

The Power of the Diamond

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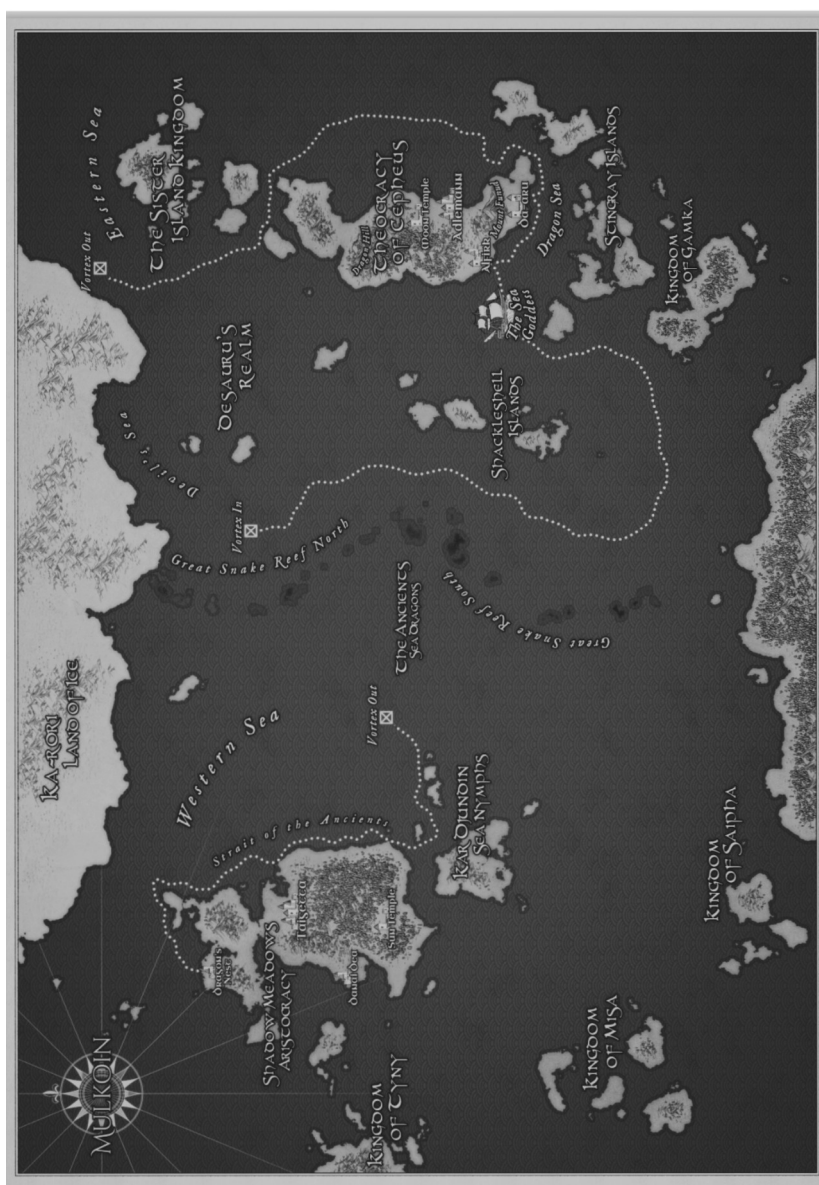


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*For all those on a quest, searching
in the depths of themselves.*

CONTENT WARNING

Please be aware that some readers may find the content of *the Power of the Diamond* disturbing, including emotional abuse, sexual assault, discrimination, drinking blood, killing animals, violence, death, and murder.



LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

IN THE THEOCRACY OF CEPHEUS:

Astraeus Maigrainyu: last King of the Mighty Forest Kingdom

Athan: a raven and Scildend of Medea

Fea: foster child of Alkaide

Lady Ydrenya: High Priestess in the Moon Temple and Ruler of the Theocracy

Lady D'Haviland: Medea's teacher in the Moon Temple

Medea Tjuvavak: novice of the Moon Temple

Philline Bonefacius: novice of the Moon Temple, Medea's best friend

Sandra Tjuvavak: Medea's mum

Toma Tjuvavak: Medea's dad, former army officer in the royal army

IN THE ARISTOCRACY OF THE SHADOW MEADOWS:

Alexandrei Sjire Alda: former Emperor of the Empire, Vadim's twin

Aemilia: mage in the D'Cybanne Forest

Cayden Silverlaeye: Crown Prince of the Sister Islands

Enora Tjuvavak K'Loua: High Priestess of the Sun Temple

Imogen Esthaesys: head of the House of Esthaesys, one of the three rulers

Kalliste Tjuvavak: former Grand Mistress of the Imperial Palace Danai Dea

Natalia Esthaesys: daughter of Imogen Esthaesys, Viktorya's best friend

Tameira Sjire Alda Maigrainyu: former Empress

Vadim Sjire Alda: High Priest and Seer at the Sun Temple, Alexandrei's twin

Vasylis Sontze: head of the Oraku Training School, Viktorya's coach

Viktorya Maigrainyu: daughter of Yelena Maigrainyu

Yelena Maigrainyu: head of the House of Maigrainyu, one of the three rulers

ON BOARD THE *SEA GODDESS*:

