



TWO WORLDS. ONE CHOICE.
LIGHT OR DARKNESS,
WHO WILL SHE BECOME?

VEIL
OF
LIGHT
AND
SHADOW

SHASHIDI TENNAKOON

Veil of Light and Shadow

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The Journey of the Lost Princess

Hillwood College Kandy

Grade 9

Published date – 10.05.2026

ISBN – 978-624-211-147-6

Dedication

Thank you to my dear parents, teachers, brother, sister, and others for their unwavering support, guidance and love.

This work is a testament of my gratitude and appreciation for the invaluable roles you have played in my life.

Thank you everyone for sharpening my journey.

To my beloved parents, loving brother and sisters, my family, well-wishers and teacher with all love.

Foreword

In an increasingly complex global future, the "Hemamala Upahara" book project, led by Mahamaya Girls' College, stands as a turning point in girls' education. Over a decade, it has successfully nurtured thousands of children to become young authors.

This year, by collaborating with other schools, we aimed to provide students with a wealth of new experiences. The goal was to develop multi-faceted skills, including communication, values, and creative growth. As a result, children have written books that pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic—the supreme symbol of the Buddhist world—to the Hill Country (Kandy).

I extend my gratitude to everyone involved, including the students who contributed their creativity and the teachers who guided them.

Shashikala Senadhira

Principal

Mahamaya Girls' College

Congratulatory Message

It is a great honor for me, as the Governor of the Central Province, to send a congratulatory message for the launch of the books created through the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project initiated by Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy.

Education is the fundamental foundation for the progress of society, and it is further strengthened through books and literary creations. It is clearly commendable that students' talents, creativity, and intellectual abilities are emerging through projects such as this.

I believe that this book creation project will provide valuable knowledge and a precious literary contribution not only to the students but to the entire society. Furthermore, I hope that through such efforts, future writers who will bring pride to Sri Lanka will emerge.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation and blessings to the Principal, the academic staff, the students, and everyone involved who dedicated themselves to this successful endeavor. I wish this project and the book launch ceremony great success.

Sarath B.S. Abeykoon

Governor, Central Province

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

2026-05-10

Congratulatory Message

I highly appreciate the noble and outstanding effort of the Principal and the academic staff of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, and the student daughters, the students of other participating schools, and everyone who dedicated themselves to plan and implement this book publication project. The project was organized under the leadership of Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, with the participation of other schools in the Kandy Zone, with the aim of encouraging children toward book creation within the current school system, as a tribute to Hemamala Kumariya who brought the Sacred Tooth Relic to Sri Lanka.

For several decades, Sri Lanka has been committed to providing free, compulsory, quality, and equitable education to all children, thereby producing a future generation of intelligent and skilled citizens. In such a context, this book creation program for school children helps develop creative ability, critical thinking, and other positive qualities for a balanced and well-rounded personality, and contributes to building a future knowledge-based society.

May all activities of the Hemamala Tribute Book Creation Project be successful through the blessings of the Sacred Tooth Relic.

Pradeep Nilanga Dela

Diyawadana Nilame,

Sri Dalada Maligawa.

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Chapter 1

A Call in the Dark

I was in the middle of playing my favorite game, 'Realmfall: Echoes Between World'. When suddenly my phone started buzzing nonstop. After pausing the game I answered the phone realizing it was my beloved mom.

I was six when my parents divorced, mom got custody over me. After the divorce she became miserable. Parting all night, spending money on useless things and I, Yuki, had to take part time jobs to make ends meet. So all the pressure of school, exams, and part time jobs was more than enough to make me stressed and overwhelmed. The only thing that made me happy was gaming. I was 16 when 'Realmfall' was released. It became the most popular game in Japan. In the game world, there are two realms. The realm of light, Luminaria, ruled by humans and the realm of darkness, Umbraxis, ruled by the demons. The realm of light have extraordinary humans with various magical powers, known as mages, this was to defeat the numerous demon who wanted power of the realm of Luminaria. Generations pasted, five great magicians were born to different mothers. As they grew up their magical power were noticed by the humans. The five of them had powers stronger than any other humans. With them the humans had high chance of defeating the demons. The demon king noticed this and with no choice declared war. Together the five magicians almost defeated the king and with that they retreated. In the game we are a player who comes after the great war of the five magicians. So, the war was won by the humans by using the help of the five great magicians, but after that the demon king, Kaelthar Veyth starts ruling the realm of darkness yet again after his embarrassing defeat. We have to defeat the four bosses to get to the demon king. Not along but there is a team for us and we can choose who to be from them. So, this group is known as Equinox Order. First boss is the commander in chief then the captain of the demon army. Left hand of the demon king, Drav is next. To get to the demon king you have to beat Igris, the right hand

man of the demon king. If you beat them you become rewarded and the storyline continues. But they made it very hard, and I have failed multiple time that I lost count. Even though you defeat the commander in chief it is not easy to get to the other four, there are millions of different demons. There is also a leaderboard, that I have place in the top 5 of the best player in the game. Depending on the players experience and level, the position in the leaderboard is given.

Mom was in vacation with her so called besties, while I was with my aunt in Tokyo. That was when mom called, "Hey Luna. How are you?" This was not like mom. She would never call me to ask how I was, she is the type who would forget her own daughter's birthday. "I am okay, anyway why did you call all of a sudden. If it is one of your friend's pranks, please hang up mom!" I said with an annoying tone. "Darling, I need some money, lost a bet and they are asking for money, please" she answered, promised to pay back. That is what she always say but never do. I also had a hunch she was calling for no good. While I was lost in thought another call popped up in the screen. "Mom, how about I call you later. Also can't you ask some money from your RICH BESTIES? They should pay you back for your generosity. Also I have more important things to do with this money. Like to pay rent. School fee, due bills." With that I hung up, I had enough of moms irresponsible choices. I never took it too serious because she is mom. But today I had enough.

"Hello Luna. It's me Akari's mom. There is an emergency. Akari got to an accident and is in surgery." As soon as I heard that my chest tightened and my heart dropped. My leg gave up on me as I fell to the ground. It was like I was dragged to deep dark void. It took a while for me to process everything. "You there darling?" Akari's mom broke the silence with her worried voice, "If you want to see her we are in the National hospital of Tokyo, room 25." I could hear her trembling all over. "I am coming!" I cried out while searching for my Jacket and boots.

It was pouring that night and the streets were mostly empty with the street lights showing the way. The silence of the streets were stolen by the chattering sound of the rain hitting the ground and the sound of my big boots as I ran as fast as I could. I quickly turned a corner to a very dark ally. Mostly living alone in the night while mom went to parties, had made me not scared of the night and going out alone. Besides that I also learned martial art for self-defense. While running down the alley I was thinking of all the things that had happened between me and Akari. We been best friends since kindergarten. The first day of school I fell and got hurt, Akari was the first person to help me when all the other look down on me because their parents didn't want their children to be friends with a child we an irresponsible mom. From that day onwards we became best friends. Not only her but her parents were just as kind as her. I would sometimes say with them for weeks, and they were more than happy. After saying with them for a while I understood what love actually means, because that was the first time I ever felt it. I am very thankful for that.

I finally got to the main road. I could see the huge hospital on the other side of the road. When the light turned red, I crossed the road thinking how to face Akari. When suddenly I heard the sound of a horn of a truck and tires screeching. I turned to see a huge cargo truck coming towards me in maximum speed. Before I can react everything went dark, the only thing I remember is the sound of sirens and paramedics running towards me.

Chapter 2

The Snowflake's Awakening

I gasped searching for air. My vision was blurry and unclear. Moreover, my head was aching badly. Slowly I regain my conciseness and started remembering about the accident that happened while I was going to the hospital. I looked around to see where I was. It didn't look like a hospital room. It was too lavish to look like one. The wall was in a pretty wallpaper. A chandelier was hung in the middle of the room. There was a beautiful dressing table with gem planted on it. The floor was covered in a huge rug and I was sitting on a luxurious bed with pink color canapé. The interior was too expansive looking for a hospital room for sure. While I was wondering what was all this, there was a knock in the door. "My lady may I come in?" asked the person on the other side of the door.

