

Dragonwatch: Book 4 Scourge of The Titan Valley

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/22652704) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/22652704>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M , Gen
Fandom:	Fablehaven Series - Brandon Mull
Relationships:	Bracken/Kendra Sorenson , Warren Burgess/Vanessa Santoro , Warren Burgess & Kendra Sorenson , The Fairy King/The Fairy Queen (Fablehaven) , Mara/unkown character
Characters:	Kendra Sorenson , Warren Burgess , Vanessa Santoro , The Fairy Queen (Fablehaven) , Newel (Fablehaven) , Doren (Fablehaven) , Seth Sorenson , Calvin (Fablehaven) , Mara Tabares , Tanugatoa "Tanu" Dufu , Trask (Fablehaven) , Bracken (Fablehaven) , The Fairy King (Fablehaven) , Marla Sorenson , Scott Sorenson , Original Female Character(s) , Dale Burgess , The Sphinx The Ethiopian
Additional Tags:	Contains Dragonwatch spoilers , character injuries , some violence
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-02-10 Updated: 2020-11-11 Words: 45,667 Chapters: 15/?

Dragonwatch: Book 4 Scourge of The Titan Valley

by [Luna_Tenebris](#)

Summary

Kendra is desperate to find her missing brother and Seth is desperate to get his identity back. Kendra and her allies race to beat Seth to the Titan Valley dragon preserve but when they get there they find that finding Seth will be easier said than done.

Notes

Hi, welcome to my Fic I was soo sick of waiting for the fourth DragonWatch book that I wrote it myself. I hope you enjoy it and leave a comment. This is my first fic so any advice is welcome. :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Arrivals

"This might work out better than you all think," Andromadus said with a faint hint of a smile in his voice. Everyone had gathered to discuss what would happen next. They needed to beat Seth to the titan valley Dragon sanctuary. Everyone sat on the floor in a large circle. Kendra had Bracken on her right with Tanu on her left. Tess sat cuddled next to Knox sleepy. Warren and Vannesa sat holding hands at the far end of the circle and Newel and Doren sat on the carpet trowing grapes their mouths.

When Seth had left in his leviathan four words had been found engraved on to the sand " Calvin lives Titan Valley" Kendra snapped out of her preoccupied thoughts to stare at the wizard with one eyebrow raised. "Those where the word Seth left on the beach before departing. Thus we must gather a team to go retrieve him. But we also have a second motivation, one of the three artifacts used to stop the first war with the dragons. The gauntlets are at wyrm roost, Consequently, there will be the harp or the shield. We have reasons to believe it is the harp that calms dragons to sleep that resides at Titan Valley." He paused to let the implications sink in.

"But stealing the harp would be an act of war!" Vanessa said sternly.

"Not if the dragons have already declared war, which they have" Warren countered. Silence enveloped the room.

"Exactly, which is why we will need a small and elite team to go to titan valley find Seth and then retrieve the harp," Andromadus said with finality. " The first thing we need to attend to is who will be going on this perilous mission of great importance."

"I am coming there is no way I am staying behind." Knox intervened.

"You might have to stay behind kid, you are no dragon tamer and many of us almost died at the last mission to a dragon temple," Warren said darkly. Kendra remembered her first trip to Wyrms Roost far too well. There had been betrayal, death, and injuries on every corner. None of which she had wanted to remember, but the memories flashed by none less. Warren his shirt bloody and torn, Mendigo being destroyed by Sellita, Dougan being eaten by Navarog in one bite, Mara falling off the edge of the ravine, Gavin disappearing in a few bites right before her eyes. She looked to Warren and Tanu. She could tell they had the same memories flashing through their minds.

"What happened last time?" Tess piped timidly. No one spoke, Tess paled and Knox put his arm around her. Warren and Vanessa shared matching grimaces. Tanu was trying to keep his poker face on. Savani, Bracken, and Andromadus all looked curious but none of them pressed for info.

"I'll get the details later," Bracken whispered into Kendra's ear he was sitting right beside her, his arm protectively around her shoulders.

"Warren, Tanu, Vanessa, Bracken and myself would probably make a good team," Kendra said, she hoped she would not regret this, but she would do anything to find Seth and help him get his memories back. Knox looked like he wanted to object but held his tongue.

"We should also consider some outside help as well, might I recommend Trask and Mara?" This was the first time Tanu had spoken the entire conversation. And Kendra couldn't help but agree with his recommendation.

"Where do they currently reside?" Andromadus asked.

"Mara is with Trask at the Jade falls dragon sanctuary in western China. They have been

investigating a death threat the dragons keep telling the caretaker," Tanu announced with no hesitation "I suspect they will be at the main stronghold of the sanctuary, the Iron Fort."

"Do you have a description I can use?" Andromadus queried.

"Sure you are looking for a tall lean native American female with high cheekbones, dark hair, and eyes; and a dark muscular guy with a bald head and a confident stride." Warren asserted with confidence. Andromadus nodded his head and disappeared with a flash.

"Can I look at your memories of the first time you came to Wyrmoost." Bracken leaned over and whispered in Kendra's ear so silently she could barely hear him.

"Sure," she said as she tentatively put a hand forward. What would he think would he see her heroics or just the times when she was scared out of her wits and running for her life?

Bracken's hand closed around hers and he closed his eyes. When he opened them his expression was stunned.

"You went through a lot, I am so sorry."

"It's okay," she reassured him, She was glad there was not only sympathy but admiration in his eyes as well. She was about to respond when Andromadus appeared with a flash along with Trask and Mara. Both of whom looked drastically different than the last time she had seen them. Mara looked impossibly thin. She had a long scar cutting deeply across one cheek, The bottom half of her tank top had been torn away to reveal the thick bandages around her abdomen. Trask looked no better, he had bandages all over his head and looked way to lean. Kendra also noticed with a jolt that Trask now only had 4 fingers on his right hand his index finger was missing completely with only a scar where it had been.

"What happened to you guys?" Tanu sounded stern but also concerned and worried.

"The threat from the dragons was no threat it was the real deal. we had only been at Jade Falls a day when the dragons attacked, the caretaker was killed despite our best efforts. The sanctuary has fallen. After the attack we fled the fort, we are lucky your wizard found us, I doubt we would have survived much longer." Trask announced gravely. Mara nodded to confirm his words. Knox was the first to speak.

"Are you ok?" He almost sounded scared Kendra understood his fear both Knights of the dawn looked like they were going to fall apart on the spot. What had happened to them? They looked like they had been mauled by a dragon then left to starve. Kendra realized with a jolt that that was probably what happened. Neither Trask or Mara looked keen to answer Knox's question. Trask looked like he was about to answer when Mara gave him a gentle elbow to the side and gestured to Tess.

"Mabey I should be the one asking what happened. These two look far too young to have any business in these grave matters." Trask stated gravely gesturing to Knox but looking at Tess. Knox looked like he was about to respond when Mara gave a low moan and toppled to the floor. Trask knelt and checked the fallen woman's pulse. "She is still alive but barely." Trask announced as he rose with Mara in his arms. "Tanu can you show me the nearest accommodations which I can put her." He gestured to Mara with his eyes when he spoke. Tanu and Trask hurried out of the room. Kendra's mind reeled what had just happened. Would Mara make it through her injuries? How could they include the two emaciated dragon tamers on their dangerous mission?

"Who were those guys," Tess asked with a hint of worry in her voice. She looked thoroughly shaken. Kendra felt so bad that her little cousin had to watch this whole ordeal.

"Trask and Mara are two of the greatest dragon tamers in the knights of the dawn. Trask is a brilliant leader and no words can explain Mara properly." Warren said.

"Smoking hot, battle-hardened, adventurer might be accurate," Doren said, Kendra didn't know if he was trying to lighten the mood or was sincere, she suspected a bit of both.

" Why doesn't someone take the little lady to the beach so the adults can talk?" Savani piped up. Both satyrs volunteered instantly. After the satyrs had taken Tess out of the room Savani announced that she was going to check and see if Tanu needed help with Mara, then left.

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Knox had no idea what he had just witnessed two people who looked like they came out of a horror movie had appeared out of nowhere and one of them had collapsed without a word. Knox knew that Tanu had experience as a healer. Could he help the woman, or had he met his match? Knox was glad that Newel and Doren had taken Tess out. He had hated that his little sister has witnessed what he had just seen. Knox half-listened to everyone talking about the upcoming trip to Taitn Valley and doing a supply run since almost everyone needed new clothes and provisions for the trip. The Satyrs had wanted to come on the road trip but Bracken had said no magical creatures would be attending the supply run himself included. That had gotten Knox's attention. When Kendra had shown up from the under realm she had brought Bracken with her. Knox could tell he was different from a normal human. Knox had suspected something about Bracken being nonhuman, but hearing it out loud was different. "If you are not human what are you?" Knox asked hoping he did not sound completely stupid.

"A unicorn," Bracken said casually as if the comment meant nothing.

"LOL no, what are you." Knox would not believe it wasn't a unicorn supposed to be a horse with a horn?

" This is my human form. Laugh all you want, I am a unicorn, I was thinking of showing your sister my true form when the meeting is over. But first I need to go check on Mara and Trask." And with that, he stood up and strode out of the room leaving Knox in his confused thoughts.

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The ride in the leviathan was the longest most boring trip in Seth's memory, which only went back a week. Who knew, he might have been on more epic journies before. He suspected he had. At least he had company Calvin the nipsie and a hermit troll Hermo. Hermo liked to play card games but Seth liked the stories of his past more, he had spent most of the journey listening to Calvin tell about Seth's past adventures. Seth was currently listening about the night he went to a dragon's castle for a feast back when he was caretaker of Wyrmoost.

" And then Eve of the fair folk showed up; she is lord Dalgorel's daughter. You walked up to her, took her hand, and kissed it."

"Hold on, I kissed her hand?" Seth exclaimed incredulously that sounded like nonsense even for him and he had done some stupid things.

" You bet you did, but I doubt you would have done it without the courage potion Tanu gave you." Seth had heard a lot about Tanu from Calvin along with a few other people who he knew. Tanu was a gifted potion master and a good friend of theirs. Seth had also heard of Warren and his girlfriend Vanessa; Calvin had never heard them confirm the depths of their relationship, but Calvin guessed it was imamate. Calvin had also told him about Kendra's unicorn boyfriend Bracken. Seth liked the stories with him and Kendra the best. Seth wished he would have believed her when she had told the truth as opposed to Ronidin's lies. Seth searched his mind for all types of people he remembered he knew what blixes where and when Calvin related that Vanessa was a narcoblix it made sense to him. Two memories that made no sense was an Australian and a native American.

"Calvin did I know and native Americans? Or Australians? I remember what they look like.

Tall, dark skin, dark eyes, high cheekbones. did I know anyone like that?"

"You might have, but I wasn't there when you met them. What if you remember the people you knew less well as opposed to your close family?"

" That fits because I remember a hand full of different people but nothing about them or what they mean to me. It might be because I don't know what they meant to me?"

"That might be a good guess, Seth, we'll question Humbugle about it when we find him."

"Good idea, if we find him." Seth was not confident in finding the demon and confronting him; but Seth would do anything to get his identity back.

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"Hey Tess I have a suprise for you." Kendra called, she knew if this did'int cheer her cousin up nothing would.

"What is it?" Tess called to Kendra without turning back. Kendra currently sat astride a tall, lean, pearly white unicorn. Bracken had offered Kendra a ride to Tess. On their way to cheer the young girl up after the trauma of the morning. Kendra hopped of Bracken about 15 paces away from Tess, who was too preoccupied to notice the unicorn sneaking up in her. Tess did'int turn around before Bracken nuzzled her shoulder gently with his muzzle. Tess whipped around and almost took out an eye on Bracken's horn. Kendra had never seen her cousin soo happy, it was adorable.

"Can I pet it," Tess asked quietly trying not to startle the unicorn.

"You can pet him, and one-up it. He said you can ride him too."

Tess had the biggest grin and looked like she was going to explode with excitement. Kendra looked down to see what Tess had been so transfixed on before. In Tess's right hand she held a small necklace made with grass with seashells woven in. "Where did you get the necklace?" Kendra asked her cousin.

"Oh, I made it a fairy showed me how to string the shells and weave the grass properly; Can I ride him now?"

"Sure." Kendra chuckled she doubted that anything would take Tess's mind off a unicorn ride. Kendra lifted her cousin up on to the horse gently as she could then hopped up with herself.

"Bracken just a short ride the others want us back by dinner in about 20 minutes." Bracken nodded his head and trotted off at a smooth leisurely pace around the beach. His strides where so smooth she almost didn't have to hold on. Tess was in heaven, she giggled and squealed with delight as Bracken started into a canter toward the treehouse. At the base of the elevator, he stopped smoothly. After Kendra and Tess hopped off Bracken changed back to his human form. Tess watched with wide eyes as to where her unicorn stood a second later there stood Bracken.

"No way! Kendra your boyfriend is a unicorn! I have the coolest cousin ever!" Tess squealed with delight. Kendra could tell by the heat in her face she was blushing. When she looked at bracken she saw that his cheeks were pink too. They rode the elevator in silence, Warren was waiting for them at the top.

"Just in time guys, I was about to come to get you. Did you little fairy princesses have fun on your unicorn ride?" warren joked half-heartedly. Tess started to chatter about the hole ride and how her unicorn had turned into Kendra's boyfriend at the end. Warren was trying and failing to hold back a laugh at that and then said: "Don't worry having a lover who is nonhuman runs in the family." He winked at Kendra and Bracken who blushed harder than before. As Bracken was about to say something the dinner bell rang.

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Knox was seated at a long table when Kendra walked into the room followed by Tess,

Bracken, and Warren. Knox looked up and down the table and noticed Tanu was missing along with the lady with the wheelchair, Uma. Knox figured they were probably assisting the two dragon tamers. After asking around a bit Knox had found out that the woman was Mara Tabares and the guy was Trask both of whom were good friends and most trusted allies. They were also some of the greatest dragon tamers in the knights of the dawn and had both survived against impossible odds. Dinner was quiet until Andromadus came in and announced a Dragonwatch/Kights of the dawn meeting. Knox immediately said if they wouldn't let him in he would find a way to eavesdrop on the meeting and after a short argument, he was reluctantly admitted with a promise not to open his mouth. But Tess and the satyrs were vetoed. Knox's was slightly nervous, Why was there going to be a meeting? Why were everyone but him and Tess part of this elite secret organization who fought demons and dragons? Knox skipped dessert and followed the others to a secret room in the center of the Monkeymaze.

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Kendra was astonished when Mara entered the room leaning heavily on Tanu with Trask walking behind them. Warren stood and wordlessly offered his chair to the native American. Vanessa did the same for Trask. Mara had changed into a new outfit that looked suspiciously like Vanessa's. Tanu looked exhausted the same with Trask, though Trask looked much better than when he had first come. He looked less emaciated and cleaner. The bandages on his head had been changed. Kendra had seen Tanu work his wonders first hand but Kendra had not expected to see Mara awake let alone up and about. Andromadus entered the room last. "May we begin the meeting?" He asked the answer was unanimous. Kendra was worried but also excited. she was scared to go to some foreign dragon sanctuary but she was excited to be going after Seth and to have any clue where he is. "The next big question is who will be going?"

"I am coming!" Knox shouted to loud that it made Trask and Mara wince.

"We talked about this Knox there is nothing against you, you just can withstand dragon terror," Tanu said calmly from his spot next to Mara.

"You can't either Tanu neither can Warren" Vanessa shot back. "I know that Tanu will be making courage potions and bringing Seth and Kendra saved your butts last time. Why not let the kid come. Let us not forget that he saved us from the squid demon." Warren added, "It's decided I am coming," Knox said a little too proudly.

"Well, we are obviously coming," Warren announced gesturing to himself and Vannesa.

"I will too," Kendra said she hoped she didn't sound to timid or hesitant.

"I will come as well," Bracken announced.

"I am also coming to lead the group," Trask announced in a tone that implied there would be no questioning his desition.

"I am coming along as well, there is no keeping me here no matter what you say," Mara spoke her normally beautiful alto was strained and slightly raspy.

"Absolutely not. you are suffering from a serious wound and serious internal bleeding." Tanu asserted.

"If you do not include me I promise I will escape the preserve and follow you to New Zeland." Kendra gawked in disbelief, Mara was crazy going on such a dangerous mission with such serious injuries.

"If we take her you can keep an eye on her Tanu," Trask affirmed.

"Fine, she can come, but I reserve the right to send her back if she gets worse. That is my final word." Tanu announced, Trask nodded his agreement and Mara's posture relaxed.

"Well it is settled, Kendra, Bracken, Knox, Warren, Vanessa, Trask, Tanu and Mara are going

to retrieve Seth. Meeting dismissed." Andramadus announced as he stood and strode from the room.

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Hard to believe we have only been in this thing for a day." Seth moaned "I am succumbing to boredom. How are we going to still be sane by the time we reach New Zeland."

"Want me to tell you about the time where you sent your clueless cousin up against swarms of dragons, and you flew on griffin to the fairy queen's shrine, and almost got eaten by dragons?" Calvin proposed Seth agreed the tale sounded like a good one, but he had other plans. the leviathan had announced they were nearing a small island with no apparent predators so Seth had quickly accepted the opportunity to stretch his legs and explore.

"We are nearing the island I recommend you ready a boat I cannot enter the shallow waters."

The leviathan's deep voice entered Seth's mind telepathically. A few minutes later the gargantuan whale's mouth opened to reveal a small island with a small grove of trees on the far side, the island was small Seth could see the end of it but there was still enough space to spare. Seth pushed the rowboat out onto the water and hopped in. What was he thinking he didn't know how to row let alone maneuver a boat! Seth almost capsized more than once on his way to the island. Then suddenly the boat pitched forward and stopped. Seth panicked what was going on? He looked around and realized he had hit the beach. Seth was excited to be able to explore the island, but he would not take too long because his memory could not wait.

Fire

Chapter Notes

Hi, thank you guys for waiting. My life has been crazy but I have not given up on this.
Hope you enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Kendra, Tess open the door; We need to get out of here now!"

Kendra woke with a start. Was this a dream? What was going on, wait she smelled smoke!

"What is going on?" Kendra yelled back to the muffled voice behind the door. Tess had awoken and was staring wide-eyed at the door.

"The treehouse is on fire. We need to get out now!" Kendra lept out of bed, grabbed Bracken's horn from her bedside table and unbolted the door Tess was already up beside her. Kendra flung open the door, Bracken was there with Mara both had rags tied around their mouths and both were covered in ash and stained with soot. "We came to get you girls out; we are going to rendezvous with the others near the fairy queen's shrine."

"This way, try not to breathe the smoke in, We'll be quicker if I carry you, Tess." Mara scooped Tess up into her arms, "We have to get out quickly the fire will reach us in a few minutes There is a ladder to the forest floor not far from here we should go that way since the elevators are out of commission." Mara muffled alto informed.

"Lead the way." Bracken invited, Mara took off at a quick pace with Tess in her arms. Kendra struggled to keep up with Mara so did Bracken, even in her injured state Mara was fast, no wonder she had escaped the dragons at Jade Falls.

Mara stopped so suddenly Kendra almost bumped into her.

"Here is the ladder we need to be quick if the fire gets to close we jump. Understand?"

Kendra nodded Mara passed a surely terrified Tess to Bracken and started down the ladder Bracken followed and Kendra brought up the rear. Mara descended the ladder with inhuman speed and agility but Kendra could still see the pain in Mara's eyes. Bracken followed quickly with Tess riding piggyback. Kendra was grateful Bracken and Mara had carried Tess. Kendra doubted that she would have been able to keep up with the adults. Kendra was about ten feet from the bottom when she heard Bracken calling her.

"Jump Kendra. I'll catch you!" Kendra looked up she saw that the fire was creeping along the ladder not 15 feet away from her. Trusting Bracken with all she had she dropped

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The island seemed huge when you were on it Seth thought. Was that what life was like? You never see the full scale of the problem until you are in the thick of it? Seth's eyes strayed to a large electric blue dragonfly. Seth knew that this one was a dragonfly. He had found a

sealed cube of butter in his bag. Calvin had told him that the butter allowed him to see magical creatures. So when Calvin had appeared as a mouse that morning Seth and reluctantly tried a taste of the butter; after he had tasted it he saw that where his mouse was there stood Calvin.

A rustling in the bushes derailed his train of thought. A girl a little taller than him was walking towards him. She had long dark hair, fair skin, blue eyes, and wore a leafy slip that complemented her thin figure. "Wow, we haven't had visitors in forever! Where are you from? Why are you here? Is the leviathan yours?" The girl had a slight accent Seth couldn't quite place. Seth supposed he may as well answer questions from a pretty girl who was some of the rare company that he didn't think was trying to manipulate him. "Uh, my name is Seth I stopped for a break and the leviathan is mine," Seth said, what else could he say? He did not want to reveal too much to the strange girl. What was she doing deserted on a distant island? "Who are you?" Seth didn't realize he had said that until the words were out of his mouth. "I am one of this island's many hamadryads. What brings you here shadow charmer?" "I am just passing through," Seth said hoping he didn't give too much away he did not want to tell this girl everything.

"Hi Seth, I am Orchid. You said you were stopping by, what is your final destination?" Seth saw no harm in telling her. "Titan Valley dragon sanctuary." Seth saw something in her eyes flash, fear? "Do you know anything about it?" He asked tentatively. The girl's eyes hardened her tone was solemn. "I will give no hints other than this. Beware the Scourge of the Titan Valley."

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Kendra and Tess rode into camp astride Bracken, Mara walked beside them, sometimes she had ridden when she started to stumble or slow to frequently. There were about 10 little tents and 5 big ones Kendra assumed that the little tents were for the Menehune and the big ones were for the humans. Mara helped Tess off Bracken and gave Kendra a hand. Trask walked up to greet them.

"I almost thought you guys didn't make it. We are going to have to be vigilant. I have a hunch that the fire was to flush us out." Kendra knew that Trask was probably right. "Mara, you look pale I am taking you to Tanu," Trask said the concern in his voice was obvious, and he was right. Mara was so pale her normally copper skin was almost white! Mara walked off with Trask leaving Kendra alone with Bracken and Tess.

"So do you two want to share with Mara and Vannesa or do you want a tent to your self? Just a warning Vannesa is a night owl and Tanu will be checking Mara regularly throughout the night and administering pain killers." The end part made Kendra concerned.

"Tess and I will take a tent for our selves for the sake of our sleep. Will Mara be ok?"

"She should be better after some sleep and pain meds. Though I doubt she will get much rest, I understand Tanu's concern with bringing her on the mission. I also secretly worry about Trask, a head injury should be taken seriously; but I doubt he would listen he is stubborn. Your tent is this way." Bracken seemed to be changing the subject on purpose so Kendra went along. Bracken showed Kendra and Tess to their tent. It was a medium-sized tent, not as big as the others but big enough to comfortably accommodate both Kendra and Tess. "Oh, you don't have to worry about watch duty Kendra, many of the Menehune have volunteered." and with that last note, Bracken left. Kendra felt alone, sure she had Tess but

Tess did not have the same comforting presence of Bracken. Kendra snuggled into her sleeping bag and closed her eyes, sleep came quickly.

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"Do you have any idea about what she was talking about?" Seth asked Calvin his meeting on the island had quite disturbed him. That girl was freaky, what was she talking about what scourge of the Titan Valley?

"I don't know, I have never heard about anything like this." Calvin's answer disappointed him but he doubted that many would know about a strange curse on a secret, deadly, dragon preserve. Seth's mind strayed, what was Kendra doing right now? Did she miss him? Was she looking for him? His brain hurt, had his life been like this all the time? So many questions and not enough answers? Would he ever get a real break? He wished he could answer that question.

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When Kendra woke up Tess was missing. Kendra's first thought was that Tess had gone out for breakfast or to use the bathroom. The sun was rising so Kendra figured there was no use in going back to sleep. She crawled out of her sleeping bag, put on her shoes, and headed out. The sun was just piercing the horizon so it was still a bit chilly, Kendra was glad for the coat she had brought with her. A few small campfires were going, Kendra saw the satyrs roasting marshmallows, and decided to ask them if they had seen Tess. "Have you guys seen Tess?" Kendra asked as she walked up to the satyrs.

"No, we haven't seen the little lady. Is she missing?" Newel answered with concern.

"I can't find her, can you keep a lookout and tell me if you find her?" Kendra was really worried now.

"Sure, oh, and your marshmallow is on fire Newel," Doren chuckled, laughing as Newel tried to extinguish the flaming marshmallow that was now ablaze and melting off the stick it was being roasted on. Kendra left the satyrs to their shenanigans. Kendra checked some of the other tents. She then noticed Vannesa walking toward her.

"If you are looking for Tess I found her," Vannesa said when she reached Kendra. "It's pretty cute come see." Kendra followed Vannesa's curiosity as she strode towards the tent that she and Mara shared. As Kendra got close Vannesa put a finger to her lips, signaling Kendra to be quiet and gently lifted the flap. At first, what Kendra thought was just a ball of blankets next to the sleeping form of Mara. Kendra realized it was Tess snuggled into the sleeping woman's side. Mara had her arm protectively around Tess in her sleep. Vannesa closed the flap and motioned Kendra to step away from the tent.

"How long has she been there?" Kendra asked when they were out of earshot of the tent.

"Tess came in, in the middle of the night. she probably did not want to wake you and figured that we would already be awake. Wich was correct, Tess came in claiming she was having trouble sleeping because of nightmares and asked if she could hang out for a bit. Mara was great with Tess, she invited her in, and started telling her about some of the fairies and creatures at Lost Mesa. That calmed Tess own and she fell asleep on Mara who didn't have the heart or the strength to move her at the moment. I fell asleep shortly after that." Vannesa confided, Kendra smiled.

"I had no idea that Mara was good with kids," Kendra admitted to Vannesa.

"She is not a very friendly type but once pics a friend they will have her forever. I think she will adopt Tess before long." Vannesa conceded." I hear Bracken calling you, Go see what's up."

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Kendra was super nervous, as she and Bracken approached the fairy queens shrine. They had received no word from Andromadus, so with no one to magic them out they were stuck. Bracken had proposed that he and Kendra ask the fairy queen to give them passage to the shrine at Fablehaven to drop Tess and the satyrs off and they also hoped to ditch Knox there too; Pick up supplies then go straight to the shrine at Titan Valley. Just one obstacle stood in their way. Would the fairy queen let them take almost a dozen mortals and 2 satyrs trough the fairy realm? As Kendra and Bracken passed through the small waterfall near the shrine Bracken spoke.

"I can hear you worrying Kendra. come on lighten up it will be fine. If she says no We will find another way." His words sparked Kendra's confidence. The tiny statue of a fairy came into view. They both kneeled down on the wet stone soaking their pants. No sooner had they keeled when Kendra smelled a flurry of smells that accompanied communication with the fairy queen. Kendra smelled Fresh pine, tulips, sweet honey, fresh baking. Then the fairy queen spoke.

"I sense you come with a purpose. I heard about the fire last night dreadfull, most definitely the work of the dragons." Bracken nodded and then spoke.

"Hello mother, the wizard Andromadus fled we have not been able to communicate with him. So we have no way out, we humbly ask that you would let us and our companions through our realm to Fablehaven then to the Titan Valley shrine." The fairy queen was silent for a moment.

" You ask a lot but I see the brilliance in your plan very well you can bring your companions. But go back to your camp with haste. I sense that some of my subjects are distressed I fear attack from the dragons." And with that Kendra was alone with Bracken again.

