

OREON

CHAINED MEMORIES



X. A. BLAKE



An Elemental, Oreon has to relive past events of his life within his mind to restore his voided memories. The problem lies with the righteous CORE and nefarious Tribune trying to capture and kill him at every turn. With the help of Menace Menice and other allies he gains along the way, Oreon will have to rediscover the world he once knew.

Oreon: Chained Memories

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OREON:

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CHAPTER 1: We Meet Again

Oreon stared at his fierce reflection in the mirror covered in sweat as his mind was stagnant this morning. He replayed the dream he just had to help gather himself. It plagued Oreon almost every other night it seemed.

It was always the same woman screaming his name, but her face would constantly remain unclear. He could only recall her scarlet curls as she ran through the flames. The only visible part of her face was a mark on her forehead which resembled the letter V. He figured she had to be an elemental like himself, how else would she be able to run through the fire unscathed?

This was always the conclusion he came to. What he was unsure about was whether or not she even existed. He had never met a person with scarlet colored hair.

He couldn't understand why it always felt so real. If he didn't wake up, he could swear he was just there.

These thoughts would linger from time to time. Something he didn't particularly mind, but knew would not have been allowed if his grandfather had his say. He wiped away the sleep and sweat from his face with a towel. His reflection showed his brown skin, relaxed posture and wandering half lidded eyes, along with his thick dreadlocks which hung past his ears. Despite his lean frame, his height along with his broad back and shoulders made him a difficult person to approach for those who didn't know him.

After a quick shower he made his way through his home. It was actually quite spacious considering only two people had ever lived in it. It was built by his late grandfather before Oreon was born.

He was brought here over fifteen years ago at the age of four. Though his grandfather was gone now, Oreon had grown accustomed to his living situation and felt no need to change it.

He often thought about adding another wing to his house when he was overcome with boredom, but never got around to it. He was pretty handy in things like that thanks to his grandfather, who acted as his only parental figure since Oreon's mother died giving birth to him.

His father went missing shortly after that leaving Oreon in care of his grandfather. He never once resented his father though. He found no point in wasting any emotional energy on a person he never knew.

Oreon stopped upon his grandfather's grave. He grabbed the bottle of rum sitting atop the tombstone and poured it on the surface. This wasn't really a custom in Oreon's family just his grandfather's own personal preference.

He always said, "No man should ever go a day without a taste."

This was one of the many things Oreon chose to ignore while the, Old Man, as he called him still lived. After he died though, he figured it was one of the few things he could do for him.

Oreon took a look at the trophy case standing behind the Old Man's grave. At first sight it would appear that it was filled with many precious antiques. The objects inside ranged from small to large trinkets, all obscure in shape. To Oreon it always looked like a bunch of junk that the Old Man was too stingy to throw away. The thought of gambling with some of it crossed his mind every now and again, but he figured that they wouldn't be worth much.

He peered through the case and found one of the pedestals empty. Just then he remembered he had to pick that one up today. This particular item was his grandfather's crowned jewel. He would always switch around the location. Oreon reckoned it was just one of the many ways the Old Man would entertain himself. Now that he was gone though, Oreon didn't want to go through all that trouble. He thought it'd be a lot easier to have his grandfather's junk all in one place.

He decided to throw his old training garments on, it had been awhile since he last wore them. The vest was as light as ever and the pants that went with them still had the extra weight on them. They were designed special by one of his grandfather's acquaintances. At first he thought they were silly looking, but they grew on him. It gave him his own kind of style. He patted off the dust that had gathered around the base of his pants as he stretched out his legs and arms.

Oreon had not been training much since the Old Man left this world. The hiatus he had took from it was relaxing for him. The Old Man would probably think of the word relax as a myth, because he never let up. He would have Oreon working from dusk 'til dawn.

He always said, "You're a One Shot boy you don't have the luxury to be an average elemental. You have to be perfect in the only element you can handle. As long as I'm breathing you will be."

One Shot was the name for elementals that could only use one element. Most elementals were born with the ability to use two. Even amongst them though, one element was always stronger than the other. That element was known as the prime. In Oreon's case, his lone and prime element was air. He didn't need anyone to remind him of what he was though. He had the birthmark to prove it. All elementals were born with the same insignia, but One Shots such as Oreon had a different one altogether. Oreon never felt ashamed though. His symbol stood on the back of his hand so he never tried to hide it.

He started sprinting to the interior of the village. His house was on the border of the small community. His grandfather built it out there so his training wouldn't destroy anything in the village. Each stride he took almost felt as if he was gliding through air. He took a coin out of his pocket and shot it from one hand to the other as he continued on. A habit he picked up whenever he was lost in his thoughts. Flashes of the girl ran through his mind as well as where he should gamble at once he picked up the trinket.

The village of Moh was a small place. They weren't one of the more modernized areas of the world, but that wasn't necessarily a bad thing. It was one of those towns where everyone knew everyone so it was like one big family to an extent. Oreon kept it cordial with the villagers and never allowed himself to get too close to any of them unlike his grandfather.

Law enforcement here was pretty much non-existent. The C.O.R.E., organization which stood for Coalition of Regional Elementals was the main acting government and police force of the world. Their officers were easily recognizable with their navy blue and silver uniforms. They didn't bother placing one of their towers here. The village itself wasn't important enough. It didn't contain anyone with any kind of notable prestige. Nothing stood out that gave it any sort of recognition from the rest of the world. This prompted CORE, to leave it to its own devices.

Once Oreon's grandfather arrived in this place, all crime even the petty ones virtually stopped. He was the only elemental in town and everyone thought he was a retired CORE official at first. Peace had been in effect for so long it just stayed that way.

Oreon was greeted by several people as he made his way to the market.

"Why good morning Oreon," a small middle aged lady tending to her garden squeaked out.

Looking down at her "morning mam," he replied with a sleepy look in his eyes.

"You know you don't have to stay here for our sake. You are still so young go see the world like your grandfather."

"I know, I know you people won't let me forget," Oreon said yawning.

"Obviously you don't know boy, because your still here ain't ya," an older gentleman with a gruff beard bellowed out from behind him.

Oreon had grown quite comfortable here. This is where he spent most of his life outside of being a baby. Part of him felt obligated to stay here, since his grandfather had helped these people for so long. He also could never really find a reason just to up and leave this place.

"I loved your grandfather's stories. They were so exciting. Anyway when you finally do decide to go do be careful dear. With people like this Menace character running around the rest of the world just isn't as safe and peaceful as our village," she said while knocking the older man down.

"Menace," Oreon asked.

"Yes the Menace haven't you been reading the papers boy," said the old man getting up off the ground.

"Can't say that I have."

"Well you really should it's our only link to the outside world."

"Will do," Oreon said putting his hands in his pockets as he kept moving.

Most people in town saw Oreon as their new peacekeeper. A title that once belonged to his grandfather. There were a few that didn't quite appreciate the little things Oreon did do. They always felt that he was just a part-timer that acted when it was convenient for him. They would either call him selfish or lazy depending on the situation, but people would defend him every day. They outweighed those who didn't much care for him. Most of the naysayers were also those who've lost something after betting with him. Oreon never let any of that

bother him though. He just didn't like being compared to his grandfather.

The people were out and about this morning, and the market place was as lively as ever. The vendors were screaming out deals one after another. Several tried pulling Oreon to the side to give him one time special offers, but Oreon was a pro at dodging them at this point and kept them all at bay. He gave them a weak smile, which kind of resembled a scowl due to his natural demeanor. This would usually scare away any others who tried to approach.

