

Chapter 3

“Kuera Power”

“This is what I signed up for!”

Bossak and his two companions moved carefully through the forest. All the scouting that they had done in the previous days was now paying off. The three men had managed to move at a steady pace and not draw any attention from the sentries and guards posted around the village. Bossak was still angry, he had only said a few words in the past six hours. Stick figured that something went wrong as their mission was to steal five scrolls and not just the one. The information that his master was given had told him that there were four scrolls of life and one scroll of death in the safe house. Bossak had emerged with only the one scroll, the scroll of death. Bossak had only volunteered to take on the mission because of the fact that he would be able to deal a huge blow to the people who had killed his family by stealing the scrolls of life from them. The sun had risen three hours earlier and was now high in the sky baking the dew off of the trees and shrubs around them.

“Why have they not sounded an alarm yet? They should have changed the guard by now.” Stick asked.

“They will know in five minutes what I did. Then they will alert the authorities, mobilise a team and send them after us.

A few moments later the trio cleared the forest and began to make their way up into the foothills of the Vorgus Mountains. Over the next thirty minutes the terrain became steeper and rockier. Their pace slowed to a fast walk as they negotiated the passage leading into the mountain range. Bossak stopped and put his hand in the air, signalling Stick and the third companion to stop. The trio stood in silence, there was a faint noise up ahead of them, a crack of a breaking twig. The air was tense, Stick could almost taste the anticipation of a battle. *Have one of the scouts followed us? No, we spent three days planning this route. It can't be.* A moment later a goat jumped out into their path and was met with the sharp side of Bossak's sword. The blade passed through skin, bone, sinew and muscles effortlessly. The goat flopped to the ground in an ever-growing pool of blood. This was not part of the plan. They would now have to take an alternative route to evade their pursuers. Bossak quickly cleaned and sheathed his sword.

“We must go now.” He said.

With that the trio sprinted up the path and then down a slope toward a small stream that was meandering its way through the mountain. They crossed the river and kept their pace up the slope on the other side of the river.

Filled to capacity for the second day in a row, the arena buzzed with anticipation. Minister Harris and the other judges were gathered on the judging area and were preparing to make the announcement of who had made it into the Dremos ranks. Max, Gordon and Lili once again stood in the centre of the arena with their fellow classmates.

“So who do you think got in?” Gordon asked directing his question to anybody who would listen.

“Well you definitely did. With that performance yesterday they will definitely choose you.”

Gordon turned around to see Mix standing next to him.

“Yeah it was good but if I had carried on that attack for just one more minute I would have probably killed myself.” Gordon replied.

“It was an amazing use of your powers Gordon. Very clever thinking.”

“Thanks Mix. Hey Mix have you heard anything about your father? Is he still missing?” Gordon asked.

“It has been so long Gordon, but my mom still thinks that he is alive somewhere and will come home. I don't know what to think. If he was alive though he would have come back a long time ago.”

“The Dremos are still looking for though aren’t they?”

“Well they are looking for him but not actively like they were a few years ago. Oh I think that my uncle is going to start things now.”

“Great” Gordon whispered. The excitement in his voice was unmistakeable.

Minister Harris stepped up to the podium, Max could see that the man was tired and today he was showing his age. His eyes had large dark patches underneath them and his face in general looked drawn.

“I will now announce the students who have passed yesterdays exam and what teams they will be in. Team one. Doske will lead this team. Second in command will be Max. Lili and Gordon will fill the last two positions.”

The assembled crowd went nuts, cheering erupted from the stands all around the arena.

“The second team will be a bit different from the others it will consist of five members. The team will be lead by Baska. Second in command will be Nola. Filling up the team will be Ras, Ross and Q. Team three will be lead by Zuki, second in command will be Toby and the rest of the team will consist of Del and Mix. Last and not least will be team four. Slam will lead team four; second in command will be Nigel. Phatz and P-dawg will occupy the last two places in this team. An audible moan erupted from Nigel’s mouth, which he quickly stifled when Phatz and P-dawg looked over at him with huge smiles on their faces. Minister Harris then dismissed the crowd and informed the now new members of the Dremos to report to their respective captains and then they could go home. They would be assigned their first missions in the morning.

