

The MoonBridge Way

Restored

'Beware the MoonBridge Way – once entered, you will never want to leave'

Books 4 in The MoonBridge Way Adventures

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Chapter one sample

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Chapter 1 – Visions

*Another day ahead to form, as darkness bows before the dawn.
The twinkling stars above my head, fade as black gives way to red.
Across the land skulk shapes of trees, the air hangs still no hint of
breeze.*

*Daybreak's here, the sky's aglow, revealed from gloom, the hilltops
show.*

*A ball of hope climbs in the East, her spreading warmth awakens
beasts.*

*The birds announce their morning songs, declaring that the night is
gone.*

Our place of beauty to behold, of woods of green in fields of gold.

Who else would dare to confront the truth now unfolding? Most have chosen another path; all remain blissfully ignorant of the facts and blind to the reality. Only one holds steadfast, one ageing man carved by a lifetime of service and endeavour.

The solitary figure leans lightly on his shoulder-high staff. Wiry fingers grasp the gnarled wooden cane knowingly, every smoothed undulation a familiar friend. Steadying his stance with a long calming exhale, he peers over the precipice. Ahead lies oblivion, below, a terrifyingly steep crater wall. Just a glance into the abyss instils an instinctive response setting his head swimming. Another deep breath restores an inner calm. For this is no ordinary man. Here stands a mighty oak with ethereal roots penetrating deeply into the underlying rock. His decades of disciplined training infuse with complete self-belief inherited

from a bloodline casting back into the dimness of history. A myriad of generations, all waiting expectantly to offer support. Drawing upon every ounce of his ancestors combined strength ensures the discomfort is short lived. He smiles wryly as the vertigo evaporates. Thanking his forebears with a silent prayer of gratitude, he stares immobile, deep in his thoughts.

Far away to the northeast, the distant hills melt gently into the vague horizon. The blanched haze marries the earth and sky, each fusing seamlessly through the pale blue mist. Waterfowl, flying in a 'Vee' formation, pass noisily overhead swerving off towards the west. Momentarily shattering the peace, and enveloping silence, the birds hurry to an unknown destination. The man allows himself a brief glance as they rapidly skirt the crater's edge and disappear off to his left. He smiles inwardly at the refreshing sight and is heartened at the sound of their honking. These creatures instinctively knew to avoid the area beyond.

"And as well they should," he murmurs under his breath.

Only he now chooses to remember the terrible events of his childhood. Horror and carnage led to the utter desolation of the North. No others wish to come here anymore; the place remains, as it had been for so long, devoid of any signs of life.

"Where are you?" he puzzles.

Unimaginable heat and pressure fused the rock into a dense glass-like material. Harder than iron, the crystal remains just beneath the surface of the immense crater. An ankle-deep ash

bonds together like dampened sand, forming gradually into shallow dunes and troughs. The wind whispers; ghostly voices pleading from a bygone age, begging for retribution and release.

The man returns his attention to the farthest horizon. Colours diffused as the warming sun's rays modulated the air currents. His throat constricted as he visualised the war leading up to the great destruction.

"Already faded from their memories," he grumbled sarcastically. "Fools, all of them, they cannot hide in their ignorance. Fate is upon us."

The remaining populous quickly looked to the future rather than dwell on the past. Fear drove them to denial. A terrible fear of 'what might have been?'. They saw only the fresh pastures, good food, clean water, and empty spaces of the far southern and eastern plains. Few, if any nowadays, ventured anywhere northward towards the great wilderness. Their fear kept them away. They believed nothing would come to haunt or harm them if they stayed far from the scars of the terrible events over half a century earlier.

"They are all so very wrong," groaned the man sadly. "Can they not see the changes or feel the wind shifting?" Tears welled up in his eyes, overwhelmed by the warning calls of the earth.

"Of course, they can't," he sighed rhetorically, wiping his face, and sniffing sharply. "That is why I am here."

The hairs on the back of his neck suddenly tingled. Instinctively, he shifted his attention as his mind searched his immediate surroundings. Bizarrely, he sensed two people observing him. One familiar and close, the other distant and unknown. Both would have to wait.

After taking three more deep calming breaths, he paused slowing his pulse. A final exhale meditated his thoughts. Rolling his head, he loosened the muscles in his neck and back. He alone shouldered this burden. He held it for his people. Moreover, they, in turn, were happy and glad he did. Silently contemplating, the man readied himself for the effort he needed. His heart beat a little faster; he could sense a growing presence that should not exist, terrifying and unwanted.

