

Stone

## Chapter Twelve

In the quietness of the moment, Jakob sought comfort within himself, not ready to discuss the Guardian any further. As they turned a corner, they came across a sudden drop, a steep cliff that went down several feet. Without hesitation, Fred took the lead, reaching out a hand to assist Jakob as they made their way down the rough terrain.

**“How much longer do we have to walk. I want to see the Scorpius?”** Jakob asked to change the subject.

**“Not too much longer now. Has you dad told you about what happened in Tavern way?”**

**“No, he didn’t.”** Jakob didn’t want to talk about his dad, he felt uneasy about him right now, **“But I think I overheard something Master Hanes was talking about.”** Jakob finished.

**“Ahhh, I don’t know if should tell you, I’ve already said to much today.”** Fred replied with uncertainty.

**“Come on Uncle tell me. I can keep it a secret. I didn’t tell my dad you were the one who told me to go to the Boulevards.”** Jakob was smart enough to use that against his uncle.

**“Alright, but everything I tell you, just keep it to yourself, okay?”** Fred said with a smile.

**“Deal.”** Jakob came back.

**“Only a few people know about this information, so I’ll know if you say something.”**

**“Okay, I won’t say anything I promise.”** Jakob replied.

**“Many people have been vanishing, including Vantis Guard members, and there were two dead Rangers discovered just north of the capital. Including the missing Ranger who attacked you.”**

**“Do they know who did it?”** Jakob questioned.

**“We aren’t sure exactly.”**

**“What about the Ogres?”**

**“Possibly.”**

**“Maybe the Source?”** A shiver ran down Jakob's back as he uttered those words.

**“The Source has been long gone for thousands of years, why would you guess that?”**

Jakob instantly thought of the voice he heard in his dream, **“The Shadow appeared defeated, but in secret still lingering for the right time.”** As that thought popped into his head, he could almost hear the voice. He didn’t want to tell his uncle everything he thought, so he asked,

**“Well, everyone is afraid to talk about the Shadow, could it be that’s who is attacking?”**

**“It’s not the Shadow they’re afraid of. Its who’s lurking within it that makes them afraid.”**

Jakob was quiet as his uncle continued,

**“Jakob, the Light is deceptive, its nothing more than a cruel illusion of tyranny. It promises beauty and joy, but for a heart seeking freedom, it becomes a prison. It blinds us to the harsh realities of life. The Light is incomplete without its counterpart. The Shadow, in all its darkness and despair, holds a painful truth that cannot be ignored. It is a necessary part of existence, for it unveils the depths and rawness of our power. The Shadow strips away the lies, exposing the truth that resides within us. Jakob, listen closely, for the world is not as simple as it seems. The Light may entice with its promises of happiness, but it is the Shadow that teaches us resilience, which molds us into who we truly are. We rise from the darkness.”**

Something inside Jakob felt like he was right, he thought of his dreams again. He was never afraid of being alone in the darkness that surrounded him. In Jakobs dream the door that was white showed him a version of him wearing the crown and that scared him, but the black door that was different. It showed Jakob as a pirate, it excited him. He didn't understand everything his uncle said but he knew his uncle had seen much more of the world than he had. His uncle viewed things differently and talked freely to him. Jakob could relate to things he would say and was appreciative that he kept it honest with him. They remained quiet for a few moments as they turned a corner.

**“Woah that's huge!”**

Jakob turned his head to catch sight of a large skeletal structure emerging from the ground. Towering above him and his uncle, the bones appeared broken and weathered. Much to his surprise, they were surprisingly smooth to the touch. Doubt crept into Jakob's mind as he

observed the skeletal remains. He circled around, noticing a set of eight colossal leg bones that differed in structure from those typically of a Scorpius.

**“Uncle, are you sure these are Scorpius bones? It feels like something is missing,”** Jakob said with uncertainty. He continued his examination, his eyes scanning the bones intently.

