

## The Darkening Sky

Leena, the youngest of the siblings, sits atop a grand stone, sketching a wondrous picture of a small stream flowing towards the Aboriginal Mountains in the far distance. Until an eye-catching creature known as the moonlight owl, its feathers sparkling like stars in the midnight sky landed on a nearby pine. The bright sun begins to rise from behind the mountains as the sparkling owl disappears. Leena finishes up her sketch as quickly as possible to be home for breakfast soon, but a rustle and a slight laugh comes from the bush to the left of her.

“I can hear you, you’re not very quiet,” Leena says with a small smile as Elleron, her older brother fails to scare her. “Breakfast is hot and ready by the way, Elysia told me to let you know,” He remarked.

“I’m on my way just let me finish the last detail.... done!” Leena climbs off the rock and walks toward the small, woodland cottage not far into the forest. The two siblings chat about what they suppose is for breakfast, as they walk through the door it became evident that Leena was right with her guess of ham and bread. Elysia set everyone’s plate in front of them before sitting down to enjoy the meal she had prepared. Everyone is now eating around the peaceful fire on this cold, winter morning.

“Does anyone have a story or something to talk about?” Elysia looked around after finishing breakfast a few minutes later.

“I have something to talk about,” Leena said in response while putting her plate away “I saw a moonlight owl in the distance.”

“That’s cool and all, but we have an important errand to do now that I think about it,” Elysia remarked with a forced smile.

“We must travel to Elmwood for a swift visit, we are starting to run out of numerous necessities,” Following this, she went to feed the horses and ready their small, wooden wagon.

They all climbed on the wooden wagon, and before long it was trudging through the dirt and sleet on the ground making its way toward Elmwood, they arrived about 20 minutes later to the surprisingly peaceful village, this was likely due to the unexpected snow in the area.

“It is indeed unusually cold for being in this part of Alleria, I heard Oakport and Shadowvale even got snow,” Elysia said before entering the small, empty trading post in the town center.

“Do you know what this reminds me of? This unusually cold weather hasn’t been recorded for at least a century,” said Elleron with a casual expression.

“Don’t tell me its that crazy book you read about dragons a moon ago,” Leena replied skeptically.

“Maybe?”

“Just don’t even start with that,” said Leena sternly.

“Just hear me out really quick, in that story it began with a foggy winter morning in a small village of Alleria, near the Aboriginal Mountains, it described it as the darkening sky, the beginning of legends, myths, tales, and wonders of the old kingdoms,” replied Elleron

“Your fairy tales are entertaining but not convincing,” Leena said with a stern smile.

Following this, thick fog rolled over the village with thunder in the distance. A chill ran down the siblings’ spines at the thunder and fogs perfectly timed appearance. Elysia came out of the trading post with a few small crates and loaded them in the wagon.

“We should get home before the rain starts,” remarked Elysia.

“We lack the time and raingear for that, we might have to shelter in the sea dog crescent,” Elleron recommended with Leena nodding shortly after.

“Alright fine, we’ll sit in the back away from everyone and wait for the storm to clear,” Elysia agreed reluctantly.

As they entered the restaurant with the dark oak walls with many intricate details, loud chatter filled the room. They walked to a table in the back and sat on the hard, wooden chairs and stools around the table. The thunder outside only grew louder, and the lightning that was over the forest a short time ago was now directly over the village. Suddenly, the outside flashes with fire as the windows shatter to pieces, sending a fiery shockwave through the village and throwing everyone scrambling to the ground for cover. Elysia flipped the table, using it as cover and a hiding spot for the three of them.

“Wha – What’s going on!?” Elleron said, terrified looking at the flaming village square.

He jumped out of the window and ducked behind the cover to see what was happening and in the flaming sky, a blood red portal is ominously flashing in the flames, with many large, dragon-like beings descending into the skies with fearsome growls at Elmwood’s terrified inhabitants. Elysia pulls Elleron back inside with force before shushing him and Leena as the door slams open. A large man, with a dark cloak and ebony armor walks in with a fearsome smile, fire emulating from his hands and arms. He placed his hand on the hilt of his sword and examined the terrified faces around the messy room, with shards of glass, broken chairs, and tables in every corner.

“Any one of ye human dogs want to stand up against your new lords?” he said with an intimidating smile while drawing his sword.

“With pleasure,” a mysterious man replied with a smile creeping under his hood while drawing a sword of his own.

The man laughs while slowly walking towards the young man who is nearly half of his size.

“Your figure doesn’t scare me old man,” said the mysterious figure.

“You’re not scared boy? Oh, you will be... you will be,” the man said before aiming his blade at the hooded figures neck.

