



Sarah Water Raven

The Story of Iolite

THE STORY OF IOLITE



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Stargazing

Two shadows stood together on a hill in the night, a caped figure and a silver steed. The woman stood as a pillar, her gaze drifting down. Her thoughts were clear but dull. They echoed in the horse's mind.

What is it that I know? I feel as though I dream my existence, Lothian. I am without reality. The stars seem to be the only truth.

The sky washed over them like a wave of night. Without trees or mountains, the heavens seemed tangible.

The steed answered, *My soul knows only one beauty, my Lady, and that is to be by your side.*

You are a poet, Lothian.

I speak only to you.

A shooting star passed, it was a stream of purity across a clouded mind. She looked up. Her youth and beauty appeared ghostly in the

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night, her skin like fresh cream and her lips like a ripe plum. Her hair was raven-black and her eyes were pools of endless dark, like a consuming void of other-worldliness.

As the shooting star burned through the sky, she felt a closeness to it she could not place. The feeling crept in and began to squeeze her chest, but it soon passed, as all her small emotions did.

*I cannot look anymore, Lothian. I grow weary.
Away with you to the camp. I shall follow after.*

I insist you ride, my Lady.

*I am to walk. Leave me to my thoughts. I will be
along.*

I will wait outside your tent.

The grey gelding trotted off toward camp. He was bare, for neither he nor the woman needed riding tack. She shook her head and let her cloak fall. With a sigh, she walked after him.

An Army

The encampment stretched out before her in the distance, tents and fires scattered like a million fireflies.

A giant cyclops could be seen walking as carefully as he could through the crowds of beasts and supplies. The fires created dark shadows upon his figure. She had created a handful of giants these past couple of years, but, sadly, they did not live long. About half of the soldiers in her army were willing to be changed; giants, centaurs and more, but the other half feared her power. A man could kill many enemies as a giant and obtain fame and wealth, but he could never have a family or normal life again. Once changed, they could never go back.

A gryphon cried out, unhappy with its rider who had fed him rotten meat. The soldiers often took for granted that her creatures obeyed

them, forgetting it was she who controlled them. The Lady felt the gryphon's thoughts: angry and murderous. She would have Orion, her second in command, deal with the rider tomorrow.

She did not care for much, but everyone in the army had to be fed, housed, and clothed or they could not perform—animal, creation, or human.

Gryphons were powerful. They were fast, but their predatory instinct and solitary nature made them inclined to disobey. She liked them but found it easier to put wings on her horses. The herd mentality kept them in order.

Although she had changed living things this way, it was not in her nature to do so. She believed that a thing was what it was, born as it should be. Lord Rez, however, had wanted change and so she did as she was told.

Lord Rez had created several creatures of his own within the last few centuries, but they were chaotic and uncontrollable. His chimera had three heads: a lion and a goat head on its neck

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and a serpent's on its tail. The sheer size of the beast was unnecessary. Because of its very existence, the creature was in turmoil, killing anyone it could and pacing endlessly. There was a sense of pity in her thoughts, though she was not sure why.

Dead grass crinkled under her boots. It had been a dry summer, making autumn a welcomed change. She exhaled, watching her breath in the cold, tugging at a memory she wished she had. The Lady thought she could remember many things, but they never came.

Her thoughts eventually brought her into camp. She walked casually. The whole of the army stopped what they were doing and bowed to her. Entire sects of religions worshipped her. To the world, she was a goddess of war, a goddess of creation, a witch, and sorceress. The list of titles and expectations went on and, while she could not deny any of it, she could not verify it either.

Her thoughts began to wane as she approached her tent. Lothian stood sentinel by the entrance. The Lady paused and considered wings on him.

Horses were not meant to fly. We were made for the ground.

Do you read my thoughts so?

My Lady, I could not read them if you did not leave them so open to me. You love me as I am. I know it.

You are a foolish horse, Lothian. Come in and rest. Were you fed? I think I shall read.

The gelding nodded in acknowledgment and moved to the back of the tent where he stood by her bed.