After working his way through the crowds he managed to make his way to the vendor he actually wanted. He stopped upon a little petite stand with an old man sitting behind the counter. The thick framed glasses he wore made his eyes appear larger the closer you got to him. Oreon proceeded to get his attention.

"So is it ready," Oreon asked.

"Ah, yes just give me a moment," the vendor replied.

"Sure take your time."

Oreon took a seat at the counter. The figurines in the shop were composed of those with big bodies and small heads with huge eyes that didn't seem to proportionate well. He couldn't help but shake the feeling that all the figurines in the boutique were staring at him. He could hear the vendor rustling in the back.

"You know your grandfather was right about this thing bringing me some good fortune. If I would have started my business with this figurine as my charm I'd already be a very rich man," the vendor called out.

Oreon looked a little confused. The vendor was speaking as if the object his grandfather lent him was like all the others he had on display. Not wanting to over think it, he figured it was probably due to old age that he thought this way. That or maybe his vision was starting to go and everything just looked the same to him.

The vendor came out with a pyramid shaped object in hand. Oreon took a look at it and compared it to the items sitting on the shelves and just shook his head.

“What's the matter young man is this not the right one?”

“No it is never mind me, I was just wondering why your figurines are shaped like that?”

“These are art, as well as dummy cases,” said the vendor.

“Dummy cases?”

“Yes perfect for concealing things as well as just putting them on display.”

Oreon looked at the figurines once more and just nodded in agreement as the vendor continued on.

“She's a beauty isn't she? I kept her shining like a pearl in your grandfather's absence. A shame to see her go.”

“I'm sure he would appreciate it,” Oreon said as he picked it up. Once Oreon made contact with the object a soft glow emitted from it.

“So you can do it too huh,” said the vendor staring at the dim light.

“Oh this, yeah it just does that.”

“I couldn't figure it out for the life of me. Must be something about you and your grandfather.”

“Yeah, I doubt there is anything special about that Old Man,” Oreon said with a light chuckle.

The market place started growing rowdier than usual, which prompted the vendor to look down the road.

“I wonder what's going on over there,” he asked.

Oreon decided to take a gander himself. They both started hearing the shouts of the crowd that had begun to gather.

“It's the Menace,” they screamed out.

The crowd looked like they were chasing someone headed in Oreon's direction. As they drew closer so did the person they called the Menace.

“Get her everyone, get her!”

A girl with scarlet curls, black shorts, a black top, black boots and a grin buzzed by. She rushed past Oreon and the

vendor. Her eyes were fixated on the object in Oreon's hands. As the villagers were running by, she looked Oreon in the face and blew him a kiss. The crowd continued to chase her out of the village until Oreon lost sight of them.

"What's the matter with you boy," the bearded man yelled at Oreon, "You could have stopped her all on your own."

"My bad, I guess I wasn't really thinking about it. Besides you guys had it handled."

The bearded man had a disgruntled look on his face.

"That isn't the point. It couldn't hurt you to help out more than once in a while," said the bearded man as he spat on the ground in disgust.

Oreon took his coin out of his pocket and showed it to the man. He wanted to place a wager on the outcome of the Menace appearing here. If heads the result of her passing would be harmless and nothing to stress over. If tails, it would be his mistake and something he would have to take responsibility for.

"So what do you say," Oreon asked.

The man shook his head. He warned Oreon some things in life shouldn't be left to chance. If there was something you could do you should do it.

"Not leaving anything to chance here. You should know by now most of my bets are safe ones," Oreon said smiling.

He flipped the coin and walked away. The man still stood shaking his head without either one of them seeing the result of the coin toss.

Oreon made his way back to the edge of town. Lost in thought he ignored the jeers of some of the village folk. He could feel the dissatisfied vibes they were sending his way nonetheless. The scarlet curls he saw on the Menace were familiar to him, but he wasn't the type to quickly jump to conclusions. His home was in view now as he muttered to himself.

"The Menace huh, I'll probably never see that weirdo again."

"I'm not weird," a voice called out.

Oreon stood alert, a reaction brought along from his training.

"Who said that," he asked.

He could hear the rustling of leaves. A red headed woman hanging upside down from a tree appeared in front of him.

"I did and I'm not weird. You of all people should know that."

"Wait what? First off hanging from a tree classifies as weird. Second I think I'll have to add crazy to that list because I don't know you," Oreon replied confused by her words. He continued on past her before being cut off by her once again.

"Crazy? Your grandfather said that's the worst thing you can call a person right," she said while swinging back in forth from the branch she was hanging from.

That got Oreon's attention. He turned around and faced her. Her red eyes were beaming as Oreon looked into them. He never met anyone outside of the village that knew the Old Man.

"How do you know my name, and what do you know of my grandfather and his words?"

She jumped off, landed on her feet and walked up to Oreon.

"Only what you've told me of course."

"Told you? I've never met you before in my life. Was I not clear the first time?"

Laughing she replies, "yes you have you just don't remember. I didn't think it'd be this bad though. I can't believe you really forgot me, but it'll be alright. I'm here to fix you up good as new."

Oreon a bit annoyed now replied, "I don't know what you're talking about and I don't think I want to."

He started walking towards his home ignoring her words. He muttered to himself, "She is definitely crazy."

"I heard that," she cried out.

Oreon couldn't help but recognize the next words that left her lips. He caught himself mouthing the same thing word for word.

"The worst thing you can call someone is crazy. It's dismissive, you don't understand them so that makes them crazy? Maybe the environment is a little sick," she called out.

"That's how it went right," shouting at him now.

Oreon kept walking. He arrived at his home a bit bewildered by what just happened. He made his way to the training ground and opened the trophy case. He placed the trinket inside letting out a sigh. He started to recall his encounter with the Menace in his head, as he took a seat next to his grandfather's grave. *Her voice did sound familiar* he thought to himself.

"Just like the one in my dream, but no way they are one in the same," he said out loud as he shook his head.

"I think I'll just leave this one alone Old Man. They call her a Menace for a reason."

"Leave what alone," a voice called out.

Oreon looked behind him, only to find the Menace standing in front of his grandfather's trophy case.

He rose up and said, "How did you get back here?"

"I walked," she replied.

"That's not what I meant. What are you doing here? Leave me alone."

"I can't do that until I fix your memory. I told you already, and stop calling me Menace. You know I don't like that. My name is Menice, but I'll forgive you since you can't remember right now."

She started messing around with the junk in the trophy case.

"All those rude people never ask me for my name and just shout Menace. I have feelings to you know," she pouted.

Oreon sounded unsympathetic in his reply.

"My memory doesn't need fixing I'm fine."

He started to push her off his property and she began to slide against the dirt. She rose her hands up and came to a complete stop. Oreon could feel his muscles starting to strain as he continued to push. Meager specks of sweat started to form above his brow. He noticed Menices' feet had been rooted to the ground. She switched the position of her hands and they started to move in the opposite direction. Oreon fell back and Menice jumped back in front of the trophy case.

"You're an elemental," he said.

"Correct. I'm really strong to, so you should stop being stubborn and just listen to me."

Oreon rose to his feet a little bit more cautious of Menice. He began to search her body with his eyes and shook his head in disappointment. Menice noticed this and took off her left boot waving her foot in Oreon's eye sight.

"Is this what you're looking for," she asked.

Oreon didn't give her a reply even though it was indeed what he had been looking for. It was her mark of the elemental, but unlike himself she was no mere one shot. Her mark was significantly different from the one on Oreon's hand. It was of a true elemental signifying she had two elements at her disposal at any given time.

"So are you ready to listen to me," she asked.

