

Chapter 1

THE BLACK ELF

Lightning cracked across the darkened sky and struck the ground near two soldiers on horseback. The horses reared in panic, but the soldiers, Hamlin and Tyrone, calmed them, dismounted, and ran for the trees, holding onto a small valise. It was now the time--Lady Cadwin, the Countess, had given them specific directions to open the valise at noon.

Tyrone set it on the ground while Hamlin spread a blanket beside it. Tyrone held his breath as he carefully lifted out the little girl who had been given an Elvish potion to make her small, not much bigger than the palms of his hands. He placed her gently on the blanket while Hamlin held his cloak out to shield the child from the pelting rain.

Tyrone knelt across from Hamlin and added his cloak to form the shield. When they looked down, the girl, young Lady Alexin, was awake and the normal size of a four-year-old.

Suddenly, thunder boomed above their heads and rolled in waves across the sky, causing the horses to bolt.

"Hey! The horses!" Hamlin jumped up to run after them, but it was hopeless.

"We'll get them later, Ham." Tyrone pulled him back with his arm.

"Where did these clouds come from? I swear it was clear just a minute ago!" Hamlin stared at the sky as rain pelted his face, holding his cloak out to shelter Lady Alexin.

"Don't forget you're on Seaward Isle. Nothing makes any sense here." Tyrone shook his head--rain dripped from his nose. His skin started to tingle and the hair on his arms rose. He glanced nervously at the sky.

Little Lady Alexin wriggled--the electricity in the air gave her a jolt. "Ow! Take me home! I want Papa!" She stood up and tried to pull away.

"Your Papa ordered us to take you to Nyla." Tyrone put his hands on her arms. "He wants you to be safe in Nyla with your brother. We can't go back!" Tyrone held her protectively, staring at the sky as lightning crackled again across the sky, striking the ground in a sharp explosion.

"That was too close! It must've hit near the Count's fortress!" Hamlin stared upward at the sky when thunder boomed. The storm was almost overhead.

"Mama! Mama!" Lady Alexin burst into tears. "I want to go home!" She cried.

"Mama, talk to me!" She put her hands over her ears, terrified.

"Lady Alexin, what's wrong?" Tyrone shook his head. "Your Mama's not here!"

"Mama won't talk to me! Take me home!" Lady Alexin stared at him, pleading with her large blue eyes. Her long, black hair was soaked around her little face.

"She can't talk to you! She's not here!" Tyrone said.

"Lady Alexin, do you mean in Elfspeak?" Hamlin asked.

She nodded.

"Elves can speak to each other with their thoughts," Hamlin told Tyrone.

A third bolt of lightning struck, followed by a loud explosion that shook the ground.

Lady Alexin screamed.

"What's going on? Ow!" Hamlin covered his head with his hands. Pieces of debris fell around them.

"The Wizard Mylar did this, but I've never seen anything like it before." Tyrone shook his head. "We'd better get moving."

As quickly as the dark clouds appeared, they rolled away, and the sky turned blue again with a bright sun. The men packed up, casting curious glances above them.

Tyrone and Hamlin scanned the forest for any trace of the horses, but when they turned to get Lady Alexin, she was missing. Hamlin caught a glimpse of her black hair, running down the path towards home. He ran after her and snatched her up in his arms.

"You can't go back. It's too dangerous, Lady Alexin!" He put her down on the ground.

"Stop calling me that! My name's Alex! I want to go home! Now!" Alex stomped her foot and tried to push him away.

Hamlin carried her back as she kicked and squirmed in his arms. He handed her to Tyrone. Then, they moved on and took turns carrying the little girl to keep her from running away. Alex sobbed uncontrollably.

Hamlin felt sorry for her. It was hard to explain to a four-year-old that a King attacked her father so he could learn how to use a Wizard in battle.