The Lady did not sleep for months at a time, but when she did sleep, she could sleep for a week easily. What was it like for the others, she wondered, so short-lived and sleeping every night? Humans slept half their life away and then died before they could learn anything of use. Tomorrow they would kill their own kind,

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their brothers, and sisters because they were too afraid to do anything else and because their short existence demanded they do anything to bring meaning to it.

She would admire the rebels if she could, but they would all die and slip away from memory, like the dead before them. She did not want to kill them, life was too precious a thing to waste, but once again, it was the will of her Lord.

Tomorrow her army would do what they were built for.

Battle

The morning air was crisp as the first rays of sunlight touched the earth. The army, all in black, waited in dark rows for their orders: foot soldiers, gryphons, winged horses, centaurs, giants, horsemen, werewolves, harpies, and elementals. The list continued till the very last cyclops. Were it not for the Lady's presence, they would all inevitably fall into chaos and destroy one another, though there were times she wondered if perhaps they would surprise her.

She sat atop Lothian, her head tilted, taking in the rebel forces. She wore a helmet in the shape of a mysterious beast with spiraling horns, its head tucked and sporting a tangle of black mane. Her cloak came alive in the wind, dancing around her.

Lothian stood strong beneath her, his body warm and showy in the light. His dapples flashed in the morning rays.

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With a simple motion of the Lady's arm, the front line moved forward toward the western plains where they expected to find the enemy. She stretched her senses towards the ground.

Her soul grew and became part of the grasslands. Her body became the earth. Millions of insects moved within her; small mammals and birds fled at the sounds of battle, and the air caressed the blades of grass upon her.

She touched the feathers and darkness of a raven, which called to her from the distance. The raven did not know words as Lothian did, so it instead projected images and emotions. It cackled, conveying messages of hope at the coming feast and happy thoughts of a full belly. It then showed her how the rebel army lay in wait beneath the soil. The raven had watched night after night as the opposing army dug pits and then covered themselves and their traps, hoping to take her army by surprise.

The raven took off and fled from her thoughts. Ravens could be helpful, they could be tricky, or they could simply be uninterested.

The Lady came back to herself and turned to Orion who sat on horseback beside her. He was an accomplished soldier, commander, and the closest thing she had to a friend. He had never asked, nor wished for a changing, but because of his loyalty and battle strategy, she prolonged his life. Orion looked to be in his mid-thirties but had the experience of over two hundred years behind him.

It had not gone unnoticed that Orion had taken to strange habits recently, to drink, and to solitude. He had a woman once, but she had died of old age some fifty years ago and he had never remarried. The Lady did not know why.

His recent recklessness with himself had unfortunately poured onto the battlefield about a month ago, causing him serious injury. The wounds would have killed him had it not been for the Lady's healing abilities.

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Whatever it was that had bothered him seemed to remedy itself—though the collection of dust

on his black armor had not gone unnoticed. At least he had shaved his beard and trimmed his blonde hair this morning.

"Orion, the rebels have altered the battlefield. They have dug holes in the night. Some are big enough to fit our giants and are filled with spears. I will tell the creatures; you tell the men: hold back and make the rebel army come to us," she commanded.

He nodded, squeezed his horse, and took off to advise the captains. He was soon lost in the dust and moving bodies.

A horn sounded, and the winged fleet took to flight, moving ahead to fire arrows and drop boulders before the earth-bound armies collided.

The scene was a repetitious play, causing the Lady to lose herself in daydreams. Lothian stood quietly beneath her, absently swatting

flies, and then sighed. The Lady became aware of Lothian's sympathy for their adversaries.

Lothian, I have been questioned, threatened, and defied over a hundred lifetimes, and yet you remain faithful despite your feelings. How is it that you can feel one thing and do another?

I do as you do, my Lady. You do not wish for them to die either, and yet you are the catalyst for their destruction.

I do not have feelings on the matter, Lothian. It is simply the end of another rebellion.

