

Chapter Two

Ian and Drew arrived back at the farm in a rush of excitement. Ian quickly secured his bicycle against the front porch and burst into the house. “Aunt Sarah! Uncle Rob!” he called as he entered the house, “Have we got some news for you!”

“What’s all this yelling about?” Robert Prescott’s voice came from the second floor. “Hold on, I’ll be right down!” The boys moved into the living room and waited for Robert to join them.

The living room was spacious: a couch along the back wall in front of the bay window, a recliner on either side, separated by an end table. An entertainment center sat across from the couch, complete with a television, surround sound system, and Blu-ray disk player. The surround sound and Blu-ray were Drew’s recent additions. A fireplace stood at the far end of the room with family pictures lining its mantel.

Sarah Prescott’s thin torso came into view as she stepped into the kitchen doorway. She was a short woman with a face drawn and weathered from hard work on the farm. Her fiery red hair, pulled into a tight bun, complemented piercing green eyes.

“I’m glad you’re home, boys,” she said sweetly. “I was just about to put supper on the table.” She had disappeared back inside the kitchen when Ian felt a rough hand grip his shoulder.

He turned to see the grizzled face of his Uncle Rob. Over the last century, Ian’s American side of the family had lost much of the Prescott look, but he still maintained the blue eyes common to the English side of his family. He had blonde hair like his mother, not the usual sandy brown of Prescott men.

Ian's face was smooth and hairless, unlike Drew who was stocky like Robert, his face ruddy from many summers working on the farm in the sun. Drew did not have a beard like his father, but had begun sporting a goatee, of which he was extremely proud. Father and son were of average height and had blue eyes like Ian, but that was the end of their similarities. No one ever assumed Ian and Drew were cousins merely by looking at them.

"Well, what's all this excitement about?" Robert asked in his gravelly voice. "No, don't tell me yet," he said, holding up a hand as Ian opened his mouth to explain. "Let's enjoy our supper and discuss it afterwards." Ian had learned early in life that once Robert made a decision about something, discussion was closed.

They all sat in their usual places, with Robert and Sarah at either end, Ian and Drew along the sides of the table. They had almost finished eating, when the farm animals began making a horrific racket.

Robert jumped up from the table and told the boys to follow him. He opened a side panel next to the fireplace, revealing two shotguns. Robert grabbed one of the shotguns and handed the other to Drew. He went to close the panel, and Ian protested, "What about me? Don't I get anything to protect myself?"

Although Ian had hunted a little, he knew he did not have the best aim and doubted his uncle would let him use a gun. Robert told him patiently, "Now, Ian, we don't have time for this same old discussion again. I'll get you a gun when you learn how to shoot properly and not before." Ian knew his uncle would have normally ignored his long face, but he could tell Robert was considering something. "All right," Robert added with a wink, "if you want something to defend yourself, then you can use this." He pushed on the wall of the cabinet and slid it away to reveal a black pommel sticking out of a worn scabbard.

Robert handed the sword to a surprised Ian. “Here you go, boy. This blade has been in our family for countless generations. If you want something to fight with, then use this sword.”

Robert did not wait for Ian to protest, but charged out the back door with Drew hard on his heels. Drew stole a glance back at Ian as he left, shaking his head. Ian could tell from the look on his face, what his cousin was thinking. Ian knew that his obstinate and inquisitive nature always ended up getting him into trouble. Instead of running out of the house with his uncle and cousin, he had stopped to examine the blade. Even though he realized Robert had only given it to him to shut him up, he still felt overwhelmed holding such an ancient family relic. He could not figure out why his uncle had entrusted it to him, though, given that he could not aim well with a gun, let alone a sword. He had no swordsmanship capabilities and was not even the eldest Prescott. A family heirloom ought to be passed down to Drew.

Unable to quell his curiosity, Ian withdrew the sword from its scabbard. It was a fascinating blade. The scabbard was extremely shabby, but the steel blade gleamed as if it had been forged yesterday. The pure black pommel appeared made of onyx. The sword was over a meter long, yet felt extremely light.

Ian’s scrutiny was interrupted only by his uncle’s yell, “Come on, boy! Get a move on!” Ian sprinted toward the back door with the sword, leaving the scabbard on the floor.

