

## Rise of a Warrior

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On a cold dreary day, mother sent my sister, Sanya, and I into the village to retrieve supplies. The streets were crowded and the shops busy. Trade didn't come easy to us, for we were just children. We made our way to Jarvin's shop. Jarvin was one of the only people that would trade with us. Sanya bargained with him and I wondered off. "Gabel, Don't go too far." Sanya shouted at me. I ignored her words and continued on.

The village streets were always moving, like the sea moved in a violent storm. And as if by magic, the crowded streets opened up and path appeared in the distance. My curiosity got the best of me; I pushed my way through the crowd. "Royalty?" I thought. I had never seen the Queen and her Guard I had only heard stories, and I was very anxious to see them. I could almost see what the commotion was about, when I tripped and stumbled into the clearing. I returned to my feet, and looked up only to see four strangers towering over me. My excitement turned instantly to fear. They wore Blackened Armor underneath dark cloaks. Their hoods covered their faces. I could see what looked to be cold blackened eyes peering back at me. Just the sight of them sent shivers down my spine. Suddenly, something grabbed me from behind. "Gabe!" I jumped and quickly spun around. My heart pounding in fear. To my relief, it was Sanya.

"Can we go home?" I whispered to her slightly shaking. I glanced back, but the path was swallowed by the commotion of moving people. The void had been filled and the strangers were gone. We made our way to the gates, and returned home.

After dinner, we listened to war stories from our Father, as we had many nights prior. "Father, do you think I will ever become a strong warrior like you?"

"My son, you will, if only you practice and believe. Then there will come a time for you. Now off to bed, you both have a long day of training that awaits you." He had started training me weeks ago in the arts of weaponry, and showed me how to track and hunt, just as he taught Sanya some years before. He wanted us to be able to take care of ourselves.

That night I could barely sleep, as I drifted off I had nightmares of the dark figures from the village. I awoke through the nightmares having heard a noise. As I made my way to where the sound came from, I heard my mother cry out for help as a man in a dark cloak was standing over her. Panicked, I ran to my sister's room, she motioned for me to get under the bed. I could hear my father trying to fend off the intruder then... silence. Sanya readied her dagger. The door kicked open but it wasn't father. She fought with the assailant, but he was too strong. I was terrified and paralyzed I watched as he took her. As quickly as they came they were gone and I was left alone

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Two and half years have passed since the death of my parents. Winter is approaching; and my food and supplies were running thin. I was alone and could no longer stay on the farm, nor go into the village for fear "they" might be there waiting for me. With my father's sword in hand, and my mother's amulet close to my heart, I left in search of food. I carried only what I needed. I walked for days and slept where I could find shelter in a cave or under an evergreen. I was tired, cold, and hungry. I could remember everything that my father taught me, but I never had the

chance to complete my training. I nearly froze one night as I laid down to rest.

---I could see her in the woods reaching out for me, "Sanya? Is that you? Where are you going?" Every step I took she got further away. I could not get to her before she vanished into the darkness. I could only hear a whisper in the wind "Gabe..." I blacked out.---

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My eyes slightly opened as shadows past through the moon lit forest, something was coming. I gripped my father's sword tight and didn't move. I feared "They" had found me. I could hear voices getting closer. I was frightened. But yet couldn't help by staying alert and continued to drift in and out of conciseness. As the shadowed figures drew near I heard every word.

"What's that? There, under that tree, it's a boy. What should we do?" Cautiously they moved closer.

"He is not one of us."

"Wait... that sword it's... it belonged to Nestaron (Nehs-TAR-on) this must be his son."

"Nestaron Thalion (Thahl-ee-on) lost his way after the war. He turned his back on his own blood, he is not welcome!"

"But he's just a child. We cannot just leave him..." Voices faded as I fell into a deep sleep.

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When I came to, I found myself under warm blankets in a small hut, still weak and disoriented I could barely make out the figure watching over me and a gentle voice saying "sleep now, you need rest" my eye lids got heavier and the same dream continued in my head.

---Back on the farm, sounds of struggling, mother screams, father falls, "darkness" takes her. Cannot move, Under a spell. Heart races. Everything dark. Free now able to move. Light peering through. Trees all around. A whisper. Cannot make it out. Move closer. Look to the crescent moon. A shadow. More whispers. Louder than before. She is there. Cannot get to her (Whisper) "Gabe..." louder "Gabe..." Dark figure appears. No face. Sounds of distant cry "Help!" ---