Deep in the centre of this echo of an earlier apocalypse, something impossible began to stir. A strange blackness hung menacingly many yards above the ground. Sparks radiated out from the ball of nothingness. A distinct aroma clung to the air – the thick acrid smell of sulphur. Upwards, reaching out towards the edge of space, occasional massive discharges powered bolts of lightning, shattering the atmosphere, and creating thunder of epic proportions. Each crash shook the ash-covered land and caused static waves to form on its surface, like some hideously frozen sea.

Here, the lonely figure waited, high upon the edge of destiny. A hooded cape, swept back across his shoulders, allowed long greying hair to sit neatly in a ponytail. His vantage point offered an exquisite panoramic view of the desolation, but his focus

aimed far beyond any visible sight. The evidence unfolding tasted unpalatable; the man prayed his instincts proved false.

“Are you real?” he wondered. “Is this just a dream?”

The frustration and doubt rippled across his face. He swallowed hard.

“But you can’t be, can you? You are all dead, every one of you. I saw you crushed with my own young eyes.”

Looking intently towards the heart of the forbidden landscape, allowing his thoughts to roam free, his body remained transfixed whilst his mind’s eye searched frantically.

“I watched you die a lifetime ago. So how could you be there? None of you are left.”

His weather-beaten face gazed worryingly towards the increasing electrical activity erupting dimly in the pale skies high above the faded horizon. Even at this great distance, the observer instinctively knew the world was changing. The sixty years of relative calm stuttered. Every fibre of his being screamed out caution. The sight, his mind perceived, sent an involuntary shiver through his spine.

“No,” he groaned in recognition. “You cannot be true. Please not again, I must be mistaken.”

Behind the man, barely ten yards away, a single moving stone scraped fleetingly across the face of another. Grinding ominously in the silence of the still morning airs the shard of rock settled silently. A boy froze, staring intently at the culprit. He pulled a face, chastising himself visibly. The younger person, hiding deep in the jagged piles of boulders, sighed regretfully. For over an hour, without revealing his position, he observed the older man. He knew his tutor would have noticed the sound. A mistake as foolish and fundamental as this could prove costly. The boy would have to atone for his clumsiness, unless he could turn the error to his advantage somehow. Looking wishfully around, he noted a small lizard basking in the warming rays of the early sun. If he could make the creature dart into view, his mentor might believe the sound emanated from him.

The older man remained motionless. Only another Sage would understand how his mind roamed freely. At the first quietly placed footfalls, over an hour earlier, he had projected his thoughts towards the sound and identified his apprentice. Periodically, he allowed his astral projection to flit back, checking how well the youngster progressed with his current task of self-concealment. The boy learned quickly despite his obvious youthful limitations.

“He must suppress his breathing when holding his body motionless,” the Sage noted.

The sound of the dislodged rock was just too clumsy, but the ruse the boy concocted amused him. This use of nature showed initiative and promise. The trial should continue.

The boy edged towards his goal, carefully remaining concealed behind piles of lichen-covered boulders. This haphazard spoilage, thrust effortlessly a lifetime earlier, provided exquisite cover. Half a century of weathering cracked and rounded the rock. A few hardy plants clung miraculously to sporadic nooks and crannies. He eased silently and stealthily towards the rim. His mental picture of the older man placed him directly behind the next crop of rocks. Just a few yards more and he would have completed this test.

“Did you really think this would work?” the older man said sternly. He was already standing directly behind the startled boy. Despite his age, the figure remained fit and active. Life had been very kind to this individual, something powerful, almost supernatural, radiated out from his persona. He was totally in tune with his surroundings and the earth responded to his proximity.

“I, I’m, sorry,” the boy stammered. He bowed his head solemnly knowing he had failed the test. “Let me try again Papa, please!”

“Fear not my young pretender,” the Sage said lightly. “You have made up for your errors with your ingenuity. I liked your improvisation of using nature; the lizard was a thoughtful touch – well done. Just learn from your mistake and try to remain focussed.” The older man had a wry grin on his face. He loved this youngster dearly – his first grandson and appointed Sageling. With a loving hug, he reassured the boy.

“Now assist me as I call the gateway.”

The older man took his grandson's hand and led him directly to the crater rim.

"First though, look Kaygee¹," the Sage pointed towards the flickering sky deep in the distance. "Look far over there. Cast your mind out and tell me what your young eyes see."