I was suppressed to why was that person is calling me 'my lady'. "Come in," I said to let the person in. The door gradually opened, then a not so young women came in. She was wearing a maid's uniform and her hair was tied to a bun. "My lady you're finally awake. Thank you for the goddess of Aurelia," exclaimed the women. I carefully got out of my bed. Suddenly I felt dizzy and stumbled forward. The women quickly ran to my side and gave me support, asking how I was in a very concerned sound. "I am fine. Anyway can you identify where I am at? And who are you?" I questioned her with curiosity. Her eyes widened and her jaw dropped to the floor. By observing I understood she was truly shock and confused. Subsequently, she responded, "My lady did you lose your memories. It is me your personal maid Marie. As well as you are at the Grand Dukes mansion." I was trying desperately to process most of the details that she was saying. When suddenly I saw myself in the mirror, I walked closer to get a good look at my face in the mirror. My black hair had turned into a snowy white and the once dark brown eyes are now a beautiful sky blue and my hair had turned in to a snowy white matching perfectly with the blue eyes. I look nothing like my normal self. In addition my skin was Porcelain and

there was a birth mark on my left hand. It was in a snowflake. The moment I saw that I realized I had seen this birth mark somewhere. There was only one person with this kind of hair color and this exact birthmark. I turned to the maid and asked, "Just to be sure, what is my name?" After hesitating for a while she replied, "It is Veyra" For a while I was in a daze, but then it hit reality.

The game was designed, so that the five mages bring victory from the war by the end. As a result they get praise and respect. Together they built the realm into a stronger and peaceful place and made five different houses. The house of Ignivar, the flames, were the strongest out of all the houses, became the royal family. The royal family ruled Luminaria for ages. Other families also got areas to rule under the royal family. The second strongest house is the house of Cryovale, the frost. They were given the title of the grand duke, to rule a huge part of Luminaria. Nobody dares to say anything to the duke because of his magnificent powers that run through the family bloodline. After marrying the duchess they had three children. And there was a special thing about the grand duke's family and that was the snowflake birthmark on the left hand. I was like a special sign to represent the family. So, the three children of the grand duke also inherited this birthmark. And their youngest daughter's name is Veyra Cryovale. "My Lady are you feeling fine. You fell off your horse and hit your head. I want I can call a doctor. And..." She asked and before she can finish, I interrupted, "NO! No need to call the doctor. I am just fine. It is probably because I hit my head. But don't worry I am just fine." After a bit of silence Marie spoke up. "Lady if you are feeling fine would you like to have dinner, in your bedchambers or would you like to have dinner with the duke and duchess. If you do, I can quickly get to work on getting Lady Veyra ready." On hearing that I nodded approval.

In no time I was ready for dinner. My hair was half up and a pink dress shimmered in the light. Simple jewelries hung to neck and ears. I began to walk down the hallway making my way to the dining hall. The corridors I walk through had magnificent paintings on the walls and

door on the way was going to more places. Finally I made it to a Massive golden color door. There were two guards standing on either sides of the door. As soon as they saw me, they ran toward the door and push it open, revealing a room with a grand table in the middle filled with various food, some I don't even recognize. In the Main seat sat a not so old man with white hair and dark blue eyes. Seeing them made a chill run down my spine. He is the Grand duke of Cryovale. Right to him sat the elegant duchess, Nyxara Cryovale. Golden hair and blue eyes made her look like a goddess. She was as beautiful just like the game described. In front of her was her eldest and youngest son. The one with golden hair and striking dark blue eyes is Kyle Cryovale, the eldest son. He is the heir to the throne of Cryovale and the future of the duchy. Next to him was a slipping images of me in boy version, Liam Cryovale. Liam and Veyra are identical twins and he is the eldest from the two. As the duchess laid her icy blue eyes on me, she was shock at the same time happy. She got up and hugged me. "You are finally awake, you should be more careful Veyra, we were so worried sick about you," her soft heartwarming voice cut through the awkward silence, "Do you feel dizzy or nauseous? You did hit your head pretty hard when you fell of your horse." My back did hurt badly, but I didn't want to worry them. "I am fine mom. Sorry for worrying you all," I said sincerely. I saw the duchess eyes were a bit swollen. When suddenly we both were interrupted by the Duke. "Darling, how about we let her take a seat first. She must be tired and worn out." The duchess nodded with approval and both of us took our seats at the grand table. My chair was in front of Kyle and next to me was the duchess. Without talking we started dinner.

After dinner I went back to my room as it was night already. Maria left after helping me with getting to know about the things I had no idea. As the small candles lit up the dark room I rose from my bed and made my way to my desk. I found a small note book that I started writing what I knew so far. While I was at dinner I learned quite a handful about the current situation. I got along with Liam pretty easily, but Kyle was a bit complicated. From what I know the three children of the house of Cryovale were all enrolled in the academy of royals. It was known as

the best school in the whole realm. Other four families were all enrolled in the same academy. It was divide into deferent sectors depending on the different ways of using their magic. Every individual magicians had mana in their body. Mana is like an energy source that generated magic. The higher the mana the higher magical powers. Right now my mana was out of control. Till school starts I have time to practice controlling it. After a while I dozed off.

I was in a house of Cryovale carriage heading toward the academy. The carriage has to pass the forest to go to the capital where the academy is situated. We were almost out of the forest, but I was too busy staring out of the window to the far away distance to notice. It has been two months since I have reincarnated in this world. For that two month I learned a lot about this world and got along with Kyle and Liam. I learned a thing or two from the two of them. And this world was more magical than I thought. Everywhere you look beauty would be overflowing. The tree slowly started to decrease and in the end I saw none of them. Maria who was with me in the carriage said we had arrived in the capital. My curiosity took over as I leaned out of the window to get a better look at the capital. It was massive. The streets were buzzing with people. It was so lively and had a very busy atmosphere. I was flabbergasted. There were a ton of shops which made me realize that we were going through the biggest market in the light realm. From what I have heard it has mostly everything you can imagine. Suddenly out of nowhere the carriage stopped. "We are here, my lady," exclaimed Maria. I looked out and saw a small old shop that was hardly holding onto its foundation. I got out of the carriage and said, "Maria you don't have to come. I can take care of this." After reassuring Maria I went inside the shop. It was so dusty that I could hardly breathe. I looked around to see no one around, but an old man behind the counter. He was busy reading a newspaper and he had no idea I had entered. I walked toward the counter and pressed the bell on the table which snapped him out of reading the newspaper. He looked at me with suspicion. I spoke first to break the tension, "Good morning, I would like to buy something," He nodded still hesitant, "I would like to buy a Skystriider, the bloodcurl type." As soon as I said

that I kept a small bag on the table. The old man carefully looked inside the bag. After seen what was in the bag he was taken it back. He gave me back the bag and told me to follow him. He opened a door in the back which lead to a dark stair case. I cautiously followed him down as the floor boards creaked under me. Finally he stopped at another door.

