



GRANITE AND GRAVITY

IN THIS LIFE, PREPARE FOR THE NEXT

Vivian Elani

Aria

(Earth names, Anna and Olivia)

Soul World: Anticipation

ARIA LOOKED DOWN FROM THE SKY. This was *the* pivotal moment for her soul group. Their future lives together would be determined by how Flora proceeded from this particular point in her life. Flora was lying in her darkened bedroom, staring into space. She had suffered a long, painful childbirth, ending with the death of her son.

Her seamstress and friend, Olivia, was on her way up the stairs to speak to Flora. Nathan, her husband, told Olivia that Flora would not speak to anyone—wouldn't even look into his eyes. So Olivia took it upon herself to see Flora. Maybe she could help Flora.

Olivia took each step tentatively; hand on the banister, looking down at her feet. She stopped periodically and sighed, shaking her head. At one point, she stopped and turned her head to look down the stairs, causing Aria's energy to come to a standstill.

Being a soul, Aria had the ability to peek into the future, but the future was uncertain. If the outcome of the meeting with Olivia and Flora was positive, Aria knew that Flora would be on the correct life path. But predicting the future was difficult. She had been through all the combinations of actions that Flora would execute as a result of this conversation. However, there were too many variables to perform an accurate forecast, so Aria just gave up.

I was naïve to think that this would be easy. When the Council of Souls asked Aria to orchestrate her soul group's next life, she readily agreed. However, this task proved to be more difficult than expected.

As Flora muttered, "What am I to do?" Aria's light-blue energy swirled around in anticipation and suspense.

Flora

June 1878: Lost Again

WHAT SHALL I DO? FLORA ASKED HERSELF over and over again as she rocked her frail, battered body back and forth in bed. She tossed the heavy blankets aside and kicked them away until they dropped onto the hardwood floor of her stuffy and unkempt bedroom. She looked at the items cluttered on her vanity: the used handkerchiefs that littered the floor and the wide-open armoire that revealed the chaos of dresses, parasols, and boots inside. Dust motes swirled in the slivers of sunlight that escaped through the cracks of her drawn curtains. Every painting that hung on the walls seemed menacing in the dim light. The farm scenes of cows, sheep, and chickens that she had once regarded with a sense of comfort now seemed unnatural and eerie.

Flora struggled to get out of bed, tentatively walked over to the vanity, and sat down. The pain throughout her body felt as if she had been tossed from a carriage and trampled by horses. She had never given the process of childbirth much thought before her labor started. But once it did, she was terrified and confused. The pain and hallucinations she had both during and afterwards would not soon be forgotten.

Slowly and quietly, she opened the top drawer of the vanity and found it: the necklace that she had hidden. The necklace that her mother gave to Flora when she was a little girl. The mother who supposedly died giving birth to Flora. “Oh,” Flora said. “I almost followed in her footsteps.” But her mother couldn’t have died during childbirth. What really happened to her—and why? She studied the white and purple beads of the necklace carefully before putting it back in its hiding place.

For the second time in her life, she just didn’t know what to do next. The first was when her father passed away some ten years ago. She felt as lost now as she did then.

“I’ve come back to where I started,” she said aloud in the darkness. “Lost again.” She sighed as her eyes rested on her favorite painting—two ships sailing through the Hudson River Valley with a vibrant sunset about to burst upon the sky over the mountains. It used to hang in the dining room in her father’s house across from Washington Square Park. She sold that house several years ago and moved to the top floor of the building she owned on 23rd Street. Now, she had her reservations about the move. Her choice to marry Nathan, who purchased that painting for her, was also called into question. Every swift and confident decision that she had ever made now seemed incorrect. She gazed upon the artwork. Each one of those decisions had led her to today.

Flora heard a soft knock on the door and slowly turned her head away from the painting in time to see it crack open. One of the seamstresses that worked in her hat shop, Olivia, opened the door wider and stepped into the room. She looked paler and even thinner than usual. Her brown hair was drawn into a tight bun behind her head. The lightweight, cotton-gray dress, which Flora fitted to her petite body several weeks ago, seemed loose. Olivia’s face changed to one of concern as soon as her eyes adjusted to the poor lighting in Flora’s bedroom.

“Flora, you shouldn’t be out of bed,” Olivia gasped as she rushed over. She gently assisted Flora back into bed, picked up the blankets from the floor, and arranged and smoothed them out. She retrieved a hairbrush from the vanity and gently brushed and braided Flora’s long, brown hair. Olivia’s calming presence quieted Flora’s mind, giving it a needed respite. When satisfied, Olivia finally settled into the chair next to Flora’s bed and placed her hand in Flora’s.

After a few more moments of silence, Olivia said, “Flora, why won’t you talk to anyone? You’re scaring all of us. Nathan. . . .”

With the mention of Nathan’s name, Flora’s grip tightened onto Olivia’s hand. She turned her head away from Olivia and attempted to stop the tears that inevitably started their course down her face and onto her already-damp pillow. Her mind spun out of control, thinking about her son—lost just hours after a delivery that almost killed her. Thoughts of her husband, Nathan, abandoning her kept running through her brain. The intense chatter in her mind was nonstop. Nightmares invaded her usual peaceful slumber and were too much to bear.