A few days before, Hamlin and Tyrone arrived at Count Dumwalt's fortress with their buddy Jake to warn him. The King was bringing three hundred men and the Wizard Mylar to learn how to integrate the Wizard's magic with the strength of his army. The Count asked them to take little Alex to safety in Nyla where her brother, Beren, attended the Sword Academy. Jake went north to get reinforcements from Lord Dimont while Tyrone and Hamlin went east with the little girl.

In order to sneak out of the Count's fortress, Alex's Elfin mother, the beautiful Lady Cadwin, gave her a shrinking potion to make her small enough to fit in the valise to hide her escape. Thank goodness, it had worked, and Alex was back to normal. At least, to a degree. She had stopped crying--Tyrone guessed because she was exhausted. She also stopped talking, even though he spoke to her softly. Hamlin didn't know what to do.

After they pressed on for several hours, Alex raised her head and stared ahead. "Horsie, come back!" She pointed to the forest.

Tyrone and Hamlin shook their heads, not seeing any horses, but stared at each other with surprise when the horses trotted up to them out of the woods.

"How did you do that?" Hamlin stared at her.

Alex shrugged her shoulders. The men checked the horses and mounted up.

They rode on for several days, until they finally stopped at a small farm. The farmer let them sleep in his barn and gave them some hot stew. They were exhausted, but safe--they fell asleep quickly.

In the middle of the night, Alex woke up and screamed.

Tyrone opened his eyes and saw a tall, black form at his feet. It had the shape of a man without any features. A cold breeze blew. His eyes opened wide.

"Look out! A Shadow!" Tyrone pushed Alex away.

Alex raised her right hand and shouted at it. "Stop! Go away!" A short beam of bright blue light shot from her hand and turned the black form into red sparks before it disappeared. Alex gasped in surprise and gaped at her hand.

"What did you do to that Shadow?" Tyrone stared at her.

"I don't know." Alex shook her head and checked her hands in the moonlight.

Hamlin rolled over to check on his companions and sat up.

"Ham, the Wizard Mylar knows I'm here. He sent this Shadow after me. I'm putting you two in danger. Go on without me." Tyrone shook with fear.

"We're not leaving you. Besides, Mylar doesn't know about Alex," Hamlin said. "Let's go!" He grabbed Tyrone's arm and roused him. They packed up in the dark and rode until dawn before stopping at a stream to water the horses.

Alex became more comfortable with them after that, and her countenance lightened. For the first time since leaving home, she was willing to talk and eat with them. When Tyrone picked her up now, she laughed as he swung her around in his arms. He held her and smiled.

Alex stared over his shoulder and held up her hand at the black Shadow behind Tyrone. "No! Go away!" Blue light shot from her hand in a small, but powerful beam.

Tyrone spun around as the Shadow burst into red sparks and disappeared. His mouth dropped open in surprise.

Alex stared at her hand and held it out to Tyrone. "Why does my hand do that?"

"I don't know, Alex. You're very special. No one has ever been able to do that." He took her hand and folded it into a fist. "Save it in case more Shadows show up."

Alex nodded and threw her arms around his neck.

"Ham, let's pack up!" Tyrone set Alex down and helped break camp.

Tyrone knew the dark magic of the Wizard. He had been a squire to Queen Diamona, the Wizard's benefactor and knew the Queen had made a deal with King Bertigam of Agana, shortly after arriving on the island. She would receive half the Kingdom in exchange for use of the Wizard's magic. Tyrone shook his head. No one had ever destroyed a Shadow before. How could this little girl do it?

They rode on for several more days until they reached a large lake called the Inward Sea. On the opposite side of the lake was the village of Nyla. They slowed as they entered the quaint village and rode up to the Sword Academy to deliver Alex. It was an unusually large building for so small a village. It was made of dark red brick and stones, standing two stories high near the Army garrison.

Relieved that the journey was over, the two men introduced themselves to the headmaster, Commandant Nielsen and his wife. The Commandant was happy to have Alex, but his wife, Mistress Nielsen, disliked her from the start.

"What's in her ears?" Mistress Nielsen frowned and turned Alex's head to the side, roughly pulling her hair back. "It's blue hair! What is she, an Elf?"