The door may be shut, my Lady, but that does not mean there is nothing behind it.

You are a foolish horse.

Aye, my Lady, a foolish horse.

Like a river colliding with the sea, the armies were entwined. As she watched, she felt an unexpected jolt of energy. The Lady scanned the mess below her. With her powers, she

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singled out the death cry of a werewolf. It had been burned alive but not by natural fire. Someone had summoned energy and blasted him. She was almost excited. Never in her long years had she felt anything like it.

Lothian—

Yes, I felt it too, my Lady.

The pair moved in unison toward the chaotic horde. Orion was soon upon them with a figure laid across his saddle. He pulled his steed to a halt and dropped an old woman on the ground. The Lady hopped off Lothian to examine her.

Orion dismounted and gave the old woman a nudge with his boot. "We lost a werewolf and suffered several other casualties due to this witch. An earth elemental caught her and gagged her venomous mouth with roots. We thought you would want to see her before we eliminate her."

The Lady could smell the power on the old woman. With a flick of the Lady's wrist, the root gag released.

Her prisoner stirred and looked up.

"My Lady," she said before she coughed.

The Lady took a closer look at her: white robes with blue trim, hardly battle attire. As the woman sat up, the Lady noticed a symbol that hung around her neck.

"Priestess, you lead this army?"

"That I do, my Lady," the old woman replied. The witch was keeping something hidden from the Lady, something in the back of her mind that the Lady could not reach.

She motioned towards the old woman's medallion. "But you are a priestess of Iolite. You worship me. Why do you attack? Surely you know you will all die. You and your army will be extinguished like flames dying in the night."

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The woman smiled softly. "Sometimes, my Lady, death is the only release." With a shriek, the witch leapt onto her. She pulled a weapon from her robes and drove it into her chest, piercing the Lady's dark armor.

Somewhere Outside of Time

There was pain and then darkness.

Iolite slowly became aware of new surroundings, or rather, the lack of surroundings—Iolite, that was her name. Why had it been so long since she had spoken it?

Her senses prickled as she stood alone in the dark. She felt small and strangely helpless. She understood now that she was somehow within the depths of her own mind. Iolite started to panic and looked for something, anything, to bring her out of this pitch black.

A sudden, awful ache, drew her attention to her chest. She stared in grotesque wonder at the dagger protruding from her body, but a regular dagger should not have killed her...She was immortal. Iolite examined it further and closer inspection revealed that it was not a dagger at all, but a large tooth.

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A growl rumbled in the void. Iolite squinted in the direction she had heard it and a figure began to manifest in front of her. She stood alone, shaking.

It was enormous and it moved like a great serpent; with a long neck, large black claws, and a star-covered luminescence. A dark mane sprouted from the elongated neck and traveled down the spine to the tip of its tail. The head was beautiful and fierce. It had the face of a great reptile and lion at the same time.

It was the beast of her war helmet, but the eyes, they were not the eyes of a predator, and they were not the sad black pools of her own vision. These eyes held eternal love and wisdom, and no matter how hard she fought it, they pulled her in.

"I know you," she whispered.

"No." The voice rang like an alien song. "You have forgotten."

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The beast erupted into starlight, giving a mighty roar, and descended upon her. The dragon consumed her and all that she was.

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Memory

Iolite raced back into the depths of her memory. She was a light in the sky, a comet stretching across the universe, and traveling to a new world. She was older than modern time, a being from that first place, a dragon.

The ancient dragons had all been from that first place but were now traveling to new homes, to become a part of new worlds. The plan was that once Iolite had found a world that fit, she would become a part of the land, sea, and sky, and meld into the planet as new life. She'd be reborn anew.

Iolite had traveled light years before she had found the bright blue planet. She had been pulled to it by the beauty of its vast seas, but something had gone wrong. She fell from the sky too fast. She was burning, burning up in the atmosphere until she shattered into a cold ocean.

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Iolite awoke, her draconic body crippled and dying on a beach. Her starlight dimmed and her eyes filled with despair. Unable to move, she breathed a heavy sigh.

