?

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