Without a word, the slightly short figure attacked the invader with speed, even jumping on tables with extraordinary acrobatic skill. The two locked into intense combat with neither really gaining an upper hand, but technically the hooded one did when he stood on top of the counter. The hooded figure threw a chair at the invader’s shins, knocking him down before yelling for everyone to follow his lead, but only Elysia, Elleron and Leena seemed to be following him. They all rushed out a window with one other middle-aged woman named Aurora, who was well liked in the town for her lovely plant shop. The five of them rushed into the burning forest, with scorched branches, leaves, and bushes around them. Unfortunately, the winged beasts seemed to track them. Before long, however, the beasts lost their scent and flew away as the terrified group sat down behind a fallen tree, all panting for air.

“I’m sure you all would like to be filled in on some things,” said the hooded one while standing up.

“Indeed,” said Elysia and Aurora at the same time.

“I’m Sylus, a fellow who’s trained many days for the foretold, darkening sky,” he replied.

“Deep into these woods, in the Aboriginal Mountains lies a piece of the old kingdoms, an artifact that stopped this same event hundreds of years ago, it is now our only chance to save Alleria and send these beasts back to their fiery realm,” Sylus stated with seriousness but excitement.

“And how do we plan on doing that?” Leena asked

“It won’t be easy, none of it will, are you sure you’re up for that?” Sylus stated.

“Of course! An adventure of excitement and courage is all I’ve ever dreamed about!” Elleron replied excitedly.

“Keep your joy while you have it, the path ahead won’t be easy,” Sylus remarked sternly.

“We must be on our way now, the journey isn’t long, but those winged beasts could reach even Shadowvale to the north,” Sylus said after a short pause before handing out some food to all of them.

They walked through the stretch of forest for hours before reaching the mountains, it was cold and elevated, something these people weren't too used to, but they trudged forward toward the peak.

"We're here, finally at Stonehenge Peak, a mountain said to be blessed by the Creator with not only beauty, but the ability to call upon his aid for when the sky darkens and the hellish dimension seeks to enslave the population and plunge the world into their fiery rule," Sylus said as they approached the mountain.

"What was that?" Leena said worryingly at the sound of a rock being hit.

Suddenly, men with clubs and bronze swords dressed in furs and wool descended into the short valley between the mountains.

"Go run! But Elleron, take this sword and help me fight!" Sylus shouted at the others before him and Elleron began open combat with gruesome raiders known as the Roof People.

The raiders retreated while Sylus and Elleron regrouped with the others after a short brawl.

"Is everyone ok?" asked Elleron.

"We're just fine," said Elysia and Aurora nodding in agreement.

"That's good, but now we need to find a way into that mountain," Sylus replied, puzzled.

Elleron stepped up to the mountain and notices ancient texts, he pressed on the area around the texts and a large door opened leading into the mountain. The inside of the mountain was torn down and abandoned, the once sparkling temple was now in ruin, but at the top of a grand, marble staircase, a bright light was illuminating from a large room.

"Going somewhere? Not on my watch," the large man from earlier was directly behind them, standing in the entrance.

"Noth, you really cared enough to follow us all this way?" Sylus said while drawing his sword.

Elleron stood behind Sylus drawing his sword too. Noth looked at them, surprised before drawing his own fiery sword. Leena, Elysia, and Aurora ran up the stairs to the room while Sylus and Elleron were engaged in combat with Noth. The room at the top of the stairs was in a circle shape, with ancient texts and pictures of dragons fighting each other dotting the walls.

"Huh, it turns out these things are Ayakas, (eye aw ka s) they're the dragons of darkness while the Hiyakas, (hi aw ka s) are the same creature, but are peacekeepers and defenders of the Celestial Realm," Elysia said while tracing her finger along the lines of text.

"This must be the artifact," Leena said while walking towards the glowing stone in the rooms center.

Leena placed her hand on the artifact, she closed her eyes and fell to the floor. She arose in the beautiful Celestial Realm, a grand figure sat atop a golden throne with a small river flowing into it. Leena bowed to him, the Creator, as he stood.

“You have come here for a purpose, I assume?” the Creator said with a booming but pleasant voice.

“Yes indeed,” said Leena “I need your help, the sky was breached, and fiery beasts emerged from the it, wreaking havoc.”

“And you have come to the right place. I will send you home with a force greater than any army, and they will take back what the light rules,” the Creator said with a pleasant expression.

“I thank you, Lord, I thank you,” said Leena before waking up back in the mortal realm with her vision blurred, but it cleared quickly.

“Leena! Your alive... I thought that thing... never mind I’m just happy you’re here to see it,” the room was ignited still while Elysia was speaking, while hoards of golden and sapphire dragons flew overhead towards Elmwood.

Sylus and Elleron stood beside them as they all peered outside, the beautiful Hiyakas flying towards the village.

“We’ll be legends after this,” Elleron said which made everyone laugh.

The happy group stood there for a moment admiring the view, and their story had a happy ending.

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Word Count = 1966