**“Scorpius used live here in the Gorge, but they were all killed by the Legion and the Regulators after the Dark Depths massacre. Also, a Scorpius has a long body with a curved tail and a venomous stinger. They only have six legs, not eight. I think these are the bones of a Widow.”**

**“Good Jake, it was a test, to see how much you know.”** Fred finished.

He continued to look at the bones amazed. Jakob read for hours about ancient Widows, leading to the chilling tales haunting his nights. These monstrous creatures instilled deep fear within his soul. Towering eight-legged beasts lurking in the Shadows. Their massive bodies, thick and menacing, with a small, yet deadly stinger poised to strike. But it was their long, menacing pincers that scared him the most, for they spun a web of entrapment, ensnaring their unsuspecting victims.

**“What makes this one so special?”** Jakob asked.

**“When your dad was around your age, he was playing near Azurite Woods and was attacked by this Widow. He nearly died.”** Fred almost seemed upset as he said that **“But somehow, he survived, and the Widow fell into the river. I wanted to bring you here so you could retrieve a bone to give to your father. To remember how precious life can be and how it can be taken away in almost an instant.”**

**“My Dad never told me, seems like I’m learning a lot about him today.”** Jakob said continuing to analyze the bones.

**“Your dad should be returning any minute, why don’t you wait here. I’ll go on ahead and meet him. We can surprise him with this old memory.”**

**“But my dad is going to be upset, he told me not to come down to the riverbed.”**

**“I’ll tell him I brought you down here, it will be our little secret.”**

Jakob nodded and continued to look around,

**“Wow check out these other bones!”** he exclaimed, examining the smaller ones that were close by. Fred hurried away, leaving Jakob by himself. It felt like an eternity as he remained in the riverbed. In a moment of carelessness, he accidentally broke a fragment of the Widow's bones. Instead of causing more damage to the bones, he decided to distract himself by engaging in imaginary sword fights with pirates.

**“My Uncle is taking forever. I wonder if my dad is mad.”** He said to himself.

Then his thoughts returned to his mom. He wasn’t sure to how he felt hearing the news about her. It was great that his mom and his uncle were close, and they spoke about him becoming the Guardian. However, deep down he really did trust his father’s guidance. His father never steered him wrong before. Even if the road ahead seemed scary, Jakob did want to make a name for himself and with his father’s guidance, he knew he would make his mom proud either way. After more time passed Jakob finally sat down after defeating the imaginary pirates. He then began carving lines on the floor of the river with his hands. Jakob was growing increasingly bored, and his uncle seemed to be taking his sweat time. He found himself sitting on the floor, feeling

restless. Suddenly, a light rain started to fall, and Jakob couldn't help but appreciate it. He extended his hands into the air, relishing the sensation of the cool droplets on his skin.

**“If my dad doesn’t kill me for being down here, I think being bored will.”**

Jakob muttered to himself. In an instant, he felt the ground beneath him shake violently, accompanied by a deafening explosion. Reacting swiftly, he scrambled to his feet and turned his gaze towards the source of the noise. In the distance, he observed thick black smoke filling into the sky. Without hesitation, he started towards the center of the riverbed, hoping to gain a clearer perspective on the unfolding scene.

**“Bam!”** The sound reverberated through the air, even more thunderous than before, causing the ground to tremble once more. Another indistinct noise reached his ears, but its origin remained elusive. Jakob stopped abruptly. The sound resembled a faint hiss, steadily growing in intensity.

**“What is that?”** The small hiss turned to a loud whoosh.

**“Water?”** Jakob questioned as he finally recognized the rushing force coming towards him. Without hesitation, he sprang into action, sprinting as fast as his legs could carry him, desperately trying to escape the impending flood. The water felt close, brushing against the back of his neck, urging him to run even faster. No matter how hard Jakob tried, the sheer power of the oncoming flood proved too much for him. It swept him off his feet, plunging him into its depths. As the water engulfed him, he struggled to catch his breath, his body tumbling with the forceful waves.