Alex pulled away and covered her ears with her hands. Tears formed in her eyes.

"They shouldn't allow this. She's deformed! A freak of nature!" Mistress Nielsen grimaced, wiping her hands on her apron with disgust.

Alex's brother, Beren, shared her opinion and wasn't at all pleased to see her.

He frowned. "Where's Father?"

"He said he would come to get me later." Alex stuck her tongue out.

"Good, girls don't belong here. This is a boys' school!" He left and slammed the door.

The Commandant had the final say, however. He smiled at the little girl, patting her gently on the head, and Alex was brought under his protection.

Alex pressed her lips together in a firm line. She knew Beren wouldn't be happy to see her, but why did that woman care? She didn't like her, but smiled back at the Commandant.

Hamlin went to the village to meet with friends at the Army garrison and stayed with them. The Commandant offered Tyrone a position as an instructor at the academy. Life soon resumed a sense of normalcy--for everyone, that is, except Alex who had Mistress Nielsen, the headmistress, in charge of her.

Mistress Nielsen grew more irritated with Alex each passing day and the feeling became mutual. Alex hated wearing the frilly dresses and bows in her hair, even as much as the chores she was assigned. She did the best she could, but it was never good enough for the headmistress who berated her constantly.

Yesterday, the headmistress had shown Alex how to make biscuits and had given her the recipe card. Alex shook her head and told her she didn't know how to read yet. Nonetheless, this morning, the headmistress ordered her to make the biscuits.

Alex knew that she needed flour. The large ceramic bowl was heavy, but she carried it to the pantry and set it on the floor, filling it with flour. Alex placed her arms under the bowl and picked it up, barely able to see over the edge. As she took it over to the kneading board, she tripped over the headmistress's foot. The bowl broke on the floor, and Alex fell into the flour and cried.

Mistress Nielsen stood over her and sneered. "You stupid little girl! Clean this up immediately!"

Alex got angry and threw handfuls of flour defiantly at the headmistress, until she was completely covered in white. Then, Alex laughed and threw flour all over the kitchen.

Mistress Nielsen rushed through the school, covered in flour, to find her husband and demand that he do something with the little terror.

The Commandant met with Tyrone to figure out what to do.

"Perhaps Alex could begin school," Tyrone suggested. "She could wear a uniform and join the early class. She'd look like one of the boys."

Having no other option, the Commandant approved the idea. He found her sitting dejectedly on her bed in her frilly pink dress, covered with flour.

"Are you sending me away?" Alex bit her lip--large tears were in her eyes.

"No, you're going to start class with the boys."

Alex smiled, jumped off the bed, and hugged her guardian.

The Commandant found her an old uniform, fixed her hair like a boy's, and accompanied her to class the next day. Delighted, Alex skipped along, holding his hand.

Alex proved to be both an excellent student and a fearless competitor--she never backed down from a fight. She had a fierce and competitive nature, and her uniform was often dirty. Her life improved by avoiding the headmistress as much as she could.

On the other hand, her brother, Beren, didn't share her enthusiasm and disapproved of her behavior. She was a girl, and he thought she should behave like one. Worse, she was an Elf and a freak. He wished his mother, Lady Isabella, was still alive. She had been a beautiful mortal woman from a distinguished royal family. Unlike his sister, he maintained his uniform impeccably--he was an excellent student and stayed away from fights. After all, he was the proper heir to a Count.

The one thing both children shared was that they missed their father. Alex and Beren waited for him to come for them, but he never did. One day, Gamin, a former servant of the Count's, arrived and described to them how their father was killed by the evil magic of the Wizard Mylar. Beren blamed Alex for his father's death and hated her even more intensely--Alex silently vowed to kill the Wizard and focused on her military lessons to defeat him.

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Five years later, Alex turned nine on the spring solstice. She was tall and slender with her long black hair tied behind her head, looking like one of the boys.

She had proven her prowess with a bow and arrow and was selected to participate in the academy's archery tournament. She focused on her targets and hit her marks to perfection.

