

## CHAPTER 6: THE SECRET OF THE MAGI

With just a few days left of term, it took a lot of concentration for Elijah to remain focused. The minute he read Roddick's note, Elijah decided he was going to meet, but the suspense was almost killing him. Elijah read the note a hundred times, it seemed, wondering what exactly Roddick meant by teaching him much more than he could imagine. Was he going to tutor him? If so, why meet at midnight? Why not just wait until he returned? When the questions started buzzing like this, Elijah had to remind himself to slow down and focus. Just meet, he thought. Roddick will answer the questions then. Whatever the Magi were and whatever Master Roddick was going to teach him would have to wait.

One evening, two days before the end of term, Elijah was feeling particularly lonely and missed his family. He was alone in his room with not much to do. He had finished his homework, his chores were done early, and for the first time in many days, Elijah had free time. He decided to finally open up one of Kyria's diaries and read. He had been carrying her diaries for a while but never read a single entry. It was too painful to read before, but he felt a particular draw to reading them now. He decided to start reading the unlocked diary first. He picked it up and opened it. On the inside of the cover he found an inscription. It read:

*"To my little cricket:  
I hope this is something you can use. Keep it safe.*

*-Dad"*

Elijah flipped to the first page.

*"Dear Diary –*

*I hope that is the only time I call you "Diary". I find it cliché. In fact, I don't know why I call you anything at all. You're a book. You have no feelings.*

*Well, I hope to find this book useful. One day I may read back on this and think how stupid this all sounds. Or maybe one day I can share this with my daughters and it will help them sort out their thoughts too."*

—Kyria

Reading the diary made Elijah upset at how things turned out. His sister would have no more thoughts to put down. There would be no daughters of hers to guide. It was unfair! He considered putting the diary down and reading it some other time, but each time he told himself he was going to stop, he turned another page and read another entry. He kept going and going until he realized he was almost finished. Surprisingly, reading the diary entries made him feel comforted. Most of the entries were silly girl stuff, he thought, but some were very deep. He never knew how much Kyria thought about things.

One entry talked about a fight she had with Elijah. According to the diary, he told her that she only cared about herself. At the time, he was just throwing out an insult in the heat of a fight. Reading the entry, however, Elijah realized how much his insult hurt her. Kyria wrote an entire page on how she hoped she didn't just care about herself. She even spent time talking about how to improve and how she could show Elijah that she cared about him. If it was possible, Elijah felt like he loved his sister even more.

The end of the diary, however, made him sit up as he read.

*“January 12*

*This will be my last entry in this diary. I found something out today. Something I can't write about.*

*I'm not sure what to think now. I'm sad Elijah doesn't know. I don't know how I'm going to keep it a secret from him for so long. I hope when he finds out, he will forgive me.*

*-Kyria”*

Elijah was about to tear open the locked diary to find out what it was Kyria knew when Samuel walked through the door. It was obvious he had been crying. He walked straight to his desk, pulled out a textbook, and began to read. Elijah noticed him gingerly rubbing the top of his hands.

“You okay?” asked Elijah. Samuel didn't answer. He continued reading his book. Elijah walked over and patted Samuel on the shoulder, but he shrugged it off and buried his face in his arms. Elijah felt defeated and decided to go to bed. He rolled over under his sheets and said, “If you want to talk, just wake me up. Goodnight.”

Out of his folded arms, Samuel made a muffled noise that sounded to Elijah like a faint “Goodnight.”

That night, Elijah dreamt of his meeting with Master Roddick. In the dream, Roddick taught him everything he needed to know in just minutes, and Elijah was ready to leave Saint Phillip’s Academy. They also snuck into the main hall and stole the Thorn Stick from Hawthorne and used it on him, and Corgan, and the pale-faced man with long, black hair. Afterwards, all three of them—Hawthorne, Corgan, and the pale man—put their heads down in their arms and cried.

Then, continued the dream, Elijah found a key to Kyria’s locked diary and opened it, but he couldn’t read a word because Roddick’s water had spilled all over them, leaving the ink smeared. Elijah woke up furious at Master Roddick.

The last day of term was filled with exams. Tests always terrified Elijah, but before he knew it, he was handing in his last test and returning to his room for the winter holidays. There seemed to be a collective exhale from all the students when exams were completed, but Elijah didn’t relax. Tonight he was going to meet with Roddick. Since receiving the note, Elijah carried it around with him at all times, reading it at least two or three times a day.

