

INFINITE DEVASTATION (2011)

Chapter 1

"The assignment is due next week, class." The teacher announced. The bell began ringing just as she finished her statement. The students scrambled out of their seats and poured into the hallways.

"Taylor!" exclaimed the teacher.

"Yes Ms. Ingram?" I replied.

She gave me a firm look, "Don't let this assignment be like the rest. All you have to do is write a story, of any kind, you got it?"

"Yeah"

"Good, now go to class, and please, don't be late."

I turn and walk out of the door. Immediately I notice no students in the halls. Normally it would be chaotic in the halls between classes. I turn to look around, the glass doors are broken, a warm wind is in the air outside is bright and sunny. The dark blue tile floor looks really scuffed. Most of the lockers are open, some are still locked. I was just now realizing the lights were off. Hearing the sound of foot steps from behind I run quickly toward them. All I see is the silhouette of a thin figure with long hair, slightly shorter than me. Then I realized that I'm in the spotlight of the skylights above me. I take a few steps back to keep from being easily seen. Now in the shadows I see that her skin is fairly pale in color. She continues towards me; she has obviously spotted me. My heart starts ponding. Am I seeing things? Am I dreaming? I blink and just like suddenly she's gone. I step back into the light to make sure she wasn't behind me without me knowing it. I make a slight glance to my right and the to my left. I gasp loudly, because she was standing right next to me. She has long silky bright red hair held up with a white ribbon, wearing a dress with purple flowers.

Her pale skin is extremely smooth looking.

"Shh, don't be afraid," she whispers. "I have an offer to make."

I was about to scream, but she put a finger up to my lips to silence me. I notice a fresh cut on her palm, blood dripping on the floor. She doesn't even seem to know it is cur. "you're bleeding." I mutter. She looks at her palm and with the other hand she unties the ribbon. Handing it to me she starts wrapping it urging me to hold it in place

After it is ties off the says, "thank you" with a gentle smile, her voice is soft and smooth. Without realizing I look at my hand. It is covered in her blood. The cut must have been deeper than I thought. In disgust I wipe it on my jeans.

"You're a part of it now, by getting my blood on you."

"What are you even talking about?"

"I'm cursed to live in this surreal world, you on the other hand can move between worlds now, we are bound by blood."

"I think you're crazy."

"Look at your palm."

I look at my palm for a few moments, then back at her. "Okay let's say your story is true, what then?"

"You will have to help me get back into the real world."

"How?" I asked puzzled

"I'm not sure."

Frustrated I sit up against the wall and start to cry.

"There is no need to cry" she says putting her hand on my shoulder. She looks toward the dark, then back at me. My face is in my knees and my arms are crossed over them.

"Here." she says laying something down beside me. "Hold onto this and call for me if you need to talk, my name is Lela."

I hear the bell ring and I look up, she's gone. I look around just as the last few students go into their classrooms. Everything is the way it should be. I look to my side to see what was laid beside me. It is a copper chain necklace with a clear glass ring (so it seemed) looped on it. I pick them up and put them in my pocket. Then I look at my hand to see if it is really stained or not. There is still a faint stain but I'm sure it will come off. Puzzled about the whole situation of what happened I head to class, so much for not being late.

Chapter 2

I get up and go to my locker to exchange books, Ms. Ingram spots me on the way there.

"Taylor! What did I tell you? What class are you going to right now?"

"I'm teacher air this hour."

"Good, I want you to go to my room and get started on that story."

In a mumble, "Yes ma'am"

I go to her room and sit closest to her desk. I take out a paper and a pencil and start writing down the 'vision' I just had.

About an hour later I have written everything down that I can recall.

When I'm finished, I show her. "Now I want you to do this every day until we turn them in, understand?"

I reluctantly nod my head.

"Good now go to class."

The last class of the day, Algebra. I hear my name being called again, "Taylor, guess what!" it said.

I turn to see my friend, Pony, "What's up?"