The old man pulled out a key from his pocket and unlocked the door. Inside was a huge room filled with loads of weapons. Like swords, bows, spears, hammers and more which were everywhere in the room. There were around five worker who were working on more weapons. I was fascinated by the number of weapons and how good they looked. In the game this shop is the suppliers of the Equinox Order. Not many people know about the secret of this shop. The shop stands as a lame weapon shop in a normal person's eye, but inside is a high level weapon shop which is owned by a legendary weapon maker, 'Auther Lerven'. The thing I said that I wanted to buy was just a secret code to get into the shop. And inside the bag I just gave to the old man was the crest of the house of Cryovale, which would help me go straight to the owner of this shop. He use to help the five magician in the great war by giving them the weapons they needed. In addition he was close with my father, and that would open me an opportunity to meet him. We pasted the worker who were too busy with their work to pay any mind for me. As the both of us went deeper into the basement I saw a man working on a complicated looking sword. He was also using magic to making sword. There were different gems and patterns on the sword handle. "Master there is a guest, the lady of the house of Cryovale is here to see you," said the old man. From my guesses this must be the owner of this shop, Auther Lerven. Auther looked at me as he started wiping his hands with a towel on his workbench. "You can leave Michel," ordered, "You must be Lady Veyra, how can I help you my lady?" He gestured me to sit on the chair in front of his desk. I took a seat and told Auther what I was looking for. "I am here to get a sword. I want it to be light, durable. Any suggestion of material?" Auther got to thinking. Suddenly he bought a box and kept in on the table. I looked at him confused. He opened it

revealing a black color cube. "This is a Glaciren cube. It is extremely rare and is only found in the north mountain. This is a very good material for a sword as it can withstand for years," He explained. The moment I touched the cube, a strong magic was released by it. I was amazed by the power of this cube. There was also so much of mana circling inside the cube. "That magic it just released was a sign to show that it can connect with your magic, my lady. Because Glaciren is found in the north mountain which is extremely cold, it would be a great material for your sword. It is mostly useful in an ice magic wilder like you, my lady." I lifted the cube out of the box, it was rather heavy. "What about the weight?" I questioned. He pulled out a dagger with a blue color blade and handed it over to me. "That dagger is also made out of Glaciren. When the material is turned in to something else it turns to a bluish white color and the weight is also reduce greatly." After thinking for a while I agreed to the idea of making my sword with Glaciren. He showed me some designs to pick for the sword. I did care about fancy swords with a ton of gems implanted so I went for simple but pretty strong sword.

Chapter 3

The Golden Gate's Welcome

The buildings stood tall and strong. There were banner to welcome the students back to the academy. The golden gates were open to welcome the students. The front yard was buzzing with people. Some gossiping about the latest news and other catching up with friends over the holidays. It was very lively and the school was very beautiful. The walls were white and the roofs were surprisingly blue in color. I walked through the gates after saying good bye to Maria. It was my first time here so I was kind of lost. I started to retrace the map of the school which was given when I started the game. While I was brainstorming through the information I knew, some shouting my name cut through. I turned to see who it was to see a girl was running towards me waving her hand. She had blond hair with emerald eyes. From my guess it must be Hazel Wavecrest, the daughter of count Wavecrest. Also one of my best friends, been since kindergarten. "Hey Veyra, where have you been? When I heard you fell off your horse, I was pretty surprised. I wanted to come, but I was stuck at parties with mom," said Hazel out of breath. I laughed back, "That's no surprise. Did you have fun?" Hazel looked at me annoyed. "Is that sarcasm I hear? WOW! You must have hit your head pretty hard!" The two of us got to talking. She was just as same as the game had described. In the game Hazel is known for her hyperactive and friendly behavior.

Unexpectedly the students started to gather near the gate leaving space in the middle. The students were cheering for something. I looked at Hazel looking for an explanation. "Why Veyra? Wait! Don't tell me you forgot what day today was? You are so forgetful, girl," Hazel replied for my reaction. "Today is the day the 'Equinox Order' are coming back. And your brother is also coming. And please don't tell me you have forgotten who the 'Equinox Order' are?" I shook my head giving a negative reply. I wouldn't possibly forget the strongest magicians of the whole school that easily. Equinox Order is the group

that the player in the game get together with and fight evil. So the character in the game is also a student of the academy. The students in the order are the strongest magician in the academy. Some time they can be stronger than people outside the academy too. They are chosen each year as new students are joining and more students are improving. If there is an event to represent the school the Equinox Order will be the representatives. Not only that, but they also go on small missions on helping the people in the realm. And they sometime protect the imperial palace when the royal guards are out. So, because of that they are pretty popular in the realm and in the academy. "VEYRA, Veyra are you there? You know, today you are getting distracted pretty easily," Hazel waved her hand to get my attention." Ha! Very funny, Hazel. Anyway should we be going there too or not?" Hazel's eyes shifted towards the crowd gathered as she started dragging me towards them. The two of us had to squeeze through the packed people to get to the front. I looked around trying to see what was happening when suddenly a loud sound cut through the shouting and cheering. The whole crowd went silent as a knight in armor riding a horse came through the golden gates. He was the one who blew a horn to silence everyone. Behind him was none other than Kyle and Vivian. The moment Kyle appeared the girls started cheering. That wasn't a surprise for the next duke of Cryovale and I got to say he did have looks. Next to him was Vivian Aethryn, Luna's other bestie, with her blackish-purple hair and dark blue eyes. She was the daughter of the house of Aethryn. The third strongest family in the realm. It is the house of lightning. The three of us have been together for a quite a long time. Vivian is known for her boyish personality and she is a person who just minds her own business. A very quiet, pretty hard to open up to other and the polar opposite of Hazel. But that is probably what makes them click.

When Hazel saw Vivian, she started waving her hand nonstop and started calling Vivian by her nickname. Hearing her nickname Vivian started scanning the crowd, saw a not so tall person waving her hand and she probably knew who it was. When she laid her eyes on the two of us a smirk appeared in her face. She looked happy seeing here two

chaotic friends in the crowd. In no time Hazel and I lost sight of Vivian because of the crowd. Behind my brother and Vivian came a carriage, on the left was Scarlet, the daughter of the duke of Verdanis. She is from the house of Verdanis and the heir to the dukedom. She was the fifth strongest member in the Royals. On the right was Kilian Aethryn, the son of the duke of Aethryn. He was Vivian's older brother, Kyles best friend. The two of them was the reason why I and Vivian was so close. "Just asking why is there a carriage here?" I questioned Hazel. "Her imperial majesties is visiting the school today, Veyra. And the princess is also there." The imperial majesties is the empress of this realm, Seraphina Ignivar. And her daughter is Princess Leilani Ignivar. In the game there is not a lot of detail about these two characters in the game. Empress Seraphina passes away earlier in the game due to an incurable disease. The diseases spreads very fast and concurs the whole realm. It was tragic, thousands of people lost they lives. After the pandemic the people starts to lose hope. And this is when the game starts. The demons took the tragedy to advantage and attacks the realm. While I was thinking about the future the carriage went past us and the rest of the Royals came. The formation was a triangle. In front was none other than his highness, Prince Rhevan Ignivar. The realms next emperor and the strongest royal out of every one. He had dark hair like the night sky and the gems of royalty, the crimson eyes that looking like the blood moon. Crimson eyes are the sign of the Royal family, because only the royal family has crimson eyes. They looked magical with the color spreading beautifully. Behind him more royals came with knights bring an end to the parade.

As the parade can to an end, everyone started going about their business as Hazel and I made our way in to the academy to search for Vivian. The inside was glamorous with a huge chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The tall window with patterns bought plenty of light into the academy and a great view too. A massive stair case led to the higher floors of the academy. And the hall way made multiple paths for imagination. They filled with painting and a number of students filling each corner with life and memory. I was so ready to make my

own memories in these hallways too. Hazel suddenly turned a corner and stopped while I was thinking of different possibilities that I didn't realize that Hazel stopped. Suddenly I hit the door in front of me. The door swung open as I fell face flat to the ground. Everyone's gaze fell on me. "Veyra!" Hazel called as she came to the side of me. A shadow fell on me as I lifted my head to see Kyle standing in front of me with his hands crossed. "What are you doing here Veyra? Is falling off your horse not enough?" Kyle questioned me. My face turned red with embarrassment and I got up with Hazel's help. "Hey Kyle. We came to see Vivian," I said as I tried to laugh off the embarrassing situation. After a while Vivian came to see her to best friends being questioned by Kyle. "Kyle don't worry I'll take it from here." Vivian said while giving Kyle a reassuring nod. The three of us got to talking and catching up on everything. We were cut short when the school bell suddenly sounded as the first period was about to start. The three of us jolted to our classes because we were a bit late.