A gasp told her she was not alone. A simple creature stood before her, what she would later call man. Spear in hand, he was ready to kill her, but pity stopped his hand.

She was too great and too beautiful. The young man could not do it.

The dragon reached out and touched his mind with what strength she had left. She let him feel her life flickering. He panicked and jumped back, raising his spear again, but fear turned to sadness as their minds connected. He approached her slowly and placed his hand upon her luminescent skin.

In that moment she bound them together. To save her own life, she borrowed some of his. Her once glorious body faded and all that was left of her were a tooth and a claw in the sand.

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The young man's clothes burned from starlight as Iolite transformed herself and he fainted. Except for his nudity, he appeared unchanged, whereas she was reborn into a new life.

Iolite awoke hours later in a small hut, human, and weak. The young man cared for her and nursed her back to health. His people welcomed her and accepted her as one of their own.

As the years went on, neither he nor Iolite aged. She had great gifts and taught the people about agriculture and literature. She spoke to animals, knew the weather, and healed the sick and wounded. For the villagers, it was a dream. The longer she stayed with them, the more the people prospered.

It later became clear that her savior had begun to gain powers of his own. Their connection had saved her life and altered his. He became stronger. Iolite did as he asked and their tribe grew, but she realized too late that it was at the cost of others.

In time, he came to call himself Lord Rez. When people defied him, he killed them. At first, it was by strength alone and, later, by the power of his thoughts.

Huts became houses, houses became estates, and finally, great castles were erected. Lord Rez's was the greatest of all and took half a century to build. Temples were erected to worship the gods that he chose and were eventually torn down to make way for his own worshippers.

Iolite was his prize, his greatest treasure. She had tried to advise him and pleaded with him against the crimes he committed and, in response, he beat and imprisoned her. The more she fought him, the more she suffered until she lost all awareness of her own desires. In saving her life, she had lost the freedom of it.

Fear and despair were smothered by physical pain until she stopped caring. The centuries went by and she did as she was told. Iolite lost her starlight and slipped into shadow.

Return from Reverie

The clash of steel and hooves brought Iolite back to the battlefield. She saw herself, suspended, with her own tooth stabbing her.

She floated above the carnage out of time. They were dying. They were all dying. A great stab of pain hit her, crashing into her like the waves on her dying body, on that day so long ago.

She knew what she had to do.

Iolite was back in her body and cried in anguish as the tooth slid again through her armor and into her chest, but this time it did not kill her.

The witch fell to her knees. "Forgive me, Great Lady. I have failed you."

Orion stood with a look of disbelief. Then, without warning, he charged her. Sword drawn he cried out, "DIIIE!"

Iolite drew her own sword and stopped his.
With the force of her free hand, she flung him.

He lay pitifully in the dirt.

"Why?" he asked her. "Why can't we die?
Please, I'm so tired."

He no longer looked youthful to her. His once-handsome face now looked drawn and forlorn and consumed in hopelessness. Orion wanted release, just as much as she did. She realized it was because of this that he had betrayed her. He had conspired against her with the old woman who now wept at her feet. The battle had all been a part of an elaborate scheme to get to her, to kill Iolite, and free them all.

Iolite walked over to Orion and kneeled before him. She placed her hand on his shoulder. "I am sorry."

She stood and turned toward the witch. "Stand before me, priestess."

The old woman did as she was told.

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"Priestess of Iolite, I bless you, your children, and your grandchildren. You have sacrificed your people and your life to set me free, and now I will do what I should have done centuries ago. I was your Goddess, but now I am your servant. Go home to your family and tell them you are free."

Iolite watched as the old woman sank to her knees again, sobbing with relief. "Thank you," she mouthed, unable to speak.

Turning to go, Iolite paused and looked at her friend one last time. "Orion, before the day is over, you will find peace."

He stared after her, as if unwilling to believe it.

Lothian.

My Lady.

It is time.

My heart is yours. I go where you go.

