

Chapter 1

Forgotten

“Ow,” he said. His eyes squinted in pain as he raised a hand to his head. Every part of his body ached. *Why* did every part of his body ache?

Rubbing his forehead, he found a large lump that was tender to the touch.

Sitting up with a groan, he inspected himself and his surroundings. He found himself in a jungle with long looping vines hanging from the trees all around, and the sounds of animals chirping and squawking. Their noise was a cacophony of sound that echoed horribly in his throbbing head. There were far and few spots where the sun reached through the canopy while the rest of the forest floor and himself were covered in green shadows. The forest had a name, he was sure of it. But...

Why can't I remember it? he thought, his chest tightening as he placed a hand against his head. He tried to think about what had led him to this moment but found that he had no memories of that either. A cold sweat erupted on his skin as he tried to remember... anything.

Bile rose from his stomach. *Who am I?*

Scrambling to his feet two things happened at once. First, he stubbed his foot on something long and hard. Second, he smacked his head on a low hanging branch. Tears streaming from his eyes, he tried to rub both his head and his injured foot. Wiping the tears away he took a few deep breaths before looking at what he had literally stumbled into.

The item on the forest floor was a sword, sheathed in black leather. The blade itself had slid out from the sheath just enough that he could see the bluish gleam of the blade.

Blue? Aren't swords supposed to be silver? He wasn't sure how he knew that, and it bothered him that he didn't know. Reaching out, he brushed the hilt, waiting to see what would happen. The blade rested motionless on the forest floor as birds chirped overhead. Glancing around to ensure that he was in fact alone, he picked up the sword by the sheath and drew the weapon out. The bluish sword was long and elegant, mirroring runes on both sides covered its center, and he carefully wrapped both of his hands around the hilt.

“Hand-and-a-half,” he muttered, a distant memory creeping through. Letting go with one hand, he instantly sighed in relief. It was as if he had found a long-lost love. Dropping the sheath, he let his muscles take over as his body moved through the motions. His arm swung the sword in wide arches as he fought off imaginary foes. An image flashed before his eyes of a hooded man charging at him with his own sword.

A cry of shock escaped his lips, and he raised the blue sword in defense. He blinked and the scene was gone, but the pounding of his heart remained with his legs aching to run. Dropping the sword, he let it clang back to the ground, as if it had been a snake that had bitten him.

Panting, he looked down to find his clothes, which were leather shoulder padding over a brown tunic and pants, were tattered. Covered with mud and... Is that blood? He frantically scratched at some of the flakey maroon substance on his arm, leaving a deep red smear on his fingers and skin. The dried blood was all over his clothes, with hardly a patch clean.

Worried that he was hurt, he quickly searched his body for any possible signs of injury. When he found none, he sighed in relief, but his heart was still pounding in his chest.

No blood. But if I'm not bleeding then where did the rest of this come from?

“Karsyth!”

The jungle silenced itself and he dropped himself to the ground, watching as a hooded person, who looked just like the figure he had seen in his head, ran through some trees not far from him. Lowering himself closer to the ground, he kept a wary eye on the newcomer. He caught himself mid-reach for the sword, a thought coming to his mind that he would need the weapon. Brushing the thought aside, he resumed keeping his eyes on the stranger. *No, I won't pick that thing up unless I have to.*

The hooded figure stopped and looked around, searching for something.

Or someone. he thought, hunkering down lower while keeping the person in view. He tried to peer at the hooded man's face but couldn't make anything out with how it shadowed their face was. He wanted to confront the stranger and see if they had any information about who he was since his memory wasn't serving him as it should.

But something inside kept him from doing so. He couldn't tell if it was some external force or not, but he could not physically make himself get up. His mind told him he should be panicking, but instead he remained calm as he watched the newcomer keep moving forward and away from him.

"Karsyth! I know you're out there. Show yourself," the deep voice bellowed.

Definitely not the call of someone hoping I'm safe, he mused, grateful he had ducked when he had.

The stranger called out three more times, moving further away with each cry. Once he couldn't hear the voice or the stomps of his boots anymore, his muscles relaxed as the sounds of the forest came back like the gradual beating of his heart.

I guess I must be Karsyth. he reasoned, figuring there was no one else out here with him who could possibly go by that name. *Now that I might have an inkling about who I am, where should I go? I could always follow that stranger and see where he goes.* A feeling of dread emanated from inside, and he tossed the idea away. *Maybe not the best idea in the world. Where else could I go?*

Karsyth inspected the forest once more and could still find no discernible paths that would lead him out of the forest.

“I should probably avoid going where that guy came from,” he said aloud, glad to be able to hear something other than the sounds of the forest around him. “And it wouldn’t be smart to head the same way he was going.” He decided it would be best to head straight in one direction that was in between those two points. Standing he brushed himself off from the leaves and dirt he stopped to stare at the bluish sword. He had felt so at home, swinging the blade and feeling the wrapped leather beneath his fingers. The sound it made while whistling through the air had almost seemed musical to him. But that vision he had seen, what had that been about?