"Why would you being an elemental have any effect on me listening to you?"

"It won't, but this might," she said revealing the pyramid shaped object she took from the case.

"Alright you've had your fun now put it back," Oreon said sternly.

"No thank you," she replied teasingly.

"I don't want to have to hurt you."

"Hmm, I don't think you can."

Oreon got into a fighting stance.

"If you attack me and I get away with this, you'll chase me won't you," she said with excitement in her tone.

He stayed on guard observing Menice as she paced back and forth slowly in front of the trophy case.

"You're not leaving here with that," he replied.

Menice put the trinket in her back pocket and closed the case back up. She quietly whispered her respects to the grave next to her before facing Oreon. The situation had become tense. Oreon knew one of her elements had to be earth because only they could manipulate the ground the way she did earlier. The mystery was her other element.

"If you decide to chase me you won't have a home to come back to," she said softly.

"I already told you you're not leaving here."

"Sorry, but I don't have a choice."

"Fine have it your way."

A stream of air burst from his hands towards Menice, who rose a pillar of earth, which impeded the blast as she shifted her hands once more. The impact caused the pillar to crumble. Dust and debris flew in every direction. When the dust settled Menice was gone. Oreon groaned in annoyance as he wiped the dirt off. He rose to his feet and noticed her footprints going back towards the village. He decided to head in that direction.

The villagers cry of the Menace grew louder the closer he got.

"Where did she go," he asked.

The bearded man confronted him.

"Finally boy you're taking action. Your grandfather would have dealt with her when she first showed herself."

Oreon looked down at the man.

"She made this personal alright. So don't go getting the wrong idea. Now where did she go?"

The man pointed towards the forest which enveloped the entire village. There was only one road that went through it. Unfortunately for Oreon, Menice took off in the opposite direction.

“Good luck finding her in there boy. It's not like you've ever been anywhere but this village.”

The vendor from before also called out to Oreon once he caught sight of him.

Oreon ignored them both as he took off into the forest. He didn't want to admit it, but the man was right. He never really spent much time outside of the village. The time he did spend out of it however, was almost predominantly inside this forest. He knew first-hand how hard it was to navigate through it.

Finding Menice would be no easy task, or so he thought. He found a row of collapsed trees and headed down the path they created.

The forest itself was like a maze. It was easy to get frustrated and feel as if you were going in circles in this place. This was something he figured the Menace was experiencing first hand. The evidence came from the destruction she was leaving behind. The path she left was obvious enough that Oreon knew he was being manipulated. He didn't care though because he knew how much that trinket meant to his grandfather. His neglect for training showed as he found himself out of breath after traversing the maze for a bit. Luckily he caught a glimpse of the red head as soon as the next tree fell.

“Stop right there,” he yelled.

Menice came to a halt and looked back at him smiling.

“I guess I made it a little too easy for you. This was nothing like the first time,” she replied.

“Look it's hot and I'm not really conditioned for this. So if you could just give that back there will be no hard feelings alright.”

Menice had begun waving her arms around.

“I can't, not yet,” she said sorrowfully.

Oreon took this opportunity to rush her. Just as he was about to reach her the ground under him gave way. His feet slipped off the surface as he tried to find a foothold. His hands reached for something to grab on to as he continued to drop.

He broke his fall by creating a cushion of air between himself and the floor. He looked up after falling down fifteen feet. He could hear Menice laughing at him from above.

"You remember this one don't you Oreon? This is the same thing I did to you before. Please tell me you remember."

Oreon shook his head and replied, "I don't know what you're talking about. Now get me out of here and give it back."

Menice put her head down in disappointment and walked away.

"Hey! Don't just leave me here," Oreon groaned. He looked up and started talking to himself.

"You must be loving this Old Man. This must be punishment for all the training I neglected. Now I'm back in this stupid forest and of course it would have something to do with you."

Oreon had never been too fond of this forest and its maze like attributes. Mainly because his grandfather's idea of training was throwing Oreon in here in the dead of the night. No food, water or provisions of any kind.

He would often say, "Only men survive off you go."

The only problem with that was he started doing this when Oreon was five. He always felt as if this forest was alive and days would go by before he was finally able to wander back to the village again.

Only reason he was able to follow Menice so far was because of all the trees she knocked over which is a simple task to an earth elemental like herself. Fortunately for Oreon though, pitfalls like the one he had dropped into had become somewhat of a second home to him so getting out was no problem at all.

He dropped his hands to his sides and propelled himself out of the hole. Once out he collapsed to his knees gasping for air. Gripping the grass, he looked up and Menice was nowhere to be found. He slammed the ground with his fist before rising to his feet.

“I’m never going a day without training again this is ridiculous,” he said as he took off once more.

CHAPTER 2: True or False

Menice grew impatient as she continued to trek through the forest.

"Why can't I remember where it is," she said to herself.

"There are too many trees!"

She pointed her finger in several directions and the trees started collapsing one after another around her. She stood still for a moment to catch her breath. The thunderous sound rumbled throughout the forest causing the wildlife to scatter. Looking over her shoulder she noticed smoke coming from a chimney. Smiling she headed towards it, which didn't take long at all to reach. She seemed to be prepping herself on the walk over.

Talking to herself she said, "I have to do this part right."

The house the chimney belonged to was located in a clearing of the forest. It was a nice little home built from stone and lumber. There were several logs that laid up against the house. Behind it stood a small vegetable garden that lacked in variety. It was filled with sweet potatoes. There was also a peculiar black line on the ground running from one end of the forest through the garden back into the forest.

Menice stopped right in front of the door and took a deep breath.

"Get out here Giddian. I have what you want," she called out.

The door swung open and a tall, but skinny man emerged. He approached Menice with serpent like movement.

Grinning he said, "Hand it over."

Serious now Menice replied, "Let them go first."

"Now, now, now, Menace who are you to order *me* around? Give me the Arymid now. Testing my patience isn't healthy," he said in disgust.

They exchanged looks for a moment before Giddian broke the silence.

"Mongol bring me the boy."

Menice could hear the rumblings from inside the house. She could see a woman struggling through the window. Behind her stood a man who was bound and gagged. He had been roughed up a bit, evidence from the bruises on his face. Menice couldn't tell if he was conscious or not due to his eyes being swelled shut and his body laying still. A woman was pleading for the boy not to be taken. Only to be denied by the short stocky fellow doing the deed.

"Boss says, I's do," he said to the woman.

He came out of the house with the little boy screaming and kicking away in his hands.

"You remember what I'm capable of don't you Menace?"

Giddian conjured up a metal pole and grabbed on to it firmly. The pole's solid state quickly turned into liquid, dripping out of his hand. He looked on at Menice with a sneer on his face only to find he was being ignored.

Menice seemed to be lost in thought. She was looking in every direction as if she was waiting for something.

"Where is he," she said to herself.

Giddian couldn't believe it. He started waving his arms around, stomping his feet and kicking the dirt to gain her attention.

Mongol looked on at his boss in awe. Smiling like a fool he started to imitate his movements.

Giddian noticed Mongols actions as well as his own and smacked him before calling out to Menice.

“Hello? Do you not hear me? This boy is in danger stupid girl.”

Menice startled a bit directed her attention back at Giddian.

“Oh right, sorry,” she said.

Giddian had a confused look on his face.

“Do I have your attention now,” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied.

“Then give it here already,” he shouted.

“If I do will you let them go?”

“Of course I will we aren't animals are we Mongol,” he said with a snarl.

“No's boss, we's gentle.”

Menice was hesitant in her approach. Each step she took was as if she was dragging her feet through tar.