"Nutin much" holding up an Algebra test that she had clearly passed, I remember helping her study for if a few nights ago. "Awesome." I say with a smile and thumbs up.

"Thank you for helping me study." She says.

"No problem, I'm always happy to help a good friend."

Ms. Ingram walks out of her classroom. "Taylor, get to class." She scolds.

"I have to go, talk to you after school." I tell Pony before I turn to leave. Sometimes I wish my locker wasn't right next to her classroom. The bell rings just as I enter the classroom. I immediately see the substitute teacher; I don't like him. He's always telling us to be quiet, even when we're not talking. I start walking over to my desk

"If you weren't in your seat when the bell rang, you're late."

That means I haven't been on time to any classes all day.

"I'm going to pass out test papers, when you hear your name, come up here and get your paper, silently." He tells us. "Alex, Anna, Ben, David..."

The four of them get up as quietly as possible and receive their papers from him and sit back down. I reach into my pocket and take out the chain and ring to better examine them. The copper chain appears to be a necklace but nothing more than that, but the ring is a bit stranger it looks shattered on the inside but perfectly smooth on the outside. I hold it up to the light to see how it refracts. Many refracted rainbows are reflecting through it. I stare at it in awe for a few moments.

"Tammy, Taylor..."

I come out of my daze and stumble to the front, he gave me a look, then hands me my paper. I take a quick glance at it. It's a 97, "sweetness." I mutter. Back at my seat I realize he was still giving me a look of distaste. I ignore it by going back to the ring and chain. I cautiously put the chain around my neck and fasten the latch. Nothing. But the ring I'm still a bit uneasy about.

"Victor" he finishes. "Your assignment is written on the board, I don't care if you actually do the assignment or not, but it's due when you walk in tomorrow." He says.

I write down the assignment and then start considering the event from this morning. Who is Lela really? Where did she go? And why did she give me the ring and necklace? The next thing I know it the bell rang to dismiss school for the day.

I go to my locker and drop off my book and get my knapsack with my other things. I head toward the maple tree out front there me and Pony first met (we always meet there not), as soon as I open the front doors, I see her standing there waiting for me. She has her denim backpack and saddle cloth.

"Are you ready to go?" she asks.

"Yeah." I nod.

We start off toward the field behind the school.

"So did ya pass too?" Pony asks.

"Absolutely, I got a 97%!" I exclaim.

"Awesome, hey could you hold this?" handing me the saddle cloth.

"Sure." I reach out and grab it.

She gets a halter out of her backpack. Funny that this routine doesn't seem strange to me anymore. About five later we get to where her horse is at and she calls it over. It is a Clydesdale mare named Millie.

"You haven't said much." Pony says.

"Yeah, I know. I have a bit on my mind."

"Like what?"

I pull out the ring and show her. "Somebody named Lela gave me this."

"Did you say Lela?"

"Yeah why?". I asked.

She throws the saddle cloth on and boosts me up. "We're going to my house." Pony says.

"Alright?" is something wrong?

"Yeah." I say showing her the ring.

"I know someone named Lela that had a similar ring. She was the best friend a friend could have, but she died about a year ago. "She leads the horse.

"What happened to her?"

Pony hesitates then says. "You wouldn't understand. Did she give you a copper chain?" I untuck it from my shirt to show her, "Good, you wanna keep that on."

"Why?" I ask feeling inquisitive.

"It protects you from being detected by magic."

"You went crazy too?"

"No. I will prove it when we get home."

For the rest of the ride there was an uneasy silence between us.

It takes us about 20 minutes for us to get through the front gate of her small ranch. To the right is a 10 acre and on the left there's her two-story house. She puts her horse in the pasture.

"Let me see the ring." I hand it to her. She takes the ring and lays it on her palm then places her other hand on it and says "be seen" then hold it up between her forefinger and thumb. I see the other would that I had been in before. I can't see it well enough to make anything out because she is holding it. She puts the ring between her hands as before and says, "be blind". Now it is the way it was. She goes

inside without saying anything and comes back out a couple minutes later with an old-fashioned key, it looks new though.