"Let's get back to camp and see what she was talking about." With that Bracken trotted out back towards camp.

Kendra heard the screams before she saw the dragon. It was small for a dragon but still as big as an elephant. The dragon had green camo scales. It was setting fire to everything! The smoke was so thick Kendra could barely see. "Head to the shrine I will go find the others". Bracken stated,

"Wait please be careful." Kendra grabbed his hand as Bracken turned to go.

"I'll be careful." He planted a kiss on her cheek and ran towards the fire. Kendra stood stunned fingering the cheek that bracken had kissed. Without looking back she turned and ran toward the shrine.

Chapter End Notes

It has been A headcanon of mine for a while that Mara would like a cute little fairy struck kid like Tess who had no idea what she's doing.

Thank you so much for reading, please leave a comment if you like it.

Shrine

Trask's intuition about the dragons flushing them out was right. The dragon had come out of nowhere. Knox had been judging a marshmallow eating contest. Warren against the satyrs. They had been on the final round. Warren against Doren 60 marshmallows 1 minute. When the dragon had come out of the trees and started lighting fire to everything. Knox was suddenly petrified, so were Warren and the satyrs! Knox's mind wheeled, none of them could move they were all going to die! Knox could now barely see, there was fire and smoke everywhere the heat was uncomfortable. He was getting really light headed when suddenly he could move! He heard Warren shouting for him. "Knox, Newel, Doren follow my voice! The dragon was a hit and run attack! There might be more, we are fleeing to the fairy queens shrine!" Knox followed Warren's voice when suddenly there was a hand on his arm. Knox whipped around to find Bracken and Warren.

"This way," Bracken said and without another word, he started running in the direction that was supposedly the shrine. Knox ran as fast as he could, occasionally, stumbling on stray stones and clumps of dirt. The smoke abruptly lightened, Knox could see a small island with a waterfall. Intimidating stone statues were everywhere. Knox expected them to leap at him but they stayed still never moving. He spotted Kendra near the waterfall talking to a fairy. He decided to go see if Kendra knew what they were doing next.

"Hi Kendra," Knox said nonchalantly trying to sound casual and not scared at all.

"Knox you made it! Have you seen Tess or Bracken I have been so worried." Kendra's anxiety was in her voice and on her face.

"I saw Bracken he's fine. He was helping the others get out of there. Where were you?" Knox asked, Kendra had disappeared not long before the dragon showed up and had taken Bracken with her. Knox assumed, that she had been on a date with Bracken.

"I was talking to the fairy queen she is going to let us cross over to her shrine at Fablehaven," Kendra answered. That was not what Knox had expected. Suddenly a piercing screech echoed across the grounds Knox looked up to see a creature breaking through the smoke. It had the front of an eagle and the back half of a lion.

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Kendra was stunned when Tempest flew out from the smoke. How? Wait, the canoe! Tempest must have come through then carried it to safety. Wait who was on the griffons back? As the griffin landed in the clearing, Mara smoothly dismounted and took the canoe from the griffin's claws. Her dark eyes were unreadable.

"Explain everything, now." Mara's tone was indecipherable her voice was husky and raged, her face was unreadable, though her posture was battle-ready. Kendra explained about the dragon, their plan to jump from shrine to shrine, and how the canoe connected to Wyrmoost. Then, Mara started to tell her side of the story "I learned about the canoe this morning, when the fire started I sent Tess through the other side. Then I went in myself grabbed the griffin, Tempest, Thronis called her. I came back and had her fly us to safety. Is everyone accounted for?"

Kendra stared stunned for a second other than this being the most words Mara had ever said to her. What she had just done was crazy!

"We have Warren, Knox, Newel, Doren, you and Tess so far," Kendra answered. Mara looked worried but said nothing. Kendra looked over to Knox who was still eyeing the griffin

tentatively then he started to talk.

"You did all of that in like five minutes. Are you ok? Arent, you badly injured?" Knox blurted clearly confused and also worried.

"Sometimes in great peril you just have endure the pain " Mara answered her breathing ragged, her arm clamped around her stomach where her injury was. Suddenly Bracken burst into the clearing with Tanu and Vanessa, and Uma.

"Bracken!" Kendra yelled as she ran towards him catching him in a tight embrace. Knowing full well he would have to run back into the smoke for the others.

"I need to go back Kendra. Trask and Savani are still in there same with Mara and Tess." Bracken said tenderly to her eyes full of concern.

"Mara is here and Tess is at Wyrmoost." Bracken's eyes lit up, he looked around to confirm Kendra's words when his eyes landed on Mara and the canoe he smiled.

"I have to go, Kendra, hopefully, I'll be back soon." He let go of Kendra who was still clinging tightly and ran back into the smoke. Kendra turned to see Warren running towards Vanessa the moment he reached her, he swept her off her feet and kissed her on the cheek. Warren put Vanessa down and was embracing her tightly. Kendra heard bits of words such as "I was so worried."

"It's ok I am only slightly singed." "I love you." Kendra smiled, she knew Warren and Vanessa liked each other a lot but seeing it like this was different. Kendra looked to Tanu who was watching with a smile, Uma did not say a word but had a sly grin, Knox looked disgusted, Mara was expressionless.

Bracken chose a good time to burst into the clearing with Savani and Trask. Warren and Vanessa let go of each other so fast Kendra doubted the others had seen them.

"All right gather around we are about to cross to the fairy realm, everyone please gather near the waterfall. Savani and Uma you are welcome to join us." Bracken declared. Kendra started walking towards the waterfall. She realized that Mara was missing, then she realized that she had probably gone to go get Tess. Kendra smiled at that thought of Tess meeting the fairy queen. Mara returned a minute later with a bubbling and smiling Tess who could not stop talking about meeting the fairy queen. Bracken took them through the waterfall in groups of two Kendra went in first with Tess. The moment she passed through the water there was a flash, and Kendra was standing in the fairy realm, and there stood the fairy queen and King. Kendra suddenly realized she should probably bow before two of the most powerful monarchs in the world, she sank to her knees Tess saw what she had done and mimicked her. Out the corner of her eye, Kendra saw Mara and Trask appear. Both sank to their knees so fast it almost looked like they came in crawling. Kendra saw Warren and Vanessa, Newel and Doren, Tanu and Knox, all of whom sank to their knees, then Bracken who led Tempest. Kendra noticed that Savani and Uma had stayed behind.

"Rise." The fairy queen said her voice warm and welcoming. Bracken walked over and embraced his mother and father. Then Tess came flying out of nowhere and hugged the fairy queen, her arms wrapping tightly around the fairy queen. Tess's head only came up to the queen's stomach. So Tess was fiercely embracing the queen's waist. The fairy king looked like he was about to die from laughter, Bracken held back a chuckle, The fairy queen looked slightly confused but decided to play along. "Hello, little one, what's your name? And how are you fairy struck?" The queen asked Tess beamed up at the fairy queen.

"Hi I am Tess, I am your biggest fan, and the fairies said they fancied me. That I was a cute novelty." Kendra realized in shock the Tess was speaking perfect Silvian! Tess let go of the fairy queen as she turned to address the group.

"Welcome, I understand you travel with haste, the shrine at Fablehaven is about a two-hour

walk but only an hour ride. I suggest that we gather mounts." The fairy queen announced " I also see that you brought a mount of your own. Who here will ride the griffin?" She added looking at Tempest.

"I will your majesty," Mara announced confidently, rising to her feet with some difficulty. The fairy queen nodded

"I assume the satyrs want to run?" The fairy King added speaking for the first time his voice rich and deep with a slight accent. Both satyrs answered affirmatively. "Does anyone want to share a mount?" The fairy king questioned when he received no answers he nodded to Bracken who let out a shrill whistle. Suddenly, a herd of majestic white stags with golden antlers came galloping out of a forest of trees off to the group's left. Warren flinched as the stags came galloping forward. Kendra understood his hesitation, considering that he was gored by similar-looking deer on their first visit to Wyrmoost. Bracken shifted into a unicorn and walked over to Kendra gesturing with his head for her to hop on. Kendra had to accept a hand up from Tanu to get on to the tall unicorn. Kendra saw the fairy king transform into a tall pure white unicorn with a pearly glow, offer a ride to Tess and his wife, both of whom accepted. The fairy queen helped Tess up then boosted herself up behind the small girl. Knox was trying, and failing to mount his deer. He kept making the mistake of grabbing the horns to pull himself up but just ended up jerking the impatient deer's head down. Mara had to intervene when the deer looked ready to stab Knox. Soon, everyone was on their designated mounts. They took off at a quick pace; Instead of walking, Tempest flew low to the ground keeping up with the group with no effort. The satyrs ran alongside them keeping up with ease. Most of the ride passed in silence other than Tess chattering away with the fairy queen. They passed through rolling hills; dense forests; and lush meadows, Kendra's favorite setting was a cristal clear lake with a white, narrow stone bridge with unicorns and fairies chiseled into the dazzling marble. Kendra reckoned that they had been riding for about an hour now. When suddenly the fairy queen called for a stop, all the mounts halted. Kendra looked ahead and saw a large pond up ahead it had a small island in the middle and had a path of smooth stepping stones leading to the island. Kendra assumed this the gateway to Fablehaven. The fairy queen confirmed Kendra's suspicions about 5 seconds later. Every one dismounted except Mara who stayed on Tempest. Which made sense to Kendra. If they were taking the griffin with them why go through the pain of dismounting? The fairy queen explained that once they set foot on the island they would be transported to Fablehaven. The group started toward the island. This time Bracken went first with Mara and Tempest. True to the queen's words the moment Bracken, Mara, and Tempest set foot on the island they disappeared, Kendra saw Tess say goodbye to the fairy queen and king embracing them warmly before hurrying to the island. A few minutes later Kendra went next. The fairy queen had explained that they should wait about five minutes in between teams giving tempest enough time to fly people across the pond. She also warned about the naiads in the lake as well. Then it was Kendra's turn to cross over. The moment her foot touched the island there was a flash, then suddenly she was at the Fablehaven shrine. Kendra saw the tiny fairy statue and the small stream that tricked across the island, Kendra hoped that no one would step on the miniature statue by accident. Tempest stood waiting to fly Kendra across to the other side of the lake. Kendra tentatively hopped on the griffin. Despite Kendra's fear. Tempest flew smoothly over the lake and deposited Kendra on the pier near Bracken, Tess, and Mara. Tess was animatedly talking to a fairy in Silvian. Mara lay on the grass, her breathing shallow and labored her eyes closed. Bracken sat next to her with one of her hands in his, lightly stroking her palm while talking gently. Kendra dismounted Tempest the trotted over to see what was going on. "Is she ok?" Kendra asked Bracken with concern.

"She won't answer, she is conscious and aware, but it seems she is just tired and in pain, this morning was probably difficult on her, she needs to rest not to be fleeing fire and dragons." Mara gave a weak thumbs-up indicating the truth in Bracken's words, though she did not open her eyes. "Well have Tanu examine her and change her bandages when we get to the main house." Bracken rose and turned his gaze to Kendra. "We now have a big advantage over Seth and have more time to plan now that we can reach the Titan Valley shrine in an hour. Which means we can probably rest at the house for a couple of days." Bracken was right! Maybe they weren't hopeless after all! Tanu arrived with Knox shortly after. Tanu took out his bag and started rummaging for something after a few minutes Mara sat up her breathing was less labored. Everyone but the satyrs had crossed over. When Newel and Doren crossed over. Tanu helped Mara unsteadily rise to her feet, he draped one of her arms around his shoulder to give her more support, she made no move to stop him. Tanu helped Mara onto Tempest and Trask hopped up behind her to make sure she would not fall off. Everyone else had the pleasure of walking back to the main house. Vanessa called the Larsons on her phone to let them know that had arrived at Fablehaven and were on their way to the house, and how they had crossed over at the fairy queen's shrine. By the time Vanessa hung up they had reached the backyard of the house. Tanu lifted Mara off Tempest had had Bracken tie the griffin to the back porch. They didn't even have to knock, the door flung open as they mounted the steps and the Grama and Grampa Larsen came running out followed by Dale. Kendra laughed as Knox and Tess were almost suffocated with hugs. But she ceased to laugh when it was her turn for the tide of affection. Kendra saw Warren and Dale embracing fiercely and tousling each other's hair. Tanu took Trask and Mara into the house successfully sneaking past the attention.

"We are so sorry about what happened to Seth. Don't worry we are going to try with all we have to get him back. Grama Larsen whispered in Kendra's ear while embracing her fiercely almost cutting off Kendra's air supply.

"We have something else to address," Grampa announced as he also let go of Kendra. "Your parents are coming back tomorrow. We assumed we would just send Knox and Tess back but with recent developments, I think it is best to keep those who are not trying to stop the end of the world at Fablehaven."

"There is no way I am staying behind," Knox complained, Kendra was ready to go nuts; what was it with him thinking this was all fun and games. He was just like Seth and look where that had gotten him.

"Knox, are you crazy? No have no experience nothing that makes you fit for this mission. And even if you are careful stuff can still happen! Have you ever seen Mara and Trask? That was on half as a dangerous sanctuary and they are some of our best operatives! You don't take this seriously at all! Seth was like this too and how did that turn out?" Kendra tried not to shout but was not doing a good job at it. Knox looked startled. Kendra didn't know if it was her speech or her yelling at him she suspected a bit of both. Vanessa walked over and tenderly embraced Kendra.

"I know this has been hard on you I wish I had been there to help, and I know your cousin can be super stupid. You have thrived against the impossible and I know you can overcome this too. Be strong Kendra, you have lots of good people supporting you remember that. We are going to do whatever it takes to get Seth back." Warren came over and joined Vanessa in embracing Kendra. She felt her anger wash away Vanessa was right, Kendra had to be strong, for Seth she thought.

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"Regarding who is going on the mission all minors will be asking for their guardians' permission." Grama stated with finality. Everyone had gathered in the kitchen for lunch with the exception of Tanu and Mara. The satyrs did not have permission to come in. Grama and Vanessa had whipped up a feast of sandwiches in all sorts of different flavors. There was turkey, tuna, peanut butter, honey and all sorts of other weird combos.

"But Vanessa and Andromadus said I could come." Knox shot back, there was no way he was passing up the opportunity to see cool dragons and giants.

"I don't care what the others said, the final verdict is up to your parents." Grampa Larson said sternly. Knox wanted to argue but he figured he would only make grampa Larson upset.

Knox had mixed emotions about seeing his parents again. What would happen now that the fate of the world was looking sketchy, but he couldn't tell his parents anything? Knox looked to Kendra, he had made a point to not talk to her after her freak out earlier. Knox wanted to blame her for spoiling his fun, but if she was right? In Stormgard castle he had gone way over his head. But was this Stormgard castle? No this was a completely different place and time right?

"Sometimes I wish I had never been roped into this," Kendra muttered, this, surprised Knox, his cousin seemed to greatly enjoy the magical world.

"When you stop getting roped into this stuff. I'll marry Vanessa." Bracken teased putting a protective arm around Kendra's shoulder. Knox looked to Vanessa, she wore a sly grin on her face Warren looked like he was going to explode.

"We wanted to save this for after everything settled down, Bracken about the whole marrying thing Warren is going to beat you to it." Vanessa held up her right hand Knox saw a glittering ring on her finger, it was studded with what looked like diamonds, it had silver metal intricately weaved around the diamonds holding them in place. "Warren and I are engaged," Vanessa announced proudly. Kendra and Tess squealed, the Larsons looked shocked. Trask looked confused, Dale and Bracken had the funniest looks. Both of them looked like they had been hit in the face with a brick wall. The commotion brought Tanu running downstairs. He took in the scene Vanessa holding up her ring, Warren with his arm around her, he obviously put two and two together quickly. The first words out of his mouth were.

"Ruth is going to kill you,"

"Well, then we will elope," Vanessa said jokingly, putting her arm around Warren.

"Then we'll send Mara after you once she recovers, you know how good she is at tracking, she was able to track Kendra halfway across Wyrmoost." Trask countered. Warren muttered something that sounded suspiciously like "Dang it"

"When is the wedding?" Kendra asked Knox was curious about that too.

"Once we find Seth and everything settles," Vanessa assured them "and, after getting Stan and Ruth back." Her tone carried some implications. "I am also switching things up for our wedding, it is not going to be traditional." Vanessa announced, Warren looked like he was about to protest.

"Switching the subject, how is Mara?" Warren asked turning to Tanu.

"She is asleep, which is why I came down, I was going to ask you to be quiet," Tanu replied,

"Sorry, we'll keep it down," Kendra replied noticeably lowering her voice.

"I was also about to suggest a nap for most of you as well, the past few days have been exhausting and who knows when our next time to rest will be?" Tanu said, Knox figured that Tanu was probably right he had not realized how tired he was until now.

"I think I'll turn in," Knox admitted, climbing the stairs to the attic where he had been staying

with Tess. He walked into his room and flopped onto his bed, oblivion swallowed conscious thought.

Reunion

Chapter Notes

Wow, I just looked at the date today and realized that tomorrow is the one-month anniversary of the day I posted this fic. So what better way to celebrate than a new chapter.

- Hope you enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Knox had no idea how long he had slept. As he sat up in his bed he looked over and saw Kendra fast asleep with Tess snuggled into her side. Oh, come on, he knew Tess was a snuggle bug but she really should keep it together. Knox rose to his feet and peeked through the curtains; the sun was piercing the sky, slightly above the horizon. Had he really slept all night? Knox heard muffled voices from downstairs and decided to go investigate. He crept down slowly, hoping to eavesdrop in case they were talking about him. As he crept past the living room, he saw Warren fast asleep draped over the couch, he snored lightly. Knox saw a mess of blankets strewn on the neighboring couch, leaving evidence that the person who had slept there was already awake. He slipped around the corner where he could hear the conversation. "How are we going to tell them about Seth?" Knox knew that voice was grama's, they must be talking about when Knox's aunt Marla and uncle Scott came back today. He leaned closer hoping to hear more.

"We tell them everything. That's the best we can do." Trask responded,

"What about Knox? His lack of expertise will get him killed if he goes. But if he doesn't come, I fear he will try to follow you guys. Most definitely getting himself killed." Grama mourned.

"Knox come out, I know you are listening." Mara's voice asserted; Knox had not known she was there but apparently; she knew about him. Knox stepped into the kitchen. All eyes were on him. "Nice catch," Trask muttered to Mara out of the corner of his mouth.

"How did you know I was here," Knox asked defensively trying not to sound too hostile.

"I could hear your breathing and your footsteps, they are quite loud," Mara replied, her voice deep and quiet. Knox did not think he had been very loud, but he had obviously not been quiet either.

"You want a pancake?" Tanu asked, he had been quiet until now. Knox saw that Tanu had been prepping pancakes over a portable grill.

"Sure," Knox responded, he knew Tanu was deliberately changing the subject.

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Kendra joined the others for a pancake breakfast prepared by Tanu, though he was heavily instructed by Mara. Kendra sank her teeth into a fresh pancake. It was warm, fluffy and sweet. Kendra had never tasted a pancake quite like this. "This is amazing Tanu!" Kendra exclaimed,

"Don't thank me, it's Mara's recipe and instructions," Tanu replied lightly,

"These are really good Mara, where did you get the recipe?" Kendra asked,

"My mom taught me to cook, we invented the recipe together," Mara replied, with a faint hint of a smile, basking in those old happy memories.

"Where is your mom now?" Knox asked curiously. Oh no, wrong question, Knox. Kendra thought

"She is dead," Mara replied, where happiness had been a second earlier was now replaced with grief and hardness. "How did she die?" Knox asked, could he just drop this? Kendra thought, how could Knox be so insensitive?

"A dragon killed her," Mara replied, her voice almost a whisper, Trask walked over and put his hand on her shoulder. She leaned into his touch, smushing her cheek on his hand, Kendra saw wetness in the corner of Mara's eyes.

"I am sorry," Knox said, looking truly regretful for asking. Kendra wanted to slap him and hug him at the same time. She knew that he couldn't possibly know about that, but he should know better than to ask such a personal question to someone he didn't know very well.

Warren came in,

"Is everything ok?" He asked, taking in the scene.

"Yes, it's fine," Mara said quietly, lifting her head from her shoulder.

"What's the plan today?" Warren asked as he sat down, his plate heaping with pancakes and syrup.

"Well as you know, Kendra and Seth's parents come back from their trip, same with Knox and Tess's. We are going to have to explain the predicament with Seth to his parents. While Dale gives Pete and Zola a tour of Fablehaven. After that we need to make a supply run, considering only half of us have clothes that fit. There is a shopping mall not far from here. we'll gather supplies. Then we will come back for dinner and finalize plans for the mission." Trask announced, everyone acknowledged with either an affirmative answer or a nod. Dale burst into the room.

"They are early! They will reach the house in about 5 minutes." He announced.

"They shouldn't be here for another hour!" Grama Larson exclaimed.

"Trask you better put a hat on, Mara you have two options, either have Vanessa cover up your scar with concealer or just use your hair. We don't want questions raised by Pete and Zola about your injuries." Tanu said. Trask and Warren dashed off to find a hat that looked natural. While Vanessa helped Mara arrange her hair to cover the right half of her face. Trask returned 30 seconds later with a baseball hat that had an unfamiliar team logo on it. Vanessa finished Mara's hair, which now covered the right half of her face. Kendra had to admit it looked good on her.

"Ok guys act natural if any questions are raised about why you are here. Say you are good friends of the Sorenson's passing by on a work trip, which is the less elaborate truth." Trask said, there was a knock on the door, everyone froze except Warren who started to guzzle his pancakes down. Vanessa shot him a glare.

"What? he said act normal." Warren managed to say through bits of pancake. As Dale raced to the door Vanessa started dishing up her own pancakes. Kendra ran after Dale; she was so excited to see her parents again! Dale opened the door. There were parents, tanned and smiling. Kendra flung herself into their arms almost knocking them over. Knox and Tess came jumping into their parents' arms as well. Kendra wanted to stay in her mom's arms forever but, had to move when grama and grampa moved in for hugs. Kendra's parents were so happy. Kendra almost cried at how distressed they would probably be when they found out about Seth. Grama and Grampa led them all to the kitchen to make introductions.

"Marla, Scott, Pete, Zola. This is Tanu, Warren and his fiancé Vanessa; Trask, Bracken, and Mara, they are staying a staying of a couple of days on their way to New Zealand for work

purposes." Grampa announced pointing to each new person he introduced. Kendra just noticed Bracken, he must have come in recently.

"We knew Warren and Venessa but we didn't know you guys were engaged, congratulations!" Kendra's Dad exclaimed as he shook Warren's hand. "When is the wedding?" he asked curiously, "We are still working on that," Warren replied vaguely. As Kendra's mom stopped hugging Vanessa and walked over to congratulate Warren.

"Pete, Zola would you like Dale to give you a tour?" Grampa Larson asked, Kendra's aunt and uncle enthusiastically agreed and followed Dale out of the room. "Scott, Marla would you two join us for a brief conversation, concerning the magical world? In the study," Grampa said it like it was a question but Kendra knew it was a command. Kendra's parents nodded and followed Grampa and Grama. The others rose to join them, Kendra realized that she should probably be part of this conversation as well. Kendra followed everyone into the study.

"You guys aren't here on a work trip." Marla stated as she sat down, "What's going on?" Concern was her voice, Mara rose and shut the door.

"We have unpleasant news, remember when we talked about Kendra and Seth going to a dragon sanctuary called Wyrmoost?" Both of Kendra's parents nodded, fear was in their eyes. "Well shortly after your children arrived, things went bad. The dragons declared war." Grampa went on to explain the scandal at Stormguard castle and how Seth lost his memory. Kendra's parents were having a hard time keeping themselves composed at that point, Marla's eyes grew wet, Scott put his arms around her. Grampa explained about how the sanctuary fell and how they had fled to Crescent Lagoon, he then explained how they had found Seth alive. He talked about Kendra standing up to the demon king. He also talked about how they had found out that Seth was going to be at Titan Valley. As Grampa paused to take a breath, Kendra found her parents hugging her fiercely and telling her they were so proud of how brave she was. "But just because they survived those dragon sanctuaries does not mean they will survive them all, they have been extremely lucky they have not suffered serious injuries unlike others in the field," Grampa said gesturing to Trask and Mara, Trask took off his hat and Mara lifted her hair, to show the casualties grampa had mentioned. Marla gasped with shock and alarm; Scott said no words. "With the danger considered we have left the matter of Kendra going on the mission to New Zealand up to you, though if she does come, she would have many looking out for her."

"Who all is going?" Scott asked curiously, "Tanu, Warren, Vanessa, Mara, Trask, and Bracken are definitely coming," Grampa said, Kendra's parents leaned in and whispered to each other for a couple of seconds then they stood up.

"We will allow Kendra to join you, on one condition, we'll come as well." The tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife, Grampa was silent. Kendra now saw his predicament, if he told them it was too dangerous then Kendra couldn't go, but if he said yes he could put them in a lot of danger, no one spoke, Mara let her hair fall, and Trask put his hat back on.

"Marla, Scott, do you know what is one of the things that make dragons more dangerous than anything on the planet?" Trask questioned,

"Their size and fire?" Scott guessed,

"Though their size and breath weapons are part of the equation, what makes a dragon most dangerous is their paralyzing aura of fear, if you are the dragon's target, you will not escape, you will freeze, your mind will go blank, then the dragon will finish you. Unless you are one of the select few we call dragon tamers. People who can withstand dragon fear, and converse with the dragons. This trait makes tamers less appealing to kill in the dragons' eyes. They would make much better use as entertainment in the dragon's mind." Trask paused to let the

info sink in,

"So, are any of you dragon tamers?" Marla asked curiously,

"Kendra is a dragon tamer, so is Bracken, Vanessa, Mara, and myself," Trask announced,

"I know you want to go to protect your daughter, but going would most certainly make you more of a hindrance than a help, no offense is intended, but it is simply that you are inexperienced in this area. Let me give you an example, if we were passing through and a dragon swooped down, those of us who could move would want to flee but because of others who can't one is more inclined to stay behind with the others. Am I right, Mara?" Trask asked,

"Yes, a situation like this happened before, Kendra, a man named Dougan, and I were cornered by dragons, Kendra had not unlocked her potential, so I was the only one who could flee. But I didn't, I had been told to protect Kendra at all costs, but, I did not reach her in time, the dragon ate Dougan, swiped and Kendra and kicked me off the ledge we were standing on. Kendra was unscathed, Dougan was killed and I was badly injured." Mara fell silent, Kendra knew that there was more to be said, she remembered that moment, it was the moment that Gavin betrayed them all and revealed his true form, Navarog, a dragon so evil they made him an honorary demon.

"I never knew." Scott murmured, "How many of these sanctuaries has Kendra been to?" He asked.

"Including non-dragon sanctuaries as well 7, I think," Trask answered, Kendra's parents looked shocked. "I know you want to come to protect your daughter but do you see that you might slow us down more than help," Trask said,

"Yes, but, if we are sending our daughter with you, we need to be certain that she has a designated protector," Marla said firmly

"Warren has always been Kendra's guardian on these missions so, you don't need to worry," Tanu reassured calmly,

"I hear the others coming back, is there anything else you want to say?" Mara asked hurriedly,

"I think we are good, Kendra you will join us to go retrieve your brother. Now we have a supply run to make." Trask announced as he rose, as people started to leave, Kendra lingered as Mara started to rise, Kendra walked over to intercept her. "Why didn't you tell them about Gavin?" Kendra asked with curiosity.