In case there was an inspection that evening, he made sure the bathrooms sparkled. He even cleaned them twice in the afternoon. One student actually slipped and fell from the huge amount of cleaning solution Elijah used on the second scrubbing. He was determined that nothing would stop him from being able to meet with Roddick.

Lights were promptly out at 10:00 p.m. and as soon as Samuel was asleep, the countdown began. Elijah pretended to sleep until fifteen minutes to midnight, when he slowly got out of bed. He wore his clothes to bed hoping Samuel wouldn’t notice. He grabbed his belongings and quietly shut the door behind him.

Sneaking down the stairs was the hardest part of his escape. Each stair groaned loudly as he stepped, and the slower he went, the louder it seemed to get. A monitor usually paced the halls at night, so Elijah tried to keep as quiet as possible. He finally reached the bottom of the stairs and looked around. Thankfully, no one stood in the entryway, so he carefully opened the big wooden doors and snuck out of the hall.

Elijah darted down the path toward the enormous fountain. He was thankful that the low clouds covered the moon, making it almost pitch black as he approached the fountain. He hid next to a tree and waited for Roddick.

Elijah remembered back not so long ago to another time he waited for someone in the dark. He remembered hiding next to a tree in a small park, waiting for Uncle Stan who never came. Elijah wondered if this wait would be like the last. Would he wait here all night for Roddick, only to have the night turn to morning?

His wondering didn't last long. Almost exactly at midnight, Roddick appeared through the trees on the other side of the fountain. Elijah glanced around, and when he felt like it was safe, he walked out and met Roddick by the fountain.

"I'm glad you decided to come. Are you ready to hear what I have to say?"

"I've been ready for weeks," Elijah said, itching to hear the secret.

"Now, I warn you, the things I am going to tell you will be hard to believe and even harder to understand." Roddick looked at Elijah very seriously as if he was trying to read Elijah's commitment.

"I'm not sure I know what you're talking about," Elijah said apprehensively.

"And you won't for quite a while," Roddick explained. "I will tell you what you need to know for now, and as you are ready to learn more, I will explain more. It will be hard to take in all at once, especially in your case. So, you're just going to have to trust me. Can you do that?"

Elijah nodded.

"First of all," Roddick began, "we will have to leave Saint Phillip's Academy."

"Okay," Elijah said. "For tonight?"

"Forever," said Roddick very seriously. "And we will have to do it now. There are too many enemies of yours here. I'll explain as we go. C'mon!"

Roddick swiftly walked away from the fountain when both he and Elijah heard a startling noise behind them. Roddick ducked down and commanded Elijah to do the same.

Across the way, they heard a small, pleading voice crying for help. Both Elijah and Roddick crept around the fountain to see from a better angle. Directly adjacent to Elijah's hall, about a hundred yards away, Elijah saw the long, black hair of the pale-faced man who had used the Thorn Stick on him. The pale-faced man was holding a short whip with not one end, but about six or seven, aggressively swinging at a small boy. It was Samuel.

"What are you doing out of your room?" the pale-faced man growled as he swung at Samuel. Samuel managed to dodge most of the whiptails. "TELL ME!!" screamed the man as he swung again. This time, the nasty whip caught Samuel, bringing him to his knees.

“Please!” Samuel pleaded. The pale-faced man made a horrible, mangled-looking grin as he stood over Samuel.

“Nice words won’t save you now,” said the man victoriously. Elijah hadn’t noticed that Master Roddick had completely stood up at this point.

“Back up, Elijah,” Roddick commanded calmly. Elijah did what he was told and witnessed the most incredible sight of his life. To his utter amazement, Roddick raised his arms slowly over his head and closed his eyes as if he was in deep meditation. As he did, the water from the fountain began to spill out and gather above Roddick in a massive tower, growing higher and higher. Elijah watched in awe. Just as the pale-faced man was about to whip Samuel again, Roddick made a violent punch with his right palm and all the water above him shot furiously toward the pale-faced man. In an instant, the force of the water hit him so hard that his whip was ripped from his hand, and he was propelled through the closed wooden doors of Elijah’s hall. The water slammed the pale-faced man clear to the back of the building.

Samuel immediately got up and ran toward Master Roddick and Elijah. Elijah glanced at Roddick, who was more furious-looking than he had ever seen him, but he somehow looked peaceful at the same time.