"But is that where Lela is?" I finally ask to break the silence.

"It should be. I hope it is. I really do!" She said in the most ecstatic voice I have ever hear. Shye continues, "I can't wait to see her again, she's really nice. She gave me her horse!" she exclaims. "How do I get there?" I ask.

"With this key." She says turning toward her house door. She unlocks her door with the key and opens it, the inside of the house is trashed wood floors are rotting, most windows are broke and the ones that aren't are moldy. The table and chairs are scattered everywhere. She takes a step in and motions for me to follow. I cautiously take a step in and she shuts the door and locks it with the key, puts the key in her pocket and unlatches it with her hand and reopens the door.

Chapter 3

The grass outside is all dead and in the field is mostly burned, some trees are still smoking from the fire. Ash is floating in the air. The porch had been broken and has holed in the top. The white fence that kept the horses in was broken and scattered everywhere. While they were taking in all the information of this world a large gray reptilian demon creature crawls out from beside the house. It is about three feet in length, has bat-like wings and sharp teeth, and spines all over its body, standing up right. It runs across the yard to the girls and tries to bite at Pony, Taylor screams. Pony gets mad at it and stomps its head with her boot. It squirms in pain; Taylor is covering her eyes with her hands. The creature gets us quickly and runs off. Pony starts off walking into the field ash blowing up as she sleeps. I stand there for a moment in fear before realizing she is leaving me behind. I gather my courage in hopes that it is a one-time event and call out "Hey wait up!" and I make a small dash up next to her.

I look to her in disbelief, "Where are we."

"Lela calls it the Gray Area. There's not supposed to be any life here, something must have gone wrong when we entered. Hopefully there is nothing else here, if there is it has to be removed."

"Where exactly are we going?" I ask.

"We have to go back to the school."

"But we don't usually have to have to go through the field to get to the school. So why are we going this way?" I ask inquisitively.

"To many questions will ruin anything." She replies.

I stop asking questions and start observing the ruined landscape. After awhile I begin to realize that there really are no animals of any kind here. The air is thick with ash now from us walking in the field. A few moments later Pony's boot strikes a single plank with a keyhole, she takes her old key and "unlocks" the plank. A door reveals a passage leading to a small room underground. The fold already has a lantern inside, but I can't tell what's in there. She hops in, I just wait on the outside, occasionally looking around to see if anything was around. Clank. Pony tosses out an old rusted steel sword. The sudden notice

spooked me, now my heart is pounding. Pony climbs out of the hole and picks up the old sword. I look at her in disbelief, if there's nothing else here then why does she need that? "Has that place always been there?"

"Kinda." She says trying to avoid the question, she's obviously hiding something. I look around, an extremely thick fog seems to be on its way, Pony notices it too. Pony looks at it for a moment before saying, "Lets get down there." Pointing underground.

Then she goes in the underground shelter again. "Careful getting down here." Slowly I go down the steps of the ladder. After I'm down I look around and notice there are many more weapons of various sorts. Now I couldn't help myself, "Why would you need one of these if there's nothing here to hurt us?" I asked.

"There should be no creatures, but there will be more people that aren't friendly, especially toward women." She replied.

"I guess that makes sense. Should I get one?"

"If you want." She answers in a choked voice. She had been playing with the lantern, trying to get more oil in it. She walks over to the wall and starts examining a small hole that is there. I'm looking at the various weapons that are on a bench. Pony takes out her key and puts it in the hold, and unlocks it.

"What exactly is that key for?" I ask.

"It unlocks secrets." She says grinning.

After awhile of eyeing her I bluntly asked, "How much do you really know?"

"About what?"

"All of... THIS!"

"The truth is that I came on a mission with Lela last year."

"What was the mission?" I say as I pick up a unique blade off the table. It had a strong glow about it.