After several rounds, the Commandant called her to stand beside him. "This was the closest result we've had in many years. I congratulate all of you for working hard on your archery prowess. The winner of this year's tournament is Alex."

Alex, the youngest winner in school history, jumped for joy. She was awarded a new bow and a sleeve of practice arrows.

Mistress Nielsen didn't share in the excitement and cornered Alex in her bedroom after the festivities were over. She glowered, pointing her finger at her face.

"You cheated, you little brat!"

"I didn't cheat!" Alex shook her head.

"You had to. There's no way anyone your age could have won the tournament. I'm going to tell my husband, you'll be disqualified for cheating."

"I didn't cheat!" Alex stomped her foot.

Mistress Nielsen picked up the bow Alex was awarded from the corner. "You don't deserve this!"

"Don't touch it!" Alex pulled it from her hands.

Mistress Nielsen slapped Alex across the face with the back of her hand.

Alex screamed and held her face, holding her bow with fierce indignation and glared.

"Brat!" Mistress Nielsen grabbed her by the hair and threw her against the wall.

Alex screamed and hit her in the face with the bow.

Mistress Nielsen screamed, grabbed the bow from her, and ran to the door.

"Stop!" Alex held up her hand, and the blue light shot from her palm, hitting the wall next to Mistress Nielsen's head, creating a hole in the plaster.

"What was that?" Mistress Nielsen turned in shock, glaring back at Alex.

"Nothing!" Alex gulped hard.

"It came from you!"

"No, it didn't!"

"See how weird you are! Normal people can't do that!" She pointed her finger at Alex.

"I'm not weird!"

"Oh, yes, you are! I'm going to tell my husband! He'll send you away!" Mistress Nielsen had an evil smile. She opened the door to leave.

"No, you won't!" Alex paused. "If you do, I'll tell him I saw you kissing that soldier last week. I know his name."

Mistress Nielsen gasped and put her hand on her chest. "What? You will do nothing of the sort!" She turned back to Alex.

"I will--I swear!" Alex backed up and stood tall, sticking her chin out defiantly.

Mistress Nielsen backed away, staring at her. Then, she stormed out, throwing the bow on the floor.

Alex took a deep breath and checked her prized bow. It was broken, but she was pretty sure, Mistress Nielsen wouldn't say anything to the Commandant about her blue light. She stared at her hand. Why did it have to go off now? She had been afraid to try to use it again because she didn't know how it worked or how to control it. Where did it come from? She shook her hands and swallowed hard.

Mistress Nielsen took some deep breaths after she left Alex's room. The little brat had been watching her! She had to get rid of her! She ran out of the house to get some fresh air and wandered to the market where she saw one of those female Scouts. They were strange women, dressed like men, but she knew they liked children and would adopt orphans. She just had to convince her that Alex was worth adopting.

Later that evening, Mistress Nielsen escorted the tall, beautiful female Scout to Alex's room where Alex sat at her desk studying. The woman carried a bow and wore a sword at her waist. Her blond hair, lightened by the sun, was tied behind her head in a long braid, and her skin was deeply tanned.

"This is Alex." Mistress Nielsen smiled. "We dress her like this, so she looks like a boy to fit in the school, but as I told you, she's a girl and doesn't belong here. Her parents are dead, and she's an orphan. Alex, this is Scout Nora. She's your new mother. The Commandant himself approved of your adoption!" She frowned at Alex.

"Mother?" Alex's mouth dropped open.

Mistress Nielsen slapped her across the face. "Don't question me! Pack!"

"No!" Alex was confused and suspicious. "I want to speak to the Commandant and my brother!" She glared at the headmistress.

"I told you what to do--do it!" Mistress Nielsen pointed at her, but when Alex stood by in defiance, she grabbed handfuls of clothes from the dresser and stuffed them into a cloth bag. She grabbed Alex's arm and dragged her out of the room.

"Don't harm her!" Scout Nora smiled reassuringly at Alex. "I'll take good care of you."