In the end I had a great day and in no time the last bell sounded as the students went on their business. There is a ton of extra activities you can take part in. And when you are bored there is also activities to do with yourself and with your friends. After school the three of us went through the Emberforge which was a market inside the school. The three of us had some quality time and I got to know the place better. I was also surprised to know that there were shops inside the academy. Not only that we went to the arcade to play different games and pass time. As time passed the sky darkened as we went to our dorms. The dorms were divided into two sections, girls and boys. They were located in the academy premises. Hazel and Vivian were my roommate with Clare and Rose. Who were also in the same class as the three of us? They were also pretty friendly. The five of us had food from a stall in the Emberforge. The food was brilliant. When we got back it was late at night. The five of us had got lost in trying out all of the goods in the stall that without us noticing a lot of time had passed. The moment we got to our room I jumped to my bed and dozed off from exhaustion.

Chapter 4

The Shadow on the Ice

Suddenly the bright sunlight fell on my porcelain skin as I struggled to open my eyes. "Get up Vey. We're going to get late for the ceremony." Vivian's voice cut through the morning silence. I covered my face with my blanket and rolled over to the other side. "Five more minutes, Vivi." I replied as someone pulled the blanket off me. "Veyra you're the only one who is not ready yet. So, get up already," Haz started shaking me while continuing, "Did you forget that we are getting badged today. And from today on we are going to be a senior just like Vivi, right?" When Hazel looked back at Vivian for an answer, she nodded. I slowly got up while rubbing my eyes still half a sleep. I looked around searching for my clock which was sitting on the bedside table, eight forty six. I gasped seeing we were almost late. We are supposed to be at hall by nine o'clock. I dashed out of bed and started getting ready frantically. Vivian and Hazel sat down on the side of my bed while enjoying watching me panicking. I paused for a second and looked at my very supportive friends. By eight fifty five I was done. I quickly yanked the two of them and ran out of the room. The stairs felt like an endless loop that kept appearing constantly. The hallway of the academy was unusually quiet, but the beauty still holds on. Right before the door was locked we barged in. "Finally we made it," I sighed in relief as the three of us were breathing heavily searching for air. Clara waved her hand, to get our attention. We quietly made our way through the students, some who I knew, and some who I had no idea if they even existed. Vivian went to sit with Equites because they have to be together. Finally the two of us plopped on the two seats next to Clare. "I thought you guys wouldn't be able to make when they were going to close the door. Nice entrance though," Rose said as the two of us laughed it off. Clare and Rose were close friends and came from two commanders' families. Both their fathers are commanders in the imperial guards. After becoming roommates, the five of us have been looking out for each other, for an example, right now.

It's been more than a year since I have reincarnated in this game. For these few months I have gotten used to living in Veyra's body. After a while I also got her memories which were pretty useful. I also got to know a lot of people and made a lot of friends too. I've joined different societies, and extra activates too. I've also made my power stronger and learned how to control my mana. It was hard at first, but with practice I improved greatly. The possibilities of ice magic is endless. I can create things, Use water to freeze things, can break frozen thing and specially heal people. Healing people with ice magic is extremely rare. From our whole family I can only do healing. It is like a special ability. I never thought that wielding a sword would be so great either. With a light sword, it is easy to wield and easy to control. That is why I wanted a sword made from Glaciren. It is both easy to wield and do amazing magic. I also picked up archery as it was important for my type of magic. Knowing archery made my aim hundred time better. Hazel and Vivian were very supportive in my training. They never questioned me or made me feel alone or lost. The two was always there in my most important moments. Hazel and Vivian showed me around, took me to brilliant place. We had the best year. They all are like family to me now. I made beautiful memories with them in this short period of time. Speaking of family, my parents and two brother are the best. I rarely felt sad. They would provide me with the best things, make my life extraordinary. And Kyle on the other hand is cold and distance, but when you get to know him, he is the best big brother. Caring, fun, smart, protective and when I need him he is right there. Now I also understand what it like is to have a twin. Sometimes annoying to core, sometimes your emotional support and bestie. Liam is just the perfect twin anyone can have. Friendly, funny, crazy and super easy to get along with. He was there normally for everything. So, life has been a roller-coaster at the same time an adventure. Finally hazel and I had finals to advance to a higher rank. Ranks are given to each magician when they are born, the lowest rank is U and the highest rank is A. When you come to the highest rank you become a master of element. Veyra was D rank, which is the fourth rank from all seven ranks. End of every year there is a test to see if your rank is the same or if you have improved and gotten a higher rank. The test contains of battels with higher rankers and we have to go through a

magical scan that says you rank properly. And in this year's test, both I and Hazel has advanced to C rank. Two more rank to becoming A rank.

Suddenly the hall went pitch dark as the stage lit up. A tall women with black hair and glasses came to the stage. "Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. I am Miss Fiona, your announcer for today's ceremony. And I warmly welcomes you all to the annual Selecta of this year," announced the woman as the hall irrputed in applauses. "Today is a very special day for all of the students who have made advancements in your ranks. I congratulate you all in behalf of the whole academy," exclaimed Miss Fiona, "I also appreciate the arrival of her majesty the empress, Seraphina Ignivar. And not to forget the headmistress of our academy, Mrs. Seana Melgon. So, without farther adieu let us begin the annual Selecta of this year with a dance by the dancers of our academy." Everyone started clapping as Miss Fiona left the stage. The curtains slowly reveled the beautiful stage that we decorated for today, it was perfect. The dancers stood on the stage not moving an inch. The music arose from the instruments breaking the silence. The dancers slowly begin to dance to the melody while making the hall feel like a magical moment with their dance and the music. Everyone started to bond with the dance and the beautiful melody. The whole performance held a story about this wonderful world that I am in. It was just as magical as the world itself.

There were a lot of performances before the fun actually began. It was the time to give the badges to the students. The badges mean, every person in this world has a magical card that is like an ID. It has your information and the persons rank. It is made and issued from the palace so no one can make fake ones. The cards was called a Rank ID and the rank is going to be changed in the card. Then it is going to be given to us today. "Now it is finally the moment you all been waiting for, the distribution of the badge. I invite the empress of this realm, her majesty Seraphina Ignivar. And our head mistress Seana Melgon." invited Miss Fiona. Everyone in the hall got up to respect her majesty.

She was beautiful with her shining dark hair and the emerald eyes that sparkled in the light. The moment she smiled the whole auditorium felt calming. Her smile was so heartwarming and calm. Probably we felt calm because of her magic. Her majesty magic revolves around healing and plus she is from the house of Verdenis. The queen signaled everyone to take their seats. As we sat down the head mistress also joined her majesty. I have met her quite a time. She is so sweet, kind and sometime strict. I knew her because of Kyle and Liam. And from the family name too. One of our teachers got onto the stage and started reading out the name list with the rank and the magic level. The magic level is from 1 to 10000. There is a range for each rank. Everyone was excitedly awaiting for their name to be called. "Hazel Wavecrest level 758, rank C," the teacher called. The moment I heard the name I started clapping. From the corner of my eye I saw Vivian was also clapping. Hazel went up with a smile like the sunshine. She bowed to her majesty and she was given the badge. While coming down the stairs of the stage Hazel glanced back at me and showed a thumbs up. In return I also showed a thumbs up. The badging continued, Rose and Clare also got their badges. I was as happy for the three of them as we have been working so hard for this. And in the end it all paid off.

As the last person got off the stage, I heard my name being called, "Veyra Cryovale, rank C, level 913. And she is the highest out of all the C ranks." I got up from my seat and made my way to the stage. I could feel eyes on me, I was so proud of myself for getting the highest level. I walked up the stair with a lot of confidence and the biggest smile I could have. I bowed to her majesty with a smile. She also smiled back. While giving the badge back she whispered to my ear, "Well done Veyra. Congratulations." After hearing that I don't know why, but I was over the moon. Out of curiosity I looked at the audience and spotted Haz, she was making funny gesture that a smirk appeared on my face. My eyes shifted to where Vivian was sitting. She looked so proud. Next to her was Kyle with a very calm look. But I know that he is happy in the inside. Even though I searched for Liam, he was nowhere to be seen. I started walking back to my seat, suddenly a hand came out of

nowhere and grabbed my hand. I turned to see it was Liam with his friends. "Where were you and how did you get here?" I questioned him. "Oh I got caught to run some errand for Miss Elena. I had to run all around the school and just got here. I couldn't possibly miss my twin's advancement ceremony, could I?" He replied, "And congrats, Vey" I could see he was tired. I thanked him and went back to my seat. After a while the ceremony finished successfully.

