

Wham!

Helen slammed the door shut against the wind, curious as to how a storm of such magnitude erupted seemingly out of nowhere. Gaining her composure, and doing her best to shake herself dry, realized she had entered a shop full of exotic items, and even stranger smells.

With nothing to do but wait out the storm Helen perused the store. Funny looking hats, and misshapen jars of different color liquids lined shelves. The heads of animals mounted on the walls had blank stares that bore holes right through her; or so she imagined. But the books, the books had a pull on her she'd couldn't quite shake.

Allowing curiosity to get the best of her she climbed the stairs near the back of the store which led to shelves full of books, scrolls and parchment marked with curious shapes and languages she'd never seen. One book above all others called out to her, almost audibly.

All by itself on an old table covered in candles and melted wax, and more strange bottles of weird liquids, it looked like a science experiment on the pages of the book itself. Making sure no one was around watching, she sat down and started to read.

"Hey you girl, what do you think you are doing?"

"Oh, sorry. I just came in to escape the storm. I happened upon this book and couldn't help myself. So I sat down and started to read it."

"Well, you should know better than – Wait, you said you could actually read that book?"

"Yes of course. I am not the most educated, but I can read."

"That book, right there, you... you can read it?"

"That's what I said."

"But it has no words, on the pages. It's blank."

"What are you talking about? They are all right here. I'm not sure what it's about, but it seems to be a text about conjuring and controlling the elements."

With a speed and strength that belied the store owner's age he reached out and grabbed the young girl's arm dragging her towards the stairs.

"Bring that book.", he said, almost shouting.

"Ouch! You're hurting me. And where are we even going?"

"You'll find out soon enough. It's best you don't ask any more questions." Confused and gripped with fear Helen had no choice but to follow.

Behind the counter the old man bent down and unlocked a latch hidden in the floor revealing a set of spiral stone stairs disappearing into the earth. With half used candles they descended into the darkness.

The bottom of the stairs ended in a well lit room with a large wooden table surrounded by people dressed in long dark cloaks, their faces barely visible, hidden beneath hoods.

“Helen...” The apparent leader of the twelve spoke.

“We’ve been expecting you.”