

# Rovers Race

## Chapter Seven

Moments later, when the arguing was done and pockets overflowing with snacks, Aleki took the lead. Aleki and Jakob had been best friends for as long as he could remember. Aleki's mother was Tita, the servant for House Stryder, which meant they were practically inseparable. Aleki, the youngest among Celeste, Jakob, and himself, had a pleasantly plump figure and short black hair. His love for food always took precedence over anything else. Celeste, Aleki, and Jakob ventured from the platforms into the maze of back alleys. At first, Aleki appeared a bit uncertain about which path to take, but he maintained a calm expression, determined to prove himself.

**“Aleki don’t get us lost.”** Celeste said as she smacked the back of his head.

In their trio, there was Celeste, a fiery spirited girl. Despite her playful teasing, the three of them were very close friends. Celeste, a year older than Jakob, stood slightly taller than him. Her straight hair flowed in a deep shade of brown, complementing her almond-shaped eyes. What set Celeste apart from other girls in the Legion Nation was her determination. She effortlessly blended in with her like-minded companions, all sharing the same aspirations to become formidable warriors. Celeste's childhood was marked by the absence of her father, which only fueled her determination to surpass the toughness exhibited by most boys. In Jakobs' eyes, Celeste possessed a unique attraction. She could effortlessly engage in playful joking with the boys, all while maintaining an undeniable beauty. It was during their youth that a fleeting moment occurred—a shared kiss—that became a silent memory cherished by both, yet never spoken of again.

Aleki finally located the path, which led to a bustling road filled with numerous individuals going about their business. Since they still had a considerable distance to cover before reaching the cliff's base, they decided to make their journey more enjoyable. They spontaneously broke into a run. The kids had invented a game of their own, known as tag. They dashed through the crowd, skillfully dodging, dipping, and jumping, playfully trying to tag one another. Their hearts pounded and their voices filled the air with joyous shouts as they weaved through the bustling crowd.

**"You're it!"** They would yell, tapping each other on the shoulder, while the other would swiftly try to escape their grasp. The game was a thrilling chase, filled with laughter and cracking jokes, and sticking their tongues out at each other.

**"It's not fair Jakob you're too good at this game."** Celeste yelled at Jakob, but really, she was just trying to get him to slow down and once he got close enough, she tagged him.

**"Gotcha!"** she yelled, running away, giggling to herself.

**"I think I'm going to throw up."** Aleki paused for a moment putting two fingers over his mouth. Jakob and Celeste, both mimicked him and laughed.

**"You shouldn't have eaten that many snacks."** Celeste scolded him.

Aleki made sure no food came up and managed to keep going. Together they continued to run and play down two more roads. They made it to the last part road that led them directly to the beginning of the Boulevards and all three of them stopped to catch their breaths for a moment. Celeste and Jakob standing next to each other looked up and said,

**“Woah!”** They finally had a great view. Amidst the remnants of old Hyperion City, the ocean glowed with a shimmer. The distant roars of the animated crowd watching the race echoed through the air, intertwining with the sounds of collisions.

**“See I told you it was great down here.”** Aleki said, as if he had told them about the view and not Jakobs uncle, but really, he was just trying to be annoying.

**“This is great Aleki, why haven’t you brought us down here before.”** Celeste said sarcastically as they continued to pause and take it all in. Jakob didn’t hear what Aleki replied to her because he was tuned out. He just continued to marvel at the sight. To the right Jakob looked up at the edge of the cliff finally realizing how truly far they had gone down from where they were earlier.

**“Look that’s the edge of the platforms!”** Jakob said as he pointed to the cliffside. To the left, the buildings of the nation stood closely together, their blue rooftops blending seamlessly with the ocean in the distance. Miles and miles of rooftops and monuments scattered across the lower areas. The buildings in the southern part of the capital were a pristine white, their light blue tops distinguishing them from those in the nearest vicinity of the Palace. As they continued the final road towards the marketplace, the road widened, revealing a grand opening. In the center, several fountains sprayed water into the air. There were lights that hung above the buildings on the left, connecting to the cliffside on the right. This was all new to Jakob, he had never been to this part of the capital, he couldn't help but feel amazed.

**“I bet it looks amazing at night, I have to try to and sneak out to see it.”** Jakob thought to himself.

**“Follow me.”** Aleki said as he walked in front. **“When we get down to the edge you have to check out the smaller rovers, usually the Civ’s do shows on the water.”**

**“I wonder if all around the world it’s like this.”** Jakob muttered quietly, not expecting a response. However, Celeste heard him and responded,

**“What do you mean?”**

**“Just like people doing whatever they want. I wonder if it is different around the rest of Hyperion. I hope I get to see it someday.”** Jakob said. He was having a great time on the surface, deep down he was longing to see the world, so much of what he had done in his life had been controlled and he wanted to feel the freedom of doing what he chose.