The four of us came out of the auditorium with the biggest smiles ever and Vivi was in the entrance to the upper school. The sleepless nights, hours of training, thousands of notes, trips we had missed just to study had all payed off at last. And from today onward Haz, Clare, Rose and I will be entering the upper school of the academy where all the best students are at. Prestige's mentors with various titles will also be there. And Hazel and I can finally be with Vivian as she graduated to upper school earlier because she is a year older than Hazel and I missed a year in the academy. I was out of the capital city for a course in my magic field. But that never made us less friendly. We would secretly sneak in to the upper school to see Vivian. And both Kyle and Liam are in the upper school and surely I won't have a day of peace. But that won't always happen and I am excited to see our new class. The upper school was located like 10m away from the junior high where we used to study. There is a gate that separates the two places from each other. And the dorms are in between the two places. In no time we were in front of the gates to the upper school and after we pass the gate a new chapter in our lives begin. Not only the four of us, but the all of the new graduates were there. I saw tears in some of the graduate's eyes and some were jumping in joy and excitement. I was also sad to leave the junior high behind, when Hazel suddenly patted my back, reassuring me that everything will be just fine. I do have to agree with Hazel, all of us had a lot of memories while we were in the junior high and it is hard to leave this place. But we still have those tiny happy memories with us and it is the time to make more chaotic memories in the upper school. The gates gradually open as we made our way out of junior high. The four of us stopped on tracks and turned back to take a one last look. It was still the same, the beauty had

increased but it still holds those chaotic fun memories. Suddenly a small tear slide down my cheek. It wasn't a sad tear but a happy one. Hazel being herself, saluted at junior high as if saying bye. We turned around to begin our new journey in the upper school.

The gates were pushed open by the knights guarding the entrance to the upper school. On the other side of the gate stood the head mistress and her majesty with the Equites to welcome us to the upper school. The upper school is the pride of this academy. And being a part of it is like a dream for a normal student. The best, strongest students are only allowed to enter. The high society revolves around the upper school. Next to her majesty was his highness and the princess who is younger than me just like Hazel. It was my first time seeing them together and this close. They were perfect, just like what the roomers say. The princess was so beautiful with her light red hair and crimson eyes. She looked just like her majesty. "Welcome to the upper school everyone. Congratulation!!!" everyone suddenly shouted taking us by surprise. I was filled with happiness that I could shout. There were few students with flowers to welcome us. Everyone scattered and started their own conversations, while the four of us searched for Vivian in the huge crowd. "Vey, Haz I see her!" called rose as she spotted Vivian with the Equites caught up in a big conversation. We made our way to Vivi when unexpectedly she saw us. She waved her hand to let us know that she saw us too. "Hey graduates. Welcome to the upper school, where your life get a whole lot chaotic," Vivian gave a sarcastic welcome. The other Equites started chuckling. "Vivian who are they? Your friends?" One of the Equites asked Vivian. And four of us started to introduce ourselves one by one. Finally I was about to introduce myself, but before I could I saw the royals looked surprised for some kind of a reason. A guy with grey hair and purple eyes suddenly spoke up, "Wait a minute... You are Liam's twin, right? And Kyle is your big brother" I wasn't that surprised that he recognized me as Kyle and Liam's sister. I did look like Liam and I had the family birth mark on my left hand. And not to forget the two of them were very famous in the academy, not only in

upper school, but in junior high too. I nodded and gave a proper introduction of myself.

After getting to know most of Equites we presided to the inside to settle down with our stuff. We had dorms here too, but bigger and with much more things around. Luckily, this time also we were together. It wasn't surprising. We been together since we started school. Most of the people knew and specially the dorm mistress. She is in charge of everything that happens in the dorms. A strict stern person. In less than an hour we finished unpacking the huge boxes. I plopped on my chair and stretched out of laziness and said, "We are finally done. How did we have this much of stuff in the first place?" Out of nowhere Clare burst out of the door, "Hey everyone, Vivi called us to come to Equites gathering room for a small welcome party, come on let's go." We were running through the hallways as the wind brushed past us. Even though I miss Akari and other who loved me. If they saw me right now they would be more than happy at what I have achieved. When we got to the room it was packed with people and was decorated beautifully. I was flabbergasted. We squeezed through the people in the process we were pushed around that we almost got lost. The Equites were gather in a small groups, Vivian was with some new students. Hazel surprised her by jumping at her. "Oh! You guys made it, I thought you were still unpacking." Haz replied with a positive answer. Vivian took us to the middle of the room where Kyle was. "Kyle I bought them, where is he?" She asked Kyle like they wanted us to meet someone. "Perfect timing. And Congratulations," Kyle wished us. All four of us thanked for the wish as the crowds sound suddenly died down. All of the attention turned to the main entrance as his highness and her highness entered. Everyone bowed. Only after that the crowd went back to their own business. His highness and her highness made their way toward where we were. I was first surprised but understood they were coming to meet my brother. "Kyle, you said you have something to say, right. What is it?" prince Rhevan's deep voice cut through the awkwardness. I no time the two were buried in a huge conversation. The princess said, "Hi Vivian, How are you? And are these your friends?" Vivian bowed and replied, "Greetings your highness, I am

doing great and yes these are my friends, your highness." Each of us introduced ourselves to the princess. "Oh wait, you are Kyle's sister, right?" she asked me curious. I nodded with a gentle smile. "Oh, I always wanted to meet you. Both Kyle and Liam has said a lot about you." We talked for a while and got to know each other better when out of on where a hand was placed on my shoulder. I turned to see it was Liam and he said, "Guess what? We are going to have a selection to find new members for the Equinox Order. You all can join too. And Veyra this is your chance to be in the Order, you always wanted to be in it, right?" Liam's words echoed in my mind. "Selection to choose member's for the Equinox Order." For a moment, everything around me faded—the laughter, the noise, the celebration. Hazel grabbed my shoulders, shaking me excitedly. "VEY! We have to join! This is our chance!" I blinked, then smiled realizing that I just dozed off. "Yeah." Vivi crossed her arms, watching us. "It won't be easy. The Equinox Order selections are not just going to test your ability but it is going to test how you will act in different situations." Kyle standing nearby, added calmly, "You'll be tested in combat, strategy, and control. If you hesitate, you lose." I met his gaze. "I won't hesitate."

After few days I was standing in front of a massive arena. Today was the day for the Equinox Selection. Students filled every seat, their voices echoing through the stone walls. Magic barriers shimmered around the battlefield. This was the stage where the strongest were chosen. Haz stood next to me, unusually quiet. "...I'm nervous," she admitted. I smirked. "That's new. Come on cheer up" Names were being called one by one. Fights broke out across different sections of the arena. Fire clashed with water, wind tore through stone—magic filled the air like a storm. "Veyra Cryovale. Step forward," called the announcer. I stepped into the arena. Across from me stood a tall boy with dark green hair and a confident smirk. "Didn't expect to face the Grand Duke's daughter this early," he said. "Try not to disappoint." I didn't respond. As soon as the announcer gave the command to begin, I raised my hand slightly. Cold air gathered instantly. The ground beneath my feet began to freeze. The boy's expression changed. He moved first—fast. A burst of fire magic shot toward me,

sharp like blades. I stepped back and raised my hand. “Ice Wall.” A solid barrier of ice formed instantly, blocking the attack. The impact cracked it—but didn’t break it. He’s predictable. I waved my hand again. The ice beneath him spread rapidly. He jumped—but that’s exactly what I expected. “Now.” Sharp ice spikes shot upward. He barely dodged, but it threw him off balance. I didn’t give him time. Drawing my sword—the one made from Glaciren—I dashed forward. The blade shimmered in a pale blue glow. Our weapons clashed. His eyes widened. “You’re fast—!” I twisted my wrist and released a burst of freezing mana. His weapon froze over instantly. With one swift movement—I knocked it out of his hand. The arena fell silent. “...Winner: Veyra Cryovale.” Cheers erupted from the stands. Hazel was screaming my name at the top of her lungs. Vivi, Haz and Liam had proud smiles on their faces. Even Kyle gave a small nod. Next to my brother, the princess who has become one of my good friends was also clapping with a big smile. Not to mention his highness was also clapping. All of them helped me so much for the past few weeks and that made us very close friends. But something felt... off. As I stepped out of the arena, a strange chill ran down my spine. Not from my magic. Something else, something darker. For a split second—I thought I saw black smoke flicker near the entrance of the arena. I turned quickly, nothing. “...Probably just my imagination,” I muttered under my breath. But the uneasy feeling didn’t leave.