Desperately, he fought his way to the surface for air, only to be dragged under again by the current. His eyes stung from the burning sensation of keeping them open underwater,

desperately searching for any sign of help. Just when he thought all hope was lost, a small piece of wood, a fragment from the dam, caught his eye. Reacting quickly, Jakob reached out and grasped onto it, using it as a makeshift floatation device. Finally, he found some stability as he resurfaced, gasping for air. As he floated along with the waves, he struggled to maintain his grip on the piece of wood. The current tugged at him, making it difficult to hold on. The makeshift raft jolted him back and forth as the river twisted and turned. Ahead, Jakob could see a large dip in the water. The perilous journey continued as Jakob clung onto the piece of wood, his grip tightening even as his hands began to bleed from splinters. With another approaching dip in the river, he knew he had to come up with a new plan to save himself. Looking around, he spotted a large rock formation jutting out from the center of the river, just within reach. As the water rushed towards the dip, Jakob braced himself, readying for impact. Losing his grip on the piece of wood and knocking the wind out of his lungs. Underwater, he fought to keep his eyes open, desperately searching for the rocks he had spotted. Thrusting his hands out, he felt around until he managed to find a solid grip. Summoning every ounce of strength left in his weary body, he pulled himself up, climbing and hauling his way to the top of the rock formation. In the center of the river, Jakob clung onto the rocks, his hands still bleeding, as the water relentlessly pounded against him. He lay as flat as he could, using the height of the rocks to shield himself from most of the force. Exhausted and battered, he closed his eyes, hoping for a moment of rest.

**“Jakob, Jakob!”**

Suddenly, he heard his name being called, and as he opened his eyes, he saw his father. With desperation in his voice, Jakob cried out for help.

**“Dad!”**



His father, filled with worry, urged him to hold on. Thinking quickly, Jakob's father turned to his brother Fred, who was standing behind him, seeking assistance.

**“Where’s your Rover? I can use it to get to him!”**

However, Fred told him that the rover was too far. Jakob's father shouted back, instructing his son to hold on while he tried to come up with a solution. Just then, a noise caught their attention. Jakob, Fred, and his father turned to see several massive pieces of wood hurtling down the river towards him. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Jakob's father decided. He called out to his son,

**“Jakob you’re going to have to jump!”**

**“It’s too hard I can’t swim!”** Barely hanging on to the rock, he was scared.

**“Jakob, listen to me you’re going to have to jump!”**

Joseph turned back to Fred,

**“Fred the clearing should be coming up soon, the water will die out there.**

**Brother, I need you to get there.”**

**“What are you going to do?”** Fred asked.

**“I’m going to save my son.”**

Fred shook his head and took off running.

**“Jakob, I need you to be brave, I need you to jump in the water and swim as hard as you can. On three!”** Fear and uncertainty gripped Jakob, but his father's words rang within him. Jakob, shaking, turned his body, looking down at the water.

**“One, Two, Three!”**

Jakob mustered up his courage and dove into the water just as the debris from the dam closed in on him. The current pulled him forcefully, and he struggled to reach the surface. Panic set in as he began to drown. But just then, a strong arm grabbed hold of him, pulling him upward. It was his father. Despite the treacherous conditions, the King had jumped into the water to save his son. With Jakob holding onto his back, they managed to find another piece of wood to cling onto, keeping themselves afloat. Amid the raging waters, Jakob's father checked on his son, ensuring he was okay.

**“Hold onto my back son!”** Joseph yelled with water in his mouth.

The King and Jakob managed to keep themselves afloat, grabbing another piece of wood.

**“Jakob, are you okay?”**

**“I’m okay!”**

Relieved to hear Jakob's response, they braced themselves against the strong current, knowing a larger drop was imminent.

