

P R O L O G U E

The Order. Yes, that was what they were called. An ancient group of warriors and mages, of myths and legends. Not much is remembered of The Order. Some even claim it to be a mere legend. A lie. Others believe the tale with all their heart.

No one person can say if the story I'm about to tell you is true or false. You will have to decide for yourself.

The stories tell of an order as old as time itself. This order of men and women were charged with protecting the multiverse and all the dimensions within it. And for a time, they were victorious in their mission. For a time.

Then, that all changed.

Wiccan was her name. The Queen of Darkness. She lay waste to all that opposed her. It was in the land of Atrenna where she was defeated, before she could find the Gateway, and where The Order was eradicated. Or so the stories go.

But in truth, The Order never was truly wiped from the face of the universe. Instead, they scattered. Each member going their own path. Traveling the multiverse to places long forgotten.

But now, the darkness draws near once again, and Atrenna will need saviours.

Our story begins on Earth, the same Earth you and I inhabit. In a small town in the middle of nowhere. With a boy named Jack Silverblade. On a morning like any other.

Yet Jack has no idea what the day has in store for him...

JACK

3 am, some consider this an ungodly time to rise, but not Jack. Jack loved to wake at these hours, when the moon was full, and the stars shone like diamonds in the sky. The crickets were music to his ears. It was a time when Jack could be alone and think. A time when he could get away from the rest of humanity, who always seemed to be rushing off to one place or the next.

Jack yawned and got out of bed, the cold biting into his skin. Today was a normal Thursday, much like any other. Which meant school. Jack could not say when he had begun to dislike school nor why. All he knew is that he did. He didn't have many friends, but that did not concern him. He mostly enjoyed his own company more than that of others.

After eating a breakfast that consisted of a cup of coffee and leftovers from the previous night, he went and got dressed. It was around 5am when he returned to the kitchen.

Jack wasn't sure what made him decide to walk to school that morning, all he knew was that he did. He left a note on the kitchen table explaining where he was to his mother and grabbed his phone. He slung his backpack over his shoulder and exited the house.

It was very misty that morning and the moon still hung high above him in the sky. Jack put his earphones on and began to make his way

down the path through the garden. He was halfway down the path when, suddenly, he stopped. *What was that?* He had heard a noise.

Jack shook his head. Perhaps he had imagined it. He listened. All he could hear were birds chirping and cars driving in the distance.

Then, he heard it again. Now he was certain he had not imagined it. It was a growling sound. Coming from the bushes. Jack carefully moved to where the growl was coming from, not knowing what to expect. He gazed into the shrubbery.

At first, he saw nothing, but then he realised that two eyes, red as rubies, were watching him. Jack could not move. The eyes stared at him, then, they were gone. Just like that, all was back to normal. Jack shook his head. Perhaps he was still dreaming. He turned away from the shrubbery and continued down the path.

It was 6:30am when he arrived at school. A good hour before class began. Jack enjoyed being the first at school. Earlier than anyone else. He sat on a bench outside, drowning his thoughts in music. Blocking out the world.

Before he knew it, it was 7:30am and the bell rang, signalling that school had begun. He sighed as he entered the building.

It was around 2pm when Jack found himself walking back home, tired from the day. Every day was like this. Get up. Go to school. Go home. Sleep. Rinse and repeat. Almost every day of his life, for as long as Jack could remember.

When Jack got home, his mother, as usual, was not there. She worked until late in the evening and rarely got home before 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening. He made himself a sandwich for lunch and decided to go for a walk. To where, he couldn't say.

It wasn't long before Jack found himself strolling through the park. Birds chirping all around him in the sunlight. He wasn't paying much attention to his surroundings when a voice called out to him, "Good day, Jack Silverblade."

Jack jerked his head up, recognising the voice. He turned around to see an old man staring at him with a smile on his face.

Braen Blackseed.

Husband of Caroline Blackseed and the most mysterious man in all of the world. Braen smiled at Jack with big, green eyes. He wore a black trench coat and a hat on his head. He had a beard as white as snow and walked with a cane.

“Come,” he said. “Sit with me.”

Jack did as he was asked.

“Might I ask what you are doing here?” Braen enquired.

“I’m... not sure,” Jack admitted. He wasn’t sure of a great many things.

Braen nodded. “Does your mother know you’re here?” he asked.

Jack simply shook his head in response.

Braen nodded again. He looked down at Jack. It felt to Jack as if Braen was inspecting him for flaws. Looking at his buttoned-up shirt for wrinkles; his trousers for tears.

“Well, we can’t let your mother worry, now can we?” Braen asked. “But I sense you’re not ready to go home yet either. Tell me, is that true?”

Jack nodded, ashamed of himself.

Braen nodded some more. “Very well,” he said. “Why don’t you come over to my house? There, we can talk. How does that sound?”

Jack hesitated. His mother had always told him not to go with strangers. Then again, Braen was no stranger. After all his wife, a Mrs Caroline Blackseed, was Jack’s art teacher.

Jack bobbed his head. “That sounds good,” he said.

Braen nodded and stood up from the bench. He turned to look at Jack. “Let’s go,” he said with a smile.

Without another word, the two were off to Mr Blackseed’s home...