Looking back the way the hooded figure had gone, it fully clicked into place that the man attacking him in the vision had been the one running through the woods. “He was looking for me,” he said. Closing his eyes, he inhaled slowly and released it just as quickly. He needed to move. A quick glance at the sky gave him no indication at all of what was North, South, East or West. For all he knew, it could’ve been midday, early afternoon, or morning. Shaking his head, he glanced back at the sword on the ground.

The bluish blade gleamed in a ray of sunlight that was shining through the jungle trees. Pushing it with the tip of his toe, he moved it out of the light, so the weapon didn’t reflect so

brightly on his face. Once it was out of the light, he inspected the sheath and found lettering inscribed down one side.

I must have missed that before, Karsyth mused picking it up and sheathing the sword. Scanning over the letters he found that he couldn't read them.

Frowning, he pulled out the sword and found more sharp looking runes over the middle of the blade. But the sharp lines on the blade meant nothing to him and conveyed no special meaning.

Sheathing the weapon, he said quietly to himself, "At least I'll have something to defend myself if I need it."

Strapping the sheath to his belt he moved perpendicular to the hooded figure's path.

Karsyth walked in the jungle easily enough for the first bit, until the underbrush became heavy enough that he had a hard time pushing through it. He didn't mind at first, until he spotted more search parties coming into the forest. Luckily, he was able to hide himself well enough that they never found him, but his heart began to race and against the heat it started to become unbearable. Taking out the blue sword he started cutting his way to make things faster.

The blue sword cut through the green of the jungle like nothing was there. Vines dropped in lumps with each swing and small branches hardly hindered the blade as it passed through them. Occasionally, Karsyth came across a branch too big to lop off with one swing, taking as many as two or more strikes to bring them down. He worried that the sound of him chopping wood would give him away, but fortunately no one seemed to hear.

He did happen to draw the attention of two large, winged lizards that hung from branches higher up. Looking up, he saw their green scaly crested heads tilt from side to side, giving him the impression that they were curious about him.

“Sorry,” he said, holding a hand over his face to block out some of the sunlight as it filtered through the trees. “I’m just trying to make my way through. Not trying to disturb you.”

They continued to gaze at him through their red-slitted eyes, heads still moving from side to side.

“I’ll just be on my way,” Karsyth said, backing up and going in the direction he had been before.

He ran into another section of heavy foliage, and after cutting a particularly thick brush, a rank smell hit his nose and he gagged. Looking around he couldn’t find any animals that the smell could have come from and there was no one else around.

Karsyth sniffed again and cursed. “What is that smell!”

He tried to see if perhaps he had stepped on anything, but his feet were relatively clean, until he noticed the rest of his clothes. He hadn’t noticed it before, but the humidity and sweat were seeping through his shirt and pants and mixed with the blood on his clothes, bringing out a smell he never wanted to have on him again.

I really need to find a river, Karsyth thought, covering his mouth to help block out the smell. *If I do find anyone that can help me, I don’t want to scare them off with how bad I smell.*

One handed he moved the freshly cut vines away to find another large branch blocking his way. He could’ve gone under it, but he didn’t want to drop his hand from his face to expose his nose again. Sighing, he swung his arm down, his sword cutting deep into the wood as chips

flew at his face. Backing away, he squinted to help avoid getting anything in his eyes. He swung again, nearly finishing off the branch. He was about to swing for the last time when a soft *thump* made him pause.

“Hello,” Karsyth called, afraid to move.

Was it a beast? Could it be something waiting to pounce on him as soon as he made the wrong move? Or was it one of the men in dark robes that had been searching for him in the jungle?

He scanned the area nervously. Animals still chirped and squawked, and there were no other signs of anyone else following him. There was another soft *thump*, this time closer and Karsyth spun around. *Where is that noise coming from?* he thought wildly. Holding his sword a little higher, he held it with both hands as he prepared for an attack.

Sweat dripped down his forehead as his eyes shifted restlessly. Where was the thing that was making the noise? It was almost as if it were right on top of him. Karsyth shuffled his feet and he waited for something to jump out and get him. When nothing came, he turned back to the branch and cut it with a final *thunk*.

Something round and hard smacked the back of his head, and Karsyth cried out. Rubbing the back of his head he spun around to see what had hit him.

He found nothing there. The space around him was still void and bare of anything except the jungle and the sounds of the animals observing him. A leaf fell from above and he watched as it drifted down to the forest floor where he saw...an egg? Bending down, he found it was roughly the size of his fist and that it was almost perfectly white. The egg had fallen right on top of the foliage he had just moved aside.

Lucky it didn't crack right onto my head, he thought as he looked up into the branches above.

He spotted what looked like a nest nearly twenty feet up, but the branch it was on was already broken. Squinting, Karsyth thought he could make out claw marks on the branch and the nest itself seemed torn in places.

"I don't think I can put you back," he said to the egg.

Picking it up, he was surprised at how little it weighed. As gently as he could, Karsyth placed the egg in his pants pocket.

He wasn't sure why he did it, he didn't even have thoughts of having it for food later. He just felt that he needed to keep the egg with him.

The last cut he had made had cleared away the foliage that he was now able to pass through the undergrowth and saw a river not too far away.

"Thank goodness," he muttered. "I was worried I was going to be stuck with this smell all day."