Fyona: contestant in short stick for the tournament in the Shadow Meadows

Rafail: foster son of Demir

Tian: contestant in archery for the tournament in the Shadow Meadows

Winta: warrior in the service of Parissa Deveraux

GODS & GODDESSES:

Alco-Raeye: the Sun God, creator of all

Alkaide: the Sea Goddess, daughter of the Moon Goddess

Ka-Ralyge: the God of the Underworld

Larysse: weaver of Fate

Moigraisse: the Moon Goddess

Parissa Deveraux: Fairy Godmother of the Forest Creatures

Sea Nymphs: Iza, Kuma, Rana, Shaula. Living in Kar-Djundin

THE ANCIENTS:

Kyrhan: Deep-Sea Dragon

Robert: member of the Council of the Ancients

Sylvy: member of the Council of the Ancients

A MULKOINIAN GLOSSARY

Da Grull — A black dragon with a black heart, in the service of Ka-Ralyge.

Dragon — Red dragons spit fire; brown dragons spit earth; blue dragons spit water; golden dragons spit lightning.

Innod — A PERSON who can read the energy of flora and fauna. They can also hear the music in everything they touch. They can see the other realms, all creatures from great to small.

Faran — A person who can travel with their mind and soul to other realms, to the past, future and present. Their body remains paralysed, similar to sleep paralysis.

Galina — A gentle sea creature that lives in groups in the deepest parts of the ocean.

Kirill horse — A horse imported by the Star People; it's a horse, but its head resembles that of a seahorse.

Scildend — An animal that will protect the Faran at all costs. It will cast an energy shield around them during their soul travels by humming a magical song.

Prologue

MEDEA STOOD IN THE HEAVY rain at the bottom of Mount Funud, out of breath, hands on her knees. The girl glared at the black bird that had followed her as it flew to a branch and sat down.

A flash of lightning revealed Medea's position. Her feet were stuck fast to the ground as if she'd sunken into the swamp.

I was certain she was up to something.

My partner, an idiot, charged at her, growling and baring his sharp teeth and his claws outstretched.

I yelled, "Stop, you fool! She's trying to lure you into the swamp!"

The fool stopped, but the annoying girl began to move in a zigzag across the marshy, wet ground.

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My partner and I immediately chased after Medea because we were ordered to bring her in. Medea's heart had gone black, and now she belonged to him: the God of the Underworld.

Medea

The Theocracy of Cepheus, the year 330

AS LADY D'HAVILAND BEGAN TO speak with her calm, clear voice, the small, tattooed sun between her eyebrows glowed a golden yellow, a sign of her enthusiasm.

She looked impressive as always, her long hair hanging in curls down her back as she stood in front of us with the blackboard behind her. She wore a silk scarf on her head, the same saffron colour as her underdress, which traditionally showed her ankles. She stood in front of the class with a chalk stick in her hand.

Something is bound to happen.

I had no idea why the thought had crossed my mind.

While fidgeting with my blue woollen dress, I looked around the tidy classroom.

Philline leaned over and whispered, “Med, is something wrong?”

I looked into her bright eyes and whispered back, “It’s nothing.” A pang ran through my stomach as the lie slipped so easily from my lips.

In the air lingered a light peppermint smell mixed with lemon and chamomile. The novices of the Moon Goddess were trained in midwifery, the science of life and death, and in herbal medicine, hence the smell.

This was our graduation year.

“Ladies,” our teacher said in a soft, firm voice, “you’ll be graduating in four months.” Lady D’Haviland pulled the train of her blue silk dress as she walked from left to right and back again. As she spoke, her face took on a serious expression that made the tattooed sun glow blue. “Some of you have already decided to join the Order; some of you are on the fence. If you decide not to join, you won’t have a sun tattooed between your eyebrows, but that’s only natural. The sun is the symbol of your commitment to the Moon Goddess, Moigraisse, and your role as her priestess. It’s up to you to make the final decision.” The teacher held her arms relaxed in front of her body and clasped her fingertips together. The tattooed phases of the moon glittered around Lady D’Haviland’s wrists like a bracelet. The same tattoos that all priestesses had explained the stage of their development.

Lady D’Haviland stopped pacing and pointed at us with the chalk in her hand. “The last few months will be about repetition, repetition and more repetition. Everything you have learned over the past years will come up.”