“Are you okay?” asked Roddick out of breath. Samuel nodded but didn’t speak. “Let’s go. Both of you!” Roddick picked up a lit torch from behind a tree, gathered a pack of belongings, and he was suddenly far ahead. Running to catch up, Elijah looked back at the wreckage of the hall. The commotion had obviously awakened everyone and the pale-faced man, though dizzy and confused, was gingerly getting to his feet. Elijah knew that was probably the last time he would see the school.

It took a while for Elijah to register what he had just witnessed. It was terrifying and amazing at the same time. Roddick would look back from time to time to see if Elijah and Samuel were still keeping up as they twisted and turned through the Canadian forest. The trees were thick and the snow made travel difficult, but if Roddick didn’t know where he was going, he didn’t show it. Even through the twists and turns, he never slowed his pace.

After what seemed like miles of running, Roddick finally slowed down. The trees began to thin out ahead and a large snow-covered meadow came into view. On the other side of the meadow was a small cave that looked like a big boulder with a hole cut out of it. The trio headed that way, keeping close to the tree line. As their pace slowed to a walk, Elijah got the creeps. It was deathly silent. The only audible sound was the crunching of snow under their feet. The only light they saw

was what illuminated from Roddick's torch. A few times, when he was last in line and looked back into the pitch blackness of the forest, Elijah's imagination got the better of him. All kinds of monsters and creatures materialized in Elijah's head, which encouraged him to speed up.

Master Roddick was indeed heading for the cave. He gave the torch to Samuel and ordered the boys inside while he looked around. The cave wasn't deep, but they could not see the back of it from the opening. As Elijah and Samuel waited for Roddick to return, it began to snow outside. The wind picked up and made eerie whistling noises as the gusts passed through the mouth of the cave. Even though he had done it many times already, Samuel continued to check behind them to make sure they were alone.

The lining of the cave was wet-looking, and when Elijah touched it, it felt slimy. The ground, however, was dry and covered with dead pine needles. Roddick suddenly appeared at the mouth of the cave, threw in a bundle of wood, and quickly returned to the snowy wilderness.

Elijah decided there wasn't any use just sitting there, so he walked over to the wood and picked it up. Near the mouth of the cave, the two boys made a small teepee with the smaller sticks, picked up some dead pine needles lying around the cave, and lit the teepee with the torch. In a few minutes a blazing fire heated the whole cave. Master Roddick came back with more sticks and logs, damp from the snow, and placed them near the fire.

"Hey, great fire, lads!"

Samuel beamed at Roddick's compliment.

"Do you think anyone is following us?" asked Elijah.

"I doubt it," answered Roddick. "It'd take more than that to get Hawthorne to leave his school of torture. Besides, I'd be surprised if that pale-faced ghoul could remember his own name now, let alone who attacked him." He sat down and looked at Samuel. "You sure you're okay, lad?"

"Yeah," said Samuel, still a little shaken from everything. "He only got me a couple of times." There was an awkward silence that filled the cave. They each knew what the other was thinking. Roddick broke the silence.

"Let me start off by saying that what you saw is not supposed to be seen. I have been trained to protect, and when I saw that horrible man hitting you," Roddick said looking at Samuel, "I reacted." He stood back up and began to pace around the cave.

"So when you made the water come out of the fountain and attack that man, it was a reaction that you couldn't control," Elijah said trying to encourage Roddick to continue.

“Yes,” said Roddick. “I *can* control it, but I believe it would have been wrong not to stop Samuel from being attacked.”

“I’m sorry,” Samuel said weakly. “I know I wasn’t supposed to be out of bed, but I heard Elijah leave and I wanted to see if he was okay.”

“It’s fine, lad,” Roddick said. “What’s done is done.” He sat down again, seemingly coming to a decision. “Alright, I’ll explain what I can now. But I insist that you talk with one of our elders when we get to where we’re going. Before I go on, you need to make that promise.”

“Okay,” they each said, quickly glancing at each other. Elijah briefly wondered where they were going, but he kept quiet and waited patiently for answers.

Roddick took a deep breath and began. “I am taking you to a place called Savenridge. It’s about a day’s walk from here. I have permission to bring Elijah, but not Samuel.” Samuel shot a worried glance at Elijah. “Don’t worry, lad,” Roddick said, noticing Samuel’s concern. “I’ll talk to the council, but you both will have to make a rather big promise.” Elijah shifted nervously. “Once I explain to you who I am—once you are taken to Savenridge and meet our people, you must never speak to anyone on the outside about what you learn. You must keep our secrets forever. The knowledge we have has been kept a secret for almost three thousand years.” Elijah’s eyes widened with awe. Samuel put his hand to his mouth. “What you’re about to be told is powerful. It’s history. Make that promise now.”