Grandpa Mo and his two grandsons arrived back home at ten minutes to nine just in time for the breakfast meal that Mrs Block had set out for them. Had they been just ten minutes later she would not have allowed them to eat as she thought that breakfast is a meal to be eaten before nine O clock. As they approached the house they noticed a man sitting at the table talking to Mrs Block. The man was dressed in a white robe and wore a silver chain around his neck with a ruby the size of a child’s fist connected by a five-fingered clasp on it. On five of his fingers were silver rings with various different gems inset into them. The man stood up and greeted the three Tarmo men as they arrived at the table.

“It has been a long time has it not?” Tiko addressed Grandpa Mo.

“It has indeed.” Now before we start I have not had a smoke on my hookah pipe today. Do you still smoke Tiko?”

“Yes I do but not as much as we did when we were in the Dremos.”

An aid walked up with the pipe and a freshly lit coal. Grandpa Mo puffed on the pipe and exhaled a thick plume of smoke. The aroma of cinnamon and honey filled the air. Tiko also took a pull from the second pipe attached to the hookah, it bubbled and hissed as the smoke was created a filtered through the water.

“So my friend. Are the roomers about Gordon here true? Has he really unlocked the Kuera abilities?”

“It looks that way. But both of my grandson’s here have the same issue that I had. In order to make their attacks effective they use up all their energy and all but kill themselves in the process.” The two old men took turns puffing on the pipe while they all ate lunch. Once the meal was finished Tiko looked over at Max and Gordon.

“Gordon come here please.” Gordon got up from his seat and walked around the table to Tiko.

“Yes sir?” Gordon asked

“Will you give me permission to observe your energy system for a few moments.”

Gordon looked at Grandpa Mo who nodded at him. He then looked at Mrs Block who also nodded at the young boy signalling that he should agree. Gordon moved closer to the old man. Tiko placed his right hand on Gordon’s shoulder and his right hand on the boys head. Tiko focussed on finding Gordon’s energy system. Gordon could feel Tiko’s conscious encompass his own. The power radiating from the old man was enormous.

“Gordon, please mould one of your mini whirlwinds in your hand. Make sure to only use wind and energy.”

Gordon focussed on drawing some energy and fusing some wind into it and formed a small whirlwind that hovered above his left hand.

“Now Gordon please add some fire to it.”

Once again the young boy focussed on his whirlwind and fused some fire into the whirlwind.

Inside his mind Gordon could feel the old man scrutinising his every move. After a few seconds Gordon felt that Tiko had withdrawn his mind. Gordon extinguished the flames and let the whirlwind dissipate.

“Very good.” The old man said to Gordon. “I have not seen anything like this in my whole life, The last known Kuera died long before my time and hence I have never observed the power in use.”

Tiko now reached into his pocket and retrieved a small purple gem and a small ball of silver.

“Now Gordon what I am going to do for you is make you an energy gem. You will be able to store a limited amount of energy in this gem. Once you have stored energy in it you will be able to draw on the energy in the stone to form your attacks instead of using the energy inside your core.” This information seemed to peak Max’s interest, Grandpa Mo noticed that Max had sat forward.

“Max? What’s wrong?” Grandpa Mo asked.

“Could I leave and come back? I just need to run home and check something. I’m guessing that the process of training Gordon to use that stone will take some time. Right?”

“Yes it will take about half an hour for me to make the stone and for Gordon to learn the technique.” Tiko said as he took out a small silver clasp. “Let the boy go, I’m sure that something interesting will come of this.”

With that Max got up and ran out of the yard and towards the path that led to his house. Gordon

looked at what the old man was doing with the three items that he had pulled out of his pocket.

“Now Gordon you need to decide how you want the stone to be housed. I personally like rings and amulets. You need to decide for your self though.” Tiko said with a smile on his face as he saw Gordon’s reaction.

“Uhm I don’t think that a ring would suit me and I already have a necklace.”

“What is that necklace made of Gordon?” Tiko asked.

“Silver” Gordon replied.

“Perfect, pass it here.” The old man said. Gordon took off the necklace that consisted of a chain and a Zippo lighter that Gordon’s father had given him when he first showed his skill with fire. The old man took the chain and lighter from the boy and looked it over.