**“Jakob, hold as tight as you can!”** The King demanded.

The river surged over the edge with a thunderous splash, and in the chaos, the last thing Jakob heard was his name being called before his world faded to black, succumbing to the impact that left him unconscious. With immense determination, the King continued to swim, carrying his son's lifeless body. As they passed the large dip, the water gradually slowed down, pouring out into the clearing that had been made for the new town. Finally, the King managed to pull himself and his son's body out of the water, carefully laying Jakob down. He checked his airways and

pulse, thankful to find that Jakob was only unconscious and breathing. Exhausted and drained, the King knew that to ensure their survival, he needed to gather his strength and compose himself. He laid back, trying to catch his own breath, almost succumbing to unconsciousness. However, the sound of approaching footsteps jolted him awake.

**“Fred is that you?”**

The King asked, looking up to see Fred walking to Jakob. Fred put his hand on Jakobs neck to check if he was okay.

**“That was a close one brother.”** The King said taking deep breaths. **“Come help me up.”** The King leaned over to his right and spit before sticking his arm out to be helped.

**“The King was supposed to die!”** Joseph heard a dark, cold voice.

**“What?”** Joseph said, turning back around, but Fred was already on him.

Fred's eyes glowed with sadistic pleasure as he delivered a vicious blow to his brother's throat. Joseph, struggling for air, found himself helpless as Fred forcefully dunked his head into the pool of water. The sounds of Joseph's desperate attempts to escape echoed in Fred's ears, fueling his twisted satisfaction. There was no tremble of the hand or racing of his heart and with every passing moment, Fred relished the power he held over his brother's fate. As Joseph's body went limp, Fred pulled him back up, a wicked grin spreading across his face. Confirming Joseph's demise, he stood tall, menacing, and his true wicked nature unveiled for all to see. The darkness within Fred had finally shown itself. Turning his attention to Jakob, Fred's steps were filled with malice. But just as he approached, a flicker of doubt crept into his mind. Jakobs face reminded Fred of Jakobs mother Janet, the woman he used to love and lost. Could he bring himself to snuff out

Jakob's life as he had done with Joseph. The thought of ending his nephew's life with his bare hands momentarily gave him pause.

**“Dad?”**

Jakob said as he was trying to come to. Fred quickly hid himself before he could be seen. Jakob coughed hard, getting the water out of his lungs. He was trying to figure out what happened.

**“Dad, where are you?”** Jakob yelled loudly.

He seen his dad's body lying down and quickly ran over. He grabbed and pushed his body,

**“Dad, come on you have to get up.”**

Jakob eyes burned and he felt his heart drop to his stomach.

**“Dad, Dad, No, I can't lose you.”**

He pushed the hardest he could and turned around looking everywhere.

**“Help! Somebody help, please Uncle, where are you? help!”**

Jakob's cry echoed through the air, tears streaming down his face as he clung onto his father's lifeless body. The weight of the loss consumed him, leaving him gasping for breath, his heart heavy with grief. In that moment, he could not comprehend the reality before him. He pleaded with every fiber of his being, desperately hoping that this was all just a cruel nightmare. As Jakob's world shattered, Fred emerged from around the corner, his face devoid of emotion, as if he were carved from stone. His presence felt cold and distant, intensifying Jakob's pain. With a voice that matched his expression, Fred spoke, his words cutting through the silence like a sharp blade.

**“Jakob? What have you done?”**

Jakob turned around, hyperventilating, trying to speak,

**“He.... He tried to save me.”** Jakob wiped his tears, **“It wasn’t my fault, I didn’t mean for it to happen.”**

Fred stood tall over Jakob.

**“The King is dead and if it weren’t for you, he would still be alive.”** Fred paused and turned around, **“What would your mother think? You’re the Guardian.”**

Jakob stood up and stepped toward Fred,

**“Uncle please tell me what to do?”**

Fred turned around, looking directly in Jakobs eyes.

**“Leave and never return.”**

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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