“I promise,” they said, and Elijah meant it. He had nothing to go back to and no one to share the secrets with, so it would be an easy promise to keep.

Roddick sighed again. “I am a Magi. Despite what you may have read, Elijah, the Magi are good. We’ve been in existence for an incredibly long time. We are not another race. We are not another species. We are human. Are you with me so far?”

“So Magi are human, they are good, and they have been around a long time,” Elijah summarized.

“Yes,” Roddick said nodding.

“So, what is the difference between a Magi and normal people?” asked Elijah.

“Nothing,” answered Roddick. “A member of the Magi is just like any other person, who we call common people, except we have knowledge of a power that they don’t know about. You saw just a small portion of that power tonight.”

“You mean the water thing?” asked Samuel.

Roddick nodded. “Yes. That is *my* power.”

“*Your* power?” Elijah asked.

“Each Magi chooses a power to train with that fits their personality.”

“What do you mean by personality?” asked Elijah.

“I’m not really the best person to explain that part,” Roddick answered. “But I can give you the basics.” Elijah and Samuel waited with intrigue. “You see, our world is broken up into four parts. Each part has its own personality. One part is water, which has a particular personality. Another part is fire, which has another personality. The third part is wind, and the last part is the earth.”

“Water, Fire, Wind, Earth,” said Samuel. “The four elements.”

“Yes,” Roddick said. “You know them as the four elements, but the Magi know them as much more. They are all part of our world. What makes the Magi so powerful is that we have acquired the knowledge of each element’s personality on a much deeper level.”

“What do you mean a deeper level?” asked Elijah.

“Again, that’s something you’ll have to be taught later. But I mean deeper than other people. Most people don’t really understand the world. They are too busy with their own conquests and self interests. Most Magi spend a lifetime trying to understand the rules and personalities of the four elements. We believe that if the world is to be used, it should be for goodness and protection—not for greed.” Elijah was fascinated but still not sure he understood everything. “Now here’s where the power comes in. When you are able to understand these rules and personalities, you can stretch those rules and use them in ways that are not normal.”

“Was what you did with the water considered stretching the rules?” asked Samuel.

“Have you ever seen water do that?” Roddick asked.

Samuel smiled. “No.”

“I was able to use the water the way I did tonight because I understand the personality of water. Therefore, when I needed to, I was able to stretch the rules to manipulate the water in ways that common people can’t. Does that make sense?”

Elijah and Samuel sat silently, processing what they heard, trying to mix what they witnessed back at the academy with what Roddick explained to them now.

“So you say anyone can do this?” asked Elijah.

Roddick shook his head. “The Magi have spent their entire lives surrounded by this idea, so when they are sent to train—usually in their early teens—they already have a basic understanding. Their families have been preparing them for training since birth. For a common person to learn

these things, it would take a very special mind. However, I believe you have that mind, Elijah. That is why I asked you to meet me tonight.”

“What about me?” Samuel asked in a frail voice, almost a whisper.

“Well, lad, I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting you until now. Training can be quite frustrating, even for Magi. Are you willing to work hard and learn?” asked Roddick.

“Yes,” Samuel said with confidence.

“That’s a good start,” Roddick said. “But I’m afraid it’s not up to me. That decision rests with the elder council.” The fire was beginning to die, and the cave started to get cold. Roddick walked over and threw another log on. In a few minutes, the cave warmed up again.

“Why do you work at the academy?” Elijah asked, wondering why someone who lived so far away would work at a school.

“Do you remember why I said I helped Samuel?” Roddick asked. “The Magi protect the good in the world, but there is also evil in the world. Not all who know our secrets are good. There is another group with our power that believes in destruction—hatred—greed. They call themselves Maliphists.” Elijah remembered reading that word in his parents’ book. He was even more curious now.

“Maliphists?” asked Samuel.

