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By Aliya Saige

Excerpt from Chapter 25, pages 280 - 285

As the conversation among the adults turned serious, they lost track of the children's whereabouts and became absorbed in their talk.

"Celah, I need to tell you something that could be very important and, well, it's actually the real reason we're here," Deak began. "We went to see Dray last week, as we always do on Sundays, and he told us something very disturbing. We decided it was worth the trip to share it with you."

Celah saw the concern in Deak and Paula's faces. She couldn't imagine what was coming next.

Paula interjected, "Dray had a dream, Celah. It was about you and Aerwyn."

"Yes, and it was very upsetting to all of us," Deak added. "He said that in the dream you and Aerwyn were in grave danger. He didn't know what he saw exactly, but it kept changing. One moment it was one thing and the next it was something else. You kept looking for it, but once you saw what it was, it wasn't the same ever again."

Paula jumped in with a question, "Do you have any idea what that means?"

"Wait, Paula. Let me tell her all of it first," Deak continued. "At one point in the dream, this thing, whatever it was, looked like a relative, um, our grandfather I think."

Celah gasped and her eyes immediately welled up with tears as chills ran down her back.

"What is it, Celah? Does this mean something to you?" Deak moved forward to encourage Celah to speak.

The words stuck in her throat. All she could do was motion for Deak to continue telling her the dream.

"From there the dream becomes obscure. Somehow Aerwyn is in a dark place and can't find his way out. This thing has something to do with him being there." Deak was afraid to say more as he watched the horror pass over Celah's face.

Micah also saw it and stood up to end the charade. "That's quite enough. I don't appreciate you coming here and upsetting my wife like this."

Deak defended himself, "We're only delivering a message."

"I don't care what or why you're doing this. I just don't want you..."

Celah found her voice and interrupted Micah, "Honey, it's alright. What Deak is saying is true. I know the dream sounds crazy, but I know it's true because I met my grandfather who wasn't real, but I thought he was, and then he was gone."

Micah threw up his hands in frustration, "I'm only trying to protect you, dear."

"I know that, Micah. Is there anything else, Deak?" Celah wanted to hear it all.

"Well, no that's about it."

Paula jumped into the conversation again, "No, there was something else, wasn't there?" She looked searchingly at Deak. "Something about a clock or a calendar..."

"Oh, yes." Deak's mind was refreshed. "Let me see, the clock was set at 5 PM and the calendar was..." he couldn't remember the exact date.

"Wasn't it February 15?" Paula asked Deak.

"Isn't today the 15th?" Micah asked almost hesitantly.

Celah ran to look at the calendar in the kitchen. She came back with near panic in her voice. "Yes, it is!"

"Now, wait a minute," Micah tried to lessen everyone's concern. "What year was on the calendar in the dream?"

Deak thought a moment, "Dray didn't mention a year, but his concern was that we get here as soon as possible to tell you this."

Celah asked anxiously, "Where's Aerwyn? We must find him now!"

"He's probably outside with the other children." Micah tried to calm her.

All four parents immediately left the parlor and went outside to find the children. Everyone was in the yard except for Jeremiah, Kit, and Aerwyn. No one had seen them for quite a while and the adults had no idea where to look. Paula and Celah were ordered by the men to stay with the other children while they went in search of the missing children. It was 3:47 PM when the men left the house headed for Joy and Abe's place.

Not long after the men left, there was a knock at the door. Celah answered it. Tamaya, Celah's great, great-grandmother, stood at the open door. Celah was alarmed and almost fearful that this was another appearance of this unknown impostor. She forced the door closed in the old woman's face, but the figure pushed back with the strength of a person Celah's age pleading, "Wait, I know where your son is. I can help!"

The old woman communicated telepathically to Celah, telling her that she understood her concerns because of her grandfather's appearance years ago. Somehow, she dispelled Celah's doubts and pressed upon her the urgency of the moment.

Celah stopped and allowed the door to open. She didn't dare miss the opportunity to hear the woman out on the chance that her information was correct. "Speak, then." She demanded, "What do you know?"

"Aerwyn went to the cave in the cedars south of town. The other children are with him. He is in danger. You must go to him now. I will show you the way." The old woman had a sincere urgency in her voice such that Celah decided to trust her. She told Paula to stay with the children, grabbed her coat and hat, and then followed the woman into the street.

"Where are you going, Celah?" Paula called after her. "I'll send the men your way when they arrive home."

"Don't wait," Celah hollered back. "Send Adry over to get them at Joy's house. Tell them I'm going to a cave in the cedars south of town. The old woman is taking me there. Tell Micah I'm with Tamaya. He'll know." Her voice trailed off in the distance as she ran to catch up with the old woman who was already a house away.

Paula did as she was told and sent Adry to Joy's house. She told her that if they weren't there to come straight home and don't go anywhere else. Adry left immediately while Paula stayed with the other children.

Celah was amazed at the old woman's speed and began to worry that it was a trap. Still, she had to know where Aerwyn went and something told her to "trust the old woman", in spite of her doubts.

They had almost reached the cedars when Celah had to stop and catch her breath. She was getting a cramp in her left calf and begged for the old woman to stop just a second. The old woman hesitated against her better judgment insisting that every second lost increased Aerwyn's impending danger. Celah pressed on, but at a slower pace.

At the edge of the cedars, their path was blocked by the appearance of a huge black bear. He stood half again as tall as Celah and she froze at the sight of him. The old woman hesitated and then instinctively changed form into that of a young warrior with a broad sword who ran at the bear with all her might. Instantly, the bear also changed form as Celah ran to hide behind the safety of a tree where she watched with fear and astonishment.

Seeing the warrior charging toward him, the black bear sprouted gigantic wings and leapt into the form of an angry dragon that breathed huge flames onto the young warrior.

She saw the dragon's change just in time to turn her body into a huge wave of water, dousing the flame as it rushed towards her and temporarily blinding the dragon in mid-flight.

Celah watched in horror as the fight ensued. She wanted to take advantage of the distraction and continue to the cave, but her uncertainty of where it was or what she might encounter there paralyzed her.

The dragon, realizing his disadvantage in losing sight of his adversary, quickly turned into a bat. The being disburbed in the wave of water decided that in order to buy time she should become something tiny and difficult to see. At the very moment that she collected herself and changed into a damselfly, the bat swooped up behind her and made a meal of her delicate body, then disappeared high above the cedars.

Celah slumped to the ground behind the tree, trembling with overwhelming fear. "Aerwyn!" Her heart sobbed in a panic. It terrified her to think what he might be encountering. How could she dream of defending him even if she were able to find the cave? Then she heard voices behind her. It was Micah and Deak. Celah fainted.

When she awoke she found herself lying on the ground beside the tree where she had hidden. Deak was with her.

"Where's Micah?" She panicked not seeing him immediately.

"Right here," Micah said from a few feet away. He was surveying the woods looking for the source of Celah's fear. "What happened?" he asked her.

"I don't really know, but there's a cave somewhere up there. I think that's where the children have gone." Celah felt helpless and hoped the two men had a plan.

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