Each dream worse than the next—her father, evicting a poor woman and children from his deplorable tenement housing—standing at her father’s side in some dark alley to meet with the managers of his drug ring—waiting in the cab as he stopped off to see how his prostitutes were fairing. Each dream ended with her father shaking her, telling her to “stop, stop, stop!” But these dreams couldn’t be true. She never witnessed these events; however, she couldn’t discount the kernel of truth in each one.

“Flora,” said Olivia. “Please, tell me what pains you so. I mean . . . you’re suffering from something more than your physical ailments. Flora, look at me.”

Flora turned to Olivia, looked into her soft brown eyes, and said, “I don’t have the strength, Olivia. This is too much to handle.” That was all Flora could say before sobbing once again.

Olivia took a cool cloth and did her best to calm Flora down before gently saying, “Flora, you’ll not be able to pretend that you’re unaffected by this like you’ve done during other crises in your life. You’ll have to feel and face this pain. You’ll need to rely on and trust the people that love you. Tell me—what can I do to help?”

“Nothing,” Flora replied in a small voice.

“Flora, please tell me something. When you were feverish and hallucinating, you spoke of your father. Is that the source of your pain?” Olivia questioned.

“I don’t know,” replied Flora, shaking her head from side to side slightly. “No, I do know. He left me, Olivia. He left me with this terrible guilt and anger. He left me a fortune that leaves me feeling dirty, and no matter how many good deeds I try to do with it, I continue to feel stained. His unrelenting greed caused many people misery. It was just so easy to not think about it. But now . . . now, it’s all I can think of. Now, I know. I know that I . . . I . . .”

“Hate him?” Olivia said, finishing the sentence that Flora couldn’t. As she said the words, Flora nodded in agreement.

“Then you must feel that hatred. Admit that you hated him. Then, find your peace with him. You shouldn’t feel guilty for his deeds. You have to start talking again. Keeping it all within yourself will end up killing you. Everyone is worried sick.”

“I’m afraid of what I’ll say to him,” Flora whispered.

“Him? You mean say to Nathan?”

“Yes,” Flora replied, looking down at the pattern on her blanket.

“Tell me: what are you afraid to tell him?”

“Olivia,” said Flora with fresh tears in her eyes. “It’s my fault that I lost the baby. During the whole pregnancy, I thought that it wasn’t meant to be. A premonition.” Flora paused and wiped her eyes with a handkerchief.

“You feel guilty about that?” Olivia asked.

“Yes, guilt that I may not have wanted this child at all. And now I see my guilt reflected back to me in Nathan’s eyes.”

“Flora, I’ve known many women who have lost their babies. They all believe that they’re at fault, that they deserved this as punishment for something. Most women question whether or not they wanted the child they are, or were, carrying, for many different reasons. What you’re feeling is normal.”

“Really, Olivia? Are you telling me the truth?”

Olivia leaned forwards and grasped Flora's hand again. "Of course I am. Most women know when their pregnancy isn't right. They have a 'premonition' that something's wrong."

They sat in silence for several minutes while Flora digested what Olivia had said.

"Olivia, let me be alone now. I understand now what I must do."

Aria

(Earth names, Anna and Olivia)

Soul World: Splitting Energy

ARIA EMPATHIZED WITH FLORA'S PAIN AND misery. Aria felt badly for having to put Flora through such an ordeal. It was needed, and even the Council of Souls had agreed with her. But it didn't really make Aria feel better.

Aria thought back to when the Council had given her this task of orchestrating her soul group's lives. At the time, it seemed so easy, but now, she realized how difficult it was to balance the soul's energy within a human form. She studied how soul energy influences human life. How it's an undercurrent of their emotions, sitting deep within them. But all of that studying was worthless when attempting to oversee lives without the practical experience that someone like her teacher had.

Flora's intuition was correct. She wasn't meant to have a child at all. The only reason she was pregnant was so that she would lose the baby. This was purposely done in order to disrupt her life, set off this emotional crisis, and force her to face all of which she had denied for so long. It was up to her now to overcome this impediment. If not, her soul would remain stagnant. If she succeeded, her soul would elevate to a higher understanding. This process of graduating from one level of enlightenment to another required dedication, patience, and many, many lives of trial and error.

Before getting this assignment, most of Aria's soul mates were living their lives in Boston or Provincetown, Massachusetts. Her human form was quietly working as a seamstress in London. She wasn't paying much attention to the life she was living on Earth but was, instead, concentrating on her studies in the Soul World. She was proficiently splitting her energy between the Sky and the Earth.

While living a human life, part of the soul energy is always left behind to hibernate. But when souls become more advanced, the part that was left behind during an incarnation can actually stay awake and converse with other souls. Part of them can study their lessons while the other part of them is on Earth. Their energy is efficiently split between two realms.

She was deeply absorbed in what she was reading when Teacher interrupted.

That's when it all started.

"Aria, the Council would like to see you."