"Well, your parents were stressed enough, there was no use stressing them about things that are long past," Mara's husky alto answered as she attempted to rise again. Kendra offered her hand and Mara took it. After Kendra helped her to her feet, Mara turned to her "Now run along to your parents, you never know how long you might have them." They walked out the door. She was right, Kendra should make the most of this time with her parents and her family when she wasn't running for her life.

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Kendra sat in the middle seat on the passenger side of the large rental van. While Kendra had shown her parents the pond, Vanessa had disappeared. Around a half hour later she had returned with an eight-passenger van. The van was rather nice. Kendra had sat in silence and stared out the window most of the drive. Tanu drove since Vanessa was a wicked speeder, Warren sped and frequently ran red lights, Trask had a head injury, Kendra had no license, and Mara was a good navigator, causing her to be the one for this trip. Warren sat beside her fiddling with a puzzle cube. Vanessa sat at Warren's side. Her head snuggled into his shoulder. She was fast asleep, Knox sat in the back with Trask. Knox had been permitted to

go on the supply run. In case they decided he would come after all. They had been driving for a while. When Mara announced that they were only 10 minutes away. Trask said he wanted to lay down some ground rules, so Warren gently woke Vanessa with a kiss on the forehead. Knox made a gagging noise. Trask cleared his throat and started to talk. Everyone turned toward him, except Tanu and Mara.

"As you know, Titan Valley will be treacherous, so we will need supplies such as food, clothes, baggage, and other things. Bracken is currently with the fairy queen assisting in making a knapsack like we had at the Wyrmoost mission but please still; try to pack only the essentials. When we get to our destination, we'll split up for clothing shopping, but we will meet back at the entrance for going to get other supplies. Everyone clear?" Everyone answered affirmatively, Kendra was nervous about the upcoming mission, but an afternoon with her fellow female knights sounded nice. A couple of minutes later their destination came into view. The mall was huge, Kendra could not see all of it. About 2 minutes later Tanu pulled into the parking lot. Tanu had found them a good spot near the entrance. They all hopped out.

"I am getting shotgun next time," Knox grumbled as he climbed out of the back.

"As you say, LOL nope. Unless you want to replace Mara as a navigator?" Tanu asked jokingly, knowing Knox would turn down the offer.

"Fine then can I go in the middle?" Knox asked.

"Maybe that can be arranged, but if you keep complaining you can ride in the trunk," Trask said from behind Knox. Knox stayed silent as they walked toward the front doors. When they entered the guys headed off in one direction, Vanessa lead Kendra and Mara off in the opposite direction. "I have a friend here. She owns one of the warehouses owned by the knights, but spends her free time here, she has a small clothing store. We can usually get a good price if we come with good gossip from the magical community." Vanessa said, "What kind of gossip?" Mara asked cautiously, this was the first time she had spoke in awhile. "Nothing sinister, she just likes to be kept in the loop. My engagement with Warren will probably be more than enough." Vanessa responded, "Oh, here we are." Vanessa said as they approached a small shop the sign out front said "Knights of the Dawn, boutique, and salon"

"Wow, that name isn't obvious at all," Mara commented sarcastically as they approached the front doors.

"Believe it or not, it is so obvious it hides in plain sight. Sometimes standing out is the key to blending in." Vanessa responded Mara looked at the shop now wearing a thoughtful expression. "Oh, and we will need to show that we are knights without being too obvious. Uncover your scar Mara, that should be enough." Vanessa added as they walked through the door. Mara tucked her hair behind her ear. The shop was brightly lit, rows of clothes lined the walls. Some on hangers some folded neatly. A smaller room off to the side had a sign that said "Salon". Vanessa was looking around when a smile lit up her face. Kendra followed her gaze to a short blond woman, she had dazzlingly blue eyes, she was talking to who Kendra assumed to be a shop worker. The woman's gaze landed on Vanessa, her face lit up with a bright smile. She hurried over. "Vanessa Santoro! It has been forever! What brings you here?" The woman hugged Vanessa, "Well, we are hoping you would help us gather supplies for a business trip. And it won't be Santoro for long." Vanessa held up her hand with the ring on it. The woman gasped.

"Who is the lucky man?" She explained excitedly.

"Warren Burgess," Vanessa announced with pride.

"Aw, you are so lucky! Well, what can I help you, girls, with?" The woman asked.

"Kendra, Mara this is Hanna, Hanna we are heading to New Zealand, what would you recommend?"

"Well considering, it is currently winter in New Zealand. You will want something warm but not too warm. Since their winters at their worst are only about -10 celsius. I can get you some jackets that are lightweight, waterproof and warm, I have some brownies in the back, so I can get you custom-fitted ones. Let me just measure for the sizes." Hanna pulled out a measuring tape and started to measure Vanessa's shoulder-length, height, and stomach. Kendra was measured also. When Hanna went to measure Mara's stomach she flinched whenever the measuring tape wrapped around her.

"What's wrong dear? It is just a measuring tape." Hanna asked as she attempted to measure Mara for the 5th time.

"Field injuries," Mara responded lifting part of her shirt to show the red-tinged bandages underneath.

"What happened?" Hanna asked,

"Dragons," Mara responded gravely,

"I see, you will probably want a looser fit then?" Hanna asked,

"Yes, please," Mara responded, flinching slightly as Hanna tried to measure Mara more gingerly. "Has she seen a healer?" Hanna asked turning to Vanessa,

"Tanu has been working on her, she is still under treatment," Vanessa responded

"Tanu is good, but she should see a professional, dragon wounds can have hidden slow-acting poison," Hanna said seriously.

"We'll take that into account," Vanessa promised. "What else do we need?"

#####

Kendra, Vanessa, and Mara rendezvoused with the guys at the entrance to go look for baggage and food. Tanu and Warren had to drag Vanessa away from the wedding dresses. Mara almost looked like she was about to laugh as Tanu and Warren dragged Vanessa away from the window of a boutique as she threatened to bite them. Knox looked confused, clearly wondering about the bite threats. Kendra snickered at his confused face. Trask also watched he kept himself as effectively composed as Mara did. When that was over; they had gone to pick up bags. Knox had picked a duffle bag with a pattern of basketballs. Warren had found a backpack that said, "Warning, I do dumb things." This had greatly amused everyone, except Knox again, because Knox was so new to everyone he did not understand any of the inside jokes. Trask had picked a brown medium-sized duffle bag. Vanessa had picked a black backpack with red floral patterns of roses. Tanu had chosen a bag with about 8 million hidden compartments. Mara had chosen a plain black backpack, she had also picked out a small spool of gold thread and a sewing needle. Kendra decided on a dark purple duffle bag with a unicorn that bore a strong resemblance to Bracken's unicorn form on it. Warren and Knox had disappeared for about ten minutes after that and returned with a whole cart loaded with junk food, chocolate bars, and frozen pizzas. But when Mara pointed out that you can't cook a pizza over a fire, and that there would be no fridge in the backpack. So the pizzas would thaw and go bad. Warren had to sheepishly admit that he had not been thinking. After they had put all the food back. They looked for more strategical food choices. Like cereal, some long-lasting fruits, stuff to make s'mores, crackers, canned food, Mara used her unbeatable logic to point out that they should also buy a can opener. They were now all set for their trip. The van had been more cramped than ever. Since on the way home, they also had groceries and clothes.

Warren and Vanessa sat next to Kendra again in the middle. Knox against his complaints had ended up in the back with Trask again. Tanu drove again, Mara was now multi-tasking with

helping Tanu navigate and embroidering something into her new bag with the thread she had purchased. The ride back was relatively quiet, except Knox's complaints about the seating that came up every ten minutes. As much as Kendra did not like his complaining, Kendra enjoyed having some time, where the worst Knox could complain about, was the car seats. Kendra knew that when they reached Titan Valley life was about a whole lot harder.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for sticking with me as I have written this. Don't worry I am not stopping anytime soon.

I also want to include a shout out to my editor Brindah who has been absolutely amazing! :)

Departure

The house was now overly crowded. Grama Larson and Kendra's mom had whipped up a feast for everyone while the rest of them packed their bags. Dinner had been difficult considering that they tried to fit 15 people in the kitchen. So some of the adults took their dinners to the living room. Bracken hadn't returned yet and Kendra was starting to worry, but Tanu had assured her that Bracken was safe in the fairy realm.

Finding places for everyone to sleep was interesting because they had, the attic, grampa and grama Sorenson's room (Which the Larsons occupied), Dale's room, and two small guest bedrooms and the master guest bedroom. Kendra, Knox, and Tess slept in the attic; Kendra's parents took the master guest room; Knox and Tess's parents took one of the smaller rooms; Warren slept on a cot in Dale's room, (having what Warren had called a "Brother sleepover."); Trask and Tanu took the living room couches, and Mara got the bed in a smaller guest room; Vanessa found an air mattress in a closet for Kendra and a cot for herself. Other than the lack of space everything else went smoothly. There were no questions raised by Knox and Tess's parents and Kendra's parents seemed to be accepting of the knights of the dawn. Grampa Larson had sent everyone except the kids' parents to bed early because they would have to rise early in order to sneak out to avoid raising suspicions. Grampa and grama Larson were going to stay up late playing board games with, Pete, Zola, Marla, and Scott. Kendra was currently trying to go to sleep, but the adults downstairs were being quite loud.

Kendra felt sorry for Tanu and Trask. Knox was currently downstairs having an argument with Grampa and Grama about going on the mission, while their parents set up the board game. Kendra heard the door to the attic room open, then she heard Tess.

"Please just one lullaby, then I will go straight to sleep and won't go down and bother mom and dad." Tess pleaded to the unseen adult that entered into the room with her. Kendra shifted under her blankets in order to see Tess's bed without spooking anyone. Kendra saw Mara tucking Tess into her bed, Kendra could tell it was Mara but in the low light, she could not see the native American's face. But Kendra heard Mara's answer none the less

"Fine, one lullaby that's all you get, because believe it or not, I need sleep too." Tess giggled with delight, "Shh, you will wake your cousin," Mara scolded gently, Tess fell silent. Kendra saw Mara tuck Tess into bed, then sat near the end of the bed herself. Then she started to sing, her voice was rich and melodious, she sounded unreal. Mara sang of summer rains, and sunshine, she sang of rolling desert plains, Kendra felt her eyelids starting to close, that was the last thing she remembered before drifting off to sleep.

#####

Seth did not like long hours in the leviathan, he could not tell what time it was, nor could Calvin, but they had guessed about 3 days. Seth had listened to every tale Calvin had to tell. But as bored as he was he did not leave the leviathan again. That girl on the island had creeped him out. Seth was currently tic-tac-toe with a piece of chalk—using a piece of wood to draw on—with Calvin and Hermo. The current scores were Seth-5 Hermo-4 Calvin-18. They had sorted out a system where the person who had not played that round played the winner. Seth stuck in his train of thought, totally lost the round, allowing Calvin to win.

"19 to 5 I can't say you are improving, Seth," Calvin said, with a hint of triumph in his voice.

"Not fair, you are like a few centuries older," Seth muttered, "how much longer are we going to be in here?" Seth mentally asked the Leviathan

"About 3 more days." The leviathan reported,
"Not much longer," Seth told himself trying to be optimistic, he wished Kendra was here.

#####

Kendra figured she was one of the first ones awake. She usually woke up early on the day of a big event, and today was no different. Kendra got dressed and crept downstairs as quietly as she could in case anyone else was trying to get more sleep; she did not want to wake her parents or her aunt or uncle. Kendra found Bracken asleep on a cot in the living room and saw Tanu and Trask both fast asleep on their couches. Both of them snored. Bracken slept face down, his hair stuck up in weird angles, and his blanket was on the floor. Kendra bent over and picked up the fallen blanket and gently draped it over the sleeping unicorn. Kendra planted a light kiss on his forehead as she had seen Warren give to Vanessa. She noticed a medium-sized knapsack draped over one of the corners of the cot. She bet it was the knapsack Bracken had been working on with the fairy queen. Kendra, driven by curiosity, opened the flap of the bag. True to her intuition when she peeked in she saw a small ladder descending into a dimly lit room. In one corner of the room inside the bag, Kendra saw their bags piled against one wall with a few other bags that she did not know the contents of, There was also a small armys worth of weapons where piled against one wall. Kendra heard Bracken stir and quickly closed the flap of the bag.

"Kendra? What time is it?" Bracken asked quietly.

"I don't know, I think around 6," Kendra replied.

"Do you want to go wake the others?" Bracken asked,

"Sure,"

"Thank you," He said that in a way that suggested that he was thanking her for more than just volunteering to go wake to others.

#####

Kendra went to go wake Mara, Vanessa, and Knox. While Bracken woke the guys. Kendra still tried to be quiet as she climbed the stairs to the guest bedroom. Trying not to wake her relatives. She creaked open the guest bedroom door. Mara was curled up in the bed, her knees drawn up to her chest under her covers. Her hair was quite a sight, Kendra had thought that Bracken's hair had looked crazy while he had slept. Mara took crazy hair to a whole new level. She looked like she had an afro. Vanessa was asleep on the cot, unlike Mara her hair had been put into a neat braid that kept it together. Kendra decided to wake Vanessa first since she was closer, so she walked up next to the cot.

"Hey, Vanessa, you have got to wake up. It's time to go if we don't want to be seen." Kendra said as she leaned over the sleeping narcoblix

"Ya, I know just give me a minute, go wake Mara," Vanessa muttered sleepily. Kendra walked over to the bed where Mara was fast asleep. Kendra felt guilty waking her, knowing full well that Mara needed rest. But she had told Bracken she would help.

"Hey, Mara, you have to wake up, we have to get ready to go. Kendra said, putting a hand on Mara's shoulder.

"Ok," Mara mumbled, as she started to stir, she sat up, blinking. Kendra figured that Mara had caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror on the wall because, her next words were "Hey, V, can I borrow a hairbrush?"

"You need it more than I do." Vanessa joked as she passed Mara the hairbrush from on top of the dresser. Kendra left them to go get ready, Kendra headed to the attic to wake, Knox.

#####

Knox had been permitted to come on the mission, he had obtained his parent's" permission", (much to Grampa's unenjoyment) under the assumption that he was going to tag along with

trusted friends on a work trip to New Zealand, where he would check out a wildlife park there. They had tried to keep the story as close to the truth as possible, without saying that they were going to find Seth on a deadly dragon sanctuary and sneaking past the guardians of the dragon temple. Kendra had come and woken Knox, he felt that he was one of the last people awake, even Tess was up before him. Knox tromped down to the kitchen, Bracken was there along with Kendra, Tanu, Trask, Warren, Vanessa, Mara, and Tess. What was Tess doing here? Knox thought, he figured that she had probably come to say bye to everyone. Knox noticed that all their bags were gone. Tanu had explained yesterday that Bracken was helping make a magical bag that was around the size of a normal bag on the outside but had a whole room on the inside. Knox bet that was where all the bags had gone. Tanu and Warren made shushing motions at Knox. Knox realized that he probably shouldn't wake his parents. Because they were traveling via shrine not car. Knox, walked more slowly, trying to be quieter. Trask confirmed that everyone was here and told them all to head out back quietly. As Mara turned to head out Tess ran up and hugged her. Wrapping her arms tightly around the native American's waist.

"Why can't you stay with me?" Tess complained,

"Don't worry, we will be back soon; hopefully we will have Seth with us." Mara encouraged as she crouched down, making herself more accessible.

"You feel cold," Tess replied snuggling deeper into Mara in an attempt to warm her up.

"You could stay, you know that right Mara? It might even be safer for you." Tanu said to Mara, Knox knew that this was Tanu's last attempt to keep Mara from coming to let her recover.

"No, I am coming. You guys need me, and I want to help." Mara responded as she rose with Tess in her arms. Tess looked quite satisfied with her current position in Mara's arms. Tanu gave a sigh of resignation, which Knox assumed as a sign that he had given up on this argument.

#####

The first thing they did on their way to the pond was stop by the stable to pick up Tempest. It had been decided that they would bring the griffin with them. Trask had said since Knox was coming on the mission they would have a formal introduction before crossing over to Titan Valley. but they could not linger in the house in case people woke up. Knox fell into step beside Mara. He noticed that she was shivering and remembered what Tess had said about Mara being cold.

"Hey, do you want me to get your jacket?" Knox asked, trying to be helpful.

"What? Oh, sure, that would be great." Mara said. Knox could tell that she was a little surprised by the question. Knox picked up his pace so he could reach Bracken, who currently held the knapsack.

"Hey, can I get something from inside the bag?" Knox asked him.

"Sure, what do you want?" Bracken asked curiously.

"I volunteered to get Mara's jacket for her," Knox responded nonchalantly,

"They say, chivalry is key, but I think Mara is a bit out of your league." Bracken joked it took Knox a second to soak in Bracken's words.

"No, no, it's not that, she just looked cold so I was trying to be nice," Knox responded hurriedly, Bracken stopped and took the bag off his shoulder and opened it. Knox descended the ladder into the bag. Though there were no lights in the room Knox could see very well. It was almost as if light filtered through the walls, though when Knox touched them they felt solid. Knox hurried over to the pile of bags. He quickly found the bag that belonged to Mara. Other than it being the only pure black bag, it now that the initials M.T embroidered in

delicate gold letters, a small gold tree embroidered in the same thread stood next to the letters. Knox opened the bag. Thankfully, the coat was right on top of the pile of neatly folded clothes inside the bag, the coat was midnight black, as Knox picked it up he felt that the fabric was quite soft, yet not flimsy. Knox tucked the coat under one arm as he climbed the ladder out of the knapsack.

"Now come on, we have catching up to do," Bracken said as he gave Knox a hand out of the knapsack. Knox set off at a quick pace with Bracken, Knox caught up with Mara and gave her the coat.

"Thanks, Knox," Mara said as he handed her the coat, despite it being a mild day she had been visibly shivering when Knox had caught up with her.

"Are you ok?" Knox asked as she zipped up the coat

"Yes, just a small cold or something like that." She whispered as they resumed walking. Knox felt sorry for her. She had a stomach injury, internal bleeding, and now a cold. Knox put in his mind to ask Tanu if he had a cold remedy next time he caught up with him. Knox and Mara walked in silence the rest of the way to the pond. They caught up with the others near one of the gazebos. "You guys made, it come over here, we are going to do official introductions," Tanu called as the pair approached the group. Knox and Mara drew nearer. Trask started to speak.

"Well, since we have a new recruit we may as well have intros. I will go first, my name is Trask, I have worked with the knights of the dawn for many years, I am one of the four lieutenants of the knights of the dawn. I have many skills but I have a long history as a detective, I am also a dragon tamer." Trask nodded to Bracken who went next.

"I am Bracken, as you all know I am a unicorn, I now have the ability to shapeshift into my true form now that I possess my third horn. I am also the son of the fairy queen, making me an heir to the throne." Bracken fell silent as if looking for more words, but he nodded to Tanu

"I am Tanu, I to have a long history with the knights, I am an experienced potion master, and I also have experience as a healer, though I am no professional, my skills have not failed me yet." He nodded to Kendra

"I've only been a knight for about a year and a half, I am have been selected by the fairy queen to be her handmaiden and do her work on the preserves and anything else around that sort of thing." Knox was really impressed, what other powers and secrets did his cousins have, though it seemed that everyone here had cool secrets and powers. Warren spoke next.

"I am Kendra's second cousin and I have been with the knights for many years. I am currently engaged to the most beautiful woman on the planet. I am a skilled adventurer who is adept at getting injured in the stupidest ways possible. Claims to fame, I once broke half the bones in my body fighting a two-headed flying panther, and I also fought in the battle of Zzyzx." Warren finished and nodded to Vanessa.

"I'm Vanessa, I am Warrens's fiancé, I am also a narcoblix which means that if I bite someone I can control them in their sleep. I have worked for the knights for quite a few years and I have also been a spy for the society, but after being discovered I betrayed my former master and aligned myself with the Sorensens." Knox now understood the bite threats, and he also thought more highly of Vanessa. It was now Mara's turn

"My name is Mara Tabares, I joined the knights when the society destroyed my home and a dragon working for them murdered most of my family. I have been a knight for a bit shorter time than Kendra. I am also a skilled tracker, dragon tamer, and I can also tame almost any wild animal." Knox realized that it was now his turn

"Uh, hi my name is Knox Larson, I am not a knight. I want to come to help save my cousin Seth, I have killed a giant squid demon." Knox felt out of place with everyone else and their

skills and abilities.

"Since Knox is a beginner I vote that we assign him a designated protector. No Knox, we are not treating you like a baby, Kendra has had Warren since her first mission" Trask said, Knox weighed his options, Warren was taken, he would have been Knox's first pick. Knox found to his surprise that his second pick was Mara. Thought Knox did not want to put more on her plate, he had seen her in action she had proven that she could protect and Knox could help protect her. That thought sealed his decision.

"Can I have Mara?" Knox asked, both Mara and Trask looked surprised but Mara show no signs of rejection.

"Well Kendra has Warren, Knox can have Mara," Trask announced as he turned to head to the pond, Tempest started to fly people across. Knox turned to Mara she looked pale and was shaking, Knox trotted over to see what was wrong.

"Hey, are you ok?" Knox asked, for the second time that day

"No, something is wrong, can you get Bracken for me?" Knox helped Mara sit down then rushed off to find Bracken, Knox reached Bracken right before he started to mount tempest to fly to the island in the middle of the pond.

"Bracken, wait," Knox said as the unicorn was climbing on to the griffin.

"What's wrong?" Bracken asked turning towards Knox.

"Something is wrong with Mara, she was real shivery and cold this morning, now she is pale and shaking, she said something is wrong," Knox explained hurriedly,

"Where is she?"

"This way," Knox said as he and Bracken set off in the direction Knox came, they found Mara, her head resting on her knees that were drawn up to her chest, she was shaking worse than ever. "Dragon venom," Bracken said gravely, "That is why she has not been healing," he said with realization in his voice.

"Can you help her," Knox asked

"I am certain I can but if I cant my mother can." Bracken said as he crouched down in front of Mara, "Mara, I am here, can you hear me?" Mara nodded she looked up from her knees. Bracken took out a long pearly unicorn horn, that Knox assumed to be Bracken's. Bracken touched the tip of the horn to Mara's forehead and started muttering in a strange language. The unicorn horn turned red-hot, Mara grimaced, then she stopped shivering, and her skin turned coppery brown again. Bracken helped her to her feet. Mara gave Knox a small smile.

"Is she ok now?" Knox asked with concern

"I will be," she said

"What was wrong with her?" Knox asked Bracken

"There were trace amounts of dragon venom in her system, my best guess is that it was a slow-acting venom designed to slowly incapacitate they prey allowing the hunter to take their time," Bracken said, "She should heal quicker now, we need everyone in their prime, we have a war to stop." #####

"Master I have news, I have found a route that will allow us to reach Titan Valley in a day and a half." The leviathan's voice startled Seth out of his slumber,

"Well that's good we need to get there as soon as possible. I don't want to be in the dark any longer." Seth answered, soon he would be out of the leviathan and soon he would have his memories.

Capture

What was taking them so long? Kendra wondered. Everyone had come through except for Knox, Bracken, and Mara. The fairy queen stood next to Kendra her eyes fixed expectantly on the shrine, the fairy king was helping the others get their mounts. Kendra was turning to mount her stag when there was a burst of light and Tempest flew over to them, astride Tempest sat Knox, Bracken, and Mara. The griffin smoothly stopped and landed near Kendra and the fairy queen, Trask trotted over to see what had taken them.

"What took you so long?" He asked Bracken as he approached.

"Sorry, we had issues, Mara had a bad reaction to dragon poison," Bracken said as he dismounted coming forward to get out of Mara's earshot.

"What, is she ok?" Trask asked, his face now serious his eyes full of concern.

"She is better now," Bracken responded, "But it would help to know what dragon attacked her, do you remember anything?"

"No, Jade Falls was a catastrophe, we had been cornered by a group of adolescent dragons, small but still deadly. They struck quickly, I got swiped in the back of the head with a tail and was knocked unconscious, Mara dragged me to safety, when I awoke I found her unconscious next to me, she was a bloody mess, barley breathing, on her deathbed. I spent the following days trying to nurse her back to health with my limited resources, then, your wizard found us. She never told me the full story other than that she dragged me to safety then blacked out.

Honestly, I doubt she remembers all of it. She was beaten up pretty bad"

Bracken nodded, "I was hoping I wouldn't have to look through her memories, but I will try later. The key to finding the right medicine for her is finding out what attacked her." Bracken said thoughtfully, he turned and mounted a magnificent white stag.

"Why don't you transform?" Kendra asked

"Because I don't want to tire myself out right as we get to Titan Valley," Bracken explained.

The group rode in silence for some time. Kendra noticed Trask acting strange, he looked too serious, every time he glanced at Mara he would avert his eyes and look at the ground. After watching this go on for half an hour Kendra moved up to find out what was going on.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Kendra asked Trask as her mount came into sync with his.

"Nothing," He responded

"It's not, nothing, come on it's ok. Is it Mara?"

"Yes," Trask responded with a hint of grief in his voice.

"What's wrong?" Kendra asked she was trying to be helpful, not intrusive.

Trask started talking, "When Mara joined the Knights of the Dawn I promised her father that I would protect her, that was the only reason her dad was ok with it. But ever since she joined I feel like she has been protecting me. She almost died so many times, but at Jade Falls I had pushed my luck with her. Without Andromadus's intervention, she would have died at Jade Falls, I have never forgiven myself. But now she is getting stronger by the day, then when I turn my back for 10 minutes she almost dies again." Trask seemed like he had wanted to say this to someone for a long time,

"You love her don't you?" Kendra realized.

"More like a daughter than romantically, Mara has her eyes on someone else."

"Who?" Kendra asked

"It does not concern you yet, so I will keep that to myself" Trask answered, Kendra was not

surprised, that Trask withheld that info, she was now curious but decided to not bring it up. Kendra looked to Trask he was staring at Mara again, she was on Tempest, her head hung low, she seemed tired and worn out.

"You can't watch her every minute and it is not your fault what happened to her back there," Kendra said trying to help Trask feel better

"I, know, but it does not stop me from beating myself up none the less," Trask acknowledged
#####

The group came to a stop near a small hill, the hill was a medium-sized hill, it had young trees around it at regular intervals, carved into the side of the hill was a stone archway that lead to a tunnel and extended in towards the center.

"This is the way to Titan valley, but be warned the shrine is in territory frequently visited by giants. There are not many fairies at Titan valley so I do not know the situation of the preserve. But be warned giants could be waiting for you on the other side." The fairy queen warned

"We will be carefully mother, I promise." Bracken dismounted and embraced his parents tightly and signaled for the others to dismount. Everyone hopped off their mounts. Mara dismounted tempest as well due to the fact, that if Mara was riding Tempest, they couldn't fit in the tunnel. Kendra started walking with Bracken towards the archway. Kendra and Bracken went in first, At first, Kendra could not see the end, then there was a change in the air, Kendra could tell that they had crossed over. Kendra and Bracken had just exited the tunnel into the sunshine when a set of nets came out of nowhere and engulfed them. Kendra heard Bracken cry out a warning but it was too late, Kendra fell back, and blacked out.
#####

Knox crossed over with Mara who lead Tempest with her, they had walked in silence through the tunnel when Mara announced that they had crossed over. Knox could tell no difference, though Mara claimed that there was a change. Knox could now see the end of the tunnel, right as he and Mara crossed out into open sunshine, Mara shouted a warning about half a second before two nets came upon them.