The men moved quickly to the back patio and looked around. Robert fired off loud instructions, “Boys, go check on the horses and livestock. I’ll check on the house and surrounding property.” Without a backward glance, he left the patio and headed toward the front of the house.

Drew carefully stalked the livestock area. The sheep and chickens began to calm down as he skirted their pens. Out of his peripheral vision, he noticed a black shape slinking away

from the side of the house towards the barn. Robert had apparently missed it lurking in the shadows.

Ian entered the barn to find the agitated horses foaming at the mouth. Despite his reassuring tones, he could not get them to stop kicking, lunging and neighing. Anytime he approached them, they charged their gates and snapped at him. He had never seen the horses act like this, so began to search for what was spooking them.

This action probably saved his life. As Ian dropped to his hands and knees to check under a stall, a black shape went sailing over him. Before he could recover, Drew yelled, "Ian! Get down!"

Instantly, Ian dropped to his stomach and put his hands over his ears. Three shots rang out over his head and into the black shape.

Drew gaped openly. All three shots had indeed hit the beast. Yet, instead of dropping dead, the thing continued to advance on Ian. "Watch out!" Drew yelled.

Heeding Drew's warning, Ian spotted the creature a few yards away from him, closing quickly. He quickly rolled over and instinctively brought the old sword up in front of him just as the shadowy beast launched itself at him.

Ian's upheld sword came to life. The pommel seemed to melt in his hand, the black color running off it like mud being washed from a tire. The blade changed as well. Instead of hardened steel, it was now blazing with a blue-white flame. Ian could not have let go of the sword had he tried. The sword began to move of its own accord, turning to ward off the menace. The beast leapt toward Ian and the blade met it in mid-air. Incredibly, the sword cut through the beast like a hot knife through butter.

Instead of yelping and running away, the shape dissipated with a blood-curdling scream. Drew slowly made his way to where the creature had stood, but all he found were scorch marks on the bare wooden floor.

“I don’t get it,” Drew gasped in amazement. “I hit that thing three times and it didn’t fall. You struck it with that old sword and it disappeared without a trace.” He then turned his attention to the sword. “Look at this!”

The pommel was now shining brilliantly as if made of the purest gold. Before the light completely faded, Ian pointed out the engraving on the pommel. It was in the shape of a maple leaf with a crown in the middle. He pulled the golden necklace he had always worn from around his neck and held it up to the pommel. The emblem on the necklace matched the pommel exactly.

Ian gave Drew a baffled shrug, and said, “I don’t know what to think.” This was not completely truthful. Reconsidering his dreams over the last six months, parts of which still came to him occasionally, he realized the sword had to be involved. He had not spoken of his dreams to anyone yet, but felt he now had no choice in the matter.

Ian remembered the warning from the Queen of Faerie. *Bring with you the lighted spear. Only it can win the fight.* He had been trying to work out the strange riddle, without much success. Could this sword be the "lighted spear"?

Drew began to investigate the strange burn marks left on the floor. “We should mention all of this to Dad,” he said, running his fingers over the floor, outlining the scorch marks. “Maybe he knows something about it.”

“Boys?” Robert called from the doorway. “I think it’s time we heard your news.” The boys nodded and followed him into the house. Ian knew part of their conversation had been overheard and that he would finally have to reveal the contents of his recurring dreams.

Sarah was waiting for them in the living room. Robert and Drew unloaded their guns and left them in the kitchen, but Ian maintained a death grip on the sword.

“What happened?” Sarah gasped, holding her hand to her mouth. Ian was scratched and filthy from the fight in the barn, and Drew was drenched in sweat. A silent conversation passed between Robert and Sarah before her hand moved to her heart and she whispered, “No, please not now.”

“Sarah,” Robert said gruffly, clearing his throat, “I’m going to talk to the boys downstairs in my den for a while. We’ll be back up in an hour or so.” Ian and Drew exchanged worried glances. Robert’s den was off-limits to everyone in the household. To Ian’s knowledge, not even Sarah knew exactly what was in there. Ian and Drew had tried to get into the room before, but Robert kept the keys with him at all times. One day he had caught them messing with the locks and had grounded both of them for a month.