The little boy continued to squirm away in Mongol's arms, but he was nothing but a mere doll to him. Mongol just slung the boy over his shoulder while he started to pound away on Mongol's head.

“It'll be alright Ita,” she told the boy.

The boy looked at Menice with his teary eyes and gave Menice a weak smile as he settled down.

Giddian could hardly contain himself as his grin grew from ear to ear. His arms were reached out inviting Menice in.

“Yeah boy it'll be all right,” he said laughing away.

Just as Menice got ready to hand over the Arymid, a strong gust of wind rushed through the area and caught everyone off guard.

Oreon walked up and removed the Arymid from Menice's grasp. He then proceeded to release Ita from Mongol whose head managed to fall into a pit of mud after being knocked over.

Ita quickly ran over to Menice who was removing the leaves that wound up in her hair after Oreon's entrance.

Giddian rose to his feet quickly with his fist clinched. The vein protruding from his neck pulsated fervently.

"Who the hell are you," he asked Oreon as he kicked Mongol causing him to roll out of the mud.

Oreon looked around and noticed the family inside the house confined and beat up.

"It doesn't matter who I am," he replied.

Ita was clinging on to Menice with the fear of the situation instilled into his eyes. Menice stood silently smiling as she waited for Oreon to make the first move.

He held up the Arymid which glowed brighter than before, and gave Menice as well as Giddian a fierce look.

"Just know that this wasn't hers to give away. I don't know why you want it and I don't care, but it's coming back home with me."

"Fool you obviously don't know who I am! And you're right it doesn't matter who you are, because you along with that useless family will all die right here," Giddian said sharply.

He started to conjure up metal spears one after another. While he removed the hair from his eyes and the sweat from his brow Giddian continued on with his rant.

Oreon could see Menice over his shoulder with his peripheral vision. She looked on at Oreon as if she was waiting to be given some instruction. Without taking his eyes off of Giddian who continued to spew on his threats, Oreon tried gaining Menace's attention. He whispered just loud enough for her to hear him.

"Menace," he said again and again.

A frown slowly replaced her smile as her dreaded nickname was being repeated. She stared directly at Oreon, but wouldn't give him a reply.

The volume of Giddian's voice grew by the second. He pointed at Menice who hadn't been paying him any mind.

"And you Menace," he shouted.

"I told you what would happen if you defied me and asked for help. Don't think I didn't notice the fact that this

arrogant fool is a one shot. Are you two listening to me," he yelled.

"Well are you Menace?"

Menice tried to ignore him, but the rage inside her was slowly building as Giddian continued on. The fire in her eyes started to burn bright as she rose to her feet. She had begun to step forward ignoring Oreon, who was unable to get through to her. This moment seemed familiar to him, but he couldn't put his finger on it. Menice conjured a fire ball in both hands as Giddian continued to insult her.

Oreon tried to call out to her once more, but got nothing in return.

"I told you what would happen if you got hostile girl," Giddian said as he snapped his fingers.

Mongol hurried out of the puddle to his side. He grabbed an arm full of spears and launched them through the window.

"Wait, no what are you doing," Oreon shouted. It all happened so fast he had no time to react.

The spears ripped through the glass and tore up anything they struck inside. The ones that didn't make it were sticking out of the home, impaled within the stone. The screams from the ones bound within were mixed with those of Menice who just dropped to her knees.

The noise just echoed in Oreon's head. All he could see was the shadow of an impaled body before a flash of white light overtook him. His vision was blurred before he regained focus once again.

Oreon looked around and Menice was at his side with Giddian across from them shouting like he was previously. The home was no longer impaled and Mongol was still in the mud.

What is going on here? Oreon thought to himself. *What the hell just happened?!* He couldn't wrap his mind around it. Was he seeing things? Did they not just experience what he did? These are the questions he asked himself as no one seemed as confused as he was. Menice got ready to step forward once

more from Giddians words and Oreon took notice. He didn't want that to happen again and settled himself down.

"Menace," he said like before calling out to her.

Ignored again, he shook his head and tried one more time.

"Sorry Menice, I forgot you don't like that other name," he whispered.

"No I don't," Menice pouted as she calmed down.

This time Oreon whispered what he wanted to say last time before that series of events sprung upon him.

All the while Giddian babbled away. The vein on his neck looked like it was ready to pop at any moment. The impertinence of those two ignoring him was unbelievable. No one had ever disrespected him to this degree before, but instead of rashly attacking he built up his spear count instead. He knew Oreon had enough power to knock him off balance which was unexpected for a one shot. That was when he had realized that he might have been slightly scared of Oreon this whole time, which enraged him even more. His ego wouldn't allow this and he signaled Mongol to attack.

Mongol had been sitting idle next to a mud puddle twiddling his thumbs with his head in the clouds. Once his name was called though he was up and ready.

Oreon was prepared and had a current of air in his hand he was ready to set loose. He waited to see what Mongol would do. He didn't grab an armful of spears like he had done previously. This time he grabbed the closest spear and hurled it at Oreon.

The spear flew just as fast as Oreon remembered, but he didn't have a problem dodging it.

"Menice you know what to do," he yelled.

Menice ran towards the door with Ita on her back.

"Where do you think you're going," Giddian hollered.

"Fire away Mongol."

This prompted Mongol to grab the armful of spears. He hurled them all at Menice who was headed towards the door. The sharp hums they made as they soared were enough to

pierce an eardrum. They flew towards the window just like they had done before, only this time Menice stood in the way and Oreon already had himself prepped for an attack with his hands held behind him.

He pushed them forward just as Mongol launched the spears. It was like he took hold of the air around him and forced it in one direction as the spears were all blown away.

Menice was breathing heavily as she quickly shut the door behind Ita letting him inside.

"Mongol you bring that brat back out here now," Giddian commanded.

Mongol launched another set of spears in Oreon's direction before waddling over to the door. Oreon quickly dodged.

Menice saw Mongol coming and snapped her fingers. A spark of fire leaped out of them and landed in front of the doorway. The spark grew into a wall of flames in an instant and shielded the door.

Mongol foolishly attempted to walk through it and was quickly engulfed by it. He rolled around the ground flopping like a fish trying to put it out.

Oreon and Menice faces cringed at the sight of his stupidity. Oreon felt more at ease now. He was sure he avoided what could have been a tragedy.

Giddian couldn't do anything more, but shake his head in dismay. He knew all too well how dumb his partner could be at times. This event was one of many things he would add to Mongols shortcomings.

"Put out the fire first you fool," he yelled.

Mongol rolled to his feet with his clothes filled with holes that the fire burned through. His skin was nearly charred black.

"Rights boss," he replied.

He gathered dirt and threw it on the flames. This did very little to quell the fire.

"Enough of this foolishness. Boy this is your last chance. Hand over the Arymid now," Giddian said as he took hold of the spear erected next to him.

So that's what this is, Oreon thought to himself as he took a look at the pyramid shaped object in his hands.

"Why do you want it so badly," Oreon replied.

"Let's just say I'm a collector," said Giddian, revealing two more trinkets resembling Oreon's Arymid.

Oreon took a good look and compared them to the one he had in his possession. He noticed that even though they shared the same shape there was a distinct difference between the two objects.

Oreon whispered to Menice who had finally caught her breath, "Do all Arymids look the same?"

"For the most part," she replied quickly.

"Then which one is real?"

Menice glanced at the one in Oreon's hand.

Oreon was skeptical. He had no way to know if she was right or not. His grandfather never spoke of the Arymids. He knew they were ancient legendary objects, but had no clue what they did or why his grandfather held one. Every story he heard of the Arymids spoke of them being lost forever. So many questions started to arise in his head and the one person he could count on to deliver him the truth was no longer living.