Knox was all tangled in his and he saw that Mara had been knocked to the ground as well. The net had completely engulfed him, he saw a rope leading from the weighted net, at the end of the rope was a giant. There were more giants, Knox counted 3, one of the other giants held nets, one net held Bracken who was yelling in a foreign tongue at the giant, Kendra dangled limp in her net, she appeared unconscious.

They had been captured, Knox saw the others come out of the tunnel all in rapid succession they all were hit with nets, Warren, Vanessa, Tanu, Trask all here captured. Knox was reeled in by one of the bigger giants who passed him off to the one that held Bracken and Kendra, the same giant reeled in a fighting Mara. Though she kicked and squirmed she could not lose the net, unlike Bracken she silently struggled. Knox saw her realizing that struggling was futile, so she halted her efforts and focused on taking in her surroundings. Knox looked around and all the giants appeared to be male. In the distance, Knox saw a magnificent castle. It was the biggest structure he had ever seen, If Knox had to take one guess about where they were going it seemed that the castle was the safest bet.

After the giants had rounded up and secured the others they set off towards the castle. It did not take long, the giants ran most of it taking long loping strides. Throughout the run, the giants had mostly conversed amongst themselves in a foreign language. Knox looked to Kendra, she was still unconscious. Knox was worried, what had the giants done to his cousin?

Knox decided it was probably that Kendra had fallen and bumped her head when the giants

had captured her. His train of thought was cut off by the long bellowing of a horn. Knox looked up and saw that they had approached the front gate of the castle. Knox was amazed by the sheer size of the building. but the size was fair since it was a giant castle. One of the giants passed their captives off to the giant that held Knox and Mara. Knox did not see who the giant held. The other two giants took the group into the castle, they passed through winding corridors and down spiral staircases. When the giant reached the bottom of a particularly long staircase to come to a tall oaken door the giant opened the door and both giants entered. They shut the door behind them and put the group down, then they started to untangle the nets. What were they going to do? Eat them? Knox did not want to find out but he could not flee, the giants were right there when Knox was untangled from his net he could now see clearly, now that ropes were no longer obstructing his vision.

"The queen will see you soon but first you have another visitor." Knox was surprised to hear the giant speak English, but he was not excited to meet anyone.

#####

Kendra had awakened with the help of some smelling salts from Tanu. She found that she was in a large room on what seemed to be a table. The first thing she saw was the giants, Kendra snapped back into reality, and jolted up. They had been captured, Kendra looked around everyone was accounted for, even Tempest, The griffin was sitting at Mara's side like an obedient puppy.

"Are you ok Kendra?" Warren asked he had been kneeling beside her.

"Ya, I just bumped my head, where are we?"

"The giant queen's castle."

"What!" Kendra said, alarmed. She did not want to believe it but it seemed like the only explanation for their current position. Kendra got startled as she heard the door creak open. She saw a giant enter the room, it appeared to be carrying a human, as the giant got closer, Kendra almost fainted again. The person on the giant's hand was none other than... The Sphinx.

#####

The giant set the Sphinx on the table. Vanessa snarled, Tanu and Trask shot looks of hatred. Knox looked confused, Mara's eyes were murderous, her hands were balled into fists, Kendra had to admit she looked pretty scary, Kendra certainly couldn't want those eyes on her.

"Well look who has become my prisoners." The Sphinx said snidely,

"Shut up you arrogant ball of slime," Mara countered snidely,

"Arrogant ball of slime? I have been called many things but that one is new." The Sphinx replied offensively, seemingly not offended by Mara's insults, "Now here are some words for you, give up, this is not children's play, this is war, I have no time to exchange petty insults."

"You are right, get out, we have no time to play your game, we are busy," Mara said, launching the Sphinx's words back at him.

"Ah, I remember you, you are the Tabares girl, Rosa's daughter, that might explain your feelings towards me." Mara looked more murderous than ever, Tanu and Trask moved to intercept her, Mara launched herself at the Sphinx,

"In about three minutes you are going to wish you had never been born. We spared you now to backstab us you traitorous," Mara spat an insult in a different language that Kendra didn't recognize. Mara continued to struggle but Tanu and Trask still had firm hands on her shoulders.

"Your companions know better than you. They know that as a guest of the giant queen any injuries you inflict on me would be an offense to her majesty." The Sphinx walked closer,

Mara redoubled her efforts to break lose of Tanu and Trask. The Sphinx walked ever closer to the snarling Native American. "My, you have grown." The Sphinx taunted, Mara struggled harder partly breaking free of Tanu. Tanu wrapped his arm around her waist right where her wound was, Mara, let out a cry of agony and doubled over sinking to her knees. Tanu and Trask let go of her. The Sphinx bore down on her, she looked up at him defiantly, hatred laced into her every feature. "I am going to keep this short. Stop fighting, you are not going to win this war, you are just going to lose more people the more you fight." Kendra couldn't watch this anymore.

"No, we won't, we prevailed against you last time, didn't we? It will be you who loses and when you do the dragons won't be happy with you." Kendra astounded herself with her own boldness. "Now, where is Seth?" Kendra asked aggressively.

"I have no idea, which is one of the reasons I am here." Kendra heard booming footsteps approaching the room but still a distance away. "Well, it seems like her majesty will see you soon." With that, the Sphinx walked over to the giant that had brought him in, it picked him up but did not move, it was clear that the Sphinx wanted to to see what was going to happen. Trask helped Mara to her feet, she was sweating and shaking with rage.

"I am so sorry, I didn't realize where I was putting my arm." Tanu apologized

"It's ok, it just hurts a lot. I doubt you did any extra damage." Mara assured him,

"Do you want anything to dull the pain?" Tanu asked

"No, I need to be alert," Mara responded "Sorry for making you guys hold me, I was just so infuriated, we spared him and now he has turned against us again, but now since he is an eternal I can't give him the painful death I want to." Mara acknowledged. Kendra felt the same way, "What if we put him in the quiet box?" Kendra asked

"No, we can't capture him while he is the giant queen's guest, he was right about everything." Mara lamented

"That was weird, taunting isn't usually the Sphinx's style," Venessa said.

"He wanted us distracted and off our game. And I fell right for it." Mara mourned, Tempest walked over to see what was going on, the griffin held the knapsack in her beak, she let out a low hoot and nuzzled Mara's hand with her beak, Mara stroked the griffin affectionately. The door swung open and revealed the giant queen.

#####

Queen

The giant queen had the portions of a regular woman, other than her size she looked quite human. She wore a magnificent gown that looked like it belonged in a medieval play, her skin was lightly tanned and she had long curly black hair. Kendra figured that she was quite attractive for a giant. But then again the only giants Kendra had ever really seen before was Thronis and the one that had carried them to the castle. "Begone, I wish to confer with the prisoners alone." The giant queen commanded her voice deep and melodious with a hint of an accent...Scottish?

"But they are my prisoners," The Sphinx countered,

"Just because, you gave me the way to obtain them does not mean that they are all your prisoners, I said you could possibly have the girl and permitted you to find the boy. Now leave." The queen's tone implied that there was no arguing. The giant holding the Sphinx titled his head in a half bow and exited the room with the two other giants that had brought them here.

"What do you want with us," Trask said, he stood closest to the giant.

"I ask the questions first, now, why are you here?" The queen asked sternly

"It does not concern you now," Trask answered coldly

"Yes, it does, unless you want to become my dinner? Humans are a rare delicacy." Kendra saw Mara lean over to Trask and whisper something in his ear.

"What did you tell him?" The giant queen demanded, turning her attention to Mara.

"She was recommending we strike a deal," Trask said,

"But before we continue I need to talk with my team."

"You have five minutes." The giant queen said, Kendra could tell that she was impatient. Trask signaled the others over.

"Mara had an idea, remember at Wyrmoost we struck a deal with Thronis, and in return for our lives, we stole something for him.

"Yes," Kendra, Warren, and Tanu simultaneously answered.

"I heard about that," Vanessa said, Knox looked confused

"Well, if we are already going to the dragon temple what if we make a deal with the queen that we will steal something for her, in return that the Sphinx won't get Kendra and we can all live?" Trask proposed

"That might work! Mara, you are a genius." Warren said

"Well, it is only genius if it works," Mara responded, Trask, turned to look at the giant queen, and turned back.

"It could work," Tanu acknowledged,

"Go for it," Vanessa assured. Trask turned to face the giant queen again.

"We are on a mission to retrieve the boy your guest is after, we are also hoping to gather an item from the dragon temple. Here are our terms, let us go, and let us have the boy. We will steal an item of your choice." Trask announced to the giant queen. her eyes lit up with excitement.

"You do not jest?" The queen asked

"We are dead serious, we have braved the temple at Wyrmoost and stole something for Thronis."

"How do I know that you do not lie to try to be spared." The queen asked suspiciously

"We have no way to prove," Trask lamented,

"Actually, there is, when you make a pact with a giant they leave a mark on you. If you made a pact with Thronis than I would be able to see your mark, if, you are lying prepare to die, if, you speak the truth Step closer those who made the deal." Trask, Mara, and Tanu stepped forward. The queen put her hand on the table palm up and the trio stepped on, the queen lifted the group closer to her face, "You three do indeed bear Thronis's mark." The queen set them back down on the table.

"Do you believe us?"

"I am starting to lean more towards trust, no one can fake the mark of a giant. What would you want to steal for me?" The queen asked

"It can be an item of your choosing, all we ask for is to be spared," Trask replied

"You do make a compelling argument. Though what if I spare you then you die and I lose my investment?" The queen questioned

"I am certain at least one of us will survive to grant you your treasures." Trask asserted confidently, the queen nodded thoughtfully. Kendra hopes it'd be more than that. Trask went on "We have also killed the dragons Glommus, Siletta, we also faced Navarog, and most of us survived." The giant queen looked mildly impressed,

"You said most, how many of you died or a team of how many." The queen asked picking up on the technicality.

"Two out of eight, one of which was Navarog who infiltrated our ranks using an avatar, then betrayed, us he revealed his true form, he killed one and injured another, he did not get to gloat about it," Trask said proudly.

"Your group is indeed more than meets the eye, the younger girl has a peculiar aspect, what's your name." Kendra realized that the giant queen was talking about her,

"My name is Kendra,"

"Tell me, Kendra, why are you here?"

"I am here to look for my brother, and to help stop the war against the dragons, and to look for allies," Kendra responded.

"you radiate a peculiar energy." The queen noted,

"I am fairykind," Kendra explained, the queen looked surprised but did not respond, she appeared to be thinking hard, when a giant burst into the room, The giant looked like a young girl, she had long ebony hair twisted into complex braids and tan skin like the queen, she also wore a simple dress that ended at about her knees, her feet were bare.

"Your majesty, a fleet of dragons are approaching the castle." The messenger reported,

"What! How many?" The queen said frantically.

"About 12, one of them is Rex Montem," The messenger answered, the queen paled, she looked flustered now.

"Gather my guard, have them meet me in the courtroom." The messenger dashed out the room her hair flying behind her as she ran.

"Is there anything we can do your majesty?" Trask asked,

"No, not one of you could stand against Rex Montem, I will see what he wants."

"Who is Rex Montem?" Kendra asked, he seemed like bad news.

"Rex Montem, is Celebrant's oldest son, he rules the dragons of this sanctuary, he is a fearsome opponent, none would dare come against him. He hungers for war. And now I hear he has gotten what he has desired for thousands of years. He crosses into my domain to either seek alliance or destroy us. I fear the latter." Kendra suddenly understood the reaction, this was bad.

#####

It had been about an hour since the giant queen had gone, the group had been able to pass the time by filling in Knox, Vanessa, and Warren about the dragon temples. They had talked about the guardians, and about tactics on how to survive dragons. There had been considerable commotion upstairs, but no one had dared to try and find out what was going on. Trask and Mara were recounting the meeting with Thronis to Knox when the giant queen entered the room.

"You need to depart now, you have no time." the queen was flustered, her hair was disheveled as if she had been constantly running her hand through it.

"What happened?" Trask asked

"Rex Montem and his guard stormed in demanding we hand over your group, whoever you humans are he must see you as a threat, he was insistent. He gave us an hour to hand your group over. You have put me in a predicament, that if I hand you over it will look like an act of cowardice, and my position of caretaker will be put into question. I would be subjecting to the dragon's will, and I refuse to do that. You have to leave. I also have a task for you."

"What do you want us to steal?" Trask asked solemnly.

"A seer stone of great renown, it will be quite a feat, I will have one of my servants bring you a sketch of it, I must go now." The queen turned and walked briskly out of the room. A few minutes later the same female giant that had alerted the queen of the dragons entered the room,

"Here are the drawings of the stone," she passed Trask a scroll that was about the size of Mara. Bracken needed to help Trask get the scroll into the bag with some assistance from Warren. Kendra was immensely glad that they had the bag, carrying the scroll would have been impossible. The young giant watched in awe as Trask and Bracken shoved the enormous scroll into the knapsack.

"Can your group fit in there?" she asked,

"Yes, we can,"

"Get in, take your griffin to, I will sneak you guys out, no one will give me a second glance,"

"Good plan, You heard her into the bag," Trask said, Kendra went in first then Bracken, followed by Tanu, Warren, Vanessa, Knox, and finally, Mara, who was leading an unimpressed Tempest, which had been quite a feat that Kendra doubted anyone but Mara could have done. Trask took up position at the top of the ladder and poked his head out, Kendra heard talking then silence and Trask closed the flap and descended the ladder, Mara and Vanessa where over by the weapons stashing throwing knives, darts, and other weapons in strategies places on their figures. Warren came over and started buckling on a sword

"Good idea to start suiting up team, Tanu do you want to help Knox find something?" Trask affirmed. Bracken helped Kendra strap on a short sword. Tanu passed Knox a small sword.

"Give that a swing, carefully" Tanu cautioned as he backed away, Knox heaved the sword, Kendra saw that he was having difficulty. Knox gave the sword a mighty swing and lost his balance and lost his grip, the sword went flying, Mara did a nimble one-handed cartwheel and dodged the sword that would have definitely killed her, Warren barely dodged out of the way, the sword tip grazed his cheek leaving a fine cut that was about 4 inches long. Bracken went to check on Warren's face; Trask went a retrieved the sword,

"I think we'll let Knox have a knife, I don't think swords are his forte," Trask said as he placed the sword with the rest of the other unclaimed blades. Tanu handed Knox a small knife, Knox gave it a couple of small swings

"Sure, I will take this one." Knox acknowledged, sheathing the knife and attaching it to his belt. Trask went up the ladder again to look and see how much longer until they were out of the castle.

"This might take longer than expected, there are dragons everywhere and security is high, the giants are trying to make sure no one comes in or out. Tiadrin, the giant carrying us, is going to try to get us well away from the castle, expect to be in here for about another half an hour." Trask announced, he climbed down the ladder and started to add a few knives to his figure as Mara and Vanessa had done. Tanu had his potions gear and a blowgun with quite a few darts too, Vanessa also had a blowgun as well. Warren had his sword, Mara had picked a tall spear and though it did not look like it, Kendra knew that she had about 6 throwing knives in various places like Vanessa. Bracken had his horn (That morphed into a sword). Kendra had her short sword and a small knife, Knox had his knife.

After about 10 minutes Warren and Vanessa started to practice sword fighting while showing Knox how it was done. Kendra thought they added a bit much flare, adding flourishes and swirls between strokes. Kendra noticed Trask and Mara doing simultaneous eye rolls between some of Warren and Vanessa's more dramatic and show parts of their play fight.

Tanu was telling Knox about the different techniques they were using. Bracken stood quietly next to Kendra watching the pair flaunt their talents. Kendra had to admit that Warren and Vanessa were quite good fighters. Kendra was starting to wonder if they were out of the castle yet. Trask climbed the ladder again to see how far they were he climbed down and started to report the situation

"We are quite a ways away from the castle, we are nearing one of the more mountainous regions that will conceal us from the dragons better than open plains," Trask told them.

"Can I start taking Tempest up on the ladder it will be no good to keep her down here and going up will probably take more time than descending, and I don't want us sitting around after Tiadrin leaves us," Mara said

"Good idea," Trask affirmed, Mara proceeded to halter the griffin. Kendra saw how this might get tricky Tempest would have to fly directly vertical and at an angle to get out and Tempest seemed to have other ideas. After about three minutes of coaxing and aggressive guidance from Mara who sat on the griffin's back to maintain contact, Tempest flew out into open air, Kendra heard a delighted screech come from the griffin. Kendra and the others exited the knapsack. Titan Valley was beautiful, tall mountains stretched all around them, lush forests covered most of the surrounding area, Kendra could smell the fresh mountain air. Their giant guide was nowhere to be found, Kendra looked up and beheld a clear blue sky, and saw Tempest happily flying in laps not far above them, Mara was still astride Tempest, her long black hair whipping in the wind. She leaned low and close to the griffin to minimize the amount of wind in her face, from up here Kendra could tell that Mara was smiling, it was not one of those fake smiles you give for pictures, it was a real smile. Bracken whistled and Tempest hearing Bracken's call came hurtling down to the group but managed to slow and land smoothly before colliding with the earth, Mara dismounted and took hold of the griffin's halter. Trask nodded

"Move out team, we have a lot of ground to cover"

#####

Seth was still bored. One could only play so much Tic-Tac-Toe before losing sanity. Seth had been poking through the old crates and stores in the leviathan, he had found an old outdated map, he had tried to learn from it, but had found it hard to remember any of the town names. Seth found a small date in fine print on the back, and he could barely read it. The date was "1652" Seth discarded the map after that, despite the apparent age of the leviathan all the food was still good, probably preserved by magic.

Seth was trying to make himself a sandwich out of some bread a hunk of cheese. He had

found a small knife in his bag, which he cleaned to the best of his abilities, and used it to cut the bread.

"Do you want some bread, Calvin?" Seth asked the large nipsie to sat on a large crate beside Seth.

"Yes, could you spare a piece of cheese, I like your sandwich idea," Calvin requested

"Sure," Seth replied using his knife to cut two minuscule pieces of bread and a small chunk of cheese. Seth cut more bread and cheese and made a larger scale sandwich for himself. He took a hesitant bite of his sandwich. Seth was still a little disbelieving that food could be fresh after it seemed like it was in there since the 17th century. Despite his hesitance, the bread was soft and rich, and cheese was on the harder side but still rich and bursting with flavor.

"It tastes good doesn't it," Calvin admitted as he polished off his own sandwich. Seth made another 3 sandwiches for Calvin and two more for himself. Seth felt as if his stomach was going to explode, though he was very happy to have a good meal for the first time in his memory.

#####

The day had been relatively uneventful other than the occasional dragon sightings in the distance, Kendra's group had also spotted a herd of grazing perytons in the distance. In the scroll from the giant queen, they had found a map that led the way to the dragon temple. They spent the day heading northwest towards the temple. The temple itself was between two of the largest mountains on the preserve situated in a deep valley. It was like the one at Wyrmoost but, it was under a vast lake, Bracken had said that the only way in was probably a secret tunnel somewhere along the shore. They had hiked most of the day other than the occasional break for food or to rest their legs.

Knox and Mara had the first watch that night. It had been suggested that they do watch in groups of two to have an extra pair of eyes and to make sure that the other person didn't fall asleep. Kendra was currently snuggled into her waterproof sleeping bag, faking sleep while listening Knox complain to a frustrated Mara about having to be on watch.

"Why can't we just go to sleep, there is nothing out here, or why can't there just be one person on watch?" Knox asked Mara sighed, Kendra could tell that Mara was sick of the complaining and probably just wanted some pice and quiet.

"You may not see everything going on around you, there are many dangers out here you are unaware of. There might be a cockatrice in the shadow or there might be dred wolves lurking just out of sight waiting to feast on your flesh. Why we don't have just one person is because that if the one person fell asleep and danger came we would likely all die. Two, if something did come into camp it could take out the sentinel before it awoke the group allowing the perpetrator or perpetrators, to kill us all in our sleep." Mara responded Gravely, Kendra felt a feeling of foreboding wash over her, as she felt the truth in Mara's words. This was not a game every moment they were out here, they were in danger real legitimate danger. Seth was in real danger if they did not find him, and the word was in real danger if they didn't succeed in stopping the dragons.

#####

Titan Valley

The night had passed uneventfully, Knox's shift had ended and he and Mara were relieved from duty by Trask and Vanessa. Knox had not found it difficult to sleep, his sleeping bag had been warm and cozy, and everything was strangely quiet, not even Tempest made a sound. Sleep overtook Knox quickly.

The morning was cold, Mara had helped Tanu make a fire while Trask retrieved everyone's coats out of the knapsack. Knox had decided he would not leave his sleeping bag until it was time for them to get up and moving. Warren caught on to what he was doing and joined him in his challenge. They had both looked like ridiculous caterpillars as they joined the others for breakfast. Knox had done a weird caterpillar crawl while Warren managed to get to his feet and do a sort of weird bunny hop.

Vanessa rolled her eyes at the sight of her approaching finance, Kendra and Bracken snickered at the approaching human caterpillars. Warren had been about 10 feet away from Vanessa when he lost his balance, face planted, and chipped his tooth on a rock. Vanessa proceeded to yell at him for being an idiot. Bracken had took away the pain and managed to heal some of Warren's tooth with his unicorn magic.

Tanu and Mara whipped up a breakfast of trail mix and canned fruit. Trask had denied them s'mores, he had said they could have some after dinner. Knox had found breakfast surprisingly filling and he was still cold but his thick jacket helped. The fire was also warm and welcoming, they had all huddled together during breakfast trying to conserve warmth. After that they set off at a quick pace trying to cover a lot of ground, Knox had enjoyed the first few hours until his legs started to get tired but no one else was complaining so he had kept his mouth shut, with the exception of asking questions about the various animals they saw. They hiked for about 5 hours before stopping for a lunch, everyone sat in a circle munching on sandwiches when Vanessa broke the silence,

"How did Rex Montem know we were at the castle? Did the Sphinx tell him then run to the giant queen or does he have an accomplice?" Everyone froze, Knox could tell that none of them had thought about that.

"Do you think Ronodin might be here?" Kendra asked timidly.

"Ronodin?" Mara asked clearly astounded and shocked.

"Did they not tell you that Ronodin has resurfaced and is causing us most displeasure?" Trask asked Mara.

"No, someone, left that out during my debriefing," Mara answered she glared at Tanu,

"I did not want to freak you out while your mental and physical health was still so fragile."

Tanu apologized, Mara rose to her feet and still glaring at Tanu.

"Just because I was on my freaking deathbed does not mean you can withhold that the villain of my childhood has resurfaced." Mara countered, frustration and anger rising in her voice,

"Well, Ronodin is back and on the move now more than ever, what more do you want me to say?" Tanu returned, rising to his feet almost matching Mara's impressive height.

"How do you know Ronodin?" Kendra asked trying to break up the argument, Knox was curious about that but not surprised, it seemed that Mara knew everything about the magical world.

"Ronodin is the kinda guy that my parents would use as a threat; don't do that or Ronodin might come after you; come inside Ronodin might be on the prowl tonight. He is someone

we all knew, and all of us feared, some could not even utter his name. If you fear for my mental health and the strain on my heart Tanu, please, alert me about my childhood nightmare when I am not out in the middle of nowhere in a dangerous area with rumors that you know who might be around." Mara responded while glaring at Tanu her dark eyes fixed and unblinking,

" There is no use working yourself up about it now," Trask added gently, Mara ripped her gaze from Tanu and fixed her eyes on the ground,

"You're right Trask, there is no use working myself up," Mara admitted, sitting back down on to the grass, drawing her knees up to her chest, she was still refusing to look at Tanu, she was staring at a particular piece of grass like it was responsible for all her frustration.

"If Ronodin is here we can't afford to be arguing, I know that the past couple days have been stressful but try to keep your tempers in check please." Bracken requested, Trask nodded, Mara gave a sigh she rubbed her fist into her forehead pressing her knuckles deep into skin as if she was trying to keep her skull in place. Knox saw Mara trying to keep the pain and frustration off her face but she was failing, Tanu was watching with concern, but did not move in yet, Trask rose to his feet and walked over to stand near Mara, he crouched and put his hand on her shoulder when he did not receive any response.

"Headache, I feel faint," Mara said, not further elaborating, Trask looked to Tanu, who—from what Knox could tell— was trying to diagnose the source of Mara's discomfort. The only guess Knox had concerning Mara was that she was still suffering grief from her injuries she sustained at Jade falls but why when they stopped and why not when they had been hiking? Trask knelt and put two of his fingers on the base of Mara's neck to check her pulse, he was silent for a minute,

"Are you ok?" He asked,

"Just give me a second, I don't feel so good all of the sudden," Mara murmured, Trask took his hand off Mara's neck and started to stroke her hair, starting at the apex of her head and working his way down massaging the skin. They sat in silence,

"Who taught you that one," Mara muttered leaning into Trask's touch, Trask had no reply he continued to silently stroke her hair. "I hate to break up this moment, but, Mara can you stand? We should be getting moving," Warren commented, Vanessa punched him lightly on the shoulder,

" I think I need to rest, I will ride Tempest," Mara whispered, her voice now raspy and breathy. Tanu nodded and walked the griffin to Mara, Trask helped Mara struggle to her feet then on to the griffin. #####

Kendra walked next to Bracken, holding his hand. That afternoon had been weird she had never seen Tanu and Mara argue, thinking about it Kendra had never heard Mara argue with anyone Mara was always so quiet and reserved. Though Kendra saw Mara's reasons, Kendra would also want the full story about what she was going up against no matter how badly she was injured, though Kendra had been curious why arguing had zapped everything out of Mara, she had been fine earlier during their walk, but then she had gone downhill rapidly.

Tanu had explained that it was from a rapid heart rate, he explained that because of Mara's blood loss her heart had to beat faster to pump blood to her vitals when she argued her heart rate went up dangerously higher. That was also why Tanu had neglected to tell Mara about Ronodin. If Mara's heart went too fast Tanu explained, she could have a heart attack or stroke that would likely kill her. Kendra had thought that Tanu had not made a smart move to neglect to tell Mara about the dark unicorn, but, she now saw why Tanu did what he did.

Kendra was not eager for Mara to die either.

Kendra looked to Mara who sat astride Tempest, she had not spoken since this afternoon,

Kendra did not know if this was the silent treatment or just tense Mara, sometimes it was hard to tell. Mara had never been the chatty type. She had not been chatty even before she had lost almost everything. Kendra was wondering if Bracken had seen inside Mara's mind yet to try and see what attacked her.

"I looked inside Mara's mind this morning," Bracken whispered to Kendra, almost as if he had read her mind.

"What, when?" Kendra asked, her curiosity now peaked

"It took some coaxing, Mara does not trust me a ton but I succeeded in convincing her right after breakfast as everyone was getting ready to start moving."