But you know where it is I go.

I do.

With a burst of renewed life and purpose, she leapt onto his back. Lothian half-reared and ran for the battlefield. Iolite's mind lifted them from the ground as Lothian's hooves ignited in star fire. He galloped on white flames above the chaos, his fear of flying lost in their triumph.

Iolite's mind shook the thoughts of the entire field.

Enough! We are done being puppets. My children, I have wronged you. Do not die for me, do not kill in my name. I free you—I free you all. Go and live and make the world better than we did.

The fighting stopped and a giant stumbled in confusion. The winged creatures swooped and dove around her, pegasus and gryphon alike, but the ground below was motionless.

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They were free. Her only hope for her children was that they would find a place in this world.

The Guard

Lothian galloped across the afternoon sky on hooves of white fire. The sun was setting as they came upon the great castle nestled in the mountains. For Iolite, it was a sad and beautiful scene.

The winged sentinels of the castle, Lord Rez's angel guard, were stilled by her presence. Lothian landed and cantered onto the castle road and up to the drawbridge. The two of them were radiant as they entered the gateway, both glowing with purpose and star fire.

The angel guards landed reluctantly in the courtyard, blocking their path. One spoke, "Lady Iolite, this is most unexpected. We thought you away to Yeronen." His wings were folded and his face hidden behind a helmet.

She slipped off of Lothian and stepped forward.

"Stand aside," she commanded.

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The angels looked at one another. The one who had previously spoken approached her slowly. "My Lady, you know we cannot let you enter the throne room without a direct order from Lord Rez."

"Stand aside."

The armed men tensed, readying their wings and weapons.

"N...no, my Lady."

Lolite brought her arms up and then dropped them. The first three lines of angels were blown to the side and thrown against the walls of the courtyard, their armor crushing like paper.

The remaining guards paused before letting out cries of outrage and then charged.

Lolite prepared another sweep of power, but Lothian charged the men before she was ready. The stallion kicked and came down on them with his hooves.

A thunderous roar shook the walls of the castle. They had awoken the chimera. The guards stopped in terror. Without hesitation, Iolite raised her hand and then pulled back, her motion opening the locks that sealed the beast's great chamber.

Chaos struck as the massive doors flew open, splintering against the stone walls. The enormous creature rushed out of its prison, immediately crushing two men with its giant paws. The goat-head flailed wildly, taking out a soldier in flight with its horns, while the lion-head roared. The serpent tail whipped about and snapped up a guard, eating him.

The blood red eyes of the lion met hers. Iolite could feel it taking in her small figure, but an understanding passed between them and she knew she was safe from its fury. The three animals unnaturally joined, continued their assault on their captures.

A troop of guards in flight frantically came after her but with another sweep of her hand she easily flung them. Iolite continued toward

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the doors of the great hall, letting the carnage of the chimera fall away from her, but in the chaos, she had lost track of Lothian.

A wrenching scream shattered her mind. A sword had found its way into Lothian's belly. The image swallowed her. It was like being stabbed again, the tooth in her chest driven deeper. His cry was her cry, his pain was her pain, and she could not bear it.

She screamed.

A sickness spread through her, a volcanic rage that burst out of her. She threw her arms up, and every soldier in the courtyard flew into the air and caught fire.

White flames burst from their insides, and their screams were lost in her anguish. The chimera, beholden to none, fled the castle.

Lolite stumbled to where Lothian lay. He heaved. With each breath, his eyes sought her.

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No! No... Why did you fight? I had it. I would have...My Lothian...

I did not want you to leave without me.

She jerked with the pain of his thoughts. If only she could cry. She remembered tears.

Lothian's voice came to her, love overpowering his pain.

I will wait for you on the other side.

You won't have to wait long. I promise.

Iolite ran her hand along his cheek and bent down to kiss his forehead. She tore herself from his side and walked to the doors of the great hall, each step heavier than the last.