"It's a picknife, it was used for disarming." She says opening the 'door' she unlocked.

I look back at it, the blade is abnormally wide and thick and the handle is thin and long (about 6" handle with a 2" blade)

"Stop avoiding the question!" I snapped.

"I won't tell you, it's for your own good!" she snaps back.

Tears starts to fill my eyes, "Why not, what was so special about the mission?" I shout as a tear rolls down my cheek.

"It was a year ago, it doesn't matter anymore!" she yells back.

"I have to know." I say trying to hold back the tears as another falls to the ground.

"You will find out soon enough." She assures me. "We have to get going." She walks down into the tunnel that is varved out of the earth.

Chapter 4

The air is stale and smells lightly of earth as if this tunnel has been here for a long time.

"Stay close behind me, and don't get lost." Pony tells me.

"Sure." I say putting the picknife in my belt.

After about 5 minutes of walking in silence Pony decides to talk, "How bad do you want to know what the mission was?"

"What makes you want to talk about it now?" I question.

"Lela will probably tell you anyway. That ring you have is what is left of the Ever Diamond. A ring made of a single diamond that grants immortality. Who wouldn't want that huh?"

"Sounds ridiculous, but after seeing this much I am almost willing to believe anything." I tell her.

"The only problem with the ring is that it doesn't grant pure immortality. You can still die but you can come back to life. With even that much power, everyone wants to have it in their possession. That's why Lela made that copper chain that you have on to keep the ring seekers away.

"What does that have to do with you?" I ask.

"I was the last one to hold the ring." She says.

I start getting an uneasy feeling in my chest.

"I was one of the students that died at the school shootings last year, Me and Lela were good friends. That day she just happened to be Principal's Assistant. She saved my life."

"So how did the ring break?" I ask. I for some reason want to be part of this now.

"Lela made a desperate attempt to restore my life back to before I died, but it backfired. She was trying to use a Time Shard to go back in time but the ring couldn't go back in time, so it shattered into thousands of pieces. What you have there is the majority of the pieces. The blast was strong enough that it killed Lela, whom is not affected by time."

"Are you trying to tell me that Lela is immortal?" I asked.

"Not only that but a goddess. The blast only affected her because it was at the same level of power as her. According to you thought it never killed her, just got her stuck here."

"What happened to the Time Shard?" I asked.

"It was destroyed too. This place used to be a paradise, but time here was destroyed with the shard. That's why it is the Gray Area, time has stopped here."

I look at my watch.

"We've only been in here for about a minute in the other world. You wonder how I know so much about this world when it was a paradise when I was here right? This is where Lela supposable died so we had the funeral here too." Pony says.

"Actually, I want to know where the ring originated." I say.

"Originally the ring had no power and had fallen from the sky. The people that found it took it to their king who at first thought nothing of it, but when the king was old, he feared death because he didn't want to be forgotten about so he ordered his arch mage to put the Phoenix Curse on the ring. But after awhile his people began to heat the king because he became power hungry. A few years later the king threw the ring into the river, he died shortly after. Many years later a small boy from a village that Lela used to be the Elder of found the ring and gave it to Lela. This was before she became a goddess. In the village you are supposed to take all you find to the Elder and they are to share is equally among the tribe, but she kept this a secret. When she was too old to be Elder she left her village to find a way to be young again. She heard a story about a temple holds youth water a ritual you can preform where, is you are pure enough you wish will come true. She wished to be pure, it was unheard of to have a wish like that, but it was granted anyway. Many more years pass and me and her met, from there you should know the rest of the story." She finishes.

"Wow, nicely put I guess." I say watching Pony move a cover of some kind that is above her head.

She goes out first then me, I go to dust off my jeans but the dirt didn't even stick to them in this world. I look down to see what the cover was. I was a block of 4 tiles.

