



## In Lost Dreams the Four Were Bound: Genean Chronicles Book One

**Bradley R. Blankenship**

**Kevin Miller XI, Editor**

**Jeff Brown, Illustrator**

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*In Lost Dreams the Four Were Bound is a dark fantasy novel that introduces a complex world of androids, chimeras, treetop villages, and mystic ruins.*

An ancient evil stalks a quiet but unlucky community of forest dwellers in Bradley R. Blankenship's fantasy novel *In Lost Dreams the Four Were Bound*.

Davnian remembers little from before the time when he awoke in the care of two very different but very familiar women. Haunted by terrible dreams and visions, he struggles to reconstruct his past. But there are other forces at work: Davnian's old enemy, Lord Ohran, has his own plans, and they involve the cursed village where Davnian was brought to recover. To defeat Ohran, Davnian will have to risk everything, including his own sanity.

This is the first book in a series, but its abundant backstories and unexplained cultural traditions make it feel like a second or third entry. There are four main characters: Davnian is feared as a monster for reasons he cannot remember. He is tended to by Neris, an ex-lover with a brutal history, and Elis, who helped raise him and still harbors feelings for him. Neris's brother, Nerin, has bound himself to the wicked mage Ohran in hopes of attaining his sick desires.

The story takes a while to get off of the ground. After an explosive opening chapter, it emphasizes Davnian and his recovery at the expense of fleshing out the main plot, the setting, and relationships that do not involve Davnian. The curse that becomes so important in the second half of the book is barely hinted at in the first half. Davnian himself is not always likable: he invades his lovers' minds without permission. Other than this, he and the others serve their purposes, but are generic, and the book's descriptions of dark-skinned characters as animalistic or possessed of unusual sexual appetites is discomfiting.

Davnian's visions, and the story's treetop setting, are made less interesting because of repetitive word choices. Chapter titles continue referring to Davnian as "unknown" after his identity is obvious, and disturbing themes, including incest, pedophilia, and rape, are featured throughout.

Toward its finale, the story becomes intriguing: the debauchery of the village's spring festival is a counterpoint to the violent tragedy which the characters face. Elis's reaction is heartbreaking, while Davnian risks becoming the monster who everyone thinks he is. The story moves toward an uncertain future full of inconceivable dangers.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (September 22, 2020)

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