"How do I know you're telling me the truth," he asked.

"I would never lie to you Oreon, you have to believe me," she pleaded.

Giddian's complexion was boiling over as if the blood inside was going to burst through at any second. He couldn't help but feel that he was being ignored once again.

"What are you two muttering about over there?"

"Nothing we just find it funny that you're walking around with a couple of fakes," Oreon replied.

"Fakes? What nonsense do you speak? These are the genuine article." Giddian proudly held up his trinkets.

"If that's the case why would you be after mine? It clearly doesn't have that hole on the bottom like the two you hold," Oreon said with a smile on his face.

Giddian stood silent for a moment. He examined the Arymids he held closely and looked over at his companion, who was still trying to put out the wall of fire with nothing more than dirt. He had trouble remembering how these two objects came into their possession, which was the first red flag. He noticed how Oreon's never stopped glowing which was the second red flag.

"Get over here now Mongol," he commanded.

Mongol stopped what he was doing and quickly waddled over to his boss.

"Where did we get these again?"

"Black-market boss, we buys them. Remembers," Mongol said as he pointed to the crevice at the bottom of each object. There were words engraved inside that read: Vemor's Gift Shop.

Giddian couldn't contain himself as he popped Mongol upside the head repeatedly before he threw the faux Arymids on the ground.

"Boss you said to gets them. They was on sales," Mongol cried out.

"We can't join the Tribune with this crap. You know what forget it, just kill the girl. The one shot is mine," replied Giddian.

"Rights boss," said Mongol rubbing his head.

Oreon couldn't help, but notice how tired Menice was even if she herself would not admit it. Mongol was charging towards her at full speed. Oreon quickly stood between them with a ball of compressed air in his hand. Mongol paid no attention to Oreon, as he was only focused on Menice. Oreon took his hand to Mongol's stomach which sent him flying back into the forest.

Giddian stood in awe at Oreon's strength. He started to perspire at a rapid rate. His legs were quivering as he tried to stand strong.

"Yo-yo-you obviously do-do-don't know what I'm ca-ca-capable of," Giddian said stuttering. He took hold of the nearest spear and made it drip out of his hands.

"You understand don't you? This will be you if you don't do as I say," he said slowly regaining his confidence.

Oreon didn't look worried at all.

"I doubt that," he said turning his attention to Menice. "For someone who claims to be as strong as yourself I can't believe you fell for his lies."

"What are you talking about," Menice said confused.

"How about a wager," he said as he picked up a stone that lied nearby.

"I bet you can't liquefy this. If I'm right, I'll let you go free. If I'm wrong I'll give you this Arymid," Oreon said as he tossed the stone over to Giddian.

"Show us your power," Oreon said with his arms crossed.

Giddian glanced at the stone. He seemed hesitant to grab it. Beads of sweat surfaced around his cheeks as he picked it up.

"Well what are you waiting for," Oreon said.

"Yeah what are you waiting for Giddian," Menice asked in a sharp tone. "Don't tell me you can't do it!"

Giddian stood silent. He did not want to look Menice in the eyes. They felt like they were already piercing through him. He took a few steps back as the sweat started to drop in ample amounts. It felt like the temperature was boiling over. He looked up and could see a huge ball of fire floating over his head.

"You're not going anywhere," Menice yelled. "You lied to me and threatened these innocent people."

Giddian threw his hands up in the air pleaded.

"Wa, wa, wait a second now. You said you'd let me go," he said as his physical form slowly started to liquefy.

"I said I would. I can't speak for her though," Oreon replied smirking.

Giddian fully liquefied himself and slithered away, but didn't get too far. The ball of fire came crashing down on him.

Oreon shielded his eyes from the blast. He couldn't help, but cough from the smoke that crept into his lungs. Menice breathed heavily. It was clear she had exhausted herself. She walked passed Oreon looking for any remains of Giddian who had disappeared. She bit her lip in disappointment and turned towards Oreon. She put up a faint smile before she collapsed into his arms.

Just who is this woman? Oreon thought to himself. The door behind him slowly creaked open. The woman that was confined inside emerged. Her arms and legs were bruised from the ropes that had tightly bound her for so long. The boy called Ita clung to her legs as she approached Oreon.

"Please bring her inside," she told Oreon. He nodded and gently lifted Menice off the ground and carried her inside.

The home was actually bigger then it looked from the outside. The remnants of a struggle still remained on the interior. Broken furniture was everywhere and the bruised man was doing his best to clean up and make their home presentable.

"Norlif worry about that later dear, please just have a seat for now," said the woman.

The room Oreon was directed to, had no damage done to it. He laid Menice down in the bed as she laid sound asleep.

"We need to let her rest for now. Please join me in the living room. We owe you both our lives and thanks," said the woman unable to hold back her tears. She led Oreon into the next room. Norlif gathered a few of the chairs that were still intact for them to sit in.

"Wait a minute, I don't want you all getting the wrong idea. I was here for my own reasons. I don't deserve your thanks," Oreon said in haste as he took a seat with the others.

"Don't be so modest boy," Norlif said patting him on the back. "Ahh where are my manners, let me introduce myself. I'm Norlif, a retired ring fighter. This here is my lovely wife Letty and son Ita."

The family bowed their heads to Oreon.

Oreon didn't know what to say. He found it hard to believe Norlif could even see him. He had received thanks before for the little things he had done in the past, but once people found out it was for his own gains he was usually shunned shortly after. This was a new experience for him. All he could do was bow his head in return.

"You're welcome. I'm Oreon," he said.

"There is no telling what might have happened to us if you hadn't showed up with Menice," Norlif said with a hearty smile. Letty brought over two cold packs for Norlif.

"Put those on your eyes dear," said Letty.

"Yes, yes," Norlif said taking the packs.

"Are you going to be okay," Oreon asked.

"Oh this is nothing Oreon my days in the ring were far worse for me physically. You elementals are a notch up from us regular folk though. I couldn't do a thing when they came. That hurts more than anything. I've never felt so helpless," Norlif said with sorrow in his tone, "so I need to know is there anything we can do for you in return?"

Oreon clinched onto the Arymid in his hand.

"No, I'm fine I have what I came here for," Oreon said getting up out of his seat.

"At least stay for dinner," Letty pleaded. "It's the least we can do for you. We don't have much, but please let us do what we can."

Oreon didn't want to put up a fight. He was indeed grateful to receive praise even though he didn't think he deserved it.

"Sure, thank you for having me."

"Ita bring in some potatoes," Letty called out.

Oreon watched as the boy came running out of the room Menice was sleeping in.

"Yes mother," Ita replied.

Oreon walked back to where Menice was. She was still sleeping peacefully. Oreon hadn't had so much happen in a day since his grandfather was around. She reminded Oreon of him a bit. If anything it was how unpredictable she was. The amount of power she displayed was new to him. He only really knew one strong elemental outside of himself. All the others he had ran into were significantly weaker. Just like Giddian and Mongol so he didn't really acknowledge them. Oreon looked on at Menice. He couldn't help but recall the woman from his dream. As much as they resembled each other he didn't want to believe they were one in the same.

"It was just a dream," he said beneath his breath as he left the room to rejoin Letty and Norlif.

"I've been meaning to ask how is it you've come to know Menice, Oreon," asked Letty.

"She too-borrowed something of mine," Oreon said not wanting to let it slip that she actually stole it.

"That girl really does have a knack for finding trouble. I do hope she didn't cause you too much of a hassle," said Letty as she peeled the potatoes Ita brought inside.

