

The Wind and the Water

Chapter 1

My father was a brave and gentle man. He was the defender of our small farming community for all of the time that I had known him. He defended the kind from the cruel, the unfortunate from the malicious, and the weak from the corrupt. When he died, our whole town suffered a tremendous loss. We were all very hurt by this, as he was a pillar for our community. Not only had he been our protector, but he had been a friend, a husband, a brother, and a father. Our town was so small that there was no one whose life had not been touched by him in some way. He died after taking severe wounds in battle. Despite his kind and gentle behavior, he was a very powerful warrior. Many bandits and beasts alike feared his blade.

Though he was a warrior, he was not a violent man. He was very strong both physically and mentally, but had a very calm demeanor. Despite his calm and peaceful demeanor, he could not avoid the violent fate that so many warriors often found on their journeys. There was nothing that any of us could have done to save him. As terrible as it may seem, he had not struggled. His death was not in vain. He passed the way that he had always wanted to, surrounded by family and friends. In his final moments, he was at peace. The same could not be said for my family. They refused to accept his passing. I had accepted his death much quicker than the others. I loved him, but I knew that it would tear me apart to try to hold on to him. I saw firsthand many times how dangerous his life could be. Although I was young, I had come to realize that my father would not be with me forever.

I remember the day that I first realized how dangerous the path my father chose was, and how it would ultimately end. I was a young and foolish child at the time, at the age where one thinks of themselves as immortal. I idolized my father and wanted to be like him, so I wandered off into the wild to kill a pack of wolves that had been terrorizing our livestock. I walked with my chest out and a large branch in hand, which I intended to use as a weapon. I went past the hills where our animals would graze and towards the forests. After what felt like hours of wandering I saw a lone wolf standing atop a hill. I raised my branch and moved towards the wolf, but I was a fool. A wolf is never truly alone. The pack descended on me from behind. I ran, but there was nowhere to run to. Just as the wolves jaws were about to snap down on my fragile limbs, beasts turned their heads to the sound of shouting. My father, who followed close behind my trail as soon as he heard I had gone missing, sprinted towards the beasts and slashed his blade at one of them, killing it almost instantly. The rest of the pack did not stand by and watch. They pounced on him, biting and clawing. I watched what I thought at first to be my fathers death, tears streaming down my face. That, as you may be able to recollect, was not how it happened. I saw him

fight and swing his blade, killing wolf after wolf until none remained. I looked up at my father as he stood, covered in a mix of his own and the wolves blood. He remained silent as he fell to his knees.

I begged my father not to speak of what happened to my mother. Although it would be impossible to explain his injuries to her, I somehow believed we could pretend this had never happened. But, I quickly realized that he was injured much more than he was letting on. He was hardly moving, and he kept his face away from me. I swallowed my fear and my pride, and helped carry my father home, where my mother and the town doctor began treating his many wounds. I stayed by his side, fearing that I had led my father to his death. He assured me he was going to live, but he told me that he wouldn't always be there for me, and that he wouldn't be able to keep getting up from battle. I was forced to confront the fears of losing my father much earlier than most of the others who knew him. I had spent a great deal of time coming to understand the costs that his job as our guardian had on him. My family could not do the same. They would need more time to heal than I did.

Though I had accepted my father's passing, I was still deeply troubled. His passing had left many holes in our small community. He was a leader. He helped to make many important decisions for our town. We would have to gather and decide on a new Mayor. While it would be possible to manage, it would be very difficult. Another issue was the unity of our community. My father worked to ensure that all of us worked together to help our community move forward. He would work out fights, small or large, between people. In a town as small as ours, simple family arguments could cause massive delays to productivity. This ability to calm people and help them reach an agreement was hard to replace. It could be possible for this tragedy to bring our community closer. My father strived to teach others how to sort out their own problems. The lessons he taught help us to this day. There was one final problem, however, that evaded even a potential solution, let alone a strong one.

Without my father there would be no defender for our town. A guardian for our town is a vital role. We could not simply grab some sticks and fling them at invaders. We needed a warrior, a job that not everyone is capable of. It requires years of training, meditation, and practice. Thankfully, not all was lost. There were a few people within my town that were capable of such a task and had the necessary skills. My uncle, my brother, and I were all skilled in these arts. My grandfather had taught my father and my uncle in the art of combat, just as the two of them had taught me and my brother. This is the tradition in our town. The blood of warriors ran in our veins. My brother and I were not prepared for the job of being our town's defender, however. Father had passed before he could complete our training, and our uncle was older than my father was. He wasn't able to train us as well as he did when we were children. There was one final problem. I learned, moments before my father's passing, that I could no longer stay within the town I had called home for so many years. My father's dying words had given me a greater purpose.

On his deathbed, my father began to call out for me in desperation. I ran to him quickly, fearing the worst and preparing for what would be the last moments with my father. My father lay in our town's

makeshift hospital: a large white tent that stood on its own, away from the town. As I stepped into the large tent, I pushed aside the white silk sheet door and entered. When I arrived in my father's room, he demanded that everyone else leave. We were all confused. It seemed odd, but no one wished to question the request of a dying man. He looked at me as I approached, his eyes filled with concern. He spoke to me in a soft voice as wind blew through the white sheets around us.

"Son, please come close. I know that my final hours are upon me, I have something I must tell you. It is something that is for you and you alone."

I leaned towards him.

"Yes Father, I am ready." I said, lowering my voice's volume to match his.

"Son, I must confess I prayed that the day would never come that I would have to speak of this. I always feared the day that you would learn of my greatest secret, but it appears I have no choice. Part of me knows you are ready for this, but the other part doesn't want you to go. Perhaps it is the parent within me wishing to protect my child. But alas, I am out of time. I cannot protect you further. Time is of the essence right now. Son, do you remember the legend of the sacred swords?"

I was caught off guard by this question. "Of course father, you told me and my brother the story every night when we were children." I replied, my voice rising slightly. I had not heard of anyone even so much as mention that tale in a very long time.

The legend spoke of two swords: The sword of the Moon and the sword of the Sun. These swords were said to be capable of slaying any demon or corrupted being with ease, even one so great as the Demon King. These legendary blades were rumored to be the most powerful swords in existence, rivaling even the weapons of the Gods themselves. In fact, it was said that one could even kill Gods with their tremendous power. Needless to say, they were frequently sought after. However, very few people would return from their quest to find the blades and no one had ever returned with the swords in hand. No one knew the locations of the blades, or so I had thought.

My father looked into my eyes, his eyebrows furrowed. He glared at me intensely.

"It is time I told you my greatest secret." He said as he beckoned for me to come closer. I put my head beside his. "The legends are true. I know the location of the Sword of the Moon."