

(Some of chapter 1)

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Change of Fate and
Colliding Destinies

Jake

My father raised his staff into the air. Within seconds, it shimmered, causing a great whirlwind to appear less than half a mile away. The whirlwind, filled with dirt, danced in a path created by my father's staff. It was a great spell manifested by my father, the Wind Guardian himself (most people would kill for magic powerful enough to bend nature).

"That was incredible!" I clapped. I was also secretly relieved that he managed to control the whirlwind so that it didn't suck us into oblivion even at this range. Father handed me his staff. "All right, Jacob, give it a try." I stared at the staff as if it was some foreign object. *What if I screw this up?* I didn't want to look bad in front of my father. I'm pretty sure he'd be quite disappointed in me. I mean, after all of the years of excessive training, who wouldn't be? "Take it. You'll do fine," he reassured. That warmed me up some and gave me a much-needed boost of confidence. I took the staff from his hands and, recalling Father's teachings, recited them in my head. Following his rules, I started by observing the area. We were in nice and comfortable grassland. Who disliked training in nice and comfortable grassland? The air of our training grounds was cool and perfumed by the scent of dirt. The view of the royal palace afar really made this place stand out. It reminded me of my secret vow to visit it one day. I took a deep breath (an important step) and pointed the wooden staff forward.

"Go ahead. Give me spell number eight," Father said, his expression softening. "And don't tell me you've forgotten that simple old technique."

"Of course not," I said and then paused to think for a few seconds. With a strong voice (in fact, probably a little too strong), I chanted the spell. Nothing happened. I mean, seriously, that tore at me. I trained every day—from running barefoot on mountaintops to standing in furious windstorms without falling. All that training yet I couldn't wield one simple wind spell in front of Father! I mean, it's not like I didn't know how; I was just incredibly nervous to be performing it in front of the one I looked up to.

"Jake, relax. Concentrate. Feed off the staff essence. You may not have known it, but I've seen what you're capable of. I may train you hard and you still may have a lot to learn, but now is the time to reveal it all—even show off a bit." He smirked, easing my tension. "I'm pretty sure you don't want to restart training. I'll make sure that the first thing we do is take another barefoot walk through a blizzard."

I shivered at the thought of a horrid memory that remark triggered. With newfound motivation, I took a deep calming breath, relaxed, and chanted spell eight again—only this time, confident and rhythmic.

A warm sensation spilled from my hand and into the staff. With a wave, it released a continuous burst of wind that lasted about twenty seconds.

“Not bad,” Father said, clapping, his expression brightening up. “Not bad at all.”

In that moment, I felt strange—like a ton of weight poured itself into me. This wasn’t an “I need a break” feeling but more of an “I feel so weak that I’m struggling to keep standing” feeling.

Then I heard something—a voice, in fact—but it definitely wasn’t my conscience.

“You’ve got talent, Other Me, but you’re wasting your pathetic life training to take your father’s place,” the voice said. “Let me show you an example of what this body can do.”

The voice rumbled with laughter, enough to make me really nervous. *Am I imagining this?* My question was answered when my staff arm aimed involuntarily at the open field. I tried to pull away, but nothing happened. *What the crap?*

“Old man,” I involuntarily said in a deep, eerie voice.

Father’s eyes widened. “Watch this.”

“The hell. What is this?” Father quickly stepped back as

I attempted to tell him that it wasn’t me, but it seemed that my voice didn’t reach him.

“Who or *what* are you?” Father said threateningly. I grew a little nervous. If he wanted to, he could summon a wind strong enough to rip my body to shreds—that is, however, if he got ahold of his staff.

“Just shut up, and see how you’re wasting your powers in this boring life,” the voice commanded me.

Crap. Crap. Crap! I had to do something quickly before things escalated. Once again, I tried to shake free, move my fingers—*anything* that would signal a chance to regain control. I mean, why sit here and let whatever this thing attempted happen without even trying to break free of its control? However, the strangeness didn’t end there. The sky darkened and suddenly lightning bolts touched down in random places, some of them nearby too.

“Jake, snap out of it!” Father yelled. I grinned involuntarily and raised the staff.

“Daddy, I’m trying to!” laughed the voice. “Let me tell you something. Essence is the building blocks of magic, right? It’s primarily the same everywhere, except inside of this body. His essence is so strange that one drop of it could grant anyone immortality and, to answer your question, I guess you can say his other half as well.”

“You expect me to believe this? Now I *know* what’s going on. You’re some kind of demon who possessed my son, aren’t you? Don’t think I’m incapable of freeing him!”

Father rushed toward me. I tried to yell at him to wait, but once again, I was unheard, practically nonexistent. The voice chuckled, aimed the staff at Father, and laughed maniacally. I don’t know if something in Father alerted him, but he sidestepped just in time to avoid one horrifying bolt of lightning. From then on, he didn’t stay put. He knew that this wasn’t over yet. He darted from his spot again, barely dodging another bolt, and circled me. After dodging another strike of lightning, he finally was close enough to deliver a punch that would’ve floored anyone. But I didn’t budge. Father grimaced as I (the demonic being) grinned.

“Check and mate,” the voice said ominously.

Right before my eyes, something utterly horrible happened. A loud crackling sound whistled through the air and was followed by a blinding bolt. I nearly lost breath as I witnessed the bolt strike Father’s head, charring him instantly and turning him to ashes. Then it happened. Extreme

rage, sadness, and shock returned the control of my body to me. I fell to my knees crying like a ten-year-old girl, absorbing the realization that I just watched my father die by my hands. *These hands.* It was like a first-person horror show.

“No!” I cried out, smashing my fists into the ground over and over again. I felt ashamed at how weak I was. I failed to free myself from the control of some random demon, and as a result, Father paid for it. And I had to live with it. I felt my blood run even colder like I was going to bleed ice at any moment. Just then, something else happened. An intense desire to kill, a craving I never felt before, washed over me until I literally saw a black tint my vision.

“You killed him.” The voice laughed. “You’re just a killer and you know it. You’re always going to have that killer instinct, and one day, you will finally eliminate everyone. I can see it now.”

“No! The hell with you!” I bellowed. “Get out of my head, and show yourself this instant!”

It simply laughed at me. “And what? Just accept that you and I are one person. Besides, you’re getting on my nerves, Other Me, so have a nice sleep.”

Immediately after the voice said that, I felt severely nauseated. Within seconds, I blacked out, slipping into unconsciousness.

Lina

“Quick! We have very little time.”

The urgency in the queen’s voice forced Lina to move faster. She felt the woman’s hand tighten on hers as she struggled to keep up in crossing the main grounds of the royal palace. Two hard-faced guards in blue cloaks followed close behind. Lina frowned upon noticing the outer walls of the palace. Each bore gaping holes every five feet. She knew this was the result of the constant enemy attacks. She knew that *he* was coming for her again. A storm raged on with lightning bolts forming an unusual pattern. She could smell the scent of death from the passing breezes. A terrible feeling settled in her gut as she wondered what exactly was going on. Suddenly the queen halted Lina. She took out a glistening purple gemstone from her pocket and passed it on to her.

“This is your spirit jewel,” she whispered to Lina. “I want you to hold on to it.” Her eyes seemed to narrow when she glanced at Lina.

“W-what am I supposed to do with it, Mom?”

“Hush, honey,” said the queen. “Remember this. That jewel holds half of your power. The queen of the guardians herself smiled upon you when she decided to give this to you, so please take care of it.”