Our teacher fell into a very meaningful silence.

Out of the corner of my eye, a large black bird flew perilously close to the window. Quickly, I turned my head towards the window as the bird flew gracefully towards the oak tree to land on one of the branches.

The branches of the two oak trees were led across the moat surrounding the Temple using a special technique. Their twigs were intertwined, forming a natural bridge.

The Moon Temple was the shining centre of Adlemarin—the capital of the theocracy of Cepheus—and the inhabitants knew that they were never allowed to cross the bridge without the permission of the priestesses.

My reverie was interrupted by Lady D'Haviland, who explained, "Once you've finished, you will be initiated as a neophyte. You will live at the Temple for the next three years of study. After that, we will see if you have been initiated as a priestess and where you will be placed. Here, at the Moon Temple, or, on the other side of the Snake Reef at the Sun Temple."

There were murmurs. Chairs shifted. A rush of excitement fluttered through the room and reached my heart, which opened wide and allowed the idea of becoming part of the Order of Moigraisse to enter in its entirety.

I focused on the teacher, who smiled and whispered, "You didn't think you were finished, did you? Even after the next three years, if you've finally become a priestess of the Order of Moigraisse, you'll still have a lot of studying to do. Next year, for example, you will learn to contact the realm of the Gods."

A thrilling sound of whispers and sighs filled the room. Again, chairs shifted.

My heart rate slowed, my breathing stopped, and my whole being anticipated what was about to happen.

Lady D'Haviland raised an index finger to command silence. The sun on her forehead turned lilac as she said, "There is one thing: Moigraisse has spoken to the High Priestess."

I exhaled as my ears started to ring. *And there it is.*

"There is someone in the class who will leave us soon," Lady D'Haviland spoke in a soft voice.

"Who is it, Ma'am?" a voice called out.

The teacher looked at us one by one and stopped at me. She whispered, “But she’ll be back before the final ceremony, I’m certain.”

I could feel my neck getting hot. Feeling dissonant caused my head to fog up. My wrists started to ache. I looked at the moon phases tattooed on my wrists. They slowly vanished under the ivory scales that had been appearing at the most impossible times and completely unexpectedly over the past few weeks.

I nervously fiddled with the moon charm hanging from the silver bracelet with my thumb and index finger. A gift from Mum and Dad for my eighteenth birthday.

Feeling Phylline’s scrutinising eyes, I quickly pulled my sleeves over my hands, stood up resignedly and nodded to the teacher.

“The High Priestess expects you.” Her face was indecipherable.

“Now?” I muttered in a hoarse voice as murmurs erupted in the classroom.

Lady D’Haviland looked at me thoughtfully and replied, “Yes, Medea, now.”

With my head down, I stood up and walked towards the door, unsure of my situation. I had a flash of memory.

As a child, I got kicked out of kindergarten because I didn’t fit in. The other kids were afraid of me. *Am I going to be sent away again?* The sudden rush of fear left me gasping for air.

Lady D’Haviland came to me, whispering in my ear, “Whatever happens is fate. We’ll be meeting up at the mausoleum this afternoon for our school field trip.” Then she turned to the class and clapped her hands. “Enough. We will continue the lesson. Which of you can name all the phases of the moon?”



THE CORRIDOR CURVED to the left. I looked at the doors on the right and at the floor, decorated with mosaic tiles. The yellow pastel

walls were decorated with panels depicting scenes of the Moon and Sea Goddess. One particular panel caught my eye.

A woman with curly red hair, wearing a saffron-coloured dress with short sleeves, embraced two dragons as if they were her own children. One dragon was red, the other golden. They had a head like a seahorse and a body like a snake—quite typical for dragons that had come from the stars. Of course, dragons didn't exist anymore. They were a part of the fables and old stories.

I didn't have time to think too much about it because the High Priestess expected me.

A moment later, I knocked on her door, my heart pounding in my dry throat.

A clear voice called, "Come in."

The room I entered was round, with a glass dome for a ceiling. I had never been here before, although I had been a novice for almost four years.

The room breathed audibly in and out as a living being. My body reacted strongly to the atmosphere. My throat became even drier, and my skin rippled as if something was shooting back and forth underneath it.

Lady Ydrenya, the High Priestess of the Moon Temple, stood on the other side of the room near a water basin with a black lining so that the water would not be affected by any colour. The older woman had obviously read the water, the High Priestess' expertise. Water functioned as a portal to the present, past and future. The messages were still echoing through the room like the notes of a harp played with great enthusiasm by the musician.