As the matches continued, I stayed near the edge of the arena, watching. More students fought. More names were called. My fingers twitched slightly as a thin layer of frost formed unconsciously on my palm. I understood my mana was reacting, to something. “Veyra!” I turned to see Vivian walking toward me, her expression serious, “You felt it too, didn’t you?” So I wasn’t imagining it. “...Yeah,” I replied quietly. “Something’s off.” Before we could find the reason—a loud explosion echoed through the arena. Both our attention drew to the sound. The magical barrier around the arena flickered violently. Students screamed, the ground shook beneath our feet. From the entrance—that same black smoke I saw earlier began pouring in. It started to grow uncontrollably, twisting, forming shapes. “D-

Demons?!" someone shouted. "No... this isn't normal..." Vivian whispered. The smoke condensed into shadow-like creatures. Not fully formed, not stable. Like something incomplete. "Everyone stay back!" a voice commanded. It was Prince Rhevan, flames erupted from his hand, lighting up the arena. Kyle stepped forward beside him, his golden eyes sharp as he commanded, "Equites, defensive formation!" In seconds, the members of the Equinox Order moved into position. The Equites fought with persistence and accuracy. Timing and speed perfect. These are the qualities of the Equites. I looked around, chaos had broken out, and students were all over the place, running for their lives. When suddenly I noticed one of the shadow creatures lunged toward a group of younger students. Without a second thought I rush and shouted, "Freeze." Ice spread instantly across the ground, stopping it mid-motion. But—the creature didn't shatter, it twitched and struggled. Like it was resisting my magic. I was helping one of the students. "Veyra, move!" Liam shouted. I jumped back just as another shadow slammed into where I stood. My heart was racing. These weren't normal demons. They felt...Unstable. From the center of the arena, the shadows gathered. Swirling together. For a brief moment, they formed something larger. A presence, cold, ancient, broken. Then it disappeared, like it was never there.

Silence fell. The arena was left damaged. Teachers rushed in and students were escorted out. The selection was stopped till further notice. "This is not a random attack," Kyle said, his voice low. Prince Rhevan looked toward the broken barrier. "...No. It isn't." Vivian turned to me and asked, "What did you see?" I hesitated. Then said, "...Something forming. Not a demon. Something else." From the corner of my eye—I noticed someone watching. Standing at the far end of the arena entrance. A tall man with a dark cloak. For a second, our eyes met. And my entire body froze. Not from fear, but recognition. Then he disappeared, like smoke. That night, I couldn't sleep, the image of that figure stayed in my mind. And the way my mana reacted... It wasn't normal. I sat up in bed, staring at my hand. A thin layer of frost formed again, uncontrolled, unnatural. "...What is happening?" I whispered.

Chapter 5

The Hero's Lie

The night was too quiet, not the peaceful kind. The kind that made your thoughts louder. I sat by the window, staring out into the dark sky. The academy, usually filled with life, felt... tense. Ever since the incident at the arena, something had changed. Even though me and Hazel got into the Equinox Order and got along with most of the students, something feels off. In me. In the air. In everything. A cold breeze slipped through the window. Too cold, even for me. I frowned slightly. "...That's strange." Slowly, I stood up, the frost on my fingertips appeared again—thin, almost glowing. My mana was reacting, to something or someone. Before I could think further—the shadows in my room shifted. The candles went out instantly, darkness swallowed the room. "Who's there?" I called out, summoning ice to my hand. No answer, but the temperature dropped. Not my kind of cold. Something deeper, heavier. Suddenly, a hand appeared from the shadows behind me. Everything went black.

Cold air filled my lungs as I gasped awake. I pushed myself up quickly, gripping my sword. This wasn't my room, this wasn't the academy. I was in a room with a glass roof. The sky above was fractured—light and darkness twisting together like something broken. The ground beneath me glowed faintly through deep cracks. Unstable and alive. "...Where am I?" I questioned myself. "The place your world fears." I turned. A man stood a few steps away. Cloaked in darkness—but not hidden by it. His presence was overwhelming... yet controlled. His eyes met mine. A crimson like Rhevan's, but different. They held not rage or hatred. Something far more dangerous, understanding. "The Dark Realm," he said. My grip tightened. "You brought me here." He gave a calm positive reply as he came to the faint light revealing his appearance. Tall, stern, cold and distance. A menacing aura enough to make a tiger step back. In seconds, I knew who was standing in front of me. 'Kaelthar Veyth' also known as 'The dark king' the ruler of the Umbraxis Realm. Anger flared as I questioned, "You expect me to

believe anything after that?" He didn't react. "I understand why you can't trust me... If I intended harm..." His voice remained calm. "You would not be standing." Silence swallowed the room.

After a while the king sat down in the sofa and I sat opposite to him. I was cautious and didn't let my guard down. "Then tell me why you bought me here?" He studied me for a moment. "In your world... who were the heroes? The Five Great Mages," he paused. "That is what they told you." Something about the way he said it, made my chest tighten. "You started the war," I shot back, his gaze didn't change.

"I tried to stop it." My breath caught.

"I refused to divide the world."

"...What?"

"The war was not about victory. It was about control." The ground beneath us pulsed faintly. "They chose separation. I chose unity," he continued, "They could not control the power we uncovered, so they split it to light and dark."

"That doesn't make sense," I said, "Why would they lie?"

He looked at me—directly.

"Because people needed a hero...and every story needs a villain. And it is the answer they came up for this problem." At this point I couldn't think straight. This was too much to take in, the whole system we were taught from the day we were born, the foundation of life, it all was a lie. That changes everything. "You've already felt it, your power are not the same as others," he exclaimed. I froze. "You hold balance... without breaking." He explained, "You are not bound to this world. Your soul does not belong to the split." My heart skipped.

"...You know about that?"

"I know enough."

He stepped closer—but not threatening.

“You can hold both sides. Light and Dark.”

“That’s impossible.”

“It is the only reason you survived coming here.”

The ground suddenly shook, violently, cracks widened. Energy burst out—light and shadow colliding wildly. I stepped back, shocked. **“What is that—?!”**

“The consequence,” his voice lowered.

“When the world was split... something was left behind.”

“It is waking up.”

The same feeling. The same presence. The arena. **“If balance is not restored,” he said, “both realms will fall.” “Why tell me this?” I asked quietly. He looked at me—not as an enemy, but as something else. “Because you are the only one who can choose differently.”**

“I’m not asking for your loyalty.”

“I’m asking you to see the truth.”

Everything went silent. The world around me began to fade. **“Wait—!”** His voice echoed one last time: **“When your world turns on you...remember who told you the truth.”** Darkness swallowed everything.

