

Prologue

At the birth of modern man, life was not very different from how it is today. Most certainly, man's tools for improving his quality of life have come a long way, but in the past four hundred thousand years, really very little has changed. People were conceived in the traditional way; they were born as infants, and they lived their lives to completion. But as chance would have it, over the course of human history, a small few were born without that part of the body that told them to age. And as a result, they matured and could live to be 200, 300 or even a thousand years, never aging past the appearance of a wise youth.

These ageless people would grow up, make friends, fall in love, raise families; their friendships would deepen; their loved ones would grow old and thoughtful and pass silently into memory. Of course, there were always new friends to be made, and there was endless time to explore possibilities that lay beyond the boundaries of a single, normal, lifetime; but as with any journey, there comes a time when an adventure starts to become more of a search for familiarity. There comes a time when novelty grows old and curiosity finds itself all used up. After countless rebirths into new identity, stoic witness to the imperturbable passage of time, one by one, each reached an understanding intimated by the words of the Old Testament: "It is not good that man should be alone." Some of them fell ill or succumbed to mortal injury, but most simply chose not to go on.

At first, there was rumor; so and so is "ancient"; so-and-so has an "old soul"; that man over there is as "old as dirt". Eventually rumors bypassed myth and became long-forgotten legend; Earth never saw more than a handful alive at a time. Slowly, the few and the disparate vanished from the pages of history.

That's when the unexpected happened. After living such abnormally long lives, the spirits of these blessed and cursed few grew to a maturity such that when the end of mortal life came, they found themselves too weary to wholly leave the body; so in one final attempt at freedom, the spirit would cleave itself into two distinct halves: To be twice reborn into natural life, to heal from the fatigue of endless age, to rejoin the other half after respite, and to one day have strength to bear the trek to the solemn resting place where chance once forsook them.

My name is Escherow Francis Pfeleiderer, and this is my story.