

The Dragon's Lair

Early in the morning following the visit from Sarah, Rhyfel had another mission. The one thing that still haunted him, even though he kept it to himself, was whether there was a dragon on the island. He knew that, at the time that Alex's ancestor would have come to the island, dragons were still well known in the world of magic. Rhyfel had only told Ambrose that he had brought the magic tools that would tell him if there was one. Magic may not affect dragons, but it could be used to find them. It had been used very much in the past to search for them or to find if one might be hiding in a cave before entering it.

Rhyfel called Ambrose and the two of them set about making the spell to find out if one did exist on the island.

The spell was straightforward. Rhyfel had brought three things with him: A red and green polished Dragon Stone, the size and shape of a chicken's egg, a 10-inch diameter 8-inch-deep hand-beaten brass bowl with a handle arched over the top by which to carry it, and a hammer made of the antler of a red deer.

Rhyfel put the Dragon Stone egg in the brass bowl and then poured in rainwater, filling it halfway. Holding the bowl by the handle he hit the top edge of the bowl with the hammer so it made a ringing sound.

What happened next would have been something no one had seen in hundreds of years.

The Dragon Stone spun around on the bottom of the bowl and then rose to the top of the water. The stone egg's narrow end then stopped and pointed in the general direction of the dragon's lair. The stone gently sank back to the bottom when the ringing sound faded.

Rhyfel looked at Ambrose with an expression of both surprise and concern.

“This is not good,” Ambrose said to Rhyfel, who had just hit the bowl again to make sure it was not a fluke.

The stone again spun around and rose to the top of the water just as before.

“We will have to deal with this first,” responded Rhyfel.

“How?” asked Ambrose.

“We will use this to find the dragon’s lair and seal the beast in,” answered Rhyfel.

“This bowl will lead us to where the dragon leaves and enters its lair. Once we find that, I will create a collapse that will seal it in. It will take months to dig or melt its way out.

Underground a dragon’s power is very limited. We need to find that lair entrance today. I need you to tell Lady Selma that we’ll be going on an exploratory tour for the day to get the lay of the land.”

“Yes, of course. She was hoping to have a day of rest after traveling. She will be pleased with having a chance to relax,” replied Ambrose.

“Ask her if she could pack us some lunch to take with us,” requested Rhyfel. “I have no idea how far we will have to walk or how long it will take to find. Better bring your shielding wand just in case we happen to catch the dragon outside of its cave. Chances are, it would only come out during the day if there is a heavy fog that would give it cover. Best if we find the lair entrance before nightfall.”

While Selma was making the packed lunch, Rhyfel and Ambrose were packing backpacks and dressing for the possible conditions they might encounter. Ambrose made sure to pack bottles of rainwater for the bowl. Only rainwater can be used for the spell to work. Fortunately, the house they were staying in only used rainwater as its main water source, as did most houses in the area. The plan was to drive a few miles and then stop and repeat the spell. They would use this method until they could no longer use roads, then they would continue the search on foot, hopefully finding the lair entrance before dark.

Meanwhile, Alex, Ted, and Sarah were having breakfast. Ted informed Sarah and Alex he needed to return to the SGM Volcano headquarters. He needed to check in and call General Wigmore about the latest development. Alex and Sarah had already decided that they needed to visit Tarian Tan. To Ted, they only said they needed to visit a friend. Alex felt it wise that the existence of a dragon should be kept only between himself and Sarah. Sarah agreed and felt special to know something this important that her father didn't.

After Ted left, Alex confided in Sarah that he was concerned about the fact that all those involved thought he had the Jewel of Power in his possession. Up until now he, like his father, believed the Jewel to be lost. But now he wondered what if it had not been lost, that it was still out there someplace, and if so, was it in the care of another descendant. How could something this important be lost yet still hold power?

Alex asked Sarah to join him in the library and help him search through some old documents, to see if there were any clues or information that he and his father may have overlooked. Sarah was more than happy to be a part of this. She was trained to look for subtle clues and details others missed. She felt that she was now a part of Alex's deeper life, even though they were not yet married.

The search began with the records of Alex's ancestor Michael Dee's arrival on the island in 1620. The manuscripts from that time had been put into book form by Alex's great-grandfather. While Alex searched through the records, Sarah pulled books randomly from a special section of the library. Many of these books had to do with the records of Alex's family history. Who they were, what royal court they served in, or where they lived. Some had a history of wars long ago, others were about how the Society of the Greenman, then called The Knights of Merlin, defended the royals and protected the Merlin line.

Sarah then came across a very old book, that had been translated into modern English, that told the stories from the time of Arthur and Merlin. Much of the stories didn't match the myth stories she had read in the past. It seemed to be more of a historical account. Stories of battles Arthur fought in, and of knights with names she had never heard of. Much of it was written in verse, as was the custom at the time.

As she read through them one caught her attention. Sarah showed it to Alex. Alex told her it was a verse describing the promise of there always being a monarch on the throne of England following Arthur after he was given the sword Excalibur and the oath of Merlin's line to protect that promise. Sarah read it again. To her, there was something more in it. The verse she had found read as follows.