"It wasn't anything I couldn't handle," Oreon said not wanting to admit the hassle was real. He did manage though and that's all that mattered to him.

"How is it you all know her," Oreon asked.

"She *borrowed* our potatoes," replied Norlif in his snarkest tone.

"What," Oreon said partly surprised.

"I'm not really that mad about it anymore, but it really was a problem at the time," said Norlif sharply.

"Well we found her asleep in our garden with our produce nearly gone. We woke her up for an explanation and she was very apologetic," Letty said.

"That aside it was nearly time to harvest and we had nothing. That was the biggest time of the season for us. With nothing to sell our funds were gone in no time," Norlif said quickly almost interrupting Letty in the process.

"Why not just turn her in," Oreon asked.

"We couldn't even if we wanted to," Norlif replied looking at his wife.

"I wanted to help her and she was really grateful for the food. I didn't have it in me to turn her in. She looked like she had been alone for quite some time," said Letty, as she put the food she was preparing next to the blue flame that was keeping the room warm.

Oreon watched as she did this looking at the flame intrigued. The flame began to wrap itself around the pan the food was in. The original flame never reduced in size. Oreon watched in awe. It was the first time he had seen anything like this.

"I don't mean to interrupt, but what is that Letty," he asked.

"Oh this old thing is the Vice Cooker by Vice Enterprises."

"I've never seen anything like it. How does it work?"

"It's quite simple actually. As long as the meal you're cooking is in an insulator like this pan the fire will engulf it allowing it to heat up. It's an elemental fire so it only burns what it's supposed to."

"That's actually one of the many things that Menice has done to pay us back. The fire itself lasted only a couple of years so we really had no use for the thing. Menice came and put a new young flame in it. It grows daily so we have to turn it down monthly," Norlif said.

"We don't have anything like this in my village," Oreon replied putting his hands through the flames. "Where did you get it?"

"A strange little peddler sold it to me," Norlif replied. "He had these funny glasses and a bald head with hair resembling cat whiskers. He gave me strict instructions though and was

very adamant about not letting any child elementals replenish the flame. Only elementals in tune with their specters can replenish a stable flame."

Oreon understood why that was. According to the Old Man a lot of elemental children outside of prodigies had very unpredictable specters. Most of the natural disasters caused in this world are a direct result of a wild specter.

"I actually wanted you to stay for another reason Oreon. I know it might be a bit selfish of me to ask this of you, but can you help her? We know she won't stay here forever and it'd be so much easier letting her go knowing someone like you was watching over her," Letty said looking towards him.

Oreon didn't know what to say. He didn't understand why these people whom he just met were so trusting of him.

"You guys don't even know me though. Why me?"

"Because you helped her," she replied.

"It's not like I had a choice," he muttered.

"But you did have a choice. You could have left once you got what you came for. I know you're not a bad person and neither is she," Letty said smiling.

"Wouldn't it be better if she stayed? She could help protect you if those guys come back. He said something about the Tribune. There might be more of them," Oreon told her.

Letty placed a dish a sweet potato pockets along with bowls of sausage and sweet potato soup for everyone as she told Oreon the truth of the matter. Turned out Menice had actually been missing for a week. When those men had come and took them hostage they told her to bring them an Arymid. They themselves weren't sure what the Tribune was, but those men weren't a part of it.

"That man Giddian went on and on about how they would finally get acknowledged by the Tribune once they delivered an Arymid," Norlif added. They ran Menice ragged in the process.

Norlif and Letty didn't think she had rested at all during that time. Since they live in the heart of this maze like forest,

they could only imagine what she had to go through just trying to get out. They knew the routes of the forest so they could navigate it no problem, but to someone who hasn't been here that long it would be a trial just to survive. Oreon knew that fact all too well.

He had recalled what Menice told him about how his memory needed fixing and how she knew of the Old Man's words. He did want to talk to her a bit more mainly because she might be the last link to him. It really was too much for him to take in all at once. He hadn't had enough time to process it all.

"I'll need some time to think about it, is that alright," Oreon asked hesitantly.

"Take all the time you need please," she replied.

The door shut behind Oreon after he bid farewell to Norlif and his family, thanking them for the delicious meal.

Menice lingered in the doorway and caught the last bit of the conversation between Oreon and Letty. She laid back down and wondered if Oreon would leave with her. She clutched her heart believing he would. He had helped her before so why not now she thought. She tried to replay the past events in her mind. Recalling it all she didn't think she did anything different. He should have no problem helping her again. Although some of the things she tried to remember felt a bit blurred in her mind she didn't let it bother her. She went back to sleep with a smile on her face.

Oreon who was now on his way back home wasn't sure what to expect upon his arrival. He knew he would get the usual jeers from a certain grouchy man, but this time would be different. It was the first time he had chased someone after they left the village and a criminal no less. He decided not to dwell on it.

He made good time back thanks to the route Norlif had gave him before he left. The stars from the evening sky shined brightly as he made his way out of the forest. Standing at the edge of the village he could see what appeared to be smoke

rising in the distance. It looked like it was coming from his home. The kind old lady from the morning ran up to him with tears racing down her eyes. She was very apologetic and pleaded with Oreon to forgive her. She went on and on about why the fire had rose.

Oreon caught a few words which caused his mind to go blank for a moment. He didn't want to believe it, but it sounded like she said his house was burning to the ground. This was indeed cause for worry. What could have happened in the short time he was gone? He ignored her as he sprinted towards his home.

Other people in the village also apologized as he raced passed them. Their faces looked as if they were all filled with remorse. They had all done something that couldn't be undone. Oreon was bewildered why they would be so sorrowful towards him. He kept telling himself as he rushed home, "Why are they all standing around? Why aren't any of them helping to put it out?"

He finally reached the outskirts of the village and saw the fire that was taking away his home. The flames continued to spread as parts of his home crumbled and crashed to the ground. At the base of the fire stood a serpent like figure.

It was Giddian laughing away at his handiwork. *Why was Giddian here?* Oreon thought. *How could he know where I live?* It was that moment Oreon understood why the people had been the way they were. He was mad at himself more than he was at them.

He knew how people were. He knew you can't expect much from people. They were most likely threatened. It didn't matter that he had just chased out a well-known criminal. Yes, that had no bearing on the situation at all. People in general are selfish. They offered nothing more than their apologies because that alone made up for what has happened. Oreon accepted that fact. There was no way for them to know he was an enemy.

Oreon knew full well who he was though which is why he didn't hesitate as he held Giddian in place and unloaded a torrent of compressed air into his chest. Giddian pleaded with Oreon and was thrown to the ground.

"Why," Oreon asked with a blank expression.

Giddian trembled and stuttered as he told Oreon he had no choice. He took out a loan with the Flux family to buy those fake Arymids. The Tribune wouldn't accept him otherwise. To repay his debt to the Flux. They ordered him to either retrieve their investment or eliminate the one responsible. He thought Oreon was inside, so he figured he would just burn it all.

"I will join the Tribune. They are the future and I won't let you or the Flux stop me," Giddian declared as he started to liquefy himself. Oreon blasted him into the evening sky with everything he had before he could. He made sure he felt flesh on flesh as he connected.

He turned to his fire consumed home. He wanted to just blow all the flames away, but he knew it would do nothing more than cause the fire to spread further. It had grown too large to be contained. He could do nothing more than to wait for it to subside.

The tears that had swelled up in his eyes fell one after another, as he stared at the Old Man's grave. He couldn't understand why someone would do this to him. Just to join something he's never even heard of. He looked up at the trophy case which was completely destroyed. The only thing that seemed to still be intact was the bottle of rum sitting upon the tombstone.