I rubbed my eyes trying to clear my vision. I was back in my room, laying on my comfortable bed. I felt my head spinning and my body aching. It was midday already, did I just dream of meeting the demon king. But it felt too real to a dream. Unexpectedly the door slammed open. **“VEYRA!”** Hazel rushed in, followed by Vivian and Liam. **“Where were you?!”** Hazel’s voice shook, **“you disappeared!”** I was rather surprised by Hazel’s words. **“I—”** Before I could speak, guards entered. **“My Lady, you are summoned to the royal court,”** one of the guards said, **“We hope you can follow us to the court room.”** I looked at Haz, Vivi and Liam hopping for an answer. **“May I know why she has to go to the court room,”** Liam questioned the guards. **“Lord Liam, we**

can't answer that question, if you are seeking an answer we advise you to follow us to the court, too," replied the guards. We quietly followed the guards to the central hall. It was a massive place for noble to gather and to discuss any problems. The hall was silent and heavy. Every noble, mage, every eye was on me. At the further end of the place I was standing sat King Altherion, the king of Luminaria. And beside him was prince Rhevan and princess Leilani. I was brought forward. "Veyra of the house of Cryovale," the King began, "you vanished and returned... changed. I feel a strong sense of dark magic since you have returned"

A royal mage stepped forward. "There are traces of dark mana within her." Gasps filled the room. "She has been corrupted!"

"She made a pact with the Dark King!"

"She is a threat to the realm!"

Voices rose. Tension exploded. I stood still, didn't move or speak. I scanned the crowd. I saw my parents worried and a bit disappointed. Next to them was Kyle and Liam, both trying to come up with a way to save me. And my friends stood unable to do anything in my behalf. "I did not betray this realm," my voice cut through the chaos. "I was taken. To the Dark Realm." Silence—Then louder outrage. "Lies!" The audience argued, "no one returns untouched!" With all this I was starting to lose hope. I don't want to give up. What if no one believes me, what will happen to me? "She's telling the truth," Vivian stepped forward. Calm and sharp. "She had every chance to harm us before, but she never did." Liam moved next, "She protects people. Even when no one is watching." Finally Kyle's cold voice joined. Deadly calm. "If she intended betrayal..." A pause, "you all would already be dead." Silence fell. A light smile appeared on my face. I looked towards the rest of friend who were nodding with approval. Unexpectedly prince Rhevan stood up and came forward. Loud and precise. "If she aligned with the Dark King..." His gaze swept the room, "why return?" No one answered. "She gains nothing by standing here." Silence deepened. I looked at him to let him know I

was thankful for his help. His eyes met mine, just for a second, steady and certain.

The King leaned back, thinking. "...You will not be punished," murmurs spread.

"But you will not be trusted."

"You will remain under observation."

"And you will be assigned to a special unit," my eyes narrowed slightly.

"One that will investigate this threat."

As the court dismissed—Zane walked past me. He didn't stop, didn't look. But quietly said— "Next time...don't disappear alone." Then he kept walking. The court was divided. Some trust and doubt. Some fear and belief.

Chapter 6

The Vanishing Protection

I stood in the grand corridor, my footsteps echoing softly against the marble floors. The walls that once felt welcoming now felt... distant. Cold in a way that had nothing to do with my magic. The royal decree came without warning. A sealed mission with high priority. And I have no room for refusal. They didn't trust me and this is my only chance to clear my name and my family name. I was watched every time by two guards. They knew exactly where I was and reported everything to his majesty. I stood in front of the academy gates as the Equinox order gathered. Prince Rhevan was already there—silent as always, eyes scanning the horizon like he could see beyond it. Vivian leaned against a pillar, arms crossed and talking to Hazel. Liam stretched lazily, but his gaze kept flicking toward me. Kyle stood slightly apart, expression unreadable. And beside them... a noble I didn't recognize, he didn't look at me directly. "We investigate abnormal mana activity near the border," Rhevan said. As we crossed deeper into the outer regions, the sky began to change. Light faded unevenly. Like reality itself was losing balance. We saw a forest—but wrong, trees partially crystallized, shadows moving where nothing stood. Mana... leaking into the air like broken glass. Then the first creature appeared. It wasn't fully formed like reality forgot how to finish making it. It lunged towards me. Prince Rhevan moved first—flames cutting clean through the air. Kyle followed—precision strikes, controlled destruction. Vivian shielded the group. Liam pulled me back— "Careful Veyra! Don't act rashly." I nodded and saw something I didn't hope to see there, unbalance. It wasn't attacking randomly, it was reacting, to fear, chaos and to us. I stepped forward, ice forming in my palm hoping to end this. But something else flickered inside it, a darker shade. I froze the creature mid-motion and it shattered in to small pieces. Silence followed. But the ice, Cracked with faint black veins. The noble stepped back and exclaimed, "...What is that?" Everyone looked at me shocked and lost for words. I hid my hand, but it was too late. A huge amount of dark energy was released from the ice and

spread everywhere. This was when I realized I had no way of been saved this time.

By the time we returned to the palace, the rumors had already spread. Not rumors, accusations. The court was already gathered. Nobles filled the chamber, their voices sharp and unforgiving. I stood in the center, again. But this time much more terrified and unsure of my future. This time I was completely alone, I don't think anyone would protect me.

"She disappeared and returned unharmed."

"She has contact with the Dark Realm."

"She used dangerous magic during the mission."

"Is that not enough proof?" I clenched my fists. Proof? They had no proof. "Lady Veyra Cryovale," one noble spoke coldly, "are you in alliance with the Dark King?" Silence filled the room and all the eyes fell on me. It was heavy and suffocating. I rose my head and faced his majesty. "No," I answered firmly. But doubt had already taken root.

"Her mana has changed."

"She is unstable. She is a threat."

"Enough," Rhevan's voice cut through the chaos, calm, controlled, but powerful. "She has never acted against this realm." The room fell silent. A noble scoffed, "Your Highness, with all due respect, you are blinded by personal bias." Rhevan didn't react immediately. "If I were," he said quietly, "she would not be standing here. She would be under my direct protection." That made the room shift. Subtle, important. I looked at him. Just for a second. Something unspoken passed between us. Kyle stepped forward next. "She is Cryovale. Our house will never betray this realm." Liam followed, voice sharper, "and if she did, we would be the first to stop her." Hazel and Vivian didn't say anything, they just stepped forward and stood beside me. That was louder than words. But it wasn't enough. Still it was more than enough for me. They all were here for me no matter what happens. The final verdict echoed across the hall. "She will be

stripped of authority and placed under watch,” announced the king, “if further suspicion arises—she will be exiled.” I didn’t react, didn’t argue, and didn’t defend myself again. Because this was enough and I understood. This wasn’t about truth. It was about fear.

That night the sky suddenly cracked. A deep, unnatural tremor shook the entire realm. The air was distorted and mana surged wildly. Screams echoed through the capital. “It’s happening—!” someone shouted, “The barrier is destabilizing!” I ran outside as quickly as I can. My head dropped and my legs weakened. Above the capital a massive distortion twisted the sky. Dark and light energy clashing violently. It was happening, what King Kaelthar said was true, The Fractured Core is awakening. Monsters began to emerge, they were twisted and unnatural. Not from the Dark Realm—but from the imbalance itself. In no time the imperial army and the equinox order gathered. I rush to where the Equites were. “Veyra what are you doing here?” Hazel questioned me. “I was an Equite and even though I am stripped of my authority, I still have the responsibility of protecting the people of this realm.” I raised my hand and enchanted a spell. Ice spread across the battlefield. Freezing explosions and stopping destruction. Together we manage a little bit more. But even I knew that this can’t be held forever. A sudden stillness fell, I felt a strong presence and it was very familiar. That presence cold, ancient, watching. Darkness gathered behind me. “You see it now.” my breath caught as I turned slowly and he was there. Untouched by the chaos, unshaken by the destruction, The Dark King. “...You came,” I said quietly. His gaze didn’t leave my, “I never left.” Around them, the battle continued—but it felt distant. Like the world had narrowed to just this moment.

“You shouldn’t be here,” I said.

“You already know that’s not true.”

Another creature roared in the distance. The sky twisted further.

“They’re losing,” he said calmly, “they will all lose.”

“I can stop this.”

He stepped closer, "Not here.”