"What did you see?" Kendra asked

"Things that belong in nightmares, Trask did not exaggerate anything that happened at Jade Falls, if anything he made it sound better than it really was. I am shocked that Mara is still alive, she was very lucky that Trask regained consciousness when he did, Mara had truly been on her deathbed. She made me promise not to tell the whole story to anyone, I think she did not want more fuss from Tanu. She wants to be independent but she needs rigorous care honestly I think Mara should have stayed back at Fablehaven" Bracken fell quiet

"Is there anything you can do for her?" Kendra asked,

"Her physical injuries are probably curable, but might lead to future disability or chronic pain, her mental wounds are irreversible," Bracken responded, Kendra felt a stab of pity for Mara, no one should have to go through all of that it was simply unfair,

"I feel the same way," Bracken said, Kendra blinked and looked down at her hand, her fingers intertwined with Bracken's and realized that he was reading her mind,

"Hey! Cheater!" Kendra exclaimed, but she did not pull her hand away, she did not mind Bracken reading her mind at the moment.

"Thanks," Bracken said, Kendra blinked again Bracken was still reading her mind, Kendra decided to try thinking in Silvian and see if it worked. Kendra focused and switched her thinking to the fairy language, "The clouds are pretty today." Kendra thought, trying to be simple so she could focus on switching languages.

"Good work, Kendra," Bracken praised Kendra assumed that that meant it had worked,

"Would people listening to my thoughts hear Silvian?" Kendra thought switching back to Silvian and directing her thought to Bracken

"Yes," Bracken's voice entered her head, Kendra realized that he was speaking telepathically

"Sweet," Kendra thought back, now she and Bracken could have long-secret conversations though Kendra would have to be careful with her thoughts Kendra imagined how horrified Kendra would be if Bracken found about the time she kissed Warren or when she met Bracken and thought he was super cute and... Kendra froze looking down at her hand in horror, her fingers were still intertwined around Bracken's. Bracken burst out laughing at the horrified look on Kendra's face. Kendra yanked her hand away from Bracken's mortified and ashamed at her carelessness

"It is ok, I won't tell anyone," Bracken promised, trying to keep his face sober. Kendra put her face in her hands, she would seriously have to watch herself next time. This was probably the most embarrassing to ever happen to her, Kendra severely hoped she was not blushing.

Kendra and Bracken resumed walking and walked in silence for a while.

#####

Knox found out that he did not enjoy hiking for hours on end, he hadn't even seen any dragons which Mara had said was a good sign. Knox had seen this weird horned rabbit with wings that Mara had said was a wolpertinger. He had thought she had been joking about the name of the strange creature until Trask confirmed Mara's information so either this was the

most convincing group joke ever or that creature had truly gotten the short end of the stick when it came for getting a name.

Knox had stuck with Mara for most of the hike walking alongside Tempest, sometimes Mara had offered him a ride up on Tempest, most of the time Knox had accepted her offer and either sat behind or in front of Mara on the griffin. Mara didn't talk a lot, she would answer any question Knox asked but would always fall silent after. She had been pale the whole afternoon her skin pasty, and light.

"The sun is starting to do down," Trask observed

"Do you think we should make camp for the night?" Tanu asked

"Yes, we don't want to be moving around after dark, see that overhang, let's camp there,"

Trask said, Knox scanned the area for the cleft Trask was talking about, after a second of searching Knox spotted a small overhang coming off of a large hill the overhang was sheltered and hard to spot between the dense trees and undergrowth, it was the perfect place to camp that would keep them hidden and out of any rain or snow.

Trask made a fire while Tanu got stuff for dinner, they ended up eating sandwiches again.

Tanu also prepared some hot chocolate, it was rich and creamy. S'mores were made, Knox and Tanu would simply set theirs on fire then eat them charred, Kendra and Vanessa waited patiently toasting their's golden brown. Bracken tried to get golden brown but ended up burning all of his. Kendra offered to toast Bracken a marshmallow, and he graciously accepted.

"Do you want a s'more Mara? I can ask Trask for another roasting stick." Knox offered Mara, she was leaning against a large rock scanning the surrounding area, only her eyes moved if she just stared straight forward she could have been a statue or a brown-tinted shadow.

"Thanks for the offer Knox, but I am good," Mara responded, her eyes never stopped moving and her body never moved. "You're sure?" Knox questioned,

"Yes, I am thinking of retiring soon."

"I mean you could, but you would have to complete this mission first and you seem to still be in your prime," Knox muttered, Mara looked at him with confusion, then she started to laugh, her laugh was musical and light, basically the polar opposite of her voice.

"By retire, I meant to go to sleep not quit the knights," Mara answered after her laughing had subsided, that made a whole lot more sense to Knox now.

"When are we on watch tonight?" Knox asked,

"She is not going to have a watch shift tonight," Trask announced as he strode up to Knox and Mara.

"What, why?" Knox and Mara asked in unison.

"Because you need rest Mara, you have barely slept for three weeks and I don't want your judgment impaired by lack of sleep, Bracken volunteered for an extra shift so you can't argue," Trask answered,

"Tell Bracken he can sleep I can do my shift tonight," Mara countered

"Please Mara, I am really worried about you, I don't want anything to happen to you because I wasn't careful with your health." Trask pleaded stepping forward and putting his hand on Mara's shoulder, Mara's eyes softened and her shoulders slumped.

"Fine," Mara sighed, Trask nodded not saying anything more. Knox felt like he wasn't supposed to be part of this conversation so he tried to blend into the shadows trying not to be noticed.

Trask turned to Knox, "You will probably want to turn in soon, Knox you do not have the night off," Trask said affirming Knox's suspicion that he would not have the night off like Mara. Though Knox was not jealous of her Knox would rather be up for a few hours in the

night than be in Mara's shoes any day of the week.

#####

Seth approached the large island in the canoe he had used before. The leviathan had announced their arrival at Titan valley not long ago but the shores were too shallow for the leviathan to get any closer. So, Seth got a workout trying to paddle the boat to shore. Seth had gathered some of the food from inside the leviathan and put in his bag that Kendra had called his emergency kit. Calvin currently sat on his shoulder giving Seth advice and encouragement.

"You are almost there only about another 30 yards!" Calvin exclaimed. Seth looked up. Calvin was right, seeing his proximity to the island Seth rowed with renewed vigor, now that Seth was closer he could see the shore more clearly, the shore was covered in white stone instead of sand, the shore was a rocky landscape for about half a mile until it faded into a lush forest. Seth could see large mountains in the distance. Seth had no idea where Humbuggle's castle was located and it appeared that he had quite the hunt ahead of him. Movement on the shoreline attracted Seth's attention. Seth's jaw dropped, and his eyes widened. On the shore staring right at him, wearing a smirk, stood Ronodin.

Rescue

Tess sat on the back steps of the main house, she had tried to show her parents the fairies, she had even taken them by the hand and lead then the biggest group of fairies in the yard, but it was no use. Her parents never saw anything but butterflies. Though Tess had noticed that when she had tried to show her parents her fairies, auntie Marla and uncle Scott had shared knowing looks and a smile at Tess.

Tess guessed that her aunt and uncle already knew about the fairies. But she could not confirm, her parents had been hanging around with her aunt and uncle so much, that Tess could not get them alone. Tess missed her brother and cousins, she also missed Mara. Mara was not only aware of the fairies but she had also taught Tess about everything, all the cool tricks, and animals. Tess missed being able to ask questions and get real answers.

"Hey, Tess," The voice startled Tess, she flinched, and whipped her head around to see the approaching person, it was Dale. The lanky man sat down next to Tess on the stairs.

"Your parents are incredibly naive, we have been trying to show them the mysteries of Fablehaven so we can share the situation with them, we have given them the most obvious clues but they remain clueless." Dale lamented, Tess understood, she wished she could talk to her parents about the world they had no idea existed.

"I miss the others," Tess confessed,

"You too? After all the excitement I guess this place can seem a little boring if you stay in the yard." Dale said,

"Ya," Tess sighed

"Have you seen the treehouse?" Dale asked

"There's a treehouse?" Tess perked up excitedly,

"This way, Hugo helped build it."

#####

Kendra rubbed her eyes and yawned, she had just awoken, when she heard a twig snap, Kendra, whipped around. A deer-like creature stood in the middle of the camp. Kendra recognized the creature as a peryton. Her eyes darted around, who was on watch? Why didn't they alert the group?

The peryton was sniffing through some of last night's fallen leftovers. Kendra saw Bracken, Tanu, and Mara they were the only ones awake. Mara was trying to keep Tempest from pouncing on the peryton, the griffin was snarling and pawing at the air. Kendra realized that they were trying to simply not spook the peryton so that it might just pass by rather than attack.

Kendra made eye contact with Bracken, who made a shushing motion. Kendra heard a faint whoosh of air, and suddenly, two feathered darts appeared in the neck of the peryton. The feathered stag bucked then sank to its knees falling victim to the dart's sleeping potion. Falling 3 feet short of the sleeping form of Warren. Kendra looked to Tanu, he didn't have his blowgun out. She turned and saw Vanessa rising from her sleeping bag blowgun in hand in one hand and a couple of darts in the other.

"Nice work," Tanu complimented, "but, you could have hit someone."

"Thanks, I was being careful, the only person I could have possibly hit was Mara, and she has the reflexes to avoid that. And worst-case-scenario Mara is on forced bedrest and Tanu would secretly be pleased." Vanessa dismissed casually. Tanu opened his mouth to talk then closed

it, indirectly affirming Vanessa's words.

"I am glad you have so much faith in me and care so much V," Mara commented sarcastically, rolling her eyes and stroking Tempest.

"Why were you up? Trask told me you didn't have a shift last night." Vanessa inquired, "Tanu had to change my bandages, when did you wake up? I didn't even hear you." Mara countered,

"I heard the peryton and stayed still waiting for my moment." Vanessa returned offhandedly "I knew Tanu would not want to risk firing his blowgun in case he missed, Bracken does not hit me as someone to use uncalled for violence, and Mara, you are in no condition to wrestle something that size." Vanessa continued, Tanu nodded as did Bracken,

"I hate how people are indirectly calling me weak," Mara muttered sourly,

"It is not your fault you were mauled." Bracken put in,

"You are still plenty strong," Kendra assured. Mara shrugged but Kendra could see the satisfaction flicker in Mara's eyes.

"You know people eerily well, Vanessa" Tanu commented,

"So does Bracken and you don't call him out about it." Vanessa countered.

"That is because Bracken can read minds, you can't." Tanu countered

"I am observant," Vanessa replied, Tanu shrugged and let it drop, All of the talking had woken Warren and Trask, Knox remained asleep, his mouth slightly opened.

"Do you want me to put a spider in his mouth and see what happens?" Warren asked mischievously,

"No!" Mara, Tanu, and Vanessa whispered in horror

"Go for it." Kendra enthused, Bracken and Trask just shrugged. Mara stepped forward to put herself between Warren and Knox, who was still oblivious to everything.

"I was joking," Warren assured.

"Where you?" Mara asked putting her hands on her hips, arching an eyebrow and looking him dead in the eye,

"Mostly," Warren muttered, Mara rolled her eyes and bent over the sleeping form of Knox.

"Knox, wake up before Warren feeds you a spider," Mara said as she gently shook Knox's shoulder.

"What, Warren fed me a spider?!" Knox gasped jolting upright, his head colliding with Mara's face. Both of them let out a cry of pain and shock. Knox let out more of a yelp and Mara let out more of a whimper that reminded Kendra of a wounded animal.

Mara's hands were now clamped around her nose and Knox was rubbing his forehead. "I'm so sorry are you ok? I have a thick skull." Knox apologized, when Mara took her hand off of her face it was covered in blood, she had blood gushing from both nostrils. Kendra cringed.

"You have the hardest skull I have ever encountered," Mara acknowledged, she was pinching her nose to try and stop the blood flow from her nose resulting in her voice sounding squeaky and high pitched. Kendra fought a snicker at the current sound of Mara's voice, she sounded like a manly chipmunk.

"Can I have something to clean my face." Mara pleaded, Trask, handed Mara a handkerchief to clean up her face. She failed and ended up just spreading blood everywhere while trying to stop the bleeding.

It got to the point where Bracken had to stem the bleeding with his unicorn magic, and Trask took pity on Mara and helped her clean up her face while Tanu found food for breakfast.

After Mara's face was blood-free she went to go change her shirt that had gotten stained from her epic nose bleed. Kendra noticed a thick purple bruise forming on Knox's forehead.

"Is your head ok Knox?" Kendra asked,

"It feels a little sore," Knox admitted
"Have you seen it." Kendra wondered,
"No," Knox replied cluelessly.
"I think that Mara's face is almost as thick as your skull." Kendra laughed, Knox shrugged.
"Both of you are pretty hard-headed." Kendra acknowledged,
"I still feel sorry about her nose." Knox said, guilt in his voice.
"I think she will forgive you, it wasn't your fault," Kendra assured.
"That doesn't make her nose feel better." Knox countered,
"No, Bracken can though." Kendra kidded trying to lighten the mood of her cousin.
"Ya, we are lucky your boyfriend decided to tag along." Knox conceded. Kendra blushed and turned away.

#####

Seth could not believe his eyes, how had Ronodin found him? Seth knew for certain that he could not become Ronodin's prisoner again. But how could he evade the dark unicorn without docking on the island or just floating in the boat until Ronodin left? It wasn't dark enough for Seth to shade walk, and Ronodin had already seen him so that would be useless. Suddenly waves tipped the boat precariously. Seth could not see the source of the rocking, the water had been still. He looked over the side of the boat, something was under the water. Seth was freaking out, what was in the water? Suddenly, he heard a voice. It was rich and melodious like a choir of teenage boys speaking in unison.

"Seth, you don't remember me but I can help, my name is Raxtus I am currently invisible, if you trust me I can fly you to shore and keep you out of reach of Ronodin."

"Will that actually work?" Seth wondered skeptically, he wouldn't believe his luck if this worked. "What do you think Calvin?" Seth wanted to make sure that his tiny partner was on board with this.

"Go for it, Seth, your sister knows this dragon, we can trust him," Calvin assured,

"Won't Ronodin see us though?" Seth wondered.

"To Ronodin, it will look like you suddenly gained the ability to fly." Raxtus assured,

"Ok, go for it, just let me grab my bag." Seth conceded,

"Sure, let me know when you are ready," Raxtus said. Seth snatched up his bag and put Calvin in his pocket so that the little nipsie would not fall off.

"You ready Calvin?" Seth asked

"Yep," Came a small response from his pocket.

"Ok, I'm ready," Seth announced, something burst from the water and Seth felt an invisible talon wrap around his waist. He panicked at first, but then realized at it was only Raxtus, Seth felt his insides lurch as he flew into the air supported by the unseen dragon.

Raxtus was fast they made it to the island in record time. Seth looked down just in time to see Ronodin's surprised face as Seth flew over. It was the funniest thing Seth had ever seen, Ronodin standing on the shore of the beach, his mouth open and his eyes wide. It wasn't until the shore of the island had become a speck in the distance when Seth perked up, "Where are you taking me?" Seth asked.

"Do you want to find your sister?" Raxtus asked,

"Kendra is here?" Seth asked,

"Along with 7 others, they have been looking desperately for you," Raxtus informed,

"Really?" Seth wondered,

"Really, your family is desperate to get you back, we just have to find them now," Raxtus affirmed,

"Do you know where they are?" Seth asked,

"I have no idea, but I know that they are heading for the dragon temple."

"But I want to find Humbuggle I wasn't heading for a dragon temple," Seth said, bewildered, "They know that, but they need something from the temple," Raxtus responded.

"What is it?" Seth asked his curiosity now peaked,

"The dragons have declared war, your friends are looking for a powerful artifact to try to stop the dragons." Raxtus relayed, "Aren't you a dragon, why aren't you trying to stop them?" Seth asked.

"I am a unique dragon, I have sided with your family against my own kind," Raxtus related,

"Wow that's pretty brave," Seth acknowledged,

"I never thought of myself as very brave," Raxtus conceded

"Well, you are" Seth assured,

"Your sister tells me the same thing all the time."

"Where did you meet Kendra?" Seth asked

"At Wyrmoost, I'll let her tell that story," Raxtus responded,

Seth put it into his head to ask Kendra later.

#####

Knox rubbed his forehead if Kendra hadn't told him he had quite the bruise, he would have assumed that he had one. Knox wished he had an earlier shift, it had sounded like others had quite the morning. First, a deer with venomous antlers walks into camp and starting eating stuff, then Vanessa shoots it with her blowgun, and finally, Warren threatened to feed Knox a spider, Knox was awake for everything after that.

He had to admit that it had been the most interesting way Knox had ever been awoken, having been almost been fed a spider in his sleep by his distant cousin-in-law while on a dangerous dragon preserve, but saved from having to consume the arachnid by this good looking native American woman, who Knox had promptly smashed into her face with his head almost breaking her nose in the process.

It sounded too ridiculous to be true if you said it out loud like that. Other than that his morning had been calm, there had been no further incidents, Warren, and Tanu had dragged the unconscious peryton into the woods. Bracken had helped Knox by taking away most of the pain in his forehead, the bruise remained but it was now faint, according to Kendra and Bracken.

Mara had been teased about being able to dodge a sword that came flying in her direction but could not avoid Knox's skull. Knox wished that they had something to eat other than granola and sandwiches for breakfast, well, he could have eaten a spider if Mara had not intervened. He tried to tell himself that someone else would have stepped in if Mara hadn't, but, part of him was slightly doubtful. Knox wished that they could just get to the dragon temple and end the suspense hanging over all of them, but Mara had shown Knox the map, they had quite a ways to go.

#####

Separated

Knox yawned, he was finding watch incredibly boring, Trask sat next to him, his dark eyes constantly scanning the area. He had barely spoken the whole time Knox was on watch with him. Trask suddenly tensed.

"What's wrong," Knox asked. Trask shushed him.

"Listen" Trask whispered, Knox listened, he heard a rustling, it wasn't from the sleeping members of the group but from the trees. Trask nudged Knox's shoulder and pointed, Knox, followed Trask gaze and spotted a pair of glowing red eyes from the undergrowth. Trask drew his crossbow,

"Wake the others, Knox, quietly." He ordered, his voice a whisper. Knox dashed over to Tanu who was closest to him while trying to be as quiet as possible.

"Tanu, wake up," Knox whispered, shaking the bulky samoan's shoulder,

"What's wrong?" Tanu asked sitting up and yawning,

"There is something in the woods watching us," Saying it aloud made Knox shudder,

"Where's Trask?" Tanu asked,

"Keeping an eye on it, he told me to go wake you guys." Tanu started rummaging through his potion bag. he handed a small bottle to Knox.

"What is this?" Knox asked.

"One is a gaseous potion if things go too far drink it and it will turn you into a ghost-like state, though you will solidify in minutes so use it wisely." Knox was about to respond when he heard a fierce growling followed by an ear-piercing screech, Knox dashed over to Mara who had managed to sleep through the commotion. Knox dashed over and shook her shoulder hard. Mara grimaced and her eyes opened, she took one look at Knox's face and asked.

"What's wrong?"

"Something is attacking, you gotta get up." Mara held her hand out and Knox took it helping Mara unsteadily to her feet. Another growl echoed followed by a fierce howl. Mara paled, panic entered her dark eyes,

"No," She whispered, tensing, preparing herself for a fight.

"What?" Knox asked, a loud crash sounded and Knox whipped around just in time to see the monstrosity burst out of the trees. It looked like a wolf but, was no wolf, it was about the size of a large bear, it had vicious fangs bared, revealing rows of sharp, jagged teeth. It had a crossbow bolt protruding from its meaty shoulder, supposedly shot by Trask.

Mara grabbed the knapsack from the ground next to her sleeping bag and slung it over her shoulder. The beast went for Tanu, who guzzled the contents of a potion right as the beast pounced, Knox looked away as the beast brought a claw down on the potion master, but instead of squashing the samoan as it should have, the claw went right through Tanu, hitting the ground hard. Tanu now looked misty, Knox realized that it must have been a gaseous potion.

"Scatter, we will meet up near the temple," Trask called out, reloading his crossbow. Mara grabbed Knox's hand and broke into a run. She let out a shrill whistle, and a screech echoed back. Knox realized that Mara was trying to call tempest, they swerved around trees and brush, occasionally vaulting over fallen logs. They heard many sounds but saw nothing, but they ran, and ran, their speed fueled by panic. Knox was having a hard time keeping up with

Mara and her inhuman speed. Knox had no clue how long he had been running, his legs and lungs were starting to burn, he could see Mara starting to weaken as well. "Ok, we can break," Mara relented slowing her pace,

"What was that thing?" Knox questioned,

"A Lycanthrope, or more commonly known as a werewolf." Mara panted, clutching her side and wiping sweat off her brow.

"Do you think the others made it?" Knox asked,

"Only time will tell. Tempest isn't far I think."

"How do you know?" Knox asked

"I let her know where we were, she should be able to follow our tracks and scent. Do you want to grab a flashlight? My night vision isn't very good at the moment." Mara requested, "Sure," Knox said, Mara swung the knapsack off of her shoulder and placed it on the ground. Knox opened the flap and climbed down. Despite it being night the bag was still evenly lit, though a little dimmer than it had been that afternoon when Knox had come down to grab food with Tanu. He found a flashlight in one of the bags of supplies.

As he climbed the ladder he heard voices. Was Mara talking to herself? She didn't seem like the kinda person that did that. Knox peeked out the top of the bag. Two shadows loomed near Mara, one was a little taller than Knox the other was a little shorter than Mara but bulkier.

Knox stayed at the top of the bag to listen for a second

"What happened?" Mara's voice cut clearly through the silence

"We were vaulting over a smaller ravine while fleeing the werewolf, but he didn't make it all the way across, it was dark and he misplaced his footing." that voice was familiar. Knox climbed out of the knapsack and flipped on the flashlight. what Knox had thought was one person was actually Warren leaning heavily on Bracken, Kendra stood next to them. Warren's ankle was twisted at a weird angle and Knox thought he could see blood seeping through Warren's pant leg.

"Knox come here, and pass me that flashlight," Mara requested, "Bracken put Warren down let me see his ankle." Mara continued, taking command of the situation. Bracken helped Warren recline against a large rock and Mara crouched next to Warren, Knox passed her the flashlight and she switched it on. Kendra hovered next to them anxiously, but not speaking. Mara rolled up Warren's pant leg, his ankle was twisted at a very weird angle, Knox could see blood coming from Warren's boot that had indeed stained his pant leg.

"You brought another pair of shoes right?" Mara asked Warren, pulling a knife out of her own boot, Knox didn't even bother to ask why she had a knife in her footwear.

"Yes, you have to cut my boot off I am guessing," Warren answered

"Good guess," Mara responded, starting to cut away pieces of Warren's boot, Knox saw that Mara would find the seams and cut around those rather than just shredding the piece of footwear. Warren grimaced when Mara jostled his ankle when she slid the remainder of the boot off.

"I think its broken," Warren conceded,

"I think you are right," Mara muttered, rolling off Warren's sock as gently as she could.

"Kendra, my bag is a roll of bandages, a small potion with a blue label, some duct tape, and some scissors, get them for me, please." Kendra dashed into the knapsack,

"Should I ask what the duct tape is for?" Warren wondered hesitantly,

"Just to keep the bandages on, no I am not taping your foot back together," Mara assured

"What do you want me to do? Or, do you want me to look for the others?" Bracken asked,

"Look for the others but don't go far, I will probably need you back," Mara affirmed, Kendra emerged with her arms full,

"Why can't Bracken just heal Warren?" Kendra asked,
"Unicorns purify, take away pain, and help with surface injuries, we are less adept with broken bones or internal bleeding." Bracken told Kendra after she had passed her load off to Mara.

"Take only a small sip of this Warren," Mara told Warren uncapping the bottle Kendra had passed her after looking at the label to make sure Kendra got the right thing.

"What is this?" Warren asked skeptically taking the bottle from Mara, Knox was curious too.

"Pain killer, very strong stuff, Tanu mixed it for me back a Fablehaven, if you drink too much you will go loopy, so just one small sip." Mara related

"You a medical expert now?" Warren joked, taking the bottle from Mara and taking in one small measured sip.

"I had to learn quickly, and I am no expert," Mara responded gravely.

"You weren't kidding about this being strong stuff," Warren muttered shaking his head. He continued "I can barely feel anything, how do you live with bigger doses of this stuff?"

"The more pain, the less potency the potion has," Mara informed, she leaned closer to examined Warren's foot, when she grimaced,

"What wrong?" Knox asked Mara pointed to Warren's foot right below his ankle bone, there was blood coming out of a deep cut that had a piece of white sticking out.

"Is that?"

"Bone, yep this is one of the worst breaks I have ever encountered." Mara lamented, "Warren, I don't know if I can treat this, usually we would have rushed you into the hospital and you would have surgery. You shouldn't push the bone back in, and infections might be imminent in this environment, I could try to just clean it, bandage it, and splint it without touching the bone, or I can try to push the bone back in and cast it with Bracken's help." Mara related, "Your call, you know more than I do," Warren responded

"I probably don't honestly, you have been doing this for a lot longer than I have." Mara conceded, Warren nodded thoughtfully, so did Kendra, "Do you want me to wait for Bracken?" Mara asked

"Sure, we'll wait,"

Bracken returned with Tempest, looking dejected

"Did you find any sign of the others?" Mara asked anxiously

"No, I couldn't even find tracks, how's Warren?"

"Bad, I know you can't fix a broken bone, but you are more knowledgeable in the medical field than I am, come take a look." Warren dozed propped up against his rock, Kendra had gone to try and sleep, and Knox had stayed up to give Mara company and reassurance. Knox noticed that when Mara was anxious or stressed she would either pace or get bad headaches because the past hour had been a mix of both, he swore that Mara had paced up and down the small line she had mentally made so many times that she could have walked multiple miles. Some times she would massage her forehead as she walked and would wince here and there though she tried not to show it.

Bracken bent down and examined Warren's ankle while Mara embraced Tempest, burying her face in the griffin's feathers,

"This looks bad," Bracken agreed,

"What should we do?" Knox asked

"Amputate it," Bracken responded nonchalantly, Mara whipped around to face Bracken.

"What? No!" Warren yelped sitting upright and turning to Bracken in horror.

"Just kidding, I wanted to see if you were awake," Bracken assured. Warren's face relaxed

but he pressed his lips into a tight line, as if biting back a comment. "Other than the bone protruding for your foot the highest risk right now is an infection, which I can cure. I honestly have no idea what to do. Though I recommend bandaging it up while we decide."

"I had the same thoughts," Mara admitted, coming to stand next to Bracken.

"Do you want to do the honors, I want to go check on Kendra," Bracken said

"Sure," Mara agreed reluctantly. Bracken turned and descended into the knapsack.

"I didn't ask earlier but how the heck did you do that to your foot," Mara asked Warren.

"There was quite a ditch on our path. Kendra can see in the dark and her aura is like a lantern to Bracken, so they could see. To me, everything was pitch black, so naturally, when they jumped I fell in." Warren related, as Mara got to work, gingerly wrapping Warren's ankle in clean white bandages, with gentle expertise.

"Someone has had practice," Warren muttered

"What?" Mara asked looking up from her work on Warren's maimed foot.

"No, it is just, you seemed like you know what you are doing with stuff like this, you are doing great," Warren responded,

"Oh, thanks, I have had lots of practice with bandages and stitches," Mara acknowledged.

"Don't tell me you tried to stitch yourself back together!" Warren said in alarm,

"No, it was Trask's head injury, I passed out from blood loss before I attempted to stitch myself."

"I am not even going to pretend you were joking," Warren said. Knox just stared at Mara, she hadn't been joking. Knox looked at Warren's foot, it was now wrapped neatly in white bandages and Mara was ripping off pieces of duct tape to keep the bandages in place. A couple of minutes later Warren's foot was in a nice looking splint with a protective layer of duct tape. Mara brushed her hands together and tucked her hair behind one ear.