Chapter 5

It was the same as before except its fogged outside, making dim skylights. I look around to see what part of the school we were in, right next to my locker. We start walking toward the main hallway, past the office and to the right. We walk in silence, looking for any sign of Lela. We get to the first secondary hallway, "You go that way." Pony says pointing right. I reluctantly do as she says, I go from classroom to classroom looking in each for her. I t wasn't until the 3rd one to my surprise, I actually found her. She was enjoying a peaceful nap. Unsure of what to do I nudge her. Her skin really is soft.

"Lela?" I whisper.

She stirs aa little and continues to sleep. I try again, "Lela." I say shaking her shoulder.

"What time is it?" She mutters.

"What?" I say confused.

"I'll get up, just a moment." She says sitting up off the cot she made from the teacher's chair. She is wearing a flannel nightgown that goes to her ankles. In what looked like a stretching motion she raises one arm and her clothes change with a glowing light from the fingertips to toe tip. Her new outfit is silk gloves with a dove white dress, and as before a white ribbon in her hair, her feet have white dress shoes. Something makes me want to look at her hand, nothing, not even a scar where the cut had been.

"I never got a chance to ask what happened to your hand." I tell her.

"I cut it." She says.

"How?"

"With a knife, it was all a setup really, for you to take the ring, as for the rest of what I told you, it's true. I can't leave this world, and the blood, it allowed you to interact with this world."

"What do you mean?"

"Magic." She says with a firm look.

Pony walks in just as she says that, and she (Pony) motions Lela over to talk to her in private. I look around and notice a staff in the corner, I get the impression that Lela was serious about the magic. The staff is wood-stained in color and has a clever hallow glass orb buried in the bottom of the staff and a gnarly club-link shape at the top. I reach out to touch it, "go ahead, it's yours." I hear Lela say. I pick it up and Lela continues, "Everyone starts out as a Landfighter. It is a status where you learn the most about a variety of weapons. Pony informed me of your discussion and the skills you already possess. Pony will teach you how to use a bowstaff and I will teach you magic. I want to tell you that I've found a way to return, we have to find the rest of the pieces and I should be able to go back."

"That's it?" I ask as if it's too easy.

"It should be." She says.

"So, when do we start?" I ask eagerly.

"You have to do training first, trust me, you will want it." Pony says "So are you ready?"

"Uh, I hesitate, "Sure?"

Lela raises her hand fingers extended and joined and says "Sleep", I begin to feel weak, and my knees give in Pony catches me. I dream of a beautiful frass lawn and I'm in the middle practicing bowstaff skills with an ordinary stick. I get a tap on the shoulder. I look around and Pony is standing there with another stick, "Bring it." She says.

I watch myself take a swing at her, I can't even control what I'm doing. Just as the stick hit her, I wake up suddenly, I'm sitting in my bed, the 6:00am alarm ringing. I switch the alarm to radio, then rationalize that if Lela knows magic then she must have sent me back home.

Chapter 6

Knock, knock, knock. Pony always comes over to wake me up, after she feeds her horse, besides we were right next to each other, almost.

"Come in." I call to her. She walks in and grabs the towel that is on the coat rack and dries her hair.

"I came over to tell you school's been canceled due to flooding." She says.

"Great." I say a little relieved, I never got any of my assignments done. I turn off the alarm and start to get dressed. I take off my nightgown and put on fresh panties. I finish getting dressed with red sport shorts and a lime green t-shirt, barefoot is the best.

"Did you enjoy your training?" She asks.

"Uh, I don't really remember it." I reply.

"Of course you don't, your dream was your training."

"Are you serious?"

"Why would I lie to you? We're friends."

"Good point." I say.

"Lela wanted you to know that she has another lesson for you."

"Speaking of lessons, I still have school work from yesterday." I say walking over to my knapsack to retrieve a book. "I should do algebra then my English."

"Get your bags we will do your work on the other side, that way we can talk to Lela."

"Pony girl, come on, you should know that work comes before play."