The High Priestess came out from behind the basin and walked towards me. The sun on her forehead had four long rays that crossed up to her hairline and three that crossed down to her eyebrows: a sign of the highest order. Her skirts rustled softly; her steps were light. She stopped right in front of me and said in a warm tone, "Welcome, Medea." She looked at me curiously as if she were a wolf inspecting a member of the pack. In a way, her face reminded me of

a wolf, a white wolf, with her white-blond hair, her eyes almond-shaped, and her face long with high cheekbones.

I followed her eyes as they slid silently from my muddy shoes to my face. I had been taught not to speak out of turn, so I kept my mouth shut. To my surprise, she looked approving.

An overwhelming scent of white sage hit me. I stifled the urge to cough.

Lady Ydrenya broke the silence. "You must be wondering why Lady D'Haviland... said what she said."

The nasty tickle in my throat grew worse. I swallowed. That didn't seem to stop the tickling.

The High Priestess gave me another approving look as I started to sweat. With her back turned, I rubbed my throat with my hand, swallowed several times and then coughed as quietly as I could.

Lady Ydrenya stood in front of the telescope, which stood in the centre of the room, throwing back the drape of her long purple skirt so that she could stand more easily. She leaned forward slightly to look through the lens.

None of the students were allowed to look through it, only if you belonged to the Order, so when the High Priestess turned and said, "Come child," I stopped dead in my tracks. My thoughts panicked. *Wait. Is this a test?*

Lady Ydrenya gestured for me to come to her.

Hesitantly, I walked towards the High Priestess, my hands clammy with sweat. I wiped them on my dress.

Lady Ydrenya pushed me in front of the lens, made me squint, and said, "Look."

I pressed my eye against the small cold glass. The blurred vision became clear as my eye adjusted to the lens. A sigh escaped my mouth. I got goosebumps all over my body.

The High Priestess murmured approvingly, "Good girl, good, good."

A whole new world opened up before me. The stars of the Cepheus galaxy twinkled in reds, blues and yellows around the dark

clouds of the Seahorse Nebula. Our country was named after this galaxy because more than three thousand years ago, our ancestors, the Star People, and with them, the seahorse dragons, came through there from a distant planet. I had never seen such a magnificent spectacle.

Lady Ydrenya pulled me from behind the telescope. She led me to two chairs and tea on a small table, which she poured. Then she sat down and began to stir the tea.

I waited patiently.

“Moigraisse spoke to me, Medea.” She looked at me sharply. “You know who you are.”

Surprised, I looked up. The soft light from the dome fell on the High Priestess’ face, casting a shadow over her eyes. For a moment, it crossed my mind that she manipulated me, but I immediately pushed that thought away. Lady Ydrenya would never deceive me.

“Speak, child.” The High Priestess took a sip of her tea and pursed her lips.

“Mother, what do you mean?” I asked. I shifted in my chair and grabbed my tea, stirring it too quickly and too loudly. I tapped the rim of my teacup with the spoon and placed it neatly on the saucer.

My voice rose as I continued to speak. “I am from Da-arú. My parents are Toma and Sandra Tjuvavak.” I raised my eyebrows. My jaws clenched. My hands fiddled with my wool dress.

Lady Ydrenya closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them again, she looked at me calmly. Her eyes softened. “Put your hand over your heart. Go ahead.”

Hesitantly, I put my right hand over my heart and closed my eyes. My breathing became shallower, and under my palm, I could feel my heart pounding and the nerves running through my body. The white sage smell lingered in the background. My throat no longer itched.

“Feel into your heart. What is it telling you? Ask Moigraisse to help you.”

A soft rustle of the High Priestess' skirts broke the intense silence in the room while I searched in my heart with all my strength. My whole body tingled, my heart raced. I thought, *Moigraisse, please help me.*

The High Priestess sighed, and at the same time, someone spoke to me through my own thoughts.

Go to Oraku, child. There, you will learn the truth. You already know that your parents are not your real parents.

You must go to Oraku. I will help you.

In the last words, a slight pressure on my heart manifested itself as if it were an additional confirmation. At that moment, I had a vision.

A woman with a yellow scarf over her head, covering her hair and part of her face, ran down the stairs. The stairs led down to the riverbank, where a sloop waited. Behind her, at the top of the hill, stood a great castle, its towers reaching up to the sky. The woman carried a small bundle in her arms. Another woman followed her. The two of them boarded the sloop. Then, the vision blurred.

I jumped up and said, "I think I just saw my mother." The last words had sounded high-pitched, the emotion threatening to overwhelm me.

"The Moon Goddess tells me to go to Oraku to find out the truth."

I rubbed my hands together and looked up at the High Priestess with my mouth hanging open. My hands fumbled at my dress.

"Mother, does this have anything to do with that woman in the painting in the hall?"

"What are you saying, child?"

The High Priestess looked at me sharply.

"There are no paintings in the hall."

My lips tightened. My eyesight blurred, and a slight nausea came over me. Then everything went black.