"This will work temporarily. Hows the pain?"

"Fine, are you ok? You look tired." Warren replied Mara had deep shadows under her slightly bloodshot eyes.

"I am fine, I have had later nights." She yawned, "Knox go get Bracken and get some sleep yourself." Mara continued.

"Ok," Knox agreed, he knew better than to argue. He had just opened the Knapsack to climb the ladder when Bracken's face appeared under it. Knox let out a small yelp, caught completely off guard. Mara whipped around and held up her knife threateningly, ready for a fight.

"Sorry for scaring you Knox, please don't stab me Mara," Bracken apologized climbing out of the bag with Kendra at his heels. Bracken had some blankets draped over one shoulder.

"We left our sleeping bags, but I found these." He informed, plopping the blankets down in front of him. Bracken was talking about when they had to flee their camp. Knox realized that they had indeed left behind their sleeping bags. "We might be able to make a blanket fort or makeshift tent." He continued. Unfolding a blanket and shaking out the wrinkles, "Or we could just sleep under the stars." He continued, "Sure, let sleep under the stars." Kendra agreed.

#####

Seth found flying exhilarating for the first couple hours, but after a while it began to grow tiresome, just dangling from the claws of an invisible dragon for hours on end. The night air chilled him down to the bone and he wished that he had brought his coat. There had been no sign of anyone, not even other dragons. Seth had dozed a lot, but currently, he was on alert. His eyes scanned the trees looking for any signs of life.

"Seth, look down there I think I see smoke," Raxtus told him quietly, Seth's eyes darted

around when he saw it, a thin trail of smoke coming from in between the treetops. Raxtus circled slowly over the small plume of smoke. The dragon suddenly dove for the trees making Seth's stomach lurch. "What was that for?" Seth yelled, startled by the sudden descent, Raxtus landed and put Seth down.

"I thought I saw something moving if it was an enemy I didn't want to be seen." Raxtus explained quietly, "I am going to check it out. Stay here" Raxtus vanished, Seth blinked, well that happened fast. Seth was unimpressed. Why couldn't he go check things out? But he knew better than to rush after Raxtus, so he waited. After what felt like an eternity Raxtus returned, "I think your friends where here come see," Raxtus informed, suddenly becoming visible. Seth followed eagerly, he took in the scene. The smoldering remains of a campfire lay in a small circle made of stones. Sleeping bags lay strewn everywhere. Seth counted 8 sleeping bags, large bear prints were everywhere. Had the camp been attacked? It sure looked like it. Though it looked like no one had been killed.

"They were here, and so was something else. Though on the bright side it looks like there were no fatalities." Raxtus announced, Seth nodded, picking up and examining a spear, it had a sharp menacing tip and was about 8 feet tall, the wood was smooth, sanded down to prevent slivers. There was also a sword on the ground some ways away. Seth put down the spear and went to examen the sword, it was heavy, made of fine metals with an ornate handle. Seth held on to the sword. It might be useful later. Other than some crossbow bolts and rouge blow darts strewn in the wreckage it seemed at everything else had been grabbed when the team had fled. Seth looked up the morning sun was just piercing the horizon, casting an orange glow over the mountain tops the surrounded them. Where were the others running from this monsters beast? Had anyone been injured? Was Kendra awake right now or was she trying to get a couple more hours of sleep? It looked like she had had a busy night. Seth felt conflicting emotions at meeting up with her again. She seemed like a real friend but how did he know? Right now it was his only course of action, and honestly, it could've been worse.

#####

Conflict

Kendra yawned and stretched, rubbing sleep crusties out of her eyes and looking around. The sun had come above the horizon shedding pale orange light over everything that wasn't shrouded in shadow. Bracken was leaning up against a tree, his long silver hair falling into his eyes. Warren lay sprawled on the ground fast asleep, his ankle elevated by a bundle of blankets. Knox slept on his side his hair poking out from the top of his blanket. Tempest lay curled up in a ball like a cat. Mara was nowhere to be seen; however, the knapsack was open. Kendra bet Mara had gone down to get something. In the center of their unofficial sleep circle, there was a small fire burning made of young branches with stones wrapped around it as a barrier.

"Morning Kendra." Bracken greeted, his gaze landing on her.

"Ya, you too" Kendra returned, rising to her feet, and stretching, "Any sign of the others?"

"No, Mara and I did extensive searching, but no results."

"Where is Mara?" Kendra asked, hoping Bracken would confirm Kendra's suspicions.

"In the knapsack, trying to change her bandages," Bracken responded, Kendra, nodded. He continued "And I think we should keep trying to find Seth and reach the dragon temple, despite our less than ideal odds. Even if we are doomed, we should still try." Again, Kendra nodded, the more she thought about it the less hope she saw. Their current group was two teenagers—one with no experience—, two usually very capable but seriously injured adults who really belonged in a hospital, and Bracken who had no injuries. The rest of their group was missing and possibly dead. Kendra did not want to think about that.

Mara emerged from the knapsack. "Do you want me to cook something over the fire?" Mara asked, turning to face Bracken. Kendra noticed in Trask's absence Mara now turned to Bracken for instructions.

"I would normally say yes, but we are not going to linger long, and we don't want to leave a trace. We can make sandwiches on the trail." Bracken answered.

"Do you want me to wake the others?" Mara asked.

"Sure, we better get moving," Bracken replied, Mara went over to Knox, and Kendra went to wake Warren. Kendra noticed that Mara was trying as hard as she could to keep her face out of range from any form of impact that Knox could cause.

As Kendra knelt next to Warren she said, "Warren, time to get up we have to go." Warren grimaced and sat up. "How's your ankle?" She asked.

"Not looking so hot" Warren admitted. Bracken and Kendra helped Warren stagger to his feet and do a one-foot bunny hop over to Tempest, who reluctantly admitted Warren on to her back. Mara brought Knox over. Kendra noticed that even though Mara's eyes had shadows under them, she looked a little more rested than last night and her eyes were no longer bloodshot.

"How'd you sleep?" Warren asked Mara.

"Three hours is enough." She replied, picking up the knapsack and swinging it over her shoulder.

"Sounds like high school all over again." Warren joked lightheartedly; Mara raised an eyebrow at him. "What? Haven't you ever stayed up almost all night to complete an assignment?" Warren asked.

"Warren, I never went to high school," Mara replied

"What?" Warren exclaimed

"Lucky," Knox murmured

"I was raised on a magical animal preserve that was hidden from humankind for obvious reasons, hundreds of miles away from all human contact. I obviously was not in the public school system. I was homeschooled by my mom. There was no record of me anywhere until I got my first passport forged when I joined the knights." Mara answered.

"That makes a lot of sense," Warren muttered, Kendra nodded, her parents had been homeschooling her and Seth since they moved to Fablehaven.

"Did you get to drop out of public school since you moved to Fablehaven?" Knox asked turning to Kendra.

"Yup, my Mom has been homeschooling me and Seth." Kendra replied.

"Maybe Mom would homeschool Tess and me if we stay at Fablehaven. Or go to some cool magic school like Hogwarts." Knox said.

"The Knights of the dawn actually gather semi often for school like classes and training, I help teach now and then, I could take you, Knox, when I recover." Mara offered.

"Cool." Knox agreed

"Can I come to?" Kendra asked, not wanting to miss out on something cool like that, but feeling a little childish as she asked.

"Sure," Mara agreed, "but we have to survive this first."

"Fine, we survive this, you recover, then you take me to cool knights of the dawn stuff."

Knox accepted, "Deal," Mara agreed.

"Let's move out." Bracken said, "We've already been here too long."

#####

Tess loved the treehouse; she would have slept in it if her parents had not said no. Tess had used most of her spare time there when she wasn't spending time with the fairies or making her relatives the little bracelets the fairies had taught her how to make. She had also found an old puzzle that resembled a fairyland palace. She worked hard to pass the time, but it was not the same without the others, her cousins, her brother, and her friends.

Tess, to help with her boredom and distracting herself from worrying about her family, was currently working on a small bracelet. It was blue with light purple, she was making this bracelet for her mom, blue and purple were her mom's favorite colors. Tess hummed a little tune as she worked, weaving little blue beads into the thread, Tess liked all of the tunes that fairies had shown her but one of her favorites was from a fairy named Shiara, the fairy had a funny accent and was really helpful, she was one of Tess's favorite fairies, though she still wished that she could ask Kendra or the others about the fairies. Grampa knew a lot about the fairies here but not as much as Kendra, Kendra seemed to know a lot if not all of them by name.

Tess almost wished she had gone with the others, but she had seen enough to know better. As much as Mara tried to hide it from her Tess saw every time Mara was in pain or when her shirt would lift a little bit when she stretched and reveal bloodstained bandages. Tess saw the stress and sorrow that surrounded them. She had even seen a person die! Tess knew that the others thought she was too little to be let in on this stuff, but she thought otherwise, she only wished she could prove it. #####

Seth had kept the sword and showed Raxtus the fallen weapons, he had hoped that the dragon might be able to track the others kind of like a dog. Turns out Raxtus could do no such thing, but they had found three groups of footprints each headed off in a different direction. They had followed a set that Raxtus guessed was Kendra and two adults. Seth had agreed, and now he was currently walking alongside Raxtus as quietly as they could through the undergrowth,

continuing to follow the trio of footprints. Raxtus stopped suddenly. "What's wrong?" Seth asked coming to a standstill next to the dragon.

"Look there," Raxtus gestured, Seth following his gaze, saw a small ravine running through the path not 10 feet in front of them, the gorge was about 5 feet wide. Two sets of footprints crossed over but the third went right down and was replaced with one footprint instead of two on the other side of the ravine.

"What do you think?" Seth asked Raxtus.

"It looks like someone failed to jump the gap and injured a foot." Raxtus coincided, "Keep a lookout, I doubt they are moving fast anymore." He added.

"Then let's hurry up before the tracks fade or get rained away." Seth encouraged picking up his pace and leaping over the ravine stumbling when he landed. Raxtus soared over the cleft and landed next to him.

They continued to follow the footprints, then it just got confusing, the three and a half sets of footprints joined with another pair, at least they thought it was a pair but one of them had decided to walk in a million circles and another set kept wandering off and coming back.

Raxtus followed several trails that just kept doubling back. Seth poked around the spot that looked like it might have been a camp, someone had tried to clean up the best they could. He found no fallen weapons here. However, there was shredded fabric caught on trees and rocks as well as some string near a large rock. Seth had also found quite a few drops of blood here and there throughout the camp supposedly from the injured team member. He kept looking for more clues, some of the footprints were faded by now, but the clearest set lead away from the spot, there were four different sets of human prints along with what Seth thought he recognized as a griffin. But weren't there five people? Seth realized that someone was probably riding the griffin. He waved Raxtus over and showed him the prints.

"These seem like the newest set, let's follow these ones." Seth proposed.

"Alright" Raxtus agreed, Seth wished that whoever they were following would just stay still for about 24 hours or however long it would take for Seth and Raxtus to track them down.

But Seth had his doubts, these guys were obviously efficient.

#####

Knox was starting to get used to the endless hiking through the forests. They had walked in silence most of the time, exchanging brief conversations now and then, but trying not to attract attention, Knox had no clue if they were succeeding or failing.

The day was warm and clear, not a cloud in the sky, the air smelled fresh and sweet. Warren and Kendra sat astride Tempest; Bracken walked beside them. Mara was on Knox's right, her dark eyes scanning their surroundings. She had barely spoken other than the usual explanation of various questions. Out of Knox's peripheral, he saw Bracken stop in his tracks and tense up. Knox whipped around to see Bracken clearer. He was staring up ahead and a little to the left with frozen eyes.

"What is it?" Kendra asked keeping her voice low.

Bracken motioned for them to be quiet. "Sh, you might want to run," He whispered.

"Why?" Knox asked

"Ronodin, and our friend from last night." Bracken said, drawing his sword, "I don't think he saw us, yet, if we are quiet, we might be able to sneak past." Almost immediately after Bracken had finished talking Tempest started to screech loudly, Knox flinched, they were all going to die.

#####

The bear-like wolf burst onto the path, Tempest reared throwing Kendra and Warren to the ground. Warren cried out in pain as Kendra landed on top of him. Kendra winced at the cracking noise she heard before her head smashed against Warren's skull and everything went blurry.

She heard unclear commotion followed by voices and a few unintelligible curses, presumably directed at Ronodin. The conversation escalated to yelling and fierce growling. She heard desperate shrieking and the yelling increased.

Kendra had no idea how long the tumult went on before her senses cleared. She arose and took in the scene. The lycanthrope lay motionless a dagger implanted into its forehead. The wolf abomination also had three throwing knives embedded deep into its hide.

Mara was laid on the ground weakly stirring near the beast. Its legs were a bloody mess along with one of the arms. Tempest and Knox were gone, Bracken was facing Ronodin, both held swords.

"Now that your beast is dead care to settle this evenly?" Bracken asked his swords held steady. Ronodin almost looked uncertain for a second, most definitely having a flashback from the last time he dueled Bracken. To Kendra's horror, a sly grin spread across the unicorn's face. Ronodin morphed so fast Kendra could barely blink before the unicorn charged forward, his orange mane whipping against his dark grey coat. Kendra suddenly realized, Ronodin was not charging Bracken, he was charging her!

Kendra tried to dodge the charging unicorn, but she was too late the unicorn was only a foot or two away. Kendra closed her eyes and used her hands to shield her face, tensing, expecting to feel the lethal horn pierce her chest any second.

She heard fierce neighing followed by a thump. Kendra dared to open her eyes and shrieked at the sight that awaited her. Bracken's unicorn form lay in front of her a deep wound piercing his side, Ronodin stood triumphantly over his fallen cousin preparing to use his bloodied horn to issue a killing blow. Kendra saw a flash of metal as a dagger flew out and embedded itself in the side of the dark unicorn. Ronodin reared and thrashed.

"Your sword Kendra!" Mara shouted, rising weakly another dagger in hand. Kendra had completely forgotten about the weapon strapped to her waist until now. As Ronodin turned around to charge Kendra again, she drew her sword a resounding clash echoed throughout the clearing as metal made contact with horn, Kendra saw that she had chipped the horn but did not fully sever the tip.

Mara shouted encouragement, but Kendra could not make out what she had said. Ronodin neighed, thrashing and rearing trying to use his front hooves to pulverize anything in sight. Kendra slashed her sword again making a deep cut in Ronodin's front leg. The unicorn squealed in agony and galloped into the trees. Kendra threw down her sword and rushed to Bracken who still lay motionless. Mara half limped half stumbled over to Kendra and Bracken

"Good job Kendra." Mara praised clapping Kendra on the back, Mara had a black eye and deep claw marks on her the lower part of her left leg, her right arm was shredded and bloodied.

"Is he ok?" Kendra asked nervously.

"I don't know, stomach injuries are unpredictable, I can get a better look at him when he turns human again. I doubt he will get infected" Mara assured, "Can you keep an eye on him, I can't treat him well while he's in his horse form." Mara continued, "I need to go check on Warren, and find Knox, I told him to go hide with Tempest," Mara said,

"Sure," Kendra agreed, Mara limped off to check on Warren.

Not long after Mara left Bracken started to stir, with a flash, the unicorn was gone replaced

by the Bracken Kendra knew, but now his shirt was torn, and silver blood covered his abdomen.

"Bracken," Kendra whispered, her voice cracking.

"Kendra," Bracken mumbled weakly, his lips barely moving.

"You, you, saved me." Kendra said, taking his hand in hers and caressing his palm.

"I would do it all over again," Bracken stated, gazing into her eyes.

"Why did you do it, you shouldn't have." Kendra insisted, Bracken looked into her eyes.

"I love you, Kendra," Bracken replied.

"I love you too." Kendra broke down into sobs.

"Don't cry, I will be ok, you saved me, Kendra. You saved me." Bracken assured squeezing her hand in his. His tone was soft and comforting.

"I guess I helped," Kendra acknowledged managing a weak smile.

"You where amazing."

#####

Knox had stayed hidden until now, he had Tempest with him. Mara had told him to flee when things had gone downhill. It had started with a lot of trash-talking, mostly between Ronodin and Bracken. Mara would chip in and roast Ronodin every opportunity she could. Then things got ugly, Ronodin told them to leave because he had "Important business."

After they had refused, Ronodin had said he would force them out, the wolf thing had attacked, the last thing Knox had seen before Mara had screamed for him to leave had been, Kendra and Warren had been knocked out after Tempest had bucked them off, The unicorns had been sword fighting and Mara had nailed several shots at the wolf with throwing knives. Her leg had gotten all scratched after she had failed to dodge a blow from the beast's mighty claws.

Knox had been told that they would come for him when the fight was over, but no one had come yet and he was getting worried, had they all been killed? Had they been eaten? Knox tried to tell himself that everyone was fine. But he had his doubts.

Great now he was being a worry wart like Kendra. Knox heard the swishing of footsteps through the undergrowth. Knox turned around expecting to find Mara or Bracken. It was not Mara or Bracken...

Almost

Knox breath caught as he looked up at the silver dragon before him. His eyes were wide and his mouth hanging open in shock. The dragon was not particularly huge, it was small compared to others that he had seen. It took Knox a second to recognize the dragon as Raxtus, and behind Raxtus was Seth.

"Seth? Is that really you?" Knox asked.

"Who are you, and how do you know me?" Seth's tone was defensive as he stepped out from behind the dragon.

"Seth, it's Knox, I'm your cousin. We've been searching everywhere for you." Knox explained.

"Who is we?" Seth asked, relaxing slightly but keeping his gaze sharp.

"Well, It used to be, me, your sister Kendra, your cousin Warren and his fiancée Vanessa, Kendra's boyfriend Bracken, your friend Tanu; and your other friends Trask and Mara. But, we where attacked and scattered so now it is just me, Kendra, Warren, and Mara." Knox informed

"Wait, Warren and Vanessa are engaged?" Raxtus exclaimed, having a hard time withholding his excitement.

"Yep." Knox affirmed.

"Where is the rest of your group?" Seth cut in.

"Actually, I have no idea, Ronodin attacked and they sent me away for my own safety."

"Ronodin?" Seth asked, tensing, and becoming defensive again.

"Yep, I have no clue what happened, but when I left everyone was a mess," Knox said

"what do you mean a mess?" Seth asked.

"Well Kendra and Warren where unconscious, Bracken was dealing Ronodin, and Mara had just gotten injured again."

"Again?" Raxtus asked,

"Ya, she isn't doing so well right now," Knox responded.

"Who is Mara?" Seth asked.

"You haven't seen her since you lost your memory, she is a knight of the dawn. I don't think you knew her really well." Knox said.

Seth fell silent, his face thoughtful, "What?" Knox asked

"Nothing," Seth dismissed,

"Where is Kendra?" a small voice piped up, coming from Seth's pocket.

"Oh sorry Calvin," Seth apologized, pulling the large nipsie from his pocket.

"Hello Knox." The tiny hero greeted cheerfully,

'Hi, Calvin, Honestly I have no clue, when they told me to leave I just ran and didn't look back. I probably should have thought that one through more." Knox realized. Knox started as Tempest screeched in agreement.

"We can probably track them down, we had been following you guys until your tracks had faded so we just kept going in the general direction we thought you guys were going," Raxtus said.

"Well you guys just made my job easier, we just need to find the others now."

#####

Seth had not expected to find Knox, he was pretty sure he could trust Knox. Raxtus seemed

to know him and he would rather have some people to trust; he was tired of pushing out everyone.

Seth had been disheartened to hear that half of the group was missing, but he retained hope that they were close, he had also caught on that the group was not in the best shape. Seth worried for Kendra, was she ok? Seth had been hesitant to see his her, but the news that something might have happened to her had finalized his decision to try everything he could to be reunited with his lost sibling.

Seth was having a hard time seeing in the dimming light, but Raxtus seemed to know where they were going, though, it felt like they were going in circles. Seth decided not to say anything and trust Raxtus. Knox, however, looked uncertain. After a few hours of walking, Knox finally voiced his uncertainty.

"Are you sure we are going in the right direction?"

"I am sure." Raxtus said,

"Are we heading north?" Knox asked,

"No, we are west, why?" Raxtus asked, losing certainty in every syllable.

Knox slapped his palm to his forehead. "The group is heading north, at least I'm pretty sure, we're totally lost." Knox moaned.

"You could have told me earlier," Raxtus pointed out.

"Sorry," Knox apologized,

"I think we should stop here and go the right way in the morning, we don't want to be wandering in the dark," Seth said, eyeing the darkening sky.

"I agree with Seth." Calvin said from his perch on Seth's shoulder,

"Alright, we'll stop here and get back on track in the morning." Raxtus agreed,

"Now let's get some sleep. We will change the course in the morning."

#####

Kendra paced around their makeshift camp, trying to ignore the dead lycanthrope that lay nearby. Before going to go check on Knox, Mara had barley managed to carry Bracken into the knapsack, descending that ladder had been a challenge. She had cleaned and bandaged Bracken's wound, then revived Warren, who had broken ribs after his fall from Tempest. Mara had worried about Warren having a concussion so she had assigned Kendra to keep an eye on Warren and make sure he didn't fall asleep while she went to search for Knox. Warren had seemed normal as far as Kendra could tell, but she had kept her promise to keep him awake.

"Calm down Kendra, come sit, I'm sure Mara will be back with Knox any minute." Warren assured her from his spot on the ground.

"Ok," Kendra said, trying to reassure herself. Though Kendra continued to pace, it felt like a lifetime before Kendra spotted Mara limping towards them through the trees, Knox was not with her. Her heart sank, as annoying as her cousin could be she still cared about him. They seemed to keep on losing more and more people and Kendra felt that soon she wouldn't be able to take the stress.

"I can't find him anywhere," Mara said.

"He's probably close by," Kendra assured, trying to comfort herself and Mara.

"I think I found his tracks though, along with something else," Mara informed,

"What?" Kendra asked, stopping her pacing.

"Seth's tracks and I think Raxtus is here too," Mara said.

"Why didn't you follow the tracks?" Kendra asked, anxiously

"I didn't want to ditch you guys since Bracken is badly injured and so is Warren," Mara countered.

Kendra sighed. She and Warren agreed.

"Question is, do I go look now or in the morning?" Mara asked, Kendra desperately wanted to say now, but something inside told her this wasn't the correct course of action.

"I think you might want to wait, Mara, you aren't in top condition yourself." Warren chipped in, as much as Kendra wanted to disagree she knew Warren was right, it was getting dark, Mara was injured, and they needed her, they couldn't afford for the only competent adult in the group run off. Kendra saw how desperately they needed Mara, but they didn't need Kendra a ton did they? They wouldn't be too bad off if she went to look for her brother and cousin. Kendra decided right then that she was going to go find Seth herself, she was done waiting.

#####

Kendra wanted to at least tell someone where she was going before she ran off to look for her brother, but every person she thought of would definitely try to stop her, so she had decided to write a note instead. Unease filled her stomach as she searched for a spot to slip the note. She also needed an opportunity to sneak away, the only way she could think of was to wait till her watch partner fell asleep. I probably wouldn't be hard, Warren and Mara could barely keep their eyes open from what Kendra could observe.

She waited until the dead of night before her wish was granted, the whole time spent worrying. Kendra was not one to run off on her own, but she needed to, if she wanted Seth back she needed to. Kendra was currently on watch with Mara when she finally took action. Warren had been given the all-clear by Mara and had been allowed to sleep. Mara had been on watch when Kendra found her fast asleep still propped up against the rock she had leaned against while on watch, she had been fully awake not five minutes previously. This was Kendra's chance

Kendra didn't know if Mara was a light sleeper so she tried to be as quiet as possible as she slipped her note out of her pocket and into Mara's medical bag. Kendra had seen Mara grabbing stuff from this bag all evening so she figured that if she hid her note there it would be found quickly.

Kendra flinched at how loud the zipper of the bag seemed in the quiet grove. Kendra quietly and as quickly as she could, pulled the note she had written earlier out of her pocket and tucked it neatly into the bag.

Kendra had half-zipped the bag closed when she heard Mara starting to stir, she froze, if Mara caught her, her quest for Seth would be over before it began. Kendra sat in silence for several minutes, after deciding the coast was clear, Kendra arose and departed in the direction Mara had come from earlier that evening. Kendra knew that her friends probably would panic when they saw that she had disappeared. Hopefully, when they saw her letter they would understand, Kendra would stop at nothing for her brother.

#####

Warren woke suddenly with a sense of foreboding, something was wrong but he couldn't put his finger on it. "Kendra," Warren called, no one answered. Wasn't Kendra suppose to be on watch with Mara? Warren tried to rise to his feet, all the movement made his ribs burn but he managed to get to his feet, well more like foot, he didn't put any weight on his broken ankle. "Kendra!" Warren called again. Warren saw Mara's outline approaching him in the darkness, she was holding what looked like a piece of paper, "Warren, look." Mara handed him the note, Warren could barely make out the letters in the dark but managed to read the note, it was in Kendra's writing.

Whoever is reading this,

I am really sorry, but I couldn't just sit and do nothing while Seth is so close. I know that none of you could afford to run off and look for him. You are all too important to the team. But, I think you guys don't need me too much, you guys are all so talented and brave. I think you can do just fine without me. If you want to follow me instead of heading to the dragon temple, I am heading in the direction that Mara came from last night to find the tracks she was talking about. I hope you understand.

~Kendra

"No," Warren muttered.

"Yes," Mara affirmed, "I accidentally fall asleep during watch and She snuck off." She related "I am so sorry, I should have been more diligent, I am so, so sorry."

"It is not your fault, Kendra is a resourceful kid, I'm sure she would have gotten away if you were awake or not," Warren assured.

"You are probably right, it doesn't stop me from beating myself up none the less," Mara told him.

"Well, we going after her right?" Warren asked.

"Of course we are going after her!" Mara exclaimed as if it had been a stupid question.

#####

#####

Kendra tromped through the dim light and dense foliage, the night was never completely dark anymore. However, the plant growth was so dense that she could barely make out the sky between thick leaves and branches.

Kendra had been walking for quite some time, still no sign of her brother or cousin. Kendra wondered if her group had found out about her disappearance yet. Had they found the letter? Where they mad at her? Kendra tried to tell herself that the others would understand but she still had some doubts in the back of her mind. She continued to tromp through the thick undergrowth looking for footprints. She flinched at every sound, secretly worried that someone was watching her.

Kendra stumbled abruptly, tripping over an unknown object. She bent down to examine what had caused her fall, a rock, classic. But next to the rock was a print, a human footprint. How did Kendra miss it? The print wasn't hers, and probably not Mara's. Upon further inspection, Kendra found more human prints along with claw marks, then horse prints. Of course, these where Knox and Tempest's tracks. Hopefully, if Kendra followed these they would lead her to Seth, and she would finally have her brother back.

#####

#####

"Seth, what are you doing up?" Knox asked his cousin.

"I couldn't sleep," Seth responded, Knox, hadn't been able to sleep either.

"What's keeping you up?" Knox asked,

"What are they like?" Seth blurted.

"They?"

"Your group, Calvin has told me about some people but he doesn't know all of them." Seth responded, "And we don't have any of the recent news too. When where Warren and Vanessa engaged? Calvin told me about them."

"They told us about a week ago, Kendra and Tess almost burst everyone's eardrums when they found out. Warren and Vanessa said they were going to wait until we had you back safely at fablehaven before planning the wedding I think Warren wanted you as one of the groom's men" Knox said.