It was then he remembered what Menice had said to him earlier that day.

"I would no longer have a home to go back to," he said to himself. *This is probably exactly what she wanted to happen, he thought.*

He wiped away his tears and grabbed the bottle that was sitting on the tombstone. He encased his hand in air so he wouldn't burn himself, as he poured most of the alcohol on his

grandfather's grave. He made his way into town drinking what was left inside the bottle. Once empty he threw it on the ground and it shattered next to the coin he had flipped earlier that day. It landed on tails. He picked it up and looked to the sky.

"Guess it's my turn to see this world Old Man," he said with a face filled with anger and sorrow.

"I'll take responsibility and find answers. I'll find this Tribune," he said as he clenched the coin in his hand.

CHAPTER 3: Channel to Burim

Oreon with nowhere else to go headed back to Norlif's place. The few people in town that did like him bid him farewell. They knew he wouldn't be returning anytime soon. He was determined and they could all tell. While they apologized for not being able to do more others were glad he was leaving. Resentment showed on their faces. He was never the man they wanted him to be. The vendor was the only one to physically stop him.

"This goes along with the trinket your grandfather left me with," the vendor said as he pulled out a dummy case and handed it to Oreon.

Oreon noticed it matched the size of the Arymid.

"If only I'd had this to begin with I could've avoided all of this," Oreon said.

The vendor had no words for him. Oreon could tell he was sorry just by looking.

"No point in complaining about it now," he said smiling as he left them all. He had accepted what had happened. Now he just wanted some of his questions answered. The only person he knew who could do that was Menice.

He arrived at Norlif's home and before he could even knock on the door it swung open. He was greeted by Menice, who had a huge smile on her face. Before she snatched him inside, Oreon noticed how cozy everyone was. Norlif was

knocked out in his arm chair with Ita sound asleep in his arms. Letty was at the table with a pack that sat in front of her, she paid it no mind though while she was engaged in her novel. When the door slammed shut behind him, it instantly killed the tranquility of the room.

It almost felt as if Menice was trying to prevent him from changing his mind and running away. The way she stood in between him and the door was telling. It seemed clear that he had no intention of doing so.

"I knew you'd come back," she said.

Oreon was taken aback a bit. He wasn't expecting that kind of greeting. Letty placed down her book and apologized for Menice. She went to wake her family out of their slumber.

"She's been waiting by the door ever since she got out of the bed. Seems like she knew something we didn't," Letty said.

She brushed by Oreon leading her family into the back room. Ita was still asleep in his father's arms with his mouth wide open. Norlif grunted as he was forced to leave the comfort of his living room. He gave Oreon a wink while he was pushed along.

"I'm sorry Letty you guys don't have to accommodate me," Oreon said.

"Don't worry about it please, after all you two have done for us. We can give you some alone time," Letty replied.

Oreon was unsure how to respond to that. He had the feeling that Norlif and Letty had gotten the wrong impression based on their actions. He apologized once more for showing up as late as he did, before he pulled Menice to the side. He paused for a bit, as he tried to figure how to put what he wanted to say into words. Menice waited eagerly for him to speak, but he held his breath. The situation was becoming awkward as the two just stared at each other.

"Was there something you wanted to ask me," Menice said puzzled.

Oreon took a deep breath before letting out his question.

"You said you know me. I didn't want to spend too much time thinking about it before, but I feel like I might know you to. I want to know how?"

"I'm not really sure."

"What do you mean you're not sure? You sounded sure when you first met me."

"Well I do remember them saying that my current memories wouldn't last too long at this point in your life."

"What is that supposed to mean? Who is *them*?"

"The people who sent me here of course. It's strange though. I'm sure I knew their names this morning. I didn't think it would happen this fast."

Oreon moaned as his frustration built. How could she help fix him if she doesn't remember the people who sent her here in the first place? Question after question started to arise in his head. He wasn't really too sure what to ask next. Part of him felt like he wouldn't like the answer. Another part of him felt like he wouldn't believe the answer. He looked on at Menice and asked if she was from the future.

"Kind of, I guess. It's confusing," she replied shaking her head.

"You said this point in my life. If that's not future talk then what is it?"

"Like I said it's confusing. My mind is in your mind. In this case my future mind is in your past mind. If that makes sense."

Oreon stopped himself for a moment. Why was he so sure she was from the future? And what was this about her mind with his mind. Wouldn't someone die if their mind wasn't in their head? He has heard the phrase "out of one's mind," but this felt like something else entirely. Coincidentally he noticed his mind started to wander. It felt like they were going in circles. He wanted to get straight to the point.

"So in other words you just don't know," he said.

"It's not that I don't know it's just, I only came with one thing on my mind and that was to make you better. I wasn't really thinking about anything else," she said promptly.

"You said I wouldn't have a home to return to if I followed you. So the fact that it happened must mean you're either from the future or you planned it from the beginning. Are you working for the Tribune too?" Oreon seemed annoyed at this point.

As much as it bothered him he couldn't find any reason to rule out the possibility that the future is where she used to reside.

"I would never do anything to hurt you Oreon you have to believe me. I don't know what the Tribune is, but it feels as if I should." Menice said pleading. Her smile was gone and her eyes proceeded to well up. She felt like Oreon was pulling away.

"These Tribune people sound serious and you know nothing about them either. If I end up involved with them in the future wouldn't you know? I'm starting to think my memory is fine and yours is messed up."

Oreon was hesitant. She seemed to know some things about him, yet little about anything else. It frustrated him and he made sure she knew it.

"If you were on my side of this exchange. You'd find it hard to find your words reliable," he said.

"I can only say what I know. If you don't believe me then why come here," Menice asked as she wiped her eyes.

"I came because my house is gone. All because you took this," Oreon said pulling out the dummy case.

"I would never take anything so ugly."

Oreon looked at his hand and shook his head.

"Not that, this," he said removing the Arymid from the case. The glow returned as soon as he touched it.

"There is a reason why it only glows in your hand. Wouldn't you like to know," Menice said as she attempted to spark his interest.

"No not really," Oreon said quickly as he looked away, "Would find it hard to believe anyway. You seem to only remember what you want."

"It's about you so of course I know. Look, you said you wanted answers," Menice said finding it hard to see what it was he was after.

"I do, but I don't like being manipulated. You choosing the questions and answers feels just like that."

"Fine, but you can't keep letting what happened to you as a child keep you from trusting others forever," she said pouting.

"What are you talking about," he asked.

"I hate to bring this up, but this is taking too long and you said yourself you had to get past it."

"Get past what," Oreon asked sternly.

"The pendant, if it wasn't for that you wouldn't be so distrusting," she said as she pointed to his chest.

"I never told anyone. How would you even know about that," Oreon demanded as he clenched on to the emblem that was hidden beneath his clothes.

Smiling she said, "Do you really need to ask that anymore?"

Oreon didn't like the idea of having to depend on someone else. He was so accustomed to doing things his own way. The thought of marching to someone else's beat besides his own was unsettling, but she knew what button push. She understood why he was the way he was. He took a deep breath as he looked on at Menice. Her smile appeared to be genuine. It really did look as if she would do him no harm or lead him astray in any way.

"What do you get out of helping me recover my memories? Because as noble as you helping me looks and sounds, I just know this can't be for nothing."

"Well you promised to assist me in my search. We were getting closer too, at least I think we were. I don't know, I'm

really having trouble piecing the last moments from when I was sent here together."

"Search? Search for what?"