Mistress Nielsen threw the bag of clothes out the door with Alex. Once the Scout passed through the door, she slammed it in her face with a firm, "Good bye!"

Although Alex felt rejected, she was also relieved to be away from that woman. The Scout seemed nice, but Alex didn't know anything about her. They spoke little and left Nyla, disappearing quickly into the forest. Alex grabbed her hand and smiled at her.

Scout Nora smiled and squeezed her hand. She didn't intend to adopt a child, but was glad to get this young girl away from that awful woman. As darkness fell, they approached the campsite in the hills.

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In the little village of Winden along the southern coast of Seaward Isle, Aqua, Lady of the Rain and the Witch of Winden, ran out of her little cottage and shouted at the young boys who

threw a rock at her window. As she frowned at the broken glass, a vision flashed across it. A Wizard lay dead at the foot of a tall Elf with a sword, but the Elf's head was located at the hole in the glass. This was a black omen of the future, and she touched it before it vanished. She gasped in fear and cut her finger on the broken glass.

"The Black Elf is coming!" Her eyes were wide with fear. "The Black Elf is coming!" Panicked, Aqua ran through the village, shouting her warning. None of the villagers paid her any heed. Finally, she ran up to Wallace, a man who had once expressed curiosity about magic.

"Wallace, as my apprentice, I order you to find the Black Elf!" She pointed a bony finger at him.

"I ain't your apprentice, Aqua!" He held up his hand to stop her.

"Find him!"

"I ain't going nowhere!" He waved his middle finger at her.

"If you don't find him, I'll put a curse on you, and you'll wander the halls of the dead forever!" She pointed at him and bared her teeth.

"No curses! That ain't fair!"

"Go!"

"Who am I looking for?"

"The Black Elf!"

"What's his name?"

"That's his name."

"What does he look like?" He scratched his head.

"I don't know. The boys threw a rock at my window and left a hole in it."

"What does that have to do with this Elf?" Wallace raised up his hands in frustration.

"That's where his head was, but I saw him. Clear as day---he was standing over a dead Wizard. He had a sword in his hand, dripping with blood. He just killed the Wizard with it." She used her hands to demonstrate the dripping blood and grimaced.

"What Wizard? Why didn't this Wizard kill him with his magic?"

"I don't know! I just know this Elf killed the Wizard and will kill all of us with magical powers, even you. Wallace, sneak up on him and kill him first!" Aqua raised her fist and ran back to her cottage near the beach.

Wallace sighed. He shook his head and went to speak to his friends, Turnin and Gorman. A few days later, they saddled their horses and decided to head north to speak to the Elves of Ridgedale. Maybe those Elves would know who this Black Elf was. Whatever else happened, they didn't want to be cursed.

As they were leaving, Wallace had another idea. He knew where there was a real Wizard. He led his two friends east towards the Castle-by-the-Sea, which had been built by the Wizard Mylar a little while back. They dismounted their horses and stared through the trees to the beach. The Wizard was talking to a blond male Elf sitting on a horse. The next thing they knew, the Elf helped the Wizard onto the horse, and they rode away with several other Elves.

"What's this? Wasn't that the Elf Mellen?" Wallace wrinkled his brow.

"Yeah, it looks like him. What's he doing with the Wizard?" Gorman pointed after them.

"Something bad. It's always bad news with Mellen." Wallace glanced at his friends.

"Let's follow them for a while." They mounted up and left, staying well behind the Elves and the Wizard.

Chapter 2

JOURNEY TO SCINTHIA

Through the fading light in the forest, Scout Nora led Alex up to a small cave.

"Sarina, come out here. I brought someone to meet you. This is Alex, my new daughter." Scout Nora beckoned Alex to stand next to her.

A very short woman with long, dark brown hair, dark eyes, and heavy eyebrows stepped out of the cave. Sarina stared at Alex and touched her shoulder. They were about the same height. "New daughter? You didn't say anything about this."