**“I’m sure you will, you’re the future king, you could go anywhere you want.”**

Celeste replied.

**“No, that’s not true, I always have someone watching me, I’m not allowed to just go where I want, I’ve barely seen half the capital. Think about it we snuck off today and this is my first time seeing the Boulevards and Aleki’s been here loads of times.”** Jakob finished with dismay.

**“I like having you here.”** Celeste's voice softened, and a brief pause followed as blush colored her cheeks.

**“You’re to lame to hang out with me.”** Jakob gave Celeste a look of sarcasm.

Celeste ignored his attitude,

**“Anyways have you told him the news yet Aleki?”**

Celeste directed her words to Aleki, who was walking ahead of them.

**“No not yet.”** Aleki answered.

**“What news? How come you told her first and not me!”** Jakob reacted.

Aleki shrugged and said,

**“I’ll tell you when we get down there, just hurry up, you guys are walking to slow for me.”**

As the trio reached the end of the path, the pavement transformed into a weathered stone road. They entered the bustling marketplace and approached the waterfront, a gentle, chilly ocean breeze brushed against their skin, carrying with it the unmistakable scent of salt. On a street corner, an elderly man stood, his voice projecting as he passionately called out to passersby.

**“Welcome all to Downtown Boulevards, we have the freshest treats for you all, there are many vendors serving your finest delights. For the Nation.”**

As he finished many people yelled back, **“For the Nation!”** some paid it no mind and others with much more enthusiasm. With a smile on his face, Jakob eagerly surveyed his surroundings, taking in the sight of a busy crowd that filled every inch of the space. What pleased him the most was the sense of secrecy he felt within the mass of people. It seemed as if nobody paid attention to his status as the King's son. They were simply gripped in their own affairs, going about their daily lives without a care. Amidst the noise of voices from the crowd, Aleki persistently guided Celeste and Jakob, urging them to keep up. The sheer volume of people made it difficult to hear his words. Pressing forward, they finally reached the waterfront, where a narrow ledge had been constructed to prevent accidental falls into the water. Aleki mentioned that several individuals had met their end by drowning, or so he claimed.

Jakob was amazed as he leaned over the wall, realizing just how close they were to the water. It was a surprising sight. As he peered downwards, a gentle gust of wind brushed against his face, prompting him to close his eyes and fully embrace its touch. In that moment, in the deafening cheers of the crowd, Jakob's eyes fluttered open to witness the exhilarating sight of four Rovers zooming past in a thrilling race. The warmth from their engines caressed his face, contrasting with the chilly presence of the nearby water. After the Rover zipped past, three guys plunged into the water, gripping miniature Rover-like machines that propelled them through the waves with their bodies partially submerged. They skillfully executed mesmerizing tricks and flips, drenching the crowd with splashes of water. The spectators erupted in excitement, shoving the three kids out of sight. Jakob scanned the area, searching for another vantage point to catch the race. Although their current spot offered a perfect view, the overwhelming arrival of people made it impossible to enjoy. His eyes landed on a building situated at the corner.

**"Maybe we can get on top of that building. Think you can take us up there, Aleki?"** Jakob inquired, a glimmer of hope in his voice. Aleki's face lit up with a smile as he replied,

**"You read my mind."**

Celeste and Jakob trailed behind him, turning the corner, and discovering a narrow passage wedged between a cluster of buildings. The path led them to the back of a smaller building, situated closest to the corner building. Together, they assisted each other, scaling the side of the building. While the climb itself was not particularly challenging, Aleki added an extra layer of difficulty by insisting on bringing snacks to enjoy once they reached the top.

**“Look there’s a piece of wood that’s connecting the buildings together.”** Celeste said as she brushed off the dust on her body. She continued to lead the way with Jakob and Aleki holding all the snacks. Seated at the edge of the building, their legs dangling over the side, the trio of kids savored their snacks. Celeste and Aleki engaged in conversation, but Jakob tuned them out, his attention fixated on the vast expanse of the ocean. The view was breathtaking. Despite the roaring cheers from the crowd below, Jakob could not hear a sound. He simply smiled, taking in the scene around him - the food vendors, the daring stunts performed by the individuals in the ocean, and the swift Rovers zooming past in the race. However, his father's earlier words and the potential challenges that lay ahead began to weigh on his mind. Jakob mind murmured,

**“I’ve already lost my mom, I’m next in line to be King, how much harder can it get.”**

**“So, what do you think Jakob?”** Celeste tried to get his attention because she knew he wasn't listening.

**“Huh, sorry I zoned out.”** He responded.

Celeste gave him a look of annoyance as she continued,

**“We were talking about Aleki’s news, and it made me think of what we are all going to do when we get older to serve our nation.”** Jakob turned to Aleki and punched his shoulder,

