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FIRST PRIZE WINNER

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THE KEEPER OF ELEMENTS

by

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(Year 5 - Age 9)

All the Earth is in utter dismay; it is ruled by an evil dictator Lord Ran.

People are slaves in his great empire. The reason he causes the world to live in fear is because *he* fears as well. Lord Ran is powerful; he can channel the energies of dark magic into his swords and render himself almost invincible, but there is one with greater powers. My mother, the greatest Arcane Sorceress to ever have been born, had power over the four elements.

*Water, Air, powers of light
Fire, Earth, powers of dark*

My mother is bearer of the Keeper of Elements, a ring that unleashes the true powers of arcane magic within a person. Special people, like my mother could use this "key" to unlock the ultimate powers of the elements.

It was for this reason that Lord Ran sent a 30,000 strong army to capture my mother, locking her away in the depths of his domain.

* * *

I walk into our old house and into my room. I sweep my hand across the bed; thinking. Four years ago, when I was nine years old, mother walked briskly into my room and sat on my bed. I relive that night.

"Helen," my mother says, "They're after me. I am sorry but I have to go."

"Why? Where are you going?" I scream.

"Hush little Helen, I shall be alright... and so will you. They are trying to get the ring. Can you imagine what would happen if Lord Ran got a hold of this? All free land in this world would soon be vanquished!"

"So what are you going to do?"

"Do not worry my child; I'll make sure Lord Ran doesn't get the ring. But you must run, go to the village in the north, your uncle will look after you."

"But what about you mother? Won't you come back?"

"I am sorry Helen; I don't know...But remember this: the secret of this world is in your heart."

As I ask her what she means, the front door breaks from its frame and armoured men burst into the room. They take my mother away. I don't even get a chance to see her face as they haul her away.

I am too frightened to move. As they carry her out of the front door, I see my mother touch the ring. It starts to glow, turning into light. The beam of light rushes off her slender finger and flies, like a dragon, into the barren sky.

She's gone.

* * *

My uncle was good to me; he looked after me well for four years. But now the time has come, I am going to save my mother. After she was taken away, I literally lived my life in the old library, learning about the way of the arcane. It was here that I discovered something that could allow me to find the ring and save mother.

"The secret of the World is in your heart." It took me a long time to understand. Arcane magic is supposed to come from the heart. But moreover, the secret of the world is not the world itself but what it is made of; fire, earth, air and water. This means that the ring of four elements is at the place of great arcane; a temple where magic was supposedly created! That is where I have to go. This is where the ring is.

I follow the path out of town. The wind hardly dares to let out a whisper not to mention a howl. My feeble footsteps echo in silence. I look at my feet. Thump, thump, thump, as my feet tread. I don't look up; I just keep treading, following the path that the map shows.

Unexpectedly, I crash into a tall muscular man, a large sword in his belt. I start to ramble out an apology.

"Don't be alarmed young lady," The man's voice gentle but firm. "May I ask where you are going with a large map but little provisions?"

I know it would be wrong to reveal secrets to a stranger, but before I know what I am doing I blurt out my whole story and am close to tears.

"WHAT! Are you telling me you are the daughter of the great Arcane Sorceress?"

"I guess so."

"What are you doing out here? Don't you know that the bounty on your head is enormous?"

"My mother is dying and I have to try and save her."

"Could I see this map?"

Between sobs, I gave him the map. What was I doing, trusting a complete stranger? Apparently he knew the first destination called the Badlands.

"You're trying to cross the Badlands all by yourself? You'll never survive the beasts! Let me accompany you, I was planning to go there myself."

So I find myself following some strange man I met only hours ago trying to chase the inkling of hope that I could save my mother.

"Sir, I did not ask your name."

"Young lady, my name is Mustang."

"I'm Helen."

"We're here!" Mustang cried. The Badlands was a large desert. The map proclaims the area is infested with snakes.

We walk carefully watching out for snakes. The air is burning, specks of dust dancing in front of my eyes.

Mustang is far ahead. I hurry to catch up. Then... it happens.

The ground begins to shake. Metres away, sand rises from the ground forming ghastly creatures.

"Sand Serpents!" I scream.

Mustang reveals a curved knife. He throws it directly at a serpent's head. The knife however seems to be absorbed by the snake's body.

"It did nothing!" I cry

"It will; that knife is filled with gunpowder." Just as he finishes his sentence the serpent's head explodes. The sand falls to the ground.

"That was close!" But my relief is short lived. The head of the serpent, using the sand regenerates.

We struggle to pass the vicious monster. We have to get to solid land, where they can't go.