"Cool, wonder if I've ever been to a wedding. How was Warren last time you saw him?" Seth asked.

"Well, he had just badly broken his ankle, Mara couldn't fix it, she said the break was to bad."

"So what did they do? Cut it off?" Seth asked in horror.

"What? No! Mara just bandaged and splinted his foot until they could get him to a doctor." Seth relaxed slightly.

"And who is Mara?"

"Honestly I don't know her super well, she has a long history I think. Isn't a fan of dragons since one killed her mom. She's a knight of the dawn, super resilient, and hard-headed. She is also the only person who has kept us organized." Knox told Seth.

"What does she look like?" Seth questioned,

"Well, her skin is a really dark copper color, she has long black hair, really dark eyes, and a scar that cuts across her right cheek." That was the best description Knox could come up with at the moment. Seth stayed silent "What is it?" Knox asked Seth sighed.

"Well, I think I can remember people that I didn't know as well because they where more made of facts in my mind and less opinion," Seth theorized.

"Wait, so you might remember Mara? Who else can you think of?" Knox questioned.

"I also remember another guy, probably in his 20's really tall and skinny, Australian I think... I don't know."

"I haven't met anyone like that, sorry" Knox apologized.

"It's ok, I just need answers."

"Well we will try to find them," Knox promised.

#####

Hi, guys, I am so sorry it has been so long I have had a crazy past few weeks since, my fish died, my goat had triplets, My brother has one of his friends over for a week, I got really sick (I still am.) and there was a power out, so yeah sorry, and I am also sorry for all the grammar errors I have made over time, every time I reread this story and see a stupid error I made I kinda die inside a little.

On a final note, Thank you for all the reviews guys they mean a lot to me, every review makes my day so please don't stop.

Love Luna :)

Slayer

Kendra was close, she could feel it. She had been walking for hours and the sun was just barely piercing the horizon. Despite bringing her coat Kendra shivered a little, but she didn't dare stop, she had to catch up with Seth before he ran off again.

Kendra flinched involuntarily as a bellowing roar and smashing crash echoed throughout the forest. She did not know if she wanted to find out what was making the noises or run away from them.

Against her will Kendra found herself creeping closer to the noise, just wanting to observe the source of the commotion. Another roar sliced through the area, followed by a resounding crash. Then silence.

Picking up her pace, Kendra trotted towards the source of the commotion. As Kendra dashed out between the trees she froze. A gigantic silver dragon lay motionless. The dragon's body was about the size of a house, the neck was bent back at a wrong angle. It had several bloody wounds along its side neck and head, it wasn't breathing it appeared to be dead.

Kendra kept a little closer, trying to be quiet. The dragon looked so familiar like she had seen it. Kendra realized that this dragon strongly reminded her of Celebrant. Her eyes stopped on a figure near the head of the dragon, facing away from Kendra. The tall figure was equipped with a full-body suit of midnight black armor, and held a ginormous sword covered halfway to the hilt in what Kendra assumed was dragon blood.

As Kendra tried to retreat back into the trees, she realized that the figure must be the Titan valley dragon slayer. Kendra did not know if the slayer was hostile or not. The dragon slayer at Crescent lagoon had tried to kill them but the Somber knight had provided immeasurable help to her and her brother.

As Kendra retreated she tripped, landing hard. She let out a cry of pain. The figure whipped around to face her. Kendra scrambled to get up as the figure advanced towards her. Upon seeing Kendra's terror the figure froze. Kendra thought that the figure looked like a woman in the heavy armor, although a helmet still blocked the facial features.

"It's ok, I won't hurt you bright one." The figure said. It was definitely a woman, her voice was deep and quiet with a light accent.

"Who are you?" Kendra asked.

"I am Nocte Stella, The official dragonslayer of Titan valley. May I ask who you are young one? You shine with the glory of a million suns. Did you happen to be blessed upon by the fairies?"

"I'm fairykind, why are you here, who was the dragon?" Kendra asked.

"I was called into action by the giants, three days ago after Rex montem struck down the queen of the giants as an act of war." Nocte informed soberly.

"That's terrible!" Kendra cried, "who will run the preserve now?"

"The late queen's daughter has taken the throne and the position of caretaker."

"Is that dragon you killed Rex Montem?" Kendra asked, eyes widening.

"The one and only." Nocte said, Kendra went silent not knowing what to say. So the giant queen was dead, Rex Montem to, and now the dragons were probably fighting for power amongst themselves. Now was the perfect time to raid the temple while the dragons where distracted.

"You really plan to raid the dragon temple?" Nocte asked in disbelief.

"How did you read my mind?" Kendra asked, there was no contact between her and Nocte. "I have some skills." Nocte acknowledged, "I also want to know how you plan to enter the dragon temple and pass the guardians."

"We have no idea," Kendra admitted.

"We?"

"I didn't come alone I just got separated from my team." Kendra said, "And I was looking for my brother."

"He is lost as well?"

"Ya," Kendra gave out a dry chuckle, "we are a total mess. We could really use your help, Dragons everywhere are declaring war, preserves are falling."

Nocte tensed, "Which preserves?" She asked, urgency evident in her voice. She sheathed her sword.

"Well, Wyrmoost, Soaring cliffs, Jade falls is a mess. Crescent lagoon did but then we reclaimed it." Kendra recounted. Nocte nodded and fell silent.

"How reliable is your team?" Nocte asked.

"Pretty reliable, why?" Kendra asked.

"The way this is sounding, it seems like the dragons are barely starting their attack on humanity. We might need to retrieve an object of great importance from the dragon temple." Kendra realized it must be the harp. She knew it was important but now it seemed like it was of even greater value than before.

"That's what we're after as well."

"Really?" Nocte asked, surprised, "how did you know about the harp?"

"The wizard andromadus told us." Kendra said.

"Who is that, I know many great wizards but this one is new." Nocte inquired.

"Andromadus used to be the ex-dragon king dramadus." Kendra said

"Good for him, leaving that dingy old cave and fighting for a worthy cause." Nocte praised.

"Could you take your helmet off so I can see your face?" Kendra asked she felt strange hearing so much vocal emotion coming from the midnight black metal helmet. Kendra was also starting to like Nocte, she was much more interesting than the somber night.

"Sure, though I have no idea what I look like. I haven't looked in a mirror for hundreds of years." Nocte commented. Nocte's armor made no sound as she pulled off her helmet.

Despite not seeing the sun or being washed for several hundred years, Nocte's face was quite beautiful, her skin was a flawless dark brown, she had silky blonde hair that almost looked white done into a loose braid. She looked no older than Mara or Vanessa. Kendra was stunned. "How do I look?" Nocte asked.

"Amazing," Kendra assured, Nocte flashed a grin, revealing sparkling white teeth.

"I think I am starting to like you bright one," Nocte said, Kendra, smiled.

"Can you chatty Charlies stop talking about looks?" A voice bellowed, "We got a problem at hand!" Kendra whipped around to find Warren limping out into the clearing with the help of a makeshift crutch. Mara was close at his heels.

"Warren! Mara!" Kendra cried, running towards them.

"I am so sorry, I just had to try to find Seth and—"

"We know Kendra, we aren't mad, you just scared us," Mara assured, pulling Kendra into a warm hug. Kendra felt guilty for scaring her friends, but she did what she had to do.

"So who's your new friend?" Warren asked, gesturing to Nocte. Mara released Kendra.

"Well, guys, this is Nocte Stella. She's the Titan valley dragon slayer."

"Nice," Warren whistled, Mara was expressionless as she studied Nocte then the dragon.

"The dragons are going to have our heads when they find out that you killed one of their

own," Mara informed dryly,

"They will have to catch us first." Warren countered with a wink. Nocte pointed to Warren. "I like your attitude."

#####

"Are you sure we are heading in the right direction?" Knox asked.

"Yes, I am sure." Raxtus snapped, that had been the 8th time Knox had asked if they were going the right way and Seth could tell Raxtus was getting sick of his obnoxious cousin, even if he was trying to be cautious.

"Why can't you just fly up and see where we are?" Knox asked,

"Because if any dragons see us we are toast, literally."

"Fine, we can walk," Knox grumbled.

"Why don't you ride the griffin?" Seth asked gesturing to Tempest. The griffin had just walked along with the group, none had attempted to get on her.

"She would likely try to kill me, she only truly accepts Mara, everyone needs her help to be able to get on Tempest." Knox related.

Seth nodded, "So we can't really use her." Seth stated.

"No, she can be useful, like if we are attacked by a lycanthrope she will try to fight it." Knox counted.

"How do you know that?" Raxtus asked.

"We've been attacked twice by one." Knox said, "Though the second time Ronodin was there to, that was when Mara told me to run, and then I found you guys."

"Hold up, you were attacked by Ronodin?" Seth questioned.

"Ya, though at the time I was more worried about the lycanthrope."

"Why didn't you tell us you were attacked by Ronodin?" Seth asked.

"I didn't think you needed to know, sorry." Knox apologized.

"WE would VERY much like to know if Ronodin is so close," Seth stated, concerned and frustrated. He had not expected or prepared for Ronodin to be so close by.

"Sorry I have been a little distracted." Knox apologized.

"It's ok," Raxtus assured, "I understand that you were worried about your friends, I think now we need to find them more than ever, the more allies the better." he continued.

"I think you're right," Seth acknowledged.

"Shut up," Knox cut in.

"What no, finding your team was your idea." Seth shot back.

"No, be quiet I hear something," Knox stated, they all fell silent, sure enough, Seth could hear the sounds of footsteps, something or someone was coming for them.

#####

"How on earth Kendra, are you so lucky?" Warren drilled, as they followed the trail of footprints. Kendra was in the lead with Nocte, Warren behind them with Mara, both were limping. Warren from his ankle and Mara from her injury during the battle with the lycanthrope "Like you run off alone you find great people to help you when I am simply running away from danger I maim my ankle or my ribs." Kendra shrugged.

"I guess I am just lucky," behind her Mara snorted.

"Kendra, when you survive this stuff you are incredibly lucky, survive unscathed is like winning the lottery, you have a whole different level of luck," she responded.

"You guys get into trouble often?" Nocte asked.

"Yes," Warren replied. Nocte opened her mouth to talk when ear-splitting roars bellowed out from all directions. The hair on the back of Kendra's neck stood up. Nocte drew her sword.

"What was that?" Warren asked.

"They have found out." Nocte stated solemnly.

"Found out what?" Warren asked.

"Does it have to do with the dragon you slew earlier?" Mara pressed, coming to face Nocte. The two women were almost the same height, though Mara was about 2 inches shorter than Nocte.

"Yes," Nocte affirmed.

"Who was it?" Mara questioned.

"Rex Montem," Nocte said. A flurry of emotions crossed across Mara's features, surprise, relief, fear, horror, respect.

"If any of the dragons find us, there will be no survivors. We have to find the others and get out of here." Mara stated solemnly. Kendra knew that she was right, if the dragons found them they would be toast, figuratively and literally.

#####

"Stay still, the might not see us," Seth whispered. Behind him, Seth saw Raxtus turn invisible, Knox froze, but it was too late.

"Who is there?" a voice bellowed, Knox perked up.

"It's ok," Knox said, "That's Tanu, a friend." Seth relaxed slightly, but, was still on edge, he wasn't fully ready to trust these people.

"Over here!" Knox hollered.

"Knox?" A new voice asked. This voice belonged to a woman.

"Vanessa, Tanu over here!" Knox yelled. Seth saw the speakers come into view, there was one woman and two men. The woman was medium height with olive skin and a flawless complexion, she had an unmistakable beauty.

"Seth, this is Tanu, Trask, and Vanessa," Knox announced gesturing to the group as he spoke. The one on the left, Trask, was tall and intimidating, he wasn't as thick as Tanu but he was still broad, his clothes were torn and he had a huge, jagged scar across his bald scalp. When he lifted his hand to wave, Seth saw that he was missing his index finger on his right hand. The man on the right, Tanu, was much less intimidating, he had a round smiling face and curly black hair. He was about the same height as Trask but much broader. All of them were looking at Seth,

"Hi, Seth." Tanu greeted, his voice was friendly with a deep tropical accent.

"H-h-h-i," Seth stuttered uncertainly.

"Good to see you Seth, Knox." Vanessa acknowledged warmly, she had a light accent that Seth could not place.

"Hi, Vanessa." Knox chirped.

"Are you and Warren really engaged?" Raxtus blurted, suddenly becoming visible again and giving the adults small heart attacks,

"Hello Raxtus. Yes Warren and I are engaged," Vanessa confirmed holding up her hand to show the glittering ring on her finger. Raxtus craned his neck forward to inspect Vanessa's ring.

"He has good taste." Raxtus acknowledged Vanessa smiled.

"Before we get into a long conversation about jewelry, Knox have you seen the rest of the

group," Trask asked turning to Knox.

"Yes," Knox answered,

"Are they ok?" Trask asked nervously,

"I don't know," Knox admitted, hanging his head.

"What do you mean?" Trask asked all eyes where on Knox now, Seth was grateful for the shift in attention.

"We where attacked, Ronodin and the lycanthrope from earlier ambushed us, last I saw, they weren't doing so good, they told me to run, so, I ran and didn't look back." Knox related, talking more to the ground than to Trask.

"Was Warren ok when you last saw him?" Vannessa asked anxiously.

"Not really, he broke his ankle while running from the lycanthrope the first time we where attacked, he had been riding Tempest when we here attacked again and she threw him off and knocked him unconscious," Knox said, raising his head to look at Vanessa, Vanessa, look concerned and scared for her future husband, but she did not say anything.

"Do you know where they are heading?" Tanu asked

"Yes, they were heading to the dragon temple hoping to meet with you guys there," Knox informed.

"We have also been heading to the dragon temple hoping for the same thing." Vanessa started but the rest of her words were cut short by furious roaring from all directions. Raxtus went invisible and the adults drew weapons.

"What was that?" Knox asked,

"Oh, no," Raxtus muttered from behind Seth, still invisible.

"What," Seth asked nervously.

"The dragons. They're mad about something, I couldn't make out what, but they are going to be on a rampage." Raxtus whispered.

"Then let's get the artifact from the temple then get out of here, we have Seth we just need the others and the harp," Trask stated.

"That won't work." Seth put in.

"Why not Seth?"

"Because I came here to find my memory, and I am not leaving until I do."

Finally

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Tess, come inside, please!" Tess turned around to find grandma Larsen on the back porch calling for her.

"Coming," Tess shouted, skipping toward the back porch.

"What do you need Gramma?" Tess asked as she stepped into the house.

"We have a visitor, and more. I thought you would like to be included, your parents are busy right now so come quick." Grandma Larsen guided Tess to the office. Tess stood in the entry in shock when she saw who was in the room. Right there in front of her was the Sorensens, her other set of grandparents. Weren't they supposed to be trapped at Wyrmoost? Next to them was Dromadus. Tess's aunt and uncle were near the doorway.

"Hello, Tess." The Sorensens greeted.

"Dromadus? Gramma and Grampa Sorenson? What are you doing here? Where were you?" Tess asked.

"There has been much unrest at Wyrmoost, the whole preserve has descended into chaos. Celebrant is on a rampage. so I retrieved your grandparents, and I brought news." Dromadus informed.

"What kind of news?" Marla asked

"Bad news for the team we sent to Titan Valley."

"What's going to happen to my children." Marla panicked, staring intently at the wizard with her lips pursed.

"You sent Kendra?" Grandma Sorenson exclaimed.

"Yes, we sent Kendra" Scott stated uncertainly.

"Guys, be quiet!" Tess exclaimed all adults turned to face her.

"I want to know the news." Tess continued.

"The dragons are strengthening the defenses of the dragon temples all around the globe, they fear that the chaos is the perfect opportunity for spies to sneak in and steal their treasures, and they are correct. If the group tries to enter the temple they will be obliterated. They need to find Seth and get out as soon as possible, the preserve is unstable now that they have lost their king."

"What do you mean? What chaos?" Grandpa Larsen questioned.

"Rumor has spread that the draconic monarch of Titan Valley, Rex Montem, one of Celebrant's sons, was killed by the Titan valley dragon slayer, a powerful Shadowcharmer and warrior named Nocte Stella." Dromadus said.

"A shadow charmer? Why haven't we heard of her?" Grandpa Sorenson questioned.

"Nocte Stella was never well known amongst the knights. She spent her time on her passion: keeping preserves stable and free from Draconic tyranny. She was powerful before she was a shadow charmer, I have gotten the opportunity to meet her once and she shared her story with me. It is a fascinating tale and the girl had not an ounce of evil or bad intentions. I would not be surprised if after all of these years she has lost her need for justice, compassion, or sense of humor, but as we were saying, do we send a team in to try and warn the group?"

"Yes, we do not have many dragon tamers at our disposal amongst the knights, the only tamers I can think of are, Vanessa, Mara and Trask. Bracken can as well but we haven't been

able to locate him." Grandpa Sorenson said.

"You need to be updated a lot." Grampa Larsen replied.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because on their way to Titan valley the group stopped here and that group consisted of Kendra, Warren, Vanessa, Tanu, Trask, Mara, Bracken, and Knox." Grandpa Larsen informed.

"You sent Knox?" Grandma Sorenson exclaimed, aghast, and appalled.

"How on earth did you guys find, Warren, Vanessa, Mara, and Trask? They were on missions across the globe. and Bracken was supposedly captured by Ronodin."

"Well, long story on all sides, but long story short, Kendra rescued Bracken; Warren and Vanessa showed up at Wyrmoost after successfully stabilizing Crescent lagoon; Mara and Trask were rescued by Andromadus after their mission miserably failed and they were badly injured." Grandma filled in hurriedly. Andromadus? She must have meant Dromadus. Maybe he changed his name. Tess would save that question for later.

"I want details later, but, moving on, I have no other knights that I can trust with such a delicate and perilous mission other than myself. Andromadus, would you be willing to take me with you to go try to retrieve my knights?" Grandpa inquired.

"Stan are you sure, you haven't been out in the field in years." Grandma Sorenson fretted, putting a hand on his shoulder.

"Ruth, when I became captain of the knights, every knight on that team became my responsibility, I have to go, if we don't find them or the dragons attack, I will have Andromadus take me straight back, don't worry." Grandpa Sorenson assured, embracing his wife. After a brief hug he turned to Andromadus. "Will you permit me to grab a few things from the attic room before we depart?" He asked, "Some potions and a few weapons?"

"Certainly, Andromadus said. Grandpa and Grandma rushed from the room.

Tess had no words.

#####

Kendra sat on the grass examining a map next to Warren, who was nibbling on the last remnants of his lunch. Mara sat a small distance from him, tightening the bandages on her leg while finishing an apple. Kendra had brought her lunch down to eat with Bracken. From what she could tell Bracken seemed to be in good spirits, despite being stabbed.

Kendra shifted her attention back to the map in front of her. The original map was way too hard to get back out of the knapsack due to its ginormous size, so Bracken had gotten the wonderful chore of drawing a simpler and much smaller map. From what Kendra could tell, Bracken had done a really good job. Everything was labeled in small curvy letters and the lines were crystal clear. Kendra figured that being thousands of years old also came with good handwriting.

As Kendra continued to study a map she found a flaw. She had been told the dragon temple was marked on the giant queen's map, but Kendra couldn't find it on this small one, she expected it to be in those neat little letters somewhere on the map, but there was no hint of the temple. "Come here, I think something's wrong with this map."

"What?" Warren asked, leaning closer to get a look while Mara struggled her feet.

"What is wrong, Kendra?" Mara asked, coming near and keeling down on one knee to see.

"There's no sign of the dragon temple on this," Kendra said.

"Obviously," Mara remarked. Kendra and Warren stared and Mara continued, lowering her voice. "We obviously can't mark the temple at all, we aren't even supposed to know it is there. If the dragons were to capture us going in that direction with a map that has a big red X

on their most sacred place, they would obliterate us off of the face of the earth without a second thought. But, if you must know where it is, it is here." Mara pointed to a small grove of trees next to a large lake. Kendra studied the area. There where wasn't much marked, just a few tiny trees next to a huge body of water labeled "Lacum Mortis".

"What does that mean?" Kendra asked pointing to the map.

"Well, my Latin is a little rusty, but I am pretty sure Lacum Mortis translates to Lake Of Death, but you can ask Nocte later." Warren chirped, Mara stared at him with stupefied surprise.

"How do you know Latin?" She asked.

"I got bored one summer as a teenager so my choices where learn a new language or get sent off to some summer school, so I learned Latin, partly to know another language, more to try and make some jerks in my class at school think I was in communion with demons." Warren answered casually. Mara cracked a smile and Kendra broke into giggles.

"You're joking." Kendra insisted.

"Nope, actually happened." Warren countered, grinning like a ten-year-old. Kendra burst into giggles again, though this time, Warren and Mara promptly shushed her.

She tensed. "What's wrong?" the two adults in front of her looked to be on high alert.

"Listen." Warren whispered. Straining her ears, Kendra managed to pick up ok some sounds. Footsteps, and quite a few.

"What do you think—" Kendra's words were cut short by the arrival of makers of the footsteps. Grandpa Sorenson. He had Andromadus at his right and Nocte on his left. Kendra bolted forward and embraced her grandfather, almost knocking him over in the process. She buried her head into his chest, relieved and overjoyed to see her Grandfather ok. He had been stuck at Wyrmoost! Her grandfather returned the embrace. Kendra heard shouts of "Captain?", "Stan?", and a "How the heck did you find us?" Followed by unclear explanations.

Kendra felt her grandfather pat her firmly on the shoulder as a wordless way to say, "you have to let go now". Kendra reluctantly ended the embrace, pulling away from her grandfather, as Warren came in, giving grandpa Sorenson a handshake and hug. Mara was shaking hands with andromadus. When grandpa and Warren had finished their exuberant greeting, grandpa turned his attention to their group.

"Where are the others?" Grampa asked, full of concern.

"Bracken is badly injured, so he was put in our new knapsack, it is just like the one we had at wyrmoost. Mara and Kendra are right here. Vanessa, Tanu, Trask, Knox, and Seth are somewhere, we have been trying to find them after we got separated, when Ronodin attacked." Warren informed as fast as he could.

"What?"

"Cant we tell you later? Now, why are you here?" Warren turned, Grandpa looked extremely worried, but questioned no more. Instead of talking he turned to Andromadus.

"We have come to get you out of here, the preserve is no longer as safe as it was if it was ever safe, the dragons are preparing their defenses, your plan to raid the temple will no longer succeed." Andromadus declared. Kendra looked to her grandpa, he nodded to confirm Andromadus's words.

"So what do we do?" Kendra asked, they needed that artifact to help them with their war against the dragons, but there was no way they could go to the dragon temple now, and Seth and the others were still missing.

"Well, we'll find them and get out of here," Grandpa announced. Warren and Mara looked like they both wanted to make a sarcastic comment, along the lines of "Oh yes, so simple, let

us just go accomplish what we had been trying to do for almost a week now." But, both of them kept their mouths shut.

Kendra decided to break the awkward silence

"How do we do that?"

"Andromadus can take us right to them, right Andromadus?"

"I believe so, but you never know until you try,"

Andromadus snapped his fingers and Kendra felt the sensation of folding in on herself that reminded her of traveling using the translocator, then right in front of her stood Seth.

#####

Seth was stunned as his older sister appeared out of nowhere. Before he had time to react, Kendra rushed forward and started hugging him so tight he couldn't breathe. Seth could hardly believe it, all of this time looking for Kendra and she just appeared out of mid-air.

"Kendra," He wheezed, "You're...cutting...my...air...off..."

"Sorry," she apologized, quickly withdrawing herself, allowing air to return to Seth's lungs. Seth stepped back to examine his supposedly older sister, she was about a head shorter than him with forest green eyes and dark brown hair, Seth assumed she was fair skinned but she was so muddy he could not make out her true skin color.

"Hi, Kendra." He greeted, realizing that he had been staring like an awkward weirdo.

"Hi, Seth." she whispered back, tears filling her eyes, and before Seth could say anything Kendra dove for him embracing him in another crushing hug, "I was so worried for you," she whisper-cried into Seth's shoulder, Seth's heart clenched, he had no idea how much grief his running away had caused his sister.

"I am sorry, for running away." Seth apologized, not knowing what else to say. Finally spying the people who he supposed must have come with Kendra, Seth looked each one over. There was an older man with balding white hair, another older guy with a long flowing white beard and exotic robes, a middle-aged guy with scruffed up hair and a leg in a splint who was chatting animatedly with Vanessa, and a tall native American woman with messy black hair and a large scar slating across one cheek.

"We found you, I can't believe it!" Kendra exclaimed.

"You were actually looking for me?" Seth asked. Somewhere in his mind he had just continued to tell himself that his sister was only here to complete her mission at the dragon temple or something, but she had actually been searching for him! He wanted to say more to his sister, but she was being smothered in hugs by Vanessa. Seth spotted the older man coming for him, he wore a gray plaid shirt and baggy jeans,

"Hello Seth," He greeted, grinning,

"Hey," Seth said, giving a small wave. He didn't know what else to say, he didn't know this man at all.

"You don't remember me." The man stated.

"No, am I supposed to?" Seth asked, feeling ashamed.

"I am your grandfather, Seth, we have come to take you home." Seth felt a weight drop in his stomach, no, they couldn't take him back, he needed to stay and find his memory, he needed to find and defeat that demon Humbuggle. "No, I can't go back," Seth argued.

"Why not?"

"Because I have work to do here," was all Seth answered, he didn't want to get into this right now in the middle of the reunion. Thankfully the man asked no more questions. Seth studied him again, so this was his grandfather, well, Seth hoped he was, he didn't seem bad, on the contrary, he seemed quite nice.

Seth stood in awkward silence until the man with the crutch limped forward with Tanu at his

side

"Hey Seth, good to see you again buddy!" He exclaimed.

"Good to see you too I guess." Seth shrugged, he had no idea who this was either but he seemed to match the description of the guy named Warren, light brown hair, tanned, injured.

"Seth, this is Warren your distant cousin." Seth's grandfather explained.

"Stan, can you shush the others? Andromadus wants to make some announcements," Tanu informed. Seth assumed that Stan was his grandfather's name. Stan, let out a shrill whistle, all talking ceased.

"Knights gather around please, we have matters to discuss," Stan announced, everyone was already there so there wasn't much movement.

"We know you came here to retrieve the artifact that could help us with the dragons, but with the dragons fortifying the temples, I would say, to abandon the mission, now that we have Seth and return home. But, apparently, you have a bargain with the giant queen that you must fulfill, I see much wisdom in trying to ally with the giants, and breaking a promise as big as this would not help our cause. After a brief consulting with Trask, might I suggest a plan, those of you who are injured or do not want to keep going will be sent back to fablehaven, and those who insist on being a part of the mission will continue with Nocte and I."

Andromadus announced. Seth found himself torn, sure it would be nice to go back to somewhere safe and maybe get some alone time, but it looked like Kendra was going to continue on the mission and Seth didn't want to be separated from her.

#####

Kendra climbed down the ladder of the knapsack, Seth coming after her. Kendra had proposed that she try to see if Bracken could do anything to fix Seth's memory and her grandfather had agreed that it was a plausible idea. Bracken sat propped up on the floor with a bundle of blankets. He was reading a book by the warm luminance of the room.

"Seth!" Bracken exclaimed, snapping the book closed.

"Hi, Bracken." Seth greeted, last time he had seen the unicorn he had been the underking's prisoner.