An Ending

The oaken doors parted lazily as she pushed against them. Her eyes lifted and fell on Lord Rez, seated upon his golden throne, as she strode forward. He looked calm and unimpressed.

"Iolite, why have you killed my guards?" he asked.

She replied, "Our time here is finished. Every reign must come to an end. Now step down and fight me. I have come to end this."

"Iolite, we've been through this. I thought I ended this foolishness, what, centuries ago? Come, you cannot defeat me. Though you know I will not be able to ignore this— indiscretion and will be forced to punish you." He tilted his head, eyes cool, daring her. She stepped forward. "Fight me."

"Oh really—stop it. If it's a new pony you want, I will get you one." He stood up, resting his hand on the hilt of his sword.

As Iolite stepped closer, Lord Rez stepped down. He lifted his finger as if to flick a fly and tossed her across the hall. Her body hit the wall and thudded to the ground.

"What is your problem? I give you everything. I take care of you. I saved your life, and here you defy me? I thought we were past this, but now I see you are just a disobedient dog who needs to be put down." His footsteps thundered as he came to where she lay. He began kicking her.

Iolite whimpered with each hit to her face, side, and stomach. Lord Rez turned her over with a shove of his boot and placed his heel on her cheek. "I could crush you," he said, applying pressure to her face. "Stomp your life out, but you know I won't because I am merciful. You will love me and respect me and you will obey me. Do you understand?"

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Lost in physical torment, her thoughts turned from her pain and out to the lonely horse in the courtyard. She felt Lothian's life dim and slip away. The life of his body was beyond her reach now and she was alone.

She cried out, but her cry became a roar. Iolite threw Lord Rez's leg off of her and he stepped back. She was on her feet. "Lord Rez, you have stolen me and kept me a slave. Now meet your death. A debt to the crone, you must pay."

He laughed. "Quoting the old faiths, are we?"

She came toward him but stumbled from her injuries. He laughed again with sick pleasure, but she silenced him with another roar. He moved to grab his sword, but she was on him. She pulled his sword from its sheath and in one movement, brought it down on him. It sliced him through, making a sick sound she found satisfying. His antler crown broke and fell from his head as his body split.

The sword dropped and Iolite coughed up blood. She fell to the floor, her eyes finally filling with an eternity of unshed tears.

Lothian.

But he was not there. She crawled out of the hall and over to his body. Iolite pulled herself onto him, caring not for the blood or the mess left by his injuries. She put her arms around him. "I am coming," she whispered to his still figure.

She held him briefly, tears soaking into his gray fur and then pulled the tooth out from her chest, losing herself to blood flow.

Thud...thud-thud...thud...thud-
thud...thud...thud...

Iolite lay silently with Lothian in the dark, the stars shining over their bodies. She listened to her heart for the last time, enjoying its seemingly peaceful pace and wondered if she would miss it.

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The quiet was interrupted by the soft steps of the surviving angel guards. They did not disturb her and their breathing provided a small comfort.

Her eyes closed as she accepted the darkness and felt her human form slip. For ages of mortal men, she had been kept a prisoner. Her soul arched from her body, a great dragon, and flew unhindered through a starry-filled sky. She heard the sound of hoof beats and flew toward them, where Lothian waited for her on the other side.

Sarah WaterRaven

About the Author

Sarah WaterRaven was born in Plantation, Florida. Ruled by an overpowering imagination, when she is not writing, she is often drawing, painting or sculpting. Forever fueled by copious amounts of espresso and tea, she practices yoga, hikes, and swims whenever she can.

Sarah also spends a lot of time with her horse and dog and is frequently seen wandering around the woods on horseback or on foot. She has a passion for animal rights and will always be an environmentalist at heart.

Sarah WaterRaven currently lives in Ontario, Canada with plans to travel the world.

To learn more about the works of Sarah WaterRaven and get updates on publications and artwork, please visit her website:

SarahWaterRaven.com
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Detective Docherty and the Demon's Tears

Step into a world where man and magic meet. See Toronto through the eyes of a paranormal detective agency and help solve the mystery.