“Yes this will do perfectly. You see Gordon there are only three materials that can conduct energy. Gold, Silver and Titanium are those metals. Gold doesn’t work very well but silver and titanium are marvellous, however silver is much easier to work with and mould it into what you want. Now lets see what I can do with this one.” The old man focussed his special form of energy. Floating over to where the lighter had been placed face down, the old man positioned the little purple gem onto it. Picking up the small ball of silver Tiko focused more energy and poured it into the silver, the silver melted and also floated over to the lighter. Tiko raised the gem into the air with energy and allowed the melted silver to settle onto the lighter and then placed the gem into the pool of silver. The three items fused into one. Gordon and the others watched on in silence as the old man picked up the lighter and looked it over.

“Yes this will do perfectly but there is one thing missing.” He looked over at Gordon. “What is your favourite animal Gordon?”

“Well I do like Phoenix’ and dragons. Why do you ask?”

“I just want to give you a small gift and a reminder of what you have here.” With that said the Tiko cupped his hands around the lighter and a small light erupted within them. When he opened them everybody could see that there was a Dragon etched into the metal on the front of the

lighter. “Right now you have to learn how to use this energy that you store in this gem. I however will not be teaching you how to do that; I am way too old to be dedicating that amount of time to you. Please understand that no offence is meant.”

“None taken sir.” Gordon replied, still awed by the amount of power that the old man had at his disposal.

When Max reached his house, Molly his housekeeper got the fright of her life as Max burst through the back door, then through the kitchen and ran up the stairs to the upper level of the house. Max bolted down the passage that led to his room. He opened the door with a blast of energy, completely ignoring the door handle. He ran through the door into his bedroom and slid to a stop in front of his wardrobe. He opened the double doors and looked down at a large oak chest. It was old and worn, it looked as if it had seen the world, fought it and now was telling the story. Max opened the lid and looked inside. The familiar fragrance embraced him as it had always done when he opened the box, this time he noticed that it was less pungent than normal. The sight was familiar; he had seen it many times. Inside the chest were his mother and father’s belongings, after they had died Molly had packed up all of their favourite positions and put them into this chest and given it to him. Max had found his father’s diary and many other useful things in the chest over the past few years. This time however Max was looking for something specific. He lifted boxes and moved books and papers until he found what he was looking for. Near the bottom of the chest stood a small square box made of wood. There was nothing fancy about it, it looked like a box you would keep small trinkets in. Max picked it up and made his way down stairs and back out the kitchen door. Molly was now outside hanging clean, wet clothes onto the line outside. She looked over at Max and flashed him a huge toothy grin.

“Is everything alright Max? You seemed to be in a rush.”

“Yeah I’m ok Molly. I just had to get something out of the chest. I think that it is very important. Oh and Molly.”

“Yes dear”

“I’ll be having supper at my Grandfather’s house tonight, please don’t wait up for me I might not come home at all tonight, We are working on a new technique and I have a feeling that it will become an all night thing.”

With that Max bolted from the kitchen doorway, out of the yard and back towards his grandfather’s estate.

Gordon stood in front of Mrs Block. He could sense that there was an energy source near him that was not his own. It was radiating from the gem that Tiko had mounted onto the back of his lighter. The lighter that normally felt cold against his skin now had a warm sensation to it. He sent his mind out towards the energy. Once he found it he began to draw on it and let it flow and mix with his own energy. Gordon then focussed on creating a ball of fire. The fireball grew larger and larger as he channelled more of the stone’s energy into it. The boy then felt his control on the gem’s energy slip. The blast sent Gordon flying ten metres across the grass in his Grandpa’s back yard. Grandpa Mo shielded himself, Tiko and Mrs Block from the assault.

“I guess that he will need some more training.” Mrs block sighed.

“Well I am very impressed that he has even managed to channel the gem’s energy.” Tiko commented. “It is not an easy task. If I remember correctly Mo here set my house on fire and you my dear Mrs Bock added a whole extra leg onto some poor chicken when I taught you two how to use energy gems.”

The three old fiends burst into laughter. Max rounded the corner of the house and saw the three older folk laughing and Gordon on the other side of the yard patting out a small fire on his arm. Max rejoined the group at the table, Gordon also returned to the table after extinguishing himself.

“So Max did you bring what I think you brought?” Asked Tiko.

“I brought this.” Max said and placed the box on the table in front of the others.