"How did you find him?" Bracken asked turning to Kendra.

"We didn't, Andromadus did, he showed up with grandpa and teleported us straight to him, turns out the others had already found him," Kendra said.

"So why are you down here and not with the others?" Bracken questioned.

"We came to see if you could do anything for Seth's memory, and There is probably some arguing," Kendra informed, "It will probably be Trask and Vanessa are trying to pressure Mara and Warren to return to Fablehaven, but they don't want to abandon the others."

"Pretty accurate assumption." Bracken chuckled. "Mara is tough to shake and Warren is stubborn, I have a hunch they still have tricks up their sleeves, and I bet they haven't told about their more recent injuries," He remarked.

"Ya." Kendra confirmed

"Back to Seth," Bracken said.

"Right, can you see into his mind and see if there is anything you can do to fix him?" Kendra asked.

"I don't think so, but Seth can you come here and give me your hand?" Bracken asked, wincing as he propped himself into a sitting position. Seth looked hesitant to approach the injured unicorn, but made no objections. He stepped forward and offered Bracken his hand, Bracken closed his eyes and concentrated for a several long minutes before letting go.

"We can't fix it with unicorn magic, but there might be another way."

"What?" Kendra and Seth asked in unison.

"First, remember no magic lasts forever, when demons cast spells or make curses they try to tie it to something nearly immortal, usually that thing is their life force. Demons are virtually immortal. and I am willing to bet that Humbuggle ties his curses to himself. Most demons do anyway."

"So what you are saying is that if we slay Humbuggle we break the curse on Seth?" Kendra exclaimed,

"Yes, but killing such a powerful demon will not go down easily, and don't forget about our other mission." Bracken reminded.

"Well, it's not my mission." Seth announced, "I came here to try and defeat Humbuggle and get my memory back, I don't belong in this group."

"Yes, you do Seth. We will try to help you get your memory back, just please, don't run off again." Kendra pleaded. Seth's eyes softened,

"Fine," Kendra was relieved, she had been worried that Seth was going to run off again.

"I think you guys might be wanted outside," Bracken remarked, Kendra knew that he was probably right.

"Thanks, Bracken."

#####

"You really plan on trying to kill Humbuggle?" Grandpa Sorenson asked incredulously.

"Yes, if it can help me get my memory back I will do anything," Seth said. Grandpa nodded.

"Slaying Humbuggle? Do you guys like to dance with death?" Nocte asked, striding forward.

"Apparently." Grandpa Sorenson muttered under his breath.

"What's so bad about Humbuggle?" Seth asked

"Humbuggle is an indomitable demon and he holds vast amounts of power. He usually takes the form of a dwarf but do not underestimate him. If he wanted he could be a dragon. He is a lethal trickster, one of his most common names for him back in my day was, the prince of the gamble, the shapeshifter, the Scourge of the Titan valley." Nocte remarked, Seth froze, oh, no, he thought, that creepy girl on the island warned him about this. He was torn between saying everything and saying nothing. Alerting the group about potential dangers was important, but if they thought fighting Humbuggle was too dangerous, they would probably send him back to fablehaven, whatever that was. Seth decided to keep quiet for the moment and see how things went.

#####

Knox was relieved to have everyone back together and he was even more relieved to find that Mara was alright. Knox had been really worried about her and the others, he felt bad that Bracken had gotten stabbed, but Warren, Mara, and Kendra didn't seem any worse, though who knows.

Knox had very much enjoyed having food again, while he had been traveling with Seth and Raxtus they had eaten wild berries. When he had met with Vanessa, Tanu and Trask, he found that Tanu had found a family-sized bag of Doritos inside one of the bags he had taken when the camp was attacked the first time. Having a real dinner had been absolutely amazing, even if it was sandwiches and smores.

Dinner had been strained. Knox knew that the others were trying to be gentle with Seth, but when he and Kendra had gone down into the knapsack there had been lots of yelling, people insisting others go back, refusing, yelling, then Andromadus and Nocte had to break everyone up as Seth had come back.

At least they all seemed happy at the fact that there was enough of them that there was much more time between watch shifts so that they all hopefully might get a good amount of sleep. Trask and Warren were trying to find a good working shift schedule with partners. Thankfully Nocte never needed sleep so she was always a partner option, but it was argued that not all of them felt 100% safe around Nocte. So they had decided that you could pick a second watch partner, which Knox was grateful for. Honestly, Nocte was quite intimidating, with her pitch-black armor, a huge sword, and impressive height, and Knox had never known her until today. Though most of the others seemed accepting of the intimidating dragon slayer. Dinner passed without incident, and Knox dug out a Blanket from the knapsack. They had lost all the sleeping bags when they had fled the original camp, however, there was still plenty of blankets and a few spare pillows. Knox had gotten third watch with Mara (Knox picking her as his partner). Knox snuggled into his blankets trying to get some sleep before it was his turn for watch, it didn't take long.

#####

Seth had first watch with Kendra and Nocte that night. The fire was slowly turning to embers as the stars started to appear in the sky. Kendra was quiet, not saying much, but Seth wanted to say everything. He wanted to ask how she had been, how the other team members had gotten injured, how she had gotten here, what was Fablehaven. After what felt like an eternity he finally broke the silence.

"Kendra, what is Fablehaven?" Kendra looked taken aback.

"Well, it's a preserve for all the magic animals. We live there with parents and grandparents, Warren lives there too, along with his brother Dale and our other grandparents are also there and before too long Vanessa will be in."

"Oh, right because she and Warren are getting married." Seth realized, "And what are our parents like?"

"Mom is amazing, she's always there for us and Dad is amazing, though he makes really bad jokes all the time. When they found out about how you lost your memory, they were so worried, Mom almost cried, Dad tried to stay strong," Kendra said. Seth felt another pang of guilt. Had his parents really been so worried about him?

"Kendra how did you get here?" He asked,

"Well, we were going to have Andromadus take us here but then the place where we were staying was set on fire by the dragons and we all ran for it, Andromadus completely disappeared, so we traveled via fairy shrine," Kendra informed, that made literally zero sense to Seth, but he'd ask about that later.

"How did the others get injured, Knox didn't tell me much of that."

"Well, Mara was injured before she came here, something with a dragon, then we were attacked by this wolf-bear thing, we tried to flee. I can see in the dark and so can Bracken, but Warren couldn't, there was a ditch in the path and Warren fell, that's how he broke his ankle. Then, we were attacked by the wolf bear and Ronodin. When they jumped out onto us, Tempest bucked Warren and me off and he broke a ton of ribs. Mara was injured again killing the wolf-bear and Ronodin stabbed Bracken. Well Ronodin was trying to stab me but Bracken saved me and got stabbed instead, honestly I have no clue on how I survived unscathed, I guess I am really lucky"

"How did you get Ronodin to go away?" Seth asked, his curiosity peaked.

"Well after Bracken had collapsed, Ronodin turned on me again, he was in his unicorn form. Mara threw a knife that injured Ronodin I damaged his horn with my sword, then I slashed his leg as he reared up, he went running afterward." Kendra said, not without a bit of pride.

Seth was astounded, his sister was awesome!

They sat in silence some more, Seth pondered Kendra's words. Could he have prevented all of this by not running away from Crescent lagoon? The thought that all of these injuries were caused by people trying to find him made Seth ache. But they were coming anyway, weren't they, or were they going to go the temple much later? Seth reckoned that they hadn't taken much time to prepare and had come straight after him.

"And how about Nocte, how did you find her?" Seth asked.

Kendra laughed, "Well, Mara had told me she had spotted some tracks that looked like yours when she was trying to find Knox so I ran off to try and find you after Mara and Warren had tended to their injuries. While I was looking for you I heard a ton of commotion I followed the noises, I found a huge dead dragon, and there was Nocte. The Titan Valley dragon slayer, who is also not nearly as intimidating as she looks." Kendra added. Seth chuckled, he would have to find that out himself.

"I am totally super intimidating!" Nocte joked joining Kendra and Seth by the smoldering remains of the fire.

"How's the perimeter?" Kendra asked.

"Nothing to report, just trees, more trees, and a few rocks." Nocte paused to study Seth.

"Kendra you never told me your brother is a shadow charmer." Nocte remarked.

"How did you know that?" Seth asked.

"I can see it." Nocte remarked.

"How?" Kendra drilled.

"Kendra, Andromadus didn't tell you? I am a shadow charmer just like your brother." Kendra gasped, and Seth had no idea what to think, weren't shadow charmers friends of demons and darkness? Was Nocte going to kill them?

"I am not going to kill you." Nocte scoffed, Seth gaped in awe, so Nocte could read minds.

"I can do much more than that Seth." She bragged.

"Can you teach me?" Seth begged, the words spilling out of his mouth to quickly to process.

"Certainly, it has been years since I met another charmer." Nocte accepted.

"Another? was there more of you?" Kendra asked, finally speaking.

"Yes, both of my sisters were charmers as well as my mother. There were many more of us back in my day."

"Really!" Seth exclaimed. The only other shadow charmer he had met so far had been the Sphinx. Seth had started to worry that all Shadow charmers were evil.

"Evil? is that what we are called these days!"

"Sorry I didn't mean to offend you." Seth apologized, Nocte took no heed.

"After all we did for those mortals, we helped them back onto their feet after the age of demons, we established preserves and boundaries, we worked tirelessly to help the human race, but you get a few rotten apples and they assume they have to cut down the tree! They already killed hundreds of us during the Salem trials, but if mass murder wasn't enough they hunt us down lock us up because they call us as evil." Nocte ranted, Seth hardly followed he had no clue what most of that stuff was. He needed to do a lot of studying.

"Nocte," He asked timidly, trying to change the subject, "Can you teach me to read minds?"

Nocte's expression and voice softened. "Well, I suppose you have no better teachers, may we conduct a little exercise?"

"Yes," Seth said uncertainly.

"Have you been taught to quench fire? Or to draw upon your energy?" Nocte asked.

"Yes," Seth answered relieved, at least he knew how to do some things.

"Ok, well that's a start, because we will need to use both of those." Nocte continued, Seth

nodded.

"When you quench fire you take your shadow and smother the flame, right?" Nocte went on.

"Right," Seth answered.

"Well, with mind reading you try to put yourself in your opponent's head, take your darkness and use it as sight. Kendra, can we use you for this?" Nocte asked.

"Is it safe?" Kendra asked uncertainly.

"It is some of the safest," Nocte assured, Kendra nodded.

"Ok."

"Seth, like you drew upon your darkness and put it into the torch, take it and try to put it into your sister's mind or head, but don't try to smother it as you did the flame, you want to see inside. Go on, try it." Nocte insisted, Seth focused drawing upon the shadow inside him he tried to make that energy flow into Kendra. The first few trials failed and he grew frustrated. He tried again, forcing more into it. The moment he did, there was a flash of blinding light, but he did not see the light with his eyes but he saw it in his mind. Seth focused harder, pushing more of his energy into his sister, when suddenly it was all clear.

"What is he doing? Did it work? I almost hope it doesn't, I don't want my little brother poking around in my mind."

"It works, Kendra. And I am officially offended" Seth confirmed, his sister looked stunned.

"Wow," She whispered in awe, Seth let out a gasp of excitement and joy, the depths of his new ability finally sinking in. This was so cool! Nocte grinned, Seth could tell that she was reading him.

Seth had a sudden idea and couldn't help himself, Seth drew upon his energy again and this time directed it at Nocte, after a fog of darkness, not unlike Kendra's light he could hear Nocte's thoughts.

"Well, the boy has talent, he would make a fine apprentice, wait, he is totally reading me, whatever, good work Seth." Seth withdrew his energy, but now he felt tired and slightly strained.

"With enough practice, you can even see into others' eyes or relive their memories but for now take a break. Too much too soon will wear you out." Nocte advised. Seth nodded, he would have to work up to doing more at once.

"You and Kendra go to sleep, you have had a long enough shift, I will wake Warren and Vanessa.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys sorry, it has been so long, my mental health hasn't been the greatest lately, I hope you like this chapter,

Love you all

-Luna

Temple

Chapter Notes

Hey guys sorry, this has taken me forever to get you all another chapter, but here, it's short but I hope to add more soon, thanks for all the reviews and kind comments they were the only things that motivated me to continue this. Sorry in advance for any errors.

Seth was so excited that he could barely sleep, he could read minds! He was still trying to wrap his head around it. After attempting to read Kendra's mind again, he found himself unable to penetrate the wall of light in her head. He had almost asked Nocte about it, but he didn't want to be scolded for trying to read minds without permission.

Seth lay in his sleeping bag, trying to read the minds of the others. He found that when he tried to read the sleeping team members' minds, he could only get a hazy reading.

From around him, he could hear Nocte wake Warren and Vanessa for their watch shift. Seth tried to read their minds but they were too far and he was already exhausted. Not wanting to drain himself more, Seth curled into his blanket, conserving warmth in the chilly night. He couldn't remember when exactly sleep had come but stark dreams left him vivid images of being chased by Humbuggle. Or had Seth been doing the chasing? He recalled running through endless corridors of dark castles and the weaving tunnels of the Under Realm. It seemed like he had been running all night when he had cornered the dwarf. Before he succeeded in whatever he had been aiming for, the dwarf shifted into a colossal dragon. The last Seth remembered of the dream was the gargantuan teeth inches away from his face.

Seth had jolted awake, his skin layered in a cold sweat. In an attempt to shake out the dream, he looked around, bleary-eyed. The sun was just barely poking over the horizon. Everything was covered in a thin layer of frost: the ground, the trees, even a few of his sleeping teammates had thin layers of frost coating their hair. Seth reached up to brush the tiny ice particles out of his hair. He was freezing!

Tanu, who was on watch, was attempting to start a small campfire. Andromadus sat near him on an old log that Tanu and Trask had dragged over to serve as a seat. Stan stood next to Nocte, seeming to discuss strategy for the day from what little Seth overheard.

He stood up and draped his blanket around him like a cloak for warmth.

"Good to see you awake Seth!" a small voice piped up. Seth, startled, looked to see Calvin perched on a tree stump near him.

"Hey, Calvin," Seth acknowledged. He often forgot the large nipsie was there. Being so small, it was a miracle he hadn't been stepped on yet.

"You look cold," the nipsie remarked. Seth held out his hand and the nipsie climbed on, brushing off frost as he went.

"What makes you think that?" Seth asked rhetorically

"Your hair is all frosty and your shivering," Calvin said.

"Aren't you cold?" Seth asked.

"No. I was earlier, but Tanu and Mara cut and recycled bits of an old handkerchiefs and made

me a sweater," Calvin said.

As Seth took a closer look, to see Calvin's new addition. The sweater fit Calvin snug, packing in heat. It was a dark blue color held together by delicate golden stitching, Mara's handiwork probably.

"Fancy," Seth said.

"It's warm too!" Calvin said.

"Wish I could wear it," Seth said half-jokingly.

"I wish I could share it with you," Calvin said, "but why don't you substitute that by warming up by the fire?" Seth assumed he was right. So, letting the nipsie scale onto his shoulder, he trudged over to the now roaring campfire.

Tanu was now roasting a hotdog, Seth's grandfather doing the same.

"Morning," Seth muttered, basking in the heat of the open flame.

"You look chilled," Tanu commented after taking one look at Seth.

"Come warm up and grab a hot dog," Seth's grandfather encouraged. Seth shuffled over, limbs huddled together.

"Want me to grab you a coat?" Tanu offered. Seth shrugged, too embarrassed to ask. Tanu got up and Seth witnessed the bizarre sight of Tanu opening a knapsack and climbing in. Seth knew the bag had a whole room in there from when Kendra had shown him. He also knew there was an injured unicorn in the bag, but seeing Tanu climb down and completely disappear was still an odd sight.

Tanu returned a moment later. He clambered out of the knapsack and tossed Seth a coat. The coat was midnight black, sleek in design, and fit to challenge the cold. He also noticed that it looked like a woman's coat but he didn't complain.

Seth let Calvin down, placing him into a pant pocket. He shrugged on the coat. It was a little big but it fit well enough with a little sleeve rolling.

"Does it fit alright?" Tanu asked. "That one belongs to Mara, so it won't fit perfectly."

"It's good," Seth assured, pulling the hood over his hair.

"Want a hot dog?" The Samoan offered.

"Ya sure." Seth shrugged, accepting a hot dog and skewer from Tanu.

Seth had a hard time trying to get his hotdog cooked right. Tanu had told him that it was near impossible to set a hotdog on fire so Seth could cook it as long as he liked. Tanu was wrong, Seth had barely been roasting his hotdog for a few minutes when it burst into a roaring flame. Seth panicked, trying to blow it out. He was making no progress when suddenly the fire completely disappeared from the hotdog. Seth looked around in confusion. Nocte winked at him from near Andromadus. She must have quenched it using her darkness. Ronodin had taught Seth the trick when he still believed Ronodin was his brother.

Seth flicked his charred hotdog off the skewer to Tempest. The griffin seemed to quite enjoy it and gave a grateful squawk.

The others started to wake not long after. Warren and Vanessa were up next. Warren managed to limp over the fire unassisted, and he used a spear to roast his hotdog despite Tanu offering him a skewer. Vanessa pointed out that he should have used a sword because it would fit more hotdogs. Tanu had to forbid using swords as hotdog skewers, something Seth had never expected to hear.

Mara was awake next. Seth watched as she walked stiffly and painfully with a limp. She came and stood near Seth.

"Can I have my coat back?" she asked, her voice deep and husky. Seth unzipped the coat and handed it to Mara. The weather was much warmer now and Seth didn't need it as he had before. Mara slipped on her coat. She seemed to have trouble getting her right arm in but she

managed.

"How are you doing?" Tanu asked. Seth was confused for a second before he realized that the Samoan had asked Mara.

"Tired, hurting. Nothing new. Got a bit more sleep as night," she told him, coming to sit next to Vanessa and Warren, accepting a skewer and shooting Warren a skeptical look at his unorthodox way of hotdog cooking.

"It's too quiet, and sober," Warren announced. "If you were to use one weapon to cook a hotdog, what weapon and why?" Seth was immediately put off by such a weird question.

"Sword," Vanessa said instantly.

"A mace," Tanu said. "You can put a hotdog and each spike."

"I have been blind to the possibilities," Warren said. "What about you Stan?"

"I'm not going to encourage this," Seth's grandfather mumbled.

"What about you Mara?" Warren urged.

"Use a shield, it would work as a huge frying pan. If it was big enough you could cook around a hundred hotdogs." Mara said.

"I've truly been missing out," Warren groaned. Seth chuckled. He had a hunch that he had really liked Warren before he lost his memory.

"What about you Seth?" Vanessa asked.

"Ummm, probably a spear." Seth shrugged.

"Nocte, if you could use a weapon of choice to roast a hotdog what would it be?" Warren called.

"What is a hotdog?" Nocte drilled.

"Like a sausage but smaller," Vanessa told her.

"Oh, well, probably some sort of halberd. Roast more than one and do it from a distance so you don't get all the heat from the fire in your face," Nocte answered.

"Nice," Warren said. Vanessa laughed.

"What are you all laughing about?" Kendra said, yawning. Seth hadn't heard his sister get up.

"Kendra, quick, if you could use one weapon to cook a hotdog what would it be?" Warren asked before Kendra could say anything. Kendra stood there taking a moment to process.

"Does a hotdog skewer count as a weapon?" she asked.

"Anything can be a weapon if you swing it hard enough," Nocte asserted.

"Then a hotdog skewer, like a normal person," Kendra said. Warren gave a long fake exasperated sigh.

"Open your mind to the possibilities Kendra," Warren said.

"Well, it looks like you are already exploring those possibilities." Kendra laughed, gesturing to Warren's hotdog-laden spear.

"You really shouldn't use weapons as utensils," Trask said, startling everyone.

"I've seen you use a dagger to cut steak," Mara reminded Trask. Tanu started laughing but changed it to coughing.

"What's life without using objects for the exact opposite of their intended purpose?" Warren asked jokingly.

"You would know, you never use the stuff for the right purpose," Vanessa bantered playfully.

"Ouch!" Warren exclaimed, faking offense. Seth had a hard time believing that they were in the middle of dragon territory during a draconic rebellion where they could all die. Now it just seemed like a group of friends out on a hike or a diverse family reunion. Seth met eyes with his sister and smiled.

#####

Kendra's anxiety raged within her. Andromadus had just barely informed them that, now that everyone was reunited and his powers were still at their strongest, that they should attempt to brave the dragon temple today. The timing made sense to Kendra; she was just nervous. Up until this point, she had been preoccupied with fleeing various magical creatures, finding Seth, and staying alive. She hadn't thought much about their main reason for coming: retrieving the harp from the dragon temple and fulfilling the deal that they had made to the late giant queen. They didn't have the opportunity to mess up, the world was counting on them to help stop the dragon war.

Kendra glanced over at Bracken. The unicorn had come out of the knapsack to join them in the dragon temple. He had healed incredibly fast and was now acting like not much had happened. Kendra was relieved, they needed all hands on deck for this mission. She thought that having Bracken on their side would be a huge help for their upcoming confrontation. Especially since Warren was being sent back to Fablehaven to properly heal from his injuries. Kendra also tried to brainstorm who the guardians of the dragon temple might be. At Wyrmoost, the temple had been guarded by dangerous and legendary dragons. Was Titan valley going to be the same or would they have guardians of a non-draconian nature? Her train of thought was derailed when Seth approached her.

"Hey, Kendra," he said

"Hi, Seth."

"So to the dragon temple?" Seth said.

"Yeah, unless you want to be sent back to Fablehaven till we can try to get your memories back from Humbuggle," Kendra told him.

"Nah, I'm gonna help, then we are getting my memories back." Kendra nodded. It was going to be nice to have her brother working by her side again.

It wasn't long before Andromadus called them all to gather around, then he told them the news. His power as a newly transformed wizard was fading which meant he only really had enough energy to get them to the dragon temple once after dropping off any injured or those who wanted to stay behind at Fablehaven. They had one shot, every move had to count. That did not help Kendra's nerves. She had been trying to take comfort in the fact that if things went wrong, Andromadus could teleport them all to safety, and that they could try again. But that lifeline was now gone, they could only rely on their gear, their wits, each other, and a huge amount of luck.

Kendra had hugged Warren goodbye and watched her cousin disappear with Andromadus. The wizard reappeared a few minutes later alone. Andromadus called them and announced their strategy. They were going to teleport to a forest near the entrance of the temple where they would rendezvous with Nocte. They would then find out that she had discovered, then go from there since they had no idea what the temple would contain. It was all happening so fast, Kendra was suddenly standing in a circle with the group and, with a sudden flash and the sensation that reminded her of traveling via the translator, she stood standing in a different forest. Nocte stood by, her pitch-black helmet concealing her fair features.

"Ready?" she asked her voice quiet yet piercing, solemnity etched in every syllable.

"What did you find?" Grandpa Sorenson asked.

"Your chances are not looking good, from what I can tell the first guardian is Verí, a Catalan dragon that breathes poison and can rot its surroundings with just its stench--"

"Wait, we're going against a dragon who can kill us by breathing?" Knox asked.

"They can also breathe some fire as well," Nocte completed. Knox paled.

"How do we get past it?" Tanu asked. Nocte shrugged.

"I am the only one who would be able to enter the general vicinity of the dragon due to my

undying status. The rest of you would have to find a way through and somehow avoid the poison in the air."

"We have a unicorn horn and Bracken," Kendra reminded everyone, pulling Bracken's first horn out of her belt to show Nocte. The dragonslayer stepped closer to evaluate the horn.

"This might do, unicorn horns are powerful protectors of purity and the poison would not affect you as you hold it, but Catalan dragons are some of the most potent poison wielders, you would need to make sure that the horn doesn't run out of power in the dragon's presence," Nocte cautioned.

"Oh, I've got that covered," Kendra assured,

"So who is going to go against the dragon?" Tanu asked.

"I will. Any volunteers will be welcome but probably unneeded. I do not doubt that I would be able to slay the beast," Nocte stated with confidence. She continued saying, "The poison in the air would most definitely remain, so your team would have to come through in groups holding the unicorn horn then one would go through again and pass it to the next group."

"How about the rest of us just go into the knapsack and someone will carry us through after you slay the dragon," Vanessa pointed out.

"Good idea," Nocte acknowledged.

"So where's the temple?" Seth asked, looking around.

"This way." Nocte gestured for them to follow her. They walked behind the dragon slayer. Despite her heavy armor, she made no sound as she tramped through the thick undergrowth. Kendra ended up at the back of the group with Seth.

The company walked for a few minutes before the trees cleared and a ginormous lake came into view. It stretched farther than Kendra could see and was wider than twice the width of her old school.

"Woah, big lake," Seth acknowledged, coming to stand by Kendra.

"I know right?"

"It makes you wonder what kind of monsters are hiding in there," Seth said.

"I was told that the name of the lake actually translates to 'Lake Death'," Kendra told him, Seth chuckled.

"Probably a fitting name considering the first thing we hear lurking under there is a huge poison breathing dragon," he remarked, resuming his quick pace.

As they followed Nocte around the shore of the lake, a huge gaping cavern came into sight, it extended down below the lake. Elaborate dragon carvings were etched into entrance pillars flanking the opening. Some of the carved stone dragons looked like average dragons, some had animalistic heads, one had snakes growing out of its shoulders, some were so disfigured Kendra could hardly tell they were dragons. Surprisingly, there wasn't a live dragon in sight, though it made sense that they wouldn't want to draw attention by posting an army at the entrance, but what about all that talk about the dragons redoubling their defenses? Kendra spotted some of the air shimmering irregularly just beside her and froze. Seth noticed it as well.

"Raxtus?" Seth whispered, startled, Raxtus? She hadn't seen the dragon in forever. The slivers of the dragon's form flickered into slight for a moment. Kendra and Seth froze, waiting until the others were out of earshot.

"Where have you been?" Kendra exclaimed in a hushed tone.

"Hiding. Nocte Stella is one of the most feared dragon slayers in the world, most dragons dare not to even speak her name. I know she is on your side but I am still too cowardly to confront her," Raxtus said.

"Are you going to come with us into the dragon temple?" Kendra asked

"I will try, since I am now a full-blown traitor to my kind, why not? As a dragon of light, I should be immune to the poisons and fire of Verí," Raxtus told them.

"Do you know anything else about the other guardians?" Kendra asked with urgency.

"I have heard rumors that one of the guardians is an abomination, an undead dragon, a draconic phantom. Call it what you wish, but those are only rumors. Although I have never heard of a dragon becoming undead. I have honestly doubted such a thing is possible," Raxtus divulged.

"An undead dragon?" Seth questioned, warily.

"Just be careful," Raxtus cautioned, "I'll try to watch out for you but no promises that I could be able to stand up against any of the guardians."

"Kendra, Seth, let's go," Tanu called from across the shore. The rest of their group had already made it to the entrance. Kendra and Seth sprinted towards Tanu, sliding over the smooth wet rocks of the beach. They skidded to a stop near the entrance of the tunnel.

"We are going to go in as far as we can without encountering the first guardian so we can get out of the open," Grandpa Sorenson informed them., leading everyone into the tunnel.

"Ready?" Kendra asked her brother,

"Ready as I'll ever be." Seth shrugged

"Then here goes nothing."

End Notes

I plan on updating this weekly and I hope you enjoy it. All advice is welcome. I have big plans for this and hope that all you Fablehaven fans like it. :)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!