"Not for what, but for who. You promised to help me find my mother."

"Why would I promise something like that?"

"I can't remember all the details, but it had to do with the V shaped mark on her forehead. Oreon paused for a moment. He recalled the dream that had been hounding him in his sleep. The images started coming to him in bits and pieces. Staring at Menice, he couldn't get past the fact that she really did resemble the woman heavily. That V symbol always stuck out in the end. It was the last thing he would see before he awoke.

The dream wasn't the first time he had seen this symbol though. He couldn't quite remember where or when he'd seen it last. He pushed that thought to the back of his mind. Focusing on the matter in front of him was more important.

He asked if Menice could draw out the V symbol for him. She obliged and took stationary out of the bag sitting on the table and drew what he wanted. He didn't want to believe it, but there was no denying it now. Either Menice was the woman from his nightmares or she was related to her somehow. The symbol she drew wasn't the most artistic looking piece, but the form did resemble what he had seen. It really did intrigue him.

Part of him could understand why the Oreon, Menice claimed to know would want to know more. He was curious of it now himself. Finding no reason to debate this any longer Oreon seemed about ready to give in and said, "I'll help you find her, but only if we look for the Tribune too. If we find them first then they take priority," he stated in a serious tone.

Menice's face lit up as she, "I remember you said something like that then to. It's decided then. We're off to Burim!"

"Burim," Oreon asked.

"Yes Burim the fountain town," she said excitedly as she picked up her pack.

He had heard of Burim before even though he had never been there himself. The village often received visitors from Burim, but they were mostly merchants. He did remember hearing that Burim was on the other side the forest. Most of the merchants seemed disgruntled by the time they had reached the village due to the trek through that maze.

"Ok so how do we get there, because no offense but something's telling me not to trust your sense of direction," Oreon said.

Menice thought about it for a second before she fully realized the rest of what Oreon had said.

"Hey wait, that was rude," Menice said folding her arms, "and I don't really remember how to get there, but that has nothing to do with my sense of direction."

The door behind the two creaked open and out came Letty and Norlif.

"If you guys need to get to Burim, there is a way to get there without getting stuck in that maze," Norlif said as he took a seat in his chair.

"Really," Menice said anxiously.

"How did you know we're going to Burim," Oreon asked.

"Well that's because Letty here was trying her best to hear everything you guys were saying through the door," Norlif said snickering.

"I'm sorry I really am. I didn't want to eavesdrop, but I just wanted to do more to help you two if anything at all."

"So listen up you two because we won't allow you guys to refuse," Norlif said.

Oreon and Menice gave Norlif their undivided attention as they both took a seat at the table with Letty. Norlif proceeded to tell them both of the channel that led to Burim's main entrance. Neither of them were familiar with what a channel was and asked Norlif about it. Norlif wasn't surprised by their response. Channels weren't used anymore in this day and age.

Various parts of the world had advanced so much technology and transportation wise that archaic pathways such as channels were nearly forgotten.

He explained how the channels were created by a sole elemental. He was one of the seven that had brought peace to the world and helped seal away a being called the Arbiter. This was not news to Oreon or Menice. Both heard plenty of tales about the Arbiter and the Seven Ancients.

The Ancient in question was Brick Ingot. He was primed in the element of metal, but was also extremely adept in earth. He created those channels after the downfall of the Arbiter. The landscape was left bare and even scarred in some areas due to the chaos that had ensued since the Arbiters arrival. Roads were left unidentifiable and even some of the major cities at the time had been laid waste to.

The channels were to be used as roads connecting town to town until the destruction that had been caused was restored. They were incredibly functional because they didn't just stop as pathways to towns. He created them throughout the world to lead to different settlements and forgotten landmarks. Not to mention places that were naturally hard to navigate through like the maze in question.

Because of how they were created these channels could be found on numerous amounts of unstable terrain and even under water. The density of the metal and earth he used to make them were of his own design. They were easily identified as a smooth black line on whatever surface it was on.

Menice sat in awe.

"That's amazing he left his signature all over the world," she said.

"So if we find this line we can get to Burim no problem then right," Oreon asked impressed by what he had heard.

"No problem indeed because that line runs through our garden. Follow it and you shouldn't have any difficulty finding Burim. Ignore the area when it splits in three

directions though just follow it all the way through," Norlif replied.

Menice grabbed her things off the table and gave her farewell Norlif and Letty. She quickly caught a hold of Oreon's hand and exited the house.

"I'm sorry for being so abrupt, but we have to get moving something is telling me we will miss out on the next step to recovering your memory if we don't get to Burim soon."

Oreon could see the concern in Menices' eyes and obliged without hesitation. Before heading to the garden. Oreon noticed the two fake Arymids still laid on the ground. He picked them up and asked Menice to put them in her pack since he didn't have one of his own.

"What do you want with these," she asked.

"I don't know yet, but they are worth more than enough for someone to burn my house down. I'll find a use for them eventually," he replied.

They made their way to the garden and spotted the channel that ran through it. It was just as Norlif described, pitch black with a polished and sleek surface. Oreon ran his hand over it and felt no rigidity of any kind. They followed it into the forest.

Dawn was quietly creeping up on them as they continued down the path the channel created. The path itself couldn't be obstructed by any of the trees or brush that stood in its way. It ran through several trees which were split in half. The trees themselves continued to develop that way. Nature itself adapted to the presence of the channel. Nothing was hindered by it and there wasn't anything able to impede the channel.

Quiet for some time now, Oreon had grown curious as to what she meant by what she said earlier.

"What did you mean by next step," he asked.

"They drilled it into me that our actions had to sync up with what we did before to unlock the next sequence or step in your memory," she replied with words that clearly weren't her own.

"What happens if they don't?"

"Hmm, let me see. Oh yeah the side effects."

"Okay what are they?"

"They said a number of things can happen. My mind can get kicked out of yours, our minds could become one, I could lose more of my original memory and the last one was death," Menice said smiling.

"Is that something you should be happy about," Oreon said with a look on his face wishing he never asked.

"I knew the risks. They said death was highly unlikely though, but if it did happen we would both die," Menice replied.

"Your mom must really mean a lot to you. Since you're willing to risk your life on this."

"Well I never really got to be with her, but," Menice paused before muttering under her breath, "it's not just her I'm worried about idiot."

"Huh?"

"Nothing," Menice said folding her arms.

"Well death would be the worst case scenario so makes sense," Oreon said still entertaining that this was all real.

"So what's waiting for us in Burim," he asked.

"They are waiting for us. Our close friends who went with us everywhere."

"Friends, huh. So I do get some of those. Who are they?"

"I don't remember," Menice said full of confidence.

"Your way too enthusiastic for not having a good answer."

"It's the truthful answer, besides I love meeting new people. Even if they technically aren't new," she said smiling.

Oreon couldn't smile as they continued forward. He didn't want to bring up that he had already failed to get through a sequence correctly. She was already losing bits of her memory and he could feel Menice's happy go lucky nature was starting to grow on him.

She said herself she didn't think it would happen this fast. So the idea that he may have been the cause was waning on

him. If he kept on messing up his memory would be even harder to recover. Not only that if she started to forget who she was then it would defeat the purpose of it all.

She was humming a tune he was familiar with, but couldn't remember where he had heard it last. It did put his mind at ease though for now.



An Elemental, Oreon has to relive past events of his life within his mind to restore his voided memories. The problem lies with the righteous CORE and nefarious Tribune trying to capture and kill him at every turn. With the help of Menace Menice and other allies he gains along the way, Oreon will have to rediscover the world he once knew.

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