From the dragon's mouth, the spell was cast,
From the dragon's word, that will ever last.

Raised the king Pendragon's son,
The land and thee, they are one.

The lady's hand from water risen,
To the king's side, the power was given.

House of thee shall forever stay,
From the land, it must not stray.

Blood in veins, it can change,
Crown of the sword, it must remain.

Magics hand kept in guard,
Magics seed keep thy charge.

Father to son and son to child,
Lord or Lady means not who keeps.

Father to son, that son to child when old,
Kept in the land, in line must hold.

Sarah sat down and went over the verse repeatedly and slowly. Finally, she raised her concern to Alex.

“Didn’t you tell me that the Jewel of Power was once mounted in the pommel of Excalibur? And didn’t you tell me the Jewel contained a dragon’s tooth?”

“Yes, that’s correct,” Alex replied.

“Then why can’t this verse contain a reference to the Jewel as well?” Sarah continued. “This verse refers to the spell being cast from the dragon’s mouth. That is where you would get a dragon’s tooth. You told me that Arthur’s power came from The Jewel in the sword, not the sword. The second verse says the power given to the king from the ladies’ hand from the water was now by his side. That refers to the sword but the power must refer to the Jewel in the sword.”

By now Alex was by Sarah’s side looking at the verse with her. Reading it as if the verse was referring to The Jewel also. Alex now saw what she saw. The verse took on a whole new meaning. One that Alex had never noticed before. He now could see that there were several references to staying in the land. He was taught that it meant the monarchy remaining in England. But if it referred to the Jewel, this meant it was a warning that it must never leave the land of which it was a part, for its power to remain intact. If this was true then the Jewel would still have to be in England. There is only one way to find out if this was true. Take the verse with them on their visit to Tan and ask him.

Alex kissed Sarah. He told her that she may have just unlocked the secret.

“You are a better Wizard than I am,” Alex told her, smiling. “We make a great team.”

Sarah smiled. She was now feeling a real part of Alex’s life. She felt for the first time that she belonged.

When Ted arrived at the SGM Volcano headquarters he went directly to his office. Jack, being still in Volcano, went in to meet with him.

“How was your day with your daughter,” asked Jack.

“Good and different all at once,” Ted answered. “More than I expected would be an understatement. My daughter is engaged to be married to Alexander.”

Jack stood there stunned for a moment, then left the office without saying anything, and returned a minute later carrying a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey and two glasses.

“This calls for a drink,” Jack said, as he put the glasses on the table and poured whiskey into each.

“That’s not all,” Ted continued. “Sarah also met with Selma and learned the truth about me and who her mother was.”

“I will make it a double then,” Jack responded, as he poured more whiskey into each glass. “That should be a weight off your shoulders. The part of her now knowing the truth. How do you feel about the engagement?”

“She is happy but I still have concerns about her safety,” Ted said, looking worried. “I also found out that he does not have the Jewel of Power. He says his family here has never had it. He says he has no idea where it might be or if it still exists.”

Jack handed Ted the whiskey he poured for him.

“Wow, that is a revelation I did not expect,” Jack responded. “I guess we all assumed he had it. That information could have saved a lot of people a lot of trouble.”

“That’s what I said,” Ted replied, as he took a large sip of his whiskey. “The bad news is the Morgans are here and are not going to believe it to be true. That is what worries me. Rhyfel will not stop until he has what he came after. I fear for Alexander and Sarah both. Alexander tried to assure me that Rhyfel can’t win in a pitched magic battle with him. My concern is what if the Morgans resort to more conventional means, like guns.”

“I see your concern,” Jack said, as he sat down and sipped his whiskey. “We better tell the General as soon as we can. But, if I may? As far as the engagement goes, I am pleased for Alexander and your daughter. I have known Alike, as I call him, for a long time. You

could not ask for a finer or more kind man. I knew his father and mother too. They were the best people and I considered them, as Alike, good friends. I can't speak for you and your concerns about Rhyfel. I can only do what the General recommends."

"Then we best get to that," Ted replied, as he swallowed the last drop of whiskey in his glass.

Jack remained in the office when Ted called General Wigmore, putting the phone on speaker so Jack could hear. Ted told the General everything and voiced his concerns about Sarah's safety. The General told them that the official rule as far as the SGM was concerned was to stay out of the fight. Not to approach the Morgans or engage with them in any way unless they were to engage the SGM or its personnel directly. He reminded them that, after the ordeal with the ODR in Kona, the US officials would not take lightly having another encounter on their soil. The General was also surprised that Alex told Ted that the Jewel was not, nor ever had been, in Hawaii. He understood that this knowledge could incite the Morgans to do something rash. His recommendation to Ted about Sarah was to see if he could get her away from the situation until things either come to a head or cool down. Both Jack and Ted agreed with the General's orders and ideas. They ended the call as always promising to keep him informed of any changes as they would occur.

Ted decided to return to Alex's place in the evening to try to convince Alex and Sarah to follow what the General recommended.

Alex and Sarah packed a light lunch and set off for the resting place of Alex's descendants and Tan's lava tube.

The hike was a bit easier for Sarah this time because she had been on it once before.