"Alright, you win." She says as she sits next to me at the table, "wanna teach me too while you're at it?"

"Sure, what are friends for right?" I say with a smile. "First we will look at the example problem."

About 20 minutes later we finish the Algebra homework and I move on to my English. Like the last time I write about my 'adventures'. Pony is making breakfast so she didn't notice what I am writing about.

"Come and get it!" Pony shouts after a while.

"Hold up, I'm almost done." I call back. I finish writing the last few words. Then she told me to sleep. "Alright I'm finished now."

"Eggs, pancakes, and hash browns. How's that sound?" Pony tells me.

"That sounds delicious." I give a fake smile. I've been thinking about the creature, we both forgot to mention it to Lela but it would make sense for it to possess a shard of the ring, that would give it power to stay in the Gray Area. I only eat a little of my breakfast.

Pony notices and asks, "What's wrong?"

"Did you tell Lela about the creature we saw?"

"No, not yet."

"I was wondering if it could have a shard of the ring, giving it the power to live in the other world."

"There is a good enough chance to go check it out." She says.

We finish breakfast and Pony makes a phone call in the bedroom; I can't hear what she is saying. When she comes back into the room, she takes me out on the porch and takes and unlocks the door as she had done before.

Chapter 7

There were slight differences this time, none of the windows were broken, the floors looked sturdy enough to walk on and a couple candles were in the house. Pony lights a couple candles with some matches. In the light I can see Lela sleeping on the couch. Pony nudges her shoulder. "We're here now, you can wake up."

I go over to the chair and sit down, coffee table between us.

"Why is she at my house?" I ask.

"She wanted to talk to you." Pony replies.

"Taylor, is that you?" Lela mutters.

"This is Taylor, what were you wanting to talk about?" I reply.

Without sitting up or opening her eyes, Lela continues, "I did an investigation on the creature that Pony mentioned yesterday. To have stayed here it needed a time controlling artifact. After killing it and examining the body I found a small shard in its forehead. I want you to have it." She said holding up her hand as if I were standing over her. I get up and walk over to examine her hand. I watch a tiny fragment materialize in her hand; I reach for it. The moment it touches my skin it vanishes in a flash of light. "It went back into the ring." Lela says.

I take the ring out of my pocket and examine it, if she's right it's not noticeable. "How many more pieces are there?"

"I think there are about 10 more." Lela says sitting up. "Whatever has possession of the shards will be more powerful than everything it surrounds is. That's why that thing survived."

"I haven't done this kind of thing before but I don't think it will be that hard to find them." Pony says.

"With each piece found a little bit of paradise comes back." Lela says pointing at the ground. The grass grew at a rapid pace until there was a beautiful green lawn. Then just as quickly as it grew, it died and withered.

"What happened?" Pony asked.

"The power created from adding a piece of the ring was not enough to support the life it created from adding a piece of the ring was not enough to support the life it created. You have to find the rest of the pieces. Life isn't a cheap creation nor is maintaining it."

"I thought you said the pieces have lots of power." Taylor asks.

"Yes, they do, but not enough to support an ecosystem, but maybe a single creature." Lela says.

"What type of creatures are we against?" Pony asks.

"It's hard to say, the one you found was a half mutation. My guess is exoskeleton dragons, at worse." Lela says with a little grin.

"This has got to be a joke!" Pony frowns.

"What's an exoskeleton dragon?" Taylor asks.

"What does contemplate mean?" Lela asks.

"Ooo, ooo, pick me!" Pony says in the mocking voice waving her hand in the air.

"How about you over there with your hand up?" Lela says.

"Think about it." Pony says looking at Taylor.

"Way to be a smarty pants." Taylor says.

"Alright, it means the dragons have really big bones making it hard to defeat." Lela says.

Flop, flop. The 3 girls look up to see the image that was outside the window is now a canvas and flapping in the wind. Outside there is a fine white beach for miles around.