The boy grinned, happy to assist. He paused for a moment preparing himself.

"Concentrate," he thought silently.

The first breath eased his mind, the second calmed his pulse and the third freed his soul. Drawing strength from his grandfather, he relaxed in readiness. Then, thrusting his mind forwards, just as Jaden² the Sage of Sages had taught him, his spirit left his body. Flying free as a bird, he leapt over the cliff edge. The initial rush of weightlessness, hanging effortlessly hundreds of yards above the crater floor, raised a huge smile on his face.

"Oh yes," he laughed.

After briefly enjoying the exhilaration, he set off to complete his task. Sweeping across dozens of miles in the twinkling of an eye, the crater floor rushed far beneath him. Ahead, he witnessed something he had only heard of in tales. What he saw frightened him deeply. Nothing like this had existed for a generation. A great globe of pulsating emptiness hung above the devastated

¹ Pronounced 'Kay-Gee'

² Pronounced 'Jay-den'

landscape. Already clearing the area of ash, exposing solid glistening bedrock, the strange object floated expectantly.

“What do you see?” the older man asked impatiently.

The boy remained mesmerised. In stark contrast to the glassy rock surface and the enormous black portal, three large bright blue cigar shaped structures hovered silently. Each pulsed with blue luminescence, moving gracefully, their ominous beauty betrayed their instinctive intent. After only a few moments of shock recognition, he bounded back to his grandfather with this terrible news.

“It’s them Papa, it’s really them! The Shumiat³ have returned. How can that be?”

The older man’s face dropped as he breathed a deep sigh of acknowledgement.

The boy continued fearfully, “They were all destroyed – you told me yourself, they were all killed during the great destruction.”

The Sage shook his head and sighed again. After a silent contemplation he responded, “I don’t know Kaygee? They should be dead, but now you have seen them too. I’d foolishly hoped it was an old man’s imagination running wild.”

³ Pronounced ‘Shoe-me-at’

The boy looked far into the distance squinting his eyes. Trying, unsuccessfully, to see what his mind and spirit had just perceived.

Jaden squeezed his grandson's hand, "But this changes everything. Where there are three, there will soon be more - thousands more maybe. We must leave quickly. There is much to be done."

Irritatingly, his sixth sense warned again of an observer.

"Kaygee, something is watching us," he whispered. The boy looked behind and shrugged his shoulders.

The Sage raised his staff and pointed it away from the crater's edge aiming into empty sky.

"Somewhere up there!"

Without waiting for a reply, he flicked his eyelids and commanded a gateway to open. A large circular portal formed directly in front of him; at its edges, a fire licked the surrounding air. A forbidding blackness formed at the centre, so unimaginably black it hurt your eyes just to look towards it. The absence of anything drew the very essence of reality into its heart. A mystical twilight fell around them despite the brightness of the morning sunlight.

"Come Kaygee, we have to make plans and warn our friends of this..."

Without hesitation, the boy held his grandfather's hand and stepped confidently into the opening. The pair disappeared as the portal shrank to a shimmering dot and popped quietly out of existence. Within moments, the light levels returned to normal.

The remote observer of these strange events suddenly found himself wrenched away. The scene gradually faded, and another took its place. A girl, familiar and yet unexpected, stood over him. She shook him hard and spoke in a loud whisper. He heard nothing and barely registered the movement of her lips. His mind raced as it tried desperately to align these two diametrically opposing worlds.

"Ky⁴ - wake up will you – you've been talking in your sleep again," the girl sounded more persistent now. She could see the realisation in her twin brother's eyes that he returned from his dream.

"What? ...What time is it, Mimi⁵?" asked the boy, barely awake, but now more on this side of reality than the one he had just been observing. His mind struggled to cope with the memories of only moments before. He gulped with difficulty; his bone-dry throat felt chokingly constricted. A croaking cough failed to offer any comfort.

"I need a drink," he gasped.

⁴ Pronounced 'K-eye'

⁵ Pronounced 'Me-me'

Darkness filled the room, the curtains fluttered briefly in the warm summer night air. Outside, a three-quarter moon shone its enchanting silvery light across the fields. Corn fluttered seductively in the silence of the hour. As the gap between the curtains opened, the room took on an entirely different feeling. Shadows moved. Objects had a life of their own. Imagined visitors and creatures from other worlds filled every dimly lit corner. Ky sat bolt upright and gulped nervously as he crashed back fully into his real existence.