Scout Nora nodded and smiled. "I know. A woman in town told me about her. Both of her parents are dead, and she's an orphan."

Sarina nodded. "Hello, Alex. My name's Sarina and I'm a Dwarf."

"I've never met a Dwarf before." Alex's eyes lit up with new curiosity.

"I'll show you where to sleep tonight," Sarina said. "We know where to camp and how to find food and water. We know the wilderness. Some people call us wanderers or Scouts. Nora is from Scinthia, and a lot of her people become Scouts."

"Where's Scinthia?" Alex asked.

"It's far to the east, beyond the sky, about a hundred leagues from here." Scout Nora pointed east. "It's a beautiful country with rolling hills and fertile fields. Our capital city is called Riesa. You have much to learn, little one. We'll move out in the morning."

"Where are we going?"

"North."

After supper, Alex helped clean up and went over to her new mother. "Thank you, Scout Nora."

"Did you enjoy supper? It's Sarina's specialty. She loves coney stew."

"I love it, too. I mean thank you for taking me away from Mistress Nielsen. She hated me."

"No problem. Get some sleep. It's late." Scout Nora hugged her and tucked her in her bedroll.

Alex lay down with a smile. "Wait!" She sat up and held out her arms. "Can I kiss you good night?" She kissed Scout Nora. Then, she got up and kissed Sarina. "Thank you, Sarina. I love coney stew, too."

"Go to bed!" Sarina pointed to her bedroll and smiled.

Alex lay down again, smiled, and closed her eyes. She felt safe.

Alex enjoyed her new company. She loved learning how to hunt and fish, identify plants, and prepare foods. She learned how to survive in the wilderness. Sarina taught her about the land and how to identify Dwarf markings. Nora taught her fighting techniques with both sword and arrow. Trained like a soldier, she trained Alex in the same manner. Alex was delighted. Along with her knowledge from the Sword Academy, she was sure that one day she could defeat the Wizard Mylar.

After several months, Scout Nora led her group over a rise and beckoned Alex to her side one afternoon as the sun was setting.

"This is the land of the Elves, and this city is called Ridgedale," Scout Nora said. "We're going to meet Lord Odin to ask for his permission to stay. The Elves are very proper so you must not offend them. Just copy what we do."

"Who's Lord Odin?" Alex's eyes were wide.

"He's the leader of all the Elves on Seaward Isle. He's powerful, but very kind."

They strolled through the cobblestone streets and were greeted by Elves who welcomed them to Ridgedale. At the end of the street was a small house with a fountain.

"Alex, we have to clean up before we meet Lord Odin. Wash your face and hands. I'll comb out your hair and braid it again." Scout Nora smiled at her warmly.

When they were ready, they went up to a large house not far away. Scout Nora rang the bell and a large, male Elf with long, blond hair opened it. He smiled immediately.

"Scout Nora! What a pleasure to see you again!"

"Good day, Retan." Scout Nora smiled and saluted him like an Elf, placing her right hand on her chest and curtsying slightly.

"Do you wish to see Lord Odin?" Retan returned the salute.

"Yes, this is my friend, Sarina who came with me on my last visit, and this is my new daughter, Alex. Does he have time to see us?"

"I'm certain he'll make time for you. Come in. I'll let him know." Retan led them into a large comfortable parlor where they sat on velvet covered chairs.

Alex ran her hand over the soft, smooth fabric and smiled. She bounced on the chairs until the Scout gave her a warning look.

A few minutes later, Lord Odin came in to greet them. He was very tall with long, blond hair, sparkling blue eyes and pointed ears. He wore a long purple robe decorated with gold leaves over a light green tunic.

"Welcome, Scout Nora and Sarina." He placed his right hand on his chest and then, extended his right hand to them and smiled.

Scout Nora and Sarina returned the greeting and bent their right knees to the floor, and Alex copied them, but lost her balance and fell. She scrambled to her feet, giggling.

"Please introduce me to my new guest." Lord Odin smiled at Alex.