“Ahh yes, this is a true treasure. Most of you should remember him, or at least have seen him before. But just in case you have forgotten, let me introduce to you him. Everybody this is Brosak.” The old man opened the box and removed a titanium wristband that had six black gems mounted onto it in a straight line.

“It’s just a bracelet.” Gordon said, irritated with himself for holding his breath with anticipation when the old man revealed it.

“Oh no it is not just a bracelet my boy.” Tiko said. “This is Brosak, well it is Brosak’s soul. Or at least that is what we have been told for the last few hundred years or so. This wrist guard was made by me for your father, it took me over five years to finish it. The six gems that are set in it are from the six continents. I collected three of them and your father collected the other three. Brosak, the man, spent the last few years of his life pouring every last ounce of his energy and personality into these six stones. Before he died he ordered his assistant to take the six gems and hide them as best as he knew how. The apprentice spent the rest of his life protecting the locations of the gems. This information was passed down from master to apprentice for over 200 years. When I saw that the Great War was going to break out I decided that we would need Brosak’s power and knowledge to win the war. I approached your father Max and told him about the myth of Brosak’s six stones. The two of us set out on a quest to retrieve the stones before the war broke out. Unfortunately I was only able to finish making the wrist guard in the fifth year of the war. Once it was finished though I could not use it, in fact after testing every single fighter in the Dremos no body could use it. Eventually we discovered that your father was the only person who Brosak would lend his power to. As you already know, it was your father who ended the war. What you don’t know is that it was only with the help of Brosak that it was achieved.”

Grandpa Mo continued to draw in the flavoured smoke from his hookah pipe.

“So the question is this. Grandpa Mo said in a cloud of exhaled smoke. “Can Max also use Brosak’s power?”

The strap that held the scroll to Stick’s shoulder bit in harder and deeper. For the fifth time in the last hour Stick changed its position. The pace that they were walking at was slower than they had planned. The terrain had become slippery due to a flash rain shower that had hit them three hours before. The shower also seemed to be working against them by wetting everything in front of them, by some mysterious way knowing exactly where their path would lead them. The distance between Bossak and himself had increased to about one hundred meters.

I need to get a move on. He is already in a bad mood I don’t need him taking his frustrations out on me.

Stick increased his pace and soon caught up the distance between them.

“Have we got any food left?” Bossak asked. Stick could still hear the annoyance in his voice.

“Yes we have some dried meat and three crusts of bread.”

“Is that it?”

“Yes that’s it. But when we stop tonight I will collect some berries and roots to add to my pack”

Not that it’s not heavy enough!

“That will have to do then won’t it? We will stop here and eat.”

The three men stopped and finally after eight solid hours of hiking Stick had a chance to rest and take the load off his shoulders. Stick took out the small bag containing the food and set it out. The three men ate quickly and then resumed their journey.

The process of learning how to use the energy gems power was harder than Gordon had thought it would be. Mrs Block had shown him how to extend his consciousness out to feel the energy that was inside the stone. That was the easy part, what came after was now learning to first store energy inside the gem. This process involved joining his energy system to the energy system in the gem, then directing the flow of energy away from his body and into the gem. After many failed attempts and after burning both hairs off of his chest Gordon finally got it right. Mrs Block

then showed him how to let the gems energy flow into his energy system, a feeling that Gordon was now accustomed to with the training and healing that Mrs Bock had given him. The first few attempts to control the flow of energy were a disaster he found that he had to focus on the flow as well as the amount of energy that he wanted to use from the gem as well as focus on the attack or defence skill that he was using at the time. Focussing on anything for more than a few minutes was hard for Gordon on a good day but not to have to focus on four or five different processes was a new predicament. He had finally reached the point where he could control the flow of power and his technique for over one minute. The gem that Tiko mounted on Gordon's lighter had a lot of energy stored inside it already, however Gordon could not keep practising all day or he would run the risk of using all the energy without facing a proper enemy. All this had led to the scene that Max found when he had returned from his house with the wrist guard now known to him as Brosak. Max on the other hand seemed to grasp the process very quickly. After trying to harness Brosak's power and failing Tiko made a silver wrist guard for the boy and placed two gems in it. Just as Mrs Block had finished making sure that the two boys had the process of harnessing their gems energy committed to memory a Dremos messenger ran into the garden sliding to a stop next to Grandpa Mo. He handed him a piece of paper, bowed and ran back the way he had just come. Grandpa Mo read the note and his face turned into a scowl.