“Yes. They are very powerful and very dangerous. They get their beliefs from a man who lived centuries ago named Maliphist. To go back to Elijah’s question,” Roddick continued, “the school has been, in recent years, a sort of training ground for the Maliphists. There is a Maliphist city close by that likes to collect angry, bitter young men and women to brainwash into joining their way of life. I won’t get into it all tonight, but to be brief, they believe that they should rule the world. Some even believe that all common people should be destroyed.” Samuel and Elijah looked horrified. “It thankfully hasn’t come to that yet. Part of that is thanks to some of us who are willing to keep the Maliphists away from young minds.”

“Like the young minds at Saint Phillip’s Academy,” Elijah said, beginning to understand.

“Exactly,” Roddick affirmed. “The Maliphists would like nothing more than to take the students that are the most angry, the most self-destructive, and move them to the Maliphist city for their own training.”

“During the time you were gone,” Elijah interjected, “Master Corgan took a student away from class.”

“That’s because Corgan is a Maliphist,” answered Roddick. “I was not there to see this, but I did hear about it. The student was most likely someone Corgan thought would make a good Maliphist—someone who would easily buy into the power of hate. Unfortunately, we can’t stop all the Maliphist deliveries.”

Elijah was shocked that all this time he was being taught by a Maliphist. He remembered the first day Corgan talked to him about science and wondered if he was saying Elijah would not make a good Maliphist. He now considered that a compliment.

“Do you now understand why I work at the school?” Roddick answered. “With so many Maliphists trying to brainwash everyone, there needs to be someone who can stop them, or at least keep them in check. And Corgan’s the least of our problems.”

“What do you mean?” asked Elijah.

“Saint Phillip’s has been under Maliphist control for a while now. Some teachers are Magi, some are Maliphists, and some are neither. A few decades ago, the majority of teachers were Magi. It was a good time. However, different chancellors bring different ideas. Each chancellor is hired by the community. As you can probably guess, if a Magi chancellor is hired, he will hire Magi teachers. If a Maliphist chancellor is hired, he will hire Maliphists. When a teacher retires or leaves, the chancellor brings in a new teacher.”

“Is Hawthorne a Maliphist?” asked Samuel.

“Yes. And as long as he is the chancellor, Hawthorne will replenish the vacant positions with Maliphists. So it is very important for the Magi to stay at the school. We need to protect the students from the influence of the Maliphists.”

“But can you even go back to the school?” Elijah asked.

“Eventually,” Roddick answered. “Pennington, my substitute, is a Magi as well, so there is no rush.”

“How did I end up at Saint Phillip’s Academy?” Elijah asked.

Roddick nodded his head. “You were most likely brought here by a deliverer.”

“A what?”

“Who brought you to the academy?” asked Roddick.

“Detective Scott,” said Elijah.

Roddick snorted at the name and gave a little nod. “Do you mean Nick Scott?”

“I think so,” said Elijah.

“Yes, Nick Scott is a Maliphist, and they have a sort of delivery system,” Roddick continued. “They collect boys and girls that are orphaned and bring them to the nearest academy or boarding school that the Maliphists use. The closest one to you was Saint Phillip’s, and Nick Scott delivers kids there.” Roddick could feel Elijah’s anger. All three jumped when the storm outside the cave grew stronger and the thunder roared outside.

“It’s getting bad out there,” Master Roddick said, peering out. “Hope we don’t have too much trouble tomorrow.”

“How does he do it?” asked Samuel, referring to Detective Scott.

“I’m not sure,” said Roddick. “My guess is that he is very crafty and is able to manipulate whoever he needs to in order to take you. There’s not many people that’ll argue with a detective, right?”

Elijah was steaming. “So every orphan is basically done for?” asked Elijah furiously. “There’s no hope? They come here to become part of the Maliphist’s little game?”

“Many are,” admitted Roddick sullenly. “But the Magi have people whose job it is to stop the deliveries. Unfortunately, we’re not always successful. It’s a dangerous job, and many Magi who are involved in the delivery raids are captured by Maliphists. Some are even killed. We do the best we can, but sometimes it’s not enough.”

Roddick looked outside the cave at the falling snow and stretched his arms. “Well, we should stay here tonight. We have a brutal hike tomorrow, so we need to get some rest, seeing that there is very little light this time of year.” Roddick threw another couple logs on the fire and they each stretched onto the ground.

For Elijah, sleep did not come quickly. He had so many things to think about. The new knowledge of Detective Scott infuriated him. The threat of the Maliphists worried him, and his upcoming training in Savenridge made him nervous.

But eventually, his tired body overpowered his thoughts, and though he didn’t dream a thing that night, Elijah Hawk slept soundly.