

CHAPTER TWELVE: The Diary

The next morning, Sam woke early. He rolled onto his knees and started stuffing everything into his backpack. Then movement caught his eye and he realized he wasn't the first one up.

Sitting cross-legged on the other side of the clearing, in the only patch of early morning sunlight, Fenton studied the diary intently. He brushed crumbs away from his mouth as he finished off a piece of bread.

The frustration from last night had mostly evaporated as Sam slept. Today they would get to the fortress and figure out a way to rescue Kendra. Then they could take her to his dad to heal him. The rest of his tension melted away as he looked at his best friend who has awoken before anyone else so he could try to find a way into the fortress.

"Fenton?" Sam whispered across the clearing, but there was no response. Sam smiled as he got to his feet and walked past the smoldering remains of their fire. "Hey," he said, kicking Fenton's foot. "You sleep at all?"

"Huh," grunted Fenton as he turned a page.

Sam sat down next to him. "Was that a 'yes *Huh*' or a 'no *Huh*'?"

Fenton tore his gaze from the pages and blinked his red eyes a couple of times as he focused on Sam, "What?"

"Did. You. Sleep?"

"Oh, yeah. A little. I kept waking up, and the glow from the diary was bright enough so I could read it. Then, before I knew it, the sun came up."

"Did you find anything?"

“Yeah.”

“Is Darius really mentioned in there?” Sam paused. “Are we?”

Fenton nodded. “Yes... and no...” He flipped through the diary and pointed out multiple pages. “This section is all weird poetry. I don’t know what it all means. Maybe the writer was just in a poet-type mood for a while. Or maybe they’re actually prophecies about The Four Warriors. It kinda sounds like us. But there’s more than just poetry. Way more.” He thumbed past a dozen pages of drawings. “All these are different creatures in Decapolis.”

“Those are freaky looking animals,” said Sam.

Fenton shook his head. “They’re not just animals. They’re races of creatures.” He pointed at a page with two images of the same man. One drawing showed him with two normal-looking legs. The second picture had been drawn with a large flipper for the lower half of his legs, almost as if everything from his knees down had merged into one appendage.

“Dude! A merman?” asked Sam.

Fenton nodded excitedly. “The next page talks about their land under the waters of Decapolis and how they can’t leave the water for any length of time or they’ll die. It also explains why they hate everyone on the land.”

He turned a few pages. “And these people are AMAZING.” He pointed to another drawing that showed two women. Like the previous pictures, one was a standard sketch of a female in a loose-fitting shirt and earth-tone pants. In the second image, the left half of her body was fading away.

“What the...?” exclaimed Sam. “They can turn invisible?”

“It’s the water,” said Fenton, pointing out a small rain cloud at the top of the page. “When they get wet, they fade away from sight.” He grew more animated. “And speaking of sight...”

He flipped back a handful of pages and jabbed a finger at a page with just one image. It was a smaller creature that was completely normal. With one exception.

“It doesn’t have eyes,” noticed Sam.

“Yeah. And they don’t need them,” said Fenton. “They use radar. They’re like human bats!”

“Ok, that *is* freaky,” said Sam.

“A little. But also fascinating. Imagine being able to sense if there’s anyone around you, without needing to see them. No one could ever sneak up on you!”

“True. And since you mentioned sneaking up. What about the fortress?”

Fenton excitedly grabbed a leaf that was sticking out the top of the diary. “This is holding a place that should help us.” He flopped the diary pages open to the leaf-marked pages and held it out to Sam. “I present to you, Beisan. Hellius’ fortress.”

“It is not his,” said a firm voice behind them.

Startled, Sam and Fenton both spun to see Glip standing with his arms folded across his chest.

“I thought you said Hellius was in the fortress of the Beisans,” questioned Fenton.

“I did,” nodded Glip. “But I did not say it was his. He took it from those who lived there.”

Fenton pointed to an earlier section in the book. “Those lizard creatures! I read about them, but thought they were all gone. I figured that’s why Hellius was using their old home.”

“No. They are not gone.” Glip’s voice quieted. “At least we hope they are not all dead. That would be a tremendous loss for our world.”

“Ok. So it’s not his place.” Fenton waved his arms as if he was clearing the air. “But this

is where he's at, right?" Glip nodded. A large smile spread across Fenton's face. "Then check this out. I think I know how to get in." He held his place in the diary, then turned to one of the last pages, where another leaf acted as a bookmark. "I think this is a map."

The new page wasn't exactly a pirate's treasure map, but it had similarities. A few landmarks had been laid out, depicting a series of waterfalls, an outcrop of rocks in the shape of a face, and a series of dotted lines.

But instead of a single line of dots like a typical map, these were laid out in pairs, running parallel with each other. One set ran from the waterfalls toward the face-rocks, with a large "X" printed below the rocks. Another set branched off in the opposite direction. They headed toward a large black oval, passed through it, then came to an abrupt halt with a second "X" in the middle of the page.

"I don't get it," said Sam. "How does this help us get in the fortress?"

"Like this." Fenton kept his thumb in that page and turned back to the drawing of the fortress. "See it yet?" he asked.

"See what?" asked another voice.

Again, the group was startled. They had been so engrossed in the diary that not one of the three had heard the others walk up behind them. Darius, Alexis, Horis and Skoog stood in a ring around them, looking over Fenton's shoulder at the diary.

"Man," said Fenton. "I wish I was those radar people," he muttered. He pointed at the diary, "This is picture of where Hellius is holed up." He turned to the map, "And I think this is a map showing how to sneak in the back." He flopped the pages back and forth a couple times between the fortress and the map.

"The X," said Alexis.

“Yep,” said Fenton smiling. “That’s my sis.”

“I don’t get it,” said Darius. “What about it? And why are there two X’s? Are there two treasures?”

“Ignore the one under those rocks. I think it’s meant to confuse us. Look where the other one stops.”

As he turned from the map back to the fortress, Sam saw what he meant. “If those were on the same page, the X on the map would stop right behind the fortress. Go back to the map.” Fenton flipped the pages. “So, if we find the entrance to the tunnel it will lead us right to the back of the fortress.” He stabbed a finger at the other X. “And I bet this is the entrance.”

“Of course,” said Fenton. “Why didn’t I see that?”

“Because you’re a dork,” said Darius.

“He figured out everything else,” defended Alexis. “Obviously he’s smarter than you think.”

“Whatever,” huffed Darius. He walked back to where he slept and began packing his things.

“Actually,” said Fenton quietly. “I discovered this on accident. I was looking at the drawing of the fortress when the wind kicked up. It blew the pages right to the map. Otherwise, I’m not sure I would have found it.”

“Doesn’t matter,” said Alexis, resting her hand on his shoulder. “You still saw it. I’m not sure any of the rest of us would have.”

Sam couldn’t believe it. It was really happening. They were going to be able to get Kendra out. His dad was going to be ok. “Good job,” he said. He turned to the rest of the group. “We know where to go. Let’s get moving.”