"Max, Gordon, come here my boys, your team has its first mission."

Max and Gordon trotted over to their grandfather. Max taking one last chance to take a snack off of the table found Mrs Block holding a small bundle of food for the boys, which she put into Max's Rug sack. The old man stood up and grabbed both boys by the shoulders and then disappeared from right in front of Mrs Block.

"LILI!" Max shouted.

"DAMN IT MAX!!! I told you not to do that!" Said Lili landing back on her feet. "Oh! Hi Grandpa Mo, Gordon. What's going on?"

"Uhm." Max said, trying to stifle his laughter. "Say good bye to your mom, we have our first mission!"

Lili ran inside her house to pack a bag and say good-bye to her mother. Their house was a small two bed roomed house, Lili's family was not as rich as Max's but didn't seem to mind that fact. They supported the Dremos with everything they had including themselves. Lili moved through the carpeted lounge, into the passage and then opened the second door on the left side of the passage and stepped into her bedroom. Surprisingly it was not painted in pretty pink and purple colours as you would expect from a sixteen year old girl, but instead was painted brown and green and had numerous flower pots placed all over the room. She opened her brown cupboard and grabbed a shoulder bag with a change of clothes in it. Lili had packed it specially for this occasion, it held a change of clothes, a hairbrush, some soap, a face cloth and five brown paper packets marked with a series of dots on the front of each one.

Lili, along with the others accepted into the Dremos, had discarded their academy uniforms and now wore clothing of their choice. Lili wore long brown pants with three pockets on each leg. She also wore a black tight top and a brown jacket over it. As she exited the house Lili noted that Gordon and Max had also chosen different outfits from when they were in the academy. Gordon wore black pants, a red shirt and jacket and a black rug sack on his back. Max on the other hand chose to wear the standard Dremos uniform, which consisted of navy blue pants and shirt; the only addition was the black pouch and two silver looking wrist guards that she had never seen before. Max also wore a rug sack on his back, this one compared to Gordon's was tatty and repairs had been made in many places. The four of them left the very plant populated yard and made their way down the road to the Dremos Headquarters. The head quarters was a large red brick multi story building, inside the walls were plastered flat and were painted in grey and blue tones. In the entrance were the pictures of all the past Dremos leaders all framed in Gold. Up

above them was Max's dad, Grandpa Mo and Minister Harris. When they arrived the clock in the entrance hall struck eleven O clock with eleven loud gongs. An official aid was waiting for them and ushered them up two large flights of stairs and then down a corridor and then stopped in front of a massive double door. The experience always amused Grandpa Mo as for years he had occupied this very same office as the then leader of the Dremos. A smile crept across his face as he heard Minister Harris's voice shout the customary 'Enter'. Filing through the door the four of them saw that Doske was already there and awaiting their arrival.

"We have a situation that I think your team could handle for us. While we were at the stadium last night somebody robbed us of a treasured artefact. It is a scroll of death!" Max noticed that his Grandfather stiffened at the sound of this news.

"As your Grandfather knows we have been the keeper of this particular scroll among others since the end of the Great War. We had a feeling that the scrolls were in danger and we separated all the scrolls into different hiding places. Unfortunately this one was stolen right from under our noses. Your mission is to track down the thief and return it safely to a new safe house that has been set up for it. Any questions?"

Grandpa Mo stepped forward and looked with worried eyes at his friend.

"Is this really a mission for these youngsters? Should it not be given to a higher level team?"

"This was a highly organised theft it could not have been done by more than two people. Sneaking a whole team in and then out of our village is impossible for a group that size it could only be done by one or maybe two people at maximum. I feel that even if worst comes to worst there will be four of them and two opponents." Minister Harris replied.

"I suppose that you are right my friend. When do they leave?"

"Right now! We sent out scouts to find their trail, it was leading up into the Vorgus mountains when they lost it due to rain fall. I believe that this was a direct attack sanctioned by Klato himself, he was obviously trying to get the other scrolls in our possession and use them against us. Please remember that you are not to open the scroll under any circumstances as it could kill you! Team Doske! Dismissed!"

The four walked out of the office and down the stairs and then out of the building. Gordon turned and looked at Max and then Lili.

"This is what I signed on for!"