We run fast, sand serpents lunging at us constantly, jumping out of the sand as a whale would out water.

From the bleakness of the surrounding mountains comes something. Lights so bright and beautiful I am mesmerized. I'm sure I'm going to die, but no, the lights fly on until it reaches the sand serpents, striking them dead on their heads.

There is a sickening sound as the light sinks deeper and deeper. Ear splitting screeches leave the serpents as they crumble.

"Those lights came from that mountain." He starts to run towards it and I trail behind. We find a young girl of about 15 standing in the wind, clothes fluttering. An ornate bow and quiver with silver bows on her side.

"That flash of light..."

She giggles. "Earth is beaten by air. Those serpents are no match for my arrows."

"Ah, your arrows are imbued with the element of air."

"You are clever for your age. You are the Great Sorceress's daughter."

I step back.

"There is no need to be alarmed; I am a bearer of the arcane and so are you."

We make camp there and I share my story with the girl. Her name is Aurora and she is from the dying race of Wind Weavers. As I finish, Mustang has fallen asleep.

"Helen, you are the next Keeper of Elements. You are the one destined to bring this land out of the misery."

"Me? Why not my mother?"

"Destiny chose you. I feel it within you. The ring will unlock more than just the power of four elements for you; you will be a master of the two equals, Light and Dark."

"How can I, a girl of 13 hold such a burden on my shoulders?"

"When the time is right it will be easy for you. Come, we have to go. It is time to fly."

"Fly?" I exclaim.

Aurora draws the wind itself with a tip of an arrow. With lightning speed, a lion with the wings of a Pegasus swoops down in front of us.

"This is Storm. He will take us to the temple."

“But what about Mustang?”

“Leave him; he won’t fit on Storm’s back.”
As I climb on, sleep enthrals my mind.

Aurora wakes me. We are at the temple. However, the temple is not the spectacle I thought it to be. Age has taken its toll and the building is crumbling.

The temple is a maze, but I run through it as if my soul is guiding me.

Entering a small room, fear races through my veins. Silver gleams at the other side of the room. I race towards it, my hand reaching.

But I do not get the chance to even touch it; a shining monster stands in front of me. A ghostly skull and glowing white armour, instead of legs it has gleaming white tentacles and hovers on the air.

“The Protector!” Aurora draws an arrow and aims for the creature. She trembles so much that she misses her target.

The Protector raises an arm and Aurora is thrown back against the wall.

And then it turns to me.

This time there is no fear; only anger. Power from beyond me, sweeps through my soul and into my fingers. Raising my hands, water bursts through the walls trapping the Protector in a vortex. Aurora fires again and does not miss. The Protector seems to cry out in agony. Its gleaming body begins to flicker and simply vanishes into nothingness.

The final hurdle is near. The end is near. And I am ready.

*Power over Air, Earth, Fire and Water
Master of Light and Dark*

There was no need to become accustomed to my skills. As soon as I put the ring on I feel reborn. I feel like I could do anything. I could fly. So I fly to him.

Lord Ran should be scared.

He is not hard to find: I can see his evil.

“If it isn’t little Helen, you’ve grown,” he sneers.

“Where is mother?” I growl.

“Locked away. But that doesn’t matter. Hand over the ring.”

“No.”

“Then die!” He draws his sword, dark magic enveloping it. I reach out my hand and draw the water from the air. My powers freeze the water around my hand, creating a blade.

“You’ve learnt a few tricks have you? Well... So have I!” His sword glows red as he brings it down at my blade. The two collide, but mine melts.

I jump back, clap my hands then touch the stone wall. Part of the castle comes down and I fly high above to watch. The rubble settles and I wait. Minutes pass. Nothing happens. It’s over. I turn my back and concentrate on finding mother.

“RRHOAAHHRR! I am RAN!” The rubble bursts, sending stones shooting in all directions. “I will not die so easily!” Lord Ran roars.

“Back for more?” I retort “So be it.” This time I will not hold back. This time all the elements will come together. This time Lord Ran will be no more!

With the power of the ring I transform. My hair is water, my body fire, my arms earth, and no legs; my body floats. I fly forward and Lord Ran cries in anger and horror. “I cannot die! I WILL not die! I AM RAN!” He charges towards me thrusting his evil sword into my chest.

But the fire makes his sword melt before it can touch me. The elements fuse and become pure; just light and dark, both together.

Together the two envelope him, his dark magic useless against both. Then at the moment when he is near death, I let him go. His powers have gone; he is nothing but a feeble man.

The land is now at peace and my journey is over. Mother and I are together and the sun finally shines.

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