**“Well first I have to hear the news, since Aleki didn’t tell me.”**

**“Ouch, I forgot, I’m sorry.”** Aleki said as he rubbed his arm.



**“Well tell me what’s the news?”** Jakob asked nervously to hear the answer.

**“I was selected to join the Vantis Guard!”** Aleki replied enthusiastically.

**“No way, that’s great! When do you leave?”** Jakob answered.

**“I leave tomorrow!”** Aleki said, getting to his feet.

Jakob couldn't help but feel genuinely happy for his friend. He understood the significance of being chosen to represent the esteemed Vantis Guard. His father had revealed to him the knowledge of this ancient order, which had originated during The Age of Hyperion. It was established by a small group of Alchemists from the Time of The Children who, after witnessing The Hand of Mata reshape the world, took special vows to dedicate themselves entirely to the study of mystical and spiritual forces of the Light. Their noble purpose was to safeguard against The Shadow, serving as trusted guides to the Kings and Queens across the Nations. It was an extraordinary honor to be selected for such a role, and Jakob knew that Aleki deserved it. However, in the excitement, a bite of sadness tugged at Jakob's heart. He realized that this might be the last time he would see his closest friend. The thought of Aleki leaving weighed heavily on him, as their bond had been forged since their early years. Jakob cherished their friendship and couldn't stomach the idea of it coming to an end.

**“Well, I hope you come back being able to do magic or something like that!”**

Celeste said. Aleki did some magic moves with his hands that he thought he knew. The three kids laughed together and that made it easier for Jakob.

**“There are several magic types, Mom has been reading books to me recently. Passive, Primal, Caster, Contract and Bonded Magic. Hopefully I can become a Magister and work directly for the Legion Nation, so I can come back to see you. Moms all worked**

**up about it, but I'm hyped.**" Aleki was so excited trying to explain things he knew nothing about, both Celeste and Jakob laughed to themselves not wanting it to rain on his parade.

**"Well, what about you Celeste what are you going to do? I mean you're already Citizen and you can do a bunch of things as women in the nation."** Aleki stopped and asked Celeste.

**"Yeah, yeah that's true."** Celeste continued, **"But I want to be like Jade Egan the first women that won the Iron Maiden Tournament and the first women General of the Legion Nation. I want to do something like that, be the first of something, be different not like everyone else and be pretty while doing it."**

Jakob seen a glow in her eyes as she spoke, and he smiled looking at her.

**"What?"** Celeste caught him staring at her.

Jakob tried to dismiss her noticing, but Celeste continued,

**"And you know, we out here hanging out with the future King of Legion."** Aleki and Celeste joked with Jakob.

**"What if I don't want to be King."** Jakob stood up and turned away from the two as they sat down.

**"What?"** Aleki was confused.

**"Yeah, like what if I want to do something different like Celeste was saying."**

Jakob spoke with dismay.

**“Yeah, but that’s different I don’t have a responsibility like you do.”** Celeste came back at him, but he did not respond. Celeste could tell he was bothered, so she changed her tone.

**“So, what do you want to do Jakob?”** she said, lowering her voice.

**“I always wanted to be a pirate. I want to travel Hyperion, sail the Southern Sea, visit the Kingdom of Atmas, The Frontier, and fight against Syndicate thugs and live the life of pirate luxury.”** There was a fire in his spirit as Jakob spoke.

**“But shouldn’t all our goals be to serve our nation? You’re going to be the one to run our nation, Jakob.”** She was genuinely confused of how he seemed to not want to be king. From the time a kid is born in the Legion Nation, whether they are born into a civilian or citizen family, they are taught to put the Legion Nation first.

**“Ahhh, I know I know! I’m just kidding, I can’t wait to be king.”** Jakob replied quickly to back track. He knew that they were closest friends but there wasn’t anyone he could tell his truth to honestly. Celeste and Aleki seemed to buy what Jakob said, and they all laughed together. They continued to eat snacks quietly and watch the race. Suddenly there was a light tremor.

**“Did you guys feel that? It felt like the ground was shaking?”** Aleki questioned.

**“No?”** Celeste and Jakob both answered.

A huge gust of wind came out of nowhere and blew Aleki’s snack right out of his hand flying out into the distance.

**“Dang it!”** Aleki was visibly upset.

As they followed the snack flying with the wind. The western sky grew dark, grey clouds and thick fog swiftly rolled in. The sudden change in weather caught everyone's attention, causing people to pause and gaze around. The wind picked up, adding a sense of unease to the atmosphere. Amidst the gathering darkness, a faint red glow emerged from one of the clouds, casting an eerie hue over the surroundings.

**“What is that?”** Jakob asked.

Out of nowhere several large fireballs were hurled out from the clouds.

**“Doom, Doom.”** Deep drums were heard from the fog and ships began popping out through the mist.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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