I didn't move. “I'm not leaving them.” For the first time, something shifted in his expression. Not anger, not frustration, but understanding. My heart tightened. “The Core is reacting to conflict,” he continued. “To fear. To division.” His eyes darkened slightly. “And right now... your realm is drowning in both.” Another tremor shook the ground, stronger, more violent. “You don't have time,” he said. I was hesitant for a second. I couldn't possibly just leave my friends and family here to carry on fighting for their and the peoples survival. I thought again about what Kaelthar told and he got a point. If I stay here I won't be able to even help them much. Because I had no idea of how to control or use my powers. Finally I made a choice, “...Fine.” The moment I agreed— Darkness surged around me fast like it was waiting for this moment. Not violent. Not consuming, controlled. My friends turned just in time to see what was happening. There were too stunned. “Veyra—!” But by the time they realized I was already gone. The battlefield froze. For a single heartbeat. Then chaos returned. And as the sky continued to break— as the realm stood on the edge of collapse— the one person who could save it... Had disappeared.

Chapter 7

The Broken Bridge

Darkness faded slowly. I felt solid ground beneath my feet. Stable and ancient. Yet again I returned to a place feared by all human beings. Cold air brushed against my skin—but it wasn't the sharp, unnatural cold of the Fractured Core. I felt surprisingly reassured. This was... different. The sky above me was a deep violet, streaked with slow-moving shadows. The land stretched endlessly—dark, but not lifeless. In the distance, faint lights glowed like scattered stars across the ground. It is the Realm of Umbraxis. Heavy, cold steps got closer to where I stood. "You're calmer than before." His distant voice came from behind me. I had a satisfied smirk all over my face as I slowly turned to face him. The Dark King stood a few steps away, his presence as steady as ever. "I've seen worse than this," I replied, a small lie. But I refused to show hesitation. He gave me a cozy blanket after seeing me shivering after what happened in Luminaria. I was told about something very interesting. "In Umbraxis the time spend is faster than in Luminaria. That means two hours in Umbraxis is around 5 minutes in Luminaria," the king added and told me to make myself home and rest for a while. After I settled down, I started making my way towards the grand hall where the king was at. In no time we were walking through a quiet stronghold—demons bowing as he passed, but their eyes lingered on me with curiosity. They were so much different from what I have heard, they seem friendly and not dangerous. "You expected monsters," he said without looking at me.

"...I expected enemies."

"And what do you see?"

I didn't answer immediately. Because what I saw—were demons with human features. Children training with magic. Families. Warriors. I saw a world... just like mine. It was totally different from what I imagined. "They lied to you," he said calmly. My eyes narrowed slightly as I replied, "I know." We continued walking and I was completely stunned. We finally stopped at a high platform overlooking

a massive abyss. At its center— Energy swirled violently. Light and darkness twisting together in unstable waves. My breath caught and I realized what it was, The Fractured Core... "It is the wound of this world," he said, "created when the Five Mages split what was never meant to be divided."

"They didn't defeat me," he continued.

"They feared what I understood." I looked at him with understanding.

"You wanted to reunite the world."

"Yes," his voice remained calm.

"But not like this." He gestured toward the Core.

"If the realms merge violently, this collapses everything."

"If they remain separated... It will slowly consume both."

I clenched my fists, "so there's no safe option."

"There is one."

Silence. His gaze locked onto me. "You." I was taken it back as that word came out of his mouth. "You are not bound to this world," he explained, "Your soul... is not part of the original divide." My heart skipped as hope started to rebuild in my heart. "You can hold both, light and dark," he continued, "Without being consumed." With a bit of fear I looked down at my hands. At the faint frost forming along my fingers, and the shadow flickering beneath it. "I felt it..." I whispered with new found hope. "You are the balance this world rejected," he said, "They will not trust you, even if you save them." I already knew that. "But you will still return," he added. Not a question. I looked toward the distant horizon. Toward the unseen Light Realm. "...Yeah." Not for the nobles or for the court. For the people. For my friends. And for everyone I cared. The Dark King stepped forward. "For the first time in history," he said, "light and dark will stand together." I met his gaze. "Not as enemies," I said. "...As survivors." And as the Fractured Core roared in the distance, the final decision was made.

The Light Realm was falling. The sky had shattered completely. The Fractured Core loomed above the capital—massive, unstable, and alive. Creatures poured from it endlessly. The Equites fought relentlessly. Kyle and Liam stood at the front lines. Hazel, Vivian, Clare, Rose— All fighting. All exhausted. But they were losing. Then everything stopped. All the attention shifted to the center as a purple magic started appearing and was concentrated on one spot. A portal split open as a dark energy was released. And through that I stepped out. Not alone. With an entire army following me. Every eye fell on us, some hopeful, some scared. And not to forget the Dark King walked right beside me. Gasps spread. Some lifted their weapons trying to protect themselves. “Stand down!”

Rhevan’s command rang out instantly. The army froze. “They’re not our enemy,” I said unshaken. My voice clear. For a while no one move. “...All units hold formation,” said his majesty. I was taken it back to see the King on our side. The two kings shared glances. After a few second King Altherion looked at me and nodded with approval. In return I also gave him a nod. Trust was built and there is only one thing to do. That is to win this tragedy that has took place. And we are half way there. In no time the two armies moved together. Light and Dark. Side by side. As one. Magic Started to surge from everywhere and now people had something to hold on to... hope. Everyone fought with confidence and faith as one by one the creature faltered. And it was my first time seeing the five mages fighting all together. Even though they are aged now, they are still the greatest I have seen. On the other hand I was getting use to my new found magic. It wasn't so different from my previous magic, but it was different. I feel great amount of energy that never had before. And it feels nice.

As more and more creatures fell the core's defense fell. Still the Core was unstable. Even though we defeated the creatures it was rather impossible for a normal person to defeat it, even though there are more than one person. It was so strong. Fill with fear and sadness. I understood how it felt just by observing him. After a while we were losing hope again. Members of the two armies were falling one after

another. And my friends fought with all they have, but it is not enough. I couldn't watch this any longer. I have to stepped forward and stop this somehow. And that is exactly what I did. I came front and face the core face to face. Alone. "This ends now." I don't know what came over me, I just followed my heart. I raised my sword. Light started too gathered around it. Darkness followed. For a moment— the world held its breath. A massive sigil formed in the sky using the energy I collected. Frozen. Perfectly balanced. Then I chanted, "Eternal Equinox." And as soon as the words came out of my mouth, the energy surged upward, not to destroy. But to stabilize. The Core trembled as its violent energy slowed. Shifted. Balanced. Slowly the creatures began to fade. Small particles that looks like snowflakes flowed out of it. And it disappeared completely. The sky... Cleared. I looked up at the orange sky and a cold breeze past through me. The sun was rising, it was magnificent. The battle was finally over. I turned back, demons and humans were helping each other out and they were happily celebrating. When suddenly Hazel came out of nowhere and hugged. She had tears pouring from her eyes. "You are back!" I hugged her back. "I am" Finally every one of my friends joined. This was going to be one of the best days of my life. The war... was over. Not by victory. By balance.

Years later— a bridge stood where the barrier once was. It was broken down. Light and dark crossed freely. Children trained together. Everyone share there joys and sores. They all are living happily. No more misunderstanding or fights. We all live like a one massive family. The world— is not perfect. But it was no longer broken. And in the end I was back. Not as a hero. But as balance.



Afterword

With the approval of the Ministry of Education, this research-based project has empowered thousands of student authors for over ten years. Educationists recognize it as a program that significantly enhances the quality of school education.

In alignment with modern educational reforms, encouraging students to author a research work is a milestone in this journey. In this digital age of "Smart" technology, the modern school must demonstrate through research that books and technology should be used together. This is because the unique joy a child receives from a book cannot be replaced by anything else.

To prevent children from drifting away from books—which remain our primary educational tool and storehouse of human knowledge—Mahamaya Girls' College has spearheaded the "Hemamala Upahara" project for many years. Its primary objectives are to foster academic discipline, promote values, and pay tribute to Princess Hemamala, who fulfilled a historic mission to empower women.

We express our gratitude to the Principal, teachers, parents, alumni of Mahamaya Girls' College, representatives of other schools, the Diyawadana Nilame, and the staff of the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) for their support.

Seneviratne Mahalekam
(Project Creator)