Alex had his staff and repeated what Sarah had seen him do the first time she went with him. Casting magic, he parted the vegetation revealing the opening to the cave. Lighting

the torches, as he did before, it was not long before they were both deep in the cave. Alex stopped for a while and paid respect to his parents in their silver-lined coffins. Then he spent a few more minutes at his sister's coffin nearby.

Sarah followed Alex deeper into the cave than they did before. Tan was not where he was the last time. Sarah could tell because what she had the first time mistaken for a rock formation was now gone. A few hundred yards further in Alex stopped. He sat down on a rock and took out a bottle of water. Sarah sat next to him as he passed the bottle to her.

Alex next reached into his jacket pocket and took out a red candle. From his inside shirt pocket, he retrieved a folded piece of paper that he then handed to Sarah. Alex then lit the candle from the fire of the torch. Leaning over close to Sarah he said,

“I would like you to call him. I will hold the candle so you can see the words on the paper. All you need to do is read them slowly and loudly. Once you finish do not say anything. Just sit still and wait.”

Sarah looked at him in astonishment. She felt a bit of fear and yet honored that he would trust her to do this.

“I will do my best,” she replied.

“Just take your time,” Alex said, reassuring her. “Take a deep breath, then breathe out and begin when you are ready.”

Sarah read the words on the paper to herself several times. She then took in a deep breath and slowly exhaled and began;

“Tarian Tan, Shield of Fire, Awaken and come is our desire.”

“Master of claw and of flame, whose name is and shall be endless fame.”

“Humbly we to your realm do come, your wisdom seeks we, oh mighty one.”

Sarah's voice echoed throughout the massive cavern. She slowly folded up the paper and handed it back to Alex who signaled for her to keep it. Alex put his finger to his lips to remind her to be silent.

They both sat in silence and watched the shadows dance off the walls of the lava tube that were created by the flames of their torches. Suddenly, the flame of their torches began to dance as they felt a breeze come from deep in the darkness beyond. The sound of tumbling pebbles could now be heard and they both strained their vision into the dark.

Without hardly any sound there appeared in front of them, two plate size eyes reflecting in the firelight.

Tarian settled down in front of them. Sarah could feel and smell his breath on her face, he was so close.

"Good to see you two again," Tarian said, in his usual low deep voice. "Queen Holly has informed me you have news to share."

Tarian grinned wide as he looked at them both. Alex and Sarah looked at each other and smiled.

"Yes," Alex replied. "We have come to ask your blessing."

"You have it then," Tarian said, still grinning. "I gave it to you the last time you were here if you remember? But I am glad to give it again. You are blessed to have a woman of such a pure heart. Truly rare among those of Morgan blood."

Sarah looked at Alex surprised.

"I told you he knew," Alex responded, with a smile.

"Now that is out of the way," Alex said, as he reached his hand out and stroked Tarian's face. "How are you, my old friend? I sense you are stressed?"

"I heard a sound I have not heard in many hundreds of years," answered Tarian. "The brass bell of someone searching for my lair. You need not tell me who, I already know. I

could smell their blood hours ago. What I don't understand is why this one is so determined to destroy you."

"He is not after me," Alex replied. "He thinks I have the Jewel of Power and Authority."

"That's not possible," Tarian answered, pulling back his head a bit. "Even if you did have it, it would be of no use. It has no power if it leaves the land of Britain's isles."

"That answers that question," Alex said, looking at Sarah.

"What question?" Tarian asked.

Alex took out a copy of the page that Sarah had found and read it to Tarian.

"Sarah said she thought that much of this verse refers to the Jewel and not just about the monarchy."

"Of course, it refers to the Jewel," Tarian responded, with a bit of a snarl. "I was there when it was written. Even the Morgans should have known that."

Just then the whole cave shook. A loud sound of collapsing rocks could be heard in the distance. Tarian raised his head and looked behind him as a few small rocks fell from the ceiling landing near Sarah and Alex. Another loud sound followed and shook the whole cave again.

Tan turned his whole body around and looked back into the darkness and sniffed the air.

It was the first time Sarah saw how big Tarian was and she could see his wings shimmer in the torchlight. Alex put his arms over Sarah's head and pulled her to the floor of the cave as more rocks fell.

"Fools!" Tarian roared, "They think they can seal me in this cave. There are more ways in and out of here than they will ever know about."

Tarian turned back to Sarah and Alex.

“No time for proper goodbyes,” Tan said to them. “You need to get out of here as fast as you can. Falling rocks roll off me like water, but I fear that is not the case for you.”

Tarian suddenly disappeared into the darkness of the cave from which he first came. Alex pulled out a wand from under his jacket and created a shield above himself and Sarah as they made a fast exit, as rocks continued to fall. Alex did not bother with putting the torches away as he did before. They both made it out of the entrance safely. Alex did conceal the entrance as usual, and they both headed back to the house as quickly as they could. They made it back in time to see Ted pulling into the drive. Ted jumped out of his Jeep and ran toward Sarah.

“Are you alright?” Ted asked, as he put his arm around Sarah. “Was that an earthquake?”

“Sort of,” Alex replied. “Let’s all get in the house and I will try to explain it.”