“Was it the same as before?” his sister whispered quite loudly. She still had hold of his shoulders and now embraced him offering comfort and support.

Ky lent over to the bedside table and glanced at the clock; it was a little after three in the morning. At this time of year, it would begin to get light in another hour or so. He picked up a sports bottle and sucked a welcome isotonic drink. The orangey flavour eased down this throat offering refreshment and energy.

“Yeah, um, I guess so!” Ky sat shivering as his body caught up with his mind. “He was there again; the man with the wooden staff, and the boy was with him this time. I think he sensed me watching him, then he opened the portal and disappeared. I saw a thunderstorm on the horizon.”

“What does it all mean?” asked Mimi. “How did you feel? Did you get struck by lightning this time?”

“Nah, you brought me back too soon. I don’t know what it means Sis, but that guy is very powerful,” Ky paused for a few moments

recollecting his visions. "...and I'm certain this is more than just some figment of my imagination."

The boy yawned widely, sucking in much needed oxygen demanded by his now fully awake body.

"Who do you think he is?" Mimi insisted.

Looking deep into each other's eyes, they connected without the need for further spoken words. They had a talent for sharing each other's thoughts and finishing each other's sentences. Now, as they sat so closely together, Ky let his visions flood into his sister's imagination. She watched the dream unfold.

Unaware of the time passing, the twins missed the approach of the rising sun across the fields. Outside, the chorus of birds, staking their claim and announcing their territorial dominance, shattered the predawn silence. The world awoke to a glorious early summer's day. The sky lost its pale washed reds and yellows giving way to a beautiful blue that promised a hot calm day ahead. All the while, the images flowed from one twin's mind to the other.

"I don't know why, but everything seems so familiar to me Ky. It feels like I have been there before; as if we belong somehow."

"Yeah, I know how you feel Sis."

The pair remained closely together, communicating without spoken words.

Mimi paused, allowing a few moments for the impact of the visions to sink in. She stood up from the bed and opened the curtains welcoming the early morning light into the room.

“Why is it only you that sees this? Why don’t I ever have these dreams?” she said over her shoulder.

“Beats me Sis, it’s like everything else I guess – just that’s the way it is.”

The twins were like any other seventeen-year-old teenagers in many ways. They loved life, sports, music, technology, friends, and fun, although, they were different in several key aspects. Mimi had an uncanny ability to see into the future and often could make accurate predictions about events affecting their lives. She was quite curvaceous with a slim waist and lithe hips. Ky stood slightly taller than his sister and was broader across the shoulders. His inner strength made him a natural leader. Both were fair skinned, slightly tanned, and had athletic bodies. An unruly mat of thick brown hair, seeming to have a mind of its own, covered their heads. They were inseparable for much of the time, preferring each other’s company whenever possible, and each instinctively knew things others would never understand.

For the last few nights, Ky experienced the recurring visions. Mimi shared his dreams through their unique ability to read each other’s thoughts.

“I’ve been thinking of speaking to Uncle Jack again,” said Ky. “He’s sure to be able to help us.”

Mimi loved her uncle dearly, but she was less keen to broadcast the fact that her brother was experiencing these strange happenings.

“He knows about so much, Sis, you should hear the stories he can tell.” Their uncle acted more like an older best friend or big brother. Ky had a very special and close relationship with him.

“When is he back from his latest trip?” asked Mimi.

“It’s not for a couple of weeks yet – I think!”

Uncle Jack spent lots of time away. Highly respected in his field of expertise and a leading authority in exploration and investigative work, he earned a six-figure salary contracting for a large multinational company. Ky didn’t even pretend to understand the details; he just knew his uncle was ‘the top man!’ Whenever he came home, he always made a great effort to take his nephew out.

“I think you should wait,” Mimi said cautiously. “If the visions continue then perhaps you should send Uncle Jack an email asking for his help. However, do not go into too much detail. I don’t feel comfortable that you acknowledge your visions or our ability to share them.”

Ky considered his sister’s opinion. She was far more level-headed than he was in most situations. She could weigh up a problem and come up with a solution in ways he never could. With a slight nod of his head, he agreed.

“You are right Sis; I’ll wait and see. If the dreams come back again tonight, I will think about how to get Uncle Jack to phone here and give him a brief outline of the whole affair. If not, I’ll wait till he returns and tell him face-to-face.”

End note: I hope you enjoyed my first chapter sample, and this will inspire you to purchase the full book. Thank you. David G Sheppard