"Lord Odin, this is my adopted daughter, Alex. She's from Nyla and a quick study. She's already learning how to be a Scout and a Dwarf. I thought she would also need to know how to be an Elf," Scout Nora said.

"You're most welcome here, and we'll be glad to train you to be an Elf. It may take the rest of your life, however. As a start, would you like to join our children for classes?" Lord Odin asked.

"Yes!" Alex smiled. "Can I ask you a question, Lord Odin?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"Why are your ears pointed?" She pointed to his ears.

Scout Nora touched her hand to her head, turning red.

Lord Odin touched his ears. "I guess because I'm an Elf. I'm supposed to have pointed ears." He laughed. "I honestly don't know why." He shook his head.

Alex giggled and covered her mouth. She liked him.

In the morning, Lord Odin came to pick her up for class. "Before we go, I must ask you some questions. Scout Nora said she adopted you so tell me about your real parents."

"My father's name was Count Dumwalt, but I don't remember my mother's. We lived in a castle somewhere. One day, some men told my father that a King was going to attack him, so my father told two soldiers, Tyrone and Hamlin, to take me to Nyla where my brother, Beren, went to school at the Sword Academy."

"Could it be?" Lord Odin stared at her. "Come closer." He put his hands around her face and looked at her rounded ears with small tufts of fine blue hair around the ear canal. "You do have the blue hair in your ears of a Water Elf. I knew your parents very well. Our Cadwin, a Water Elf, married your father, Count Dumwalt. I helped deliver you when you were born."

"You did? Her name was Cadwin? What was she like? What did she look like? Was she nice?" Tears filled her eyes. "I don't remember her very well."

"Your mother was very beautiful. She had long hair of an unusual gold color and large blue eyes like yours. She was the daughter of Themius, a very good friend of mine. He was also killed when the King attacked with the Wizard Mylar. He was a Titan, you know. Your grandmother is Lady Lestin, a noble Water Elf who lives in Leesdale on the far side of the volcano with your cousins. She'll be relieved to know you're alive and well. She fears that the Wizard will come for your cousins, so she stays close to home." He paused. "The Wizard may try to find you, if he knows of you."

"Why?"

"Because you may be able to destroy his Shadows like your grandfather did."

"Are they black things? When I was a little girl, Tyrone and Hamlin took me to Nyla, and these black things came. I was very scared so I told them to go away, and they exploded like fireworks." Alex waved her arms in the air to resemble an explosion.

"Yes, those were his Shadows. What did you do to make them disappear?"

"I don't know. I just held my hand up like this, and a blue light came out of it. Then, I saw red sparks, and they vanished." Alex showed him her hand.

"Why did they come after you?" He examined the palms of her hands.

"I'm not sure. Tyrone said the Wizard was after him because he worked for some queen." Alex shook her head.

Lord Odin's mouth dropped open. He covered it with his hand and shook his head. He could hardly believe it. Alex had escaped the destruction at her father's castle with the help of this man, Tyrone, the Queen's squire who had vanished. He stared at Alex's little hand again and recalled her grandfather, Themius, had used the blue light, causing considerable destruction before he knew what he was doing. The light was powerful, capable of destroying anything.

"What's a Titan?" Alex tugged at his sleeve and cocked her head to the side.

Lord Odin glanced up and smiled at her again. "I'm not familiar with all the stories of mortals, but I understand Titans had much to do with them. Your grandfather was only seven when my friend, Prince Darin, rescued him from a shipwreck. Apparently, a man called Zeus wanted to kill the Titans, scattering them in different directions. Your grandfather's ship was caught in the storms that surround this island and was destroyed. We took him in and raised him as one of our own."

After Lord Odin took Alex to class, he returned to speak with Scout Nora.

"Scout Nora, I know you'll do the best for this girl, but remember who she is and what she can do. The Wizard Mylar still lives. He may search for her, but won't suspect that she's with your people. She told me that she can tap into the use of a powerful force that she calls the blue light. It's capable of enormous destruction. You must teach her control and restraint."