Robert opened the basement door and disappeared inside. Ian and Drew quickly followed. They walked down the creaking wooden staircase until they reached the bottom. On their left stood a solid oak door with three locks. Robert reached into his shirt and withdrew a golden chain containing three keys. He took the first key, which was small and silver, and placed it in the top lock. Then, he took the second key, which was slender and gold, and placed it in the second lock. Finally, he took the third key, which was thick and white, and placed it in the third lock. He turned the white key first and then turned the silver and gold keys simultaneously. They heard three clicking sounds, and the door swung open soundlessly.

Ian and Drew gawked as they scanned the room, which appeared completely out of place compared to the rest of the farmhouse. The floor was made of solid stone and covered by a large braided area rug. Along the wall to the left was a fireplace. Ian guessed that the chimney must parallel the one in the living room.

Directly ahead of them, Ian noticed an oil painting of a young man wearing strange robes. The name beneath the painting read, "Ayden Prescott." To the right stood a large pine desk containing a tray of writing paper on the left, a set of pens on the right and a green-shaded desk lamp in the middle. Robert pulled the desk chair out and sat down, motioning toward two chairs by the fireplace. "Pull up a seat, boys, and let's talk."

The boys sat down on a small couch and Robert cleared his throat, "Okay now. I know there've been some strange things happening today, but let's talk about your news first." He rubbed sweat off his face with a handkerchief. After overhearing Drew's description of the creature's demise and seeing the sword in its present condition, Ian could tell Robert had suspicions about the creature's origins. It was obvious from Robert's expression those suspicions made him nervous, and that bothered Ian because he had never seen anything rattle his uncle.

Ian opened his mouth to respond when a knock sounded at the front door and Sarah's footsteps could be heard crossing the living room to answer it. The post had already been delivered, which made this late delivery extremely peculiar. After a brief conversation, they heard the front door shut quickly and Sarah's footsteps crossing the living room again, and then come down the stairs. Ian and Drew gaped at each other, and Robert motioned them not to say a word as he got up and opened the door to receive his wife's news.

"Robert, I'm sorry to bother you, but someone just delivered this package for Ian. She looked so much like Ian, it was uncanny." Dropping her voice to a whisper, Ian had to strain to

hear what she said next, "There was a definite family resemblance. You don't think they've come for him after all these years, do you?" Then, raising her voice to normal levels, she continued, "I examined the package to see who sent it, but it only had Ian's name on it. When I looked up again to question the girl, she was gone. I've no idea what's inside."

"Thank you, my dear," he said sincerely, adding softly, "I'll get to the bottom of this mystery." After Sarah gave her husband a small smile and headed back upstairs, Robert closed the door once again and turned his attention to Ian. "All right, what's going on here? Too many strange things have happened tonight for them to be coincidences. Open your blasted package and let's get to the bottom of this." He handed the package over to Ian, and watched him carefully as he opened it.

Ian opened the package to reveal a beautiful amulet. His eyes widened in shock, and, before he could stop himself, he blurted out, "It's the amulet from my dream!"

The silence was palpable as Drew and Robert stared at Ian in shocked amazement. "I guess it's time that I tell you about it, huh?" No one moved a muscle. "All right," Ian began, swallowing hard, "but first I just want to hold it, for real this time." He grasped the amulet and removed it from the package. At his touch, it began to glow and emitted the musical voice of the Queen of Faerie.

Drew gasped as the queen's voice spoke the riddle Ian had heard in his dream. When it finished, everyone sat in muted silence. Robert nodded, obviously accepting affirmation of something he had already been pondering.

Ian broke the silence. "I've been trying to work out the riddle for the last six months. It wasn't until tonight's fight in the barn that I think I worked out the part about the 'lighted spear.' It must involve this sword."

Robert held up a hand to stop him, “Wait a minute,” he said, confusion showing in his face. “What does the sword have to do with this?”

Immediately, Drew spoke up again and related the fight in the barn between him, Ian, and the creature. “As the beast lunged at him, the sword came to life,” Drew finished. For emphasis, he added, “The black color on the pommel melted away to reveal what seems to be gold, inset with the emblem of a maple leaf containing a crown – a match for the one on Ian’s necklace. The blade lit up with a blue-white flame and attacked the creature, cutting it in half. Instead of falling dead, it just disappeared.”

Robert, who had been quietly taking this all in, sighed and shook his head. “Boys,” he replied dejectedly, “I think it’s time you were finally told about our family legend. According to Prescott tradition, I’m not supposed to reveal this to you until you turn 21 but, unless my guess is wrong, we may not live to see that day.”