Chapter 8

Pony gets up and looks out the door, Lela and I follow close behind. I close the door to the house, and the house turns to sand and falls to the ground.

"Where are we?" Pony directs towards Lela.

"It's called the Rough." She answers. Slowly the wind starts to pick up. "We need shelter."

Pony takes out her key and tries to open a shelter in the sand, nothing; she puts the key back in her pocket.

Sand is starting to pick up into the air. I look around and notice a few figures on a nearby dune.

"Do you know how to summon your weapon?" Lela asks me.

"Seriously!? No."

She lifts her hand in the air, palm up and makes a fist. As she makes the fist a shimmer of yellow light forms into a strange blade in her fist. The blade is wide with staggered spines.

She lowers her summoned weapon. "Now you try." She says.

I lift my hand up just as she had done, a shimmer and a flash of white light and my staff appears. Pony does the same thing, in her hands is a sword with waves appears in a light blue shimmer.

The figure on the dune is now many more figures. I hope we are not about to do what I think we're doing. The figures are carrying staves and swords, some even so much as a battle axe or a hammer. I would guess there to be about 20-30 in all.

Chapter 9

"What's going on?" I ask.

"It's a group of Waste Makers, they destroy everything in their path." Lela says not taking an eye off them, "They are barbaric with their methods so it is best to use long rang attacks."

She turns back toward the enemy with a really serious look on her face, and slowly drops the sword, and as it appeared it disappeared, in a yellow shimmer (dematerializing) and when what's left of it hits the ground it shatters into particles of yellow light. Lela takes a step forward and puts her hand in front of her, palm down-ward at shoulder level and says, "Be alive" as she lowers her hand up to waist level. The sand in front of her starts to shake around and vibrate until it looks like water rippling in a pond.

I watch in excitement as she turns her hand over and life spirit creates a humanoid out of the terrain the caster is on raises them to the sky saying "and rise". A hand made of sand reaches out of the ground and pulled itself up to stable ground. The figure was human shaped. I quickly took the same stance as Lela. "It's called life spirit; it will copy me until I command it otherwise." Lela explains. "You will use your staff, point it the terrain you want to summon on and then to the skies."

I look around, nothing but sand, I point my staff at the ground and say "Be alive," then the skies, "and rise" and another sand figure appears as the other one had. Lela's strikes mine with a fist and mine falls to sand again, then hers reaches into the sand and pulls up a huge sand sword. I'm not disappointed because I need more experience first.

The enemy is near, "Attack!" Lela screams pointing at the spirit. It starts to run then falls back into the sand, then reappears rights next to an enemy and strikes him down with the sword. Pony runs up to get into a sword-on-sword fight, evenly matched. Somebody grabs me and I scream. Lela quickly turns to look "Hold on Taylor!" she raises her hand like a claw and a fireball emerges and strikes him. He gets back up and I swing at him with my staff but he catches it and I kick him in the face, he lets go. I use the momentum of the kick to swing my staff around and hit him in the head, he's out.

Pony now has a dagger in her hands that looks exactly like the sword she had with a quick thrust the enemy she had grappled is stabbed and dies.

The spirit has 5 enemies at the same time and is struggling to fight them off. Lela notices this and says, "Be free" and the spirit within the sand rushes out so fast that the sand erodes the bodies of its enemies and they all fall to the ground dead. One man is running from battle and Lela spots him and raises her hand toward him fingers extended and joined and something that looks like blue fire shoots out. The man jumps to avoid the attack but it hits right below him and freezes all of that area. He freezes midair, falls to the ground and shatters. Pony grabs the dagger with 2 hands and it enlarges to full size and she strikes a man's legs. She turns and faceplants the hilt of the sword in his face and he falls. I fall in the sand and my vision gets blurry as an enemy comes near, Lela summons her weapon and starts glowing with energy, with extreme speed she slashes the enemy down on after another. I fall asleep.

Chapter 10

I wake up to a cold shill of wind. I sir up only to realize that I was back at home again. It's early morning and my window has been opened. I get up to close it, "Boo!"

It was a young boy, about 5 years old, with a bow and quiver with a few arrows left. His light weight leather was slightly splattered with blood.

"Who are you?" I say with a gasp.

"My name is Chris Anders. Lela sent me to make sure you're okay."

I ask him, "Where did you come from?"

"Over there." He points outside.

The sand still covers the land outside, he gets up to go outside, "Hold up, who's bow is that?"

"Tommy said that I could play with it." He runs outside.

I stand up from the chair just as Lela walks in, "Found you something." She says holding out her hand to reveal another piece of the ring. I get out the ring and like last time they bond. "How did the house return?"

The shard was turning everything to sand. I also found this." Pulling paper out of her pocket, it has a map on it, "I think it is a map to a divine shrine or temple, let's check it out." I take the paper from her and she fades away into thin air. I start turning looking for her, "Lela?"

I hurry out the door another young man is approaching me, he his about 20 years old. The little boy is hurrying behind him, "Here." The boy hurrying behind him, "Here." The boy says handing him the bow. He takes it and slings it on his shoulder along with the quiver.

"Hey, I'm Tommy", he says offering a hand shake. I politely shake his hand. "You being me new leader I would be honored to present a demonstration of my archery skills."

"No thank you, what do you mean leader?"

"Lela says to take orders from you now."

"Where's Pony?" I ask.

"She's over here, follow me." Chris says and runs out into the sandy land.

"So how did you get here?" I ask Tommy.

"I was one of the enemy's captives and Chris was one of theirs, so he's a hostage."

I see Pony sitting down holding the handle of a broken sword in her hands.

"What happened?" I ask.

"I dropped it and the enemy trampled it. I need a new weapon now." She said with a frown. She looks up and sees Tommy. "Tom!" She says running up to hug him. "I've missed you. I thought they had done away with you by now. You have to tell me how you did it. She says in an I-won-state-champion voice.

"They caught word that Lela was still alive and want to trade." He says.

"Who is the little boy?" she asks.

"My name is Chris Anders." The little boy boasts.

"He is the only one Lela left standing when Taylor passed out." Tom says gesturing in Taylor's direction. "She must have something special in mind."

"Where is Lela?" Pony asks.

"Good question, I think Taylor saw here last." Tom adds.

"She vanished." I said trying to smile as if it were a joke.

"You can't be serious. Really where did she go?" Pony says.

"She vanished into thin air." I say.

"There's a caravan up north about a day of travel, if we hurry, we could get good armor and weapons. We'll need them if we keep fighting like this." Lela's voice carries from a dark figure approaching, "We'll break camp in the morning, for now a night's rest." She finishes with a smile.

Pony and Tom walks off talking to one another, Chris runs to Lela and holds her hand as she turns to walk away.

"Hey Lela?" I call to her.

"Yes?"

"Thank you. I want to tell you for tricking me into coming here with you, and I apologize for hating you at first for it, but I think it will change me for the better." I pause to rethink what I said, "What I mean is thanks for bringing me where and being my friend."

She turns around and moves close to me and gives me a little hug around the neck then holds me away by the shoulder. "Don't mention it." She says warmly. "By the way do you know how to use this?" she holds out my pickknife.

"No" I say searching myself.

"Watch and learn." She points it, with her left hand, at me and summons my staff on her right. She hands the staff to me then flicks her wrist and it unsummons itself. She hands the pickknife back to me. "The pickknife itself if not summonable but almost anything else is." I point the pickknife at Lela and hold up my hand there is a spark of gold and a shimmer as it is defined, I'm holding Lela's weapon, "It's called Cosmin." Lela tells me.

"It's so light."

“It’s bonded to me.” She says, “meaning I can resummon it from you.” So, she does and it vanishes from my hand and into hers then unsummons. “This tool will be useful if you get into a tight spot, don’t lose it.”