

The Weight of the Blade

Nobody dies.

Kayden had that clear. But that didn't mean he wouldn't fight. He would fight to save everyone. He knew that for that he'd have to make sacrifices. But he wouldn't kill. Neither would he leave someone to die.

Nobody dies.

Kayden's first move was to head over to the wounded guard, and pursing his lips, regressed time on him by a full ten seconds. He appeared standing back on his feet, slashing the air with his sword as if Kayden was still standing there. Kayden slammed the flat side of his own sword onto the guard's head, dropping him unconscious to the ground.

As soon as his breath stabilized, he headed toward the stunned Magnetbender guard, taking off his armor, leaving him with just his breeches and shirt. Kayden clothed himself with it, disguising himself as a guard. He then retrieved a set of keys from the fallen belt, removing his shackles and putting them on the guard he had just taken the armor off of. Others wouldn't take long to find out the deception, but it should buy him some time.

As if on cue, a group of five guards stormed into the cavern-cell, their weapons at the ready.

"Thank goodness you arrived!" Kayden exclaimed, feigning fear, thinking fast, hoping for the best. He cleared his sore throat, closing his right eye for the guards to not see the difference in color with his left one. "The prisoner freed himself, but my fellow guard and I stopped him, leaving him stunned on the ground."

The other guards quickly rushed to the prisoner-look-alike guard, pulling him to his feet. As they did, Kayden used the distraction to casually walk away. As soon as he was out of his cell,

he rushed away, into the rock corridors lit by torches, their fire dancing with sharp and violent moves.

But he wasn't out yet. And he wouldn't get far with this stock longsword. He had to get a greatsword. As he was pretty sure he would have to fight some more before this was all over.

Fight...

He still felt sick from seeing the gurgling blood earlier. But why? He'd doubted he was that way before. After all, skill-wise, he was still an outstanding fighter. No time to reflect on his actions, though. Maybe later. He didn't like how torch fire moved in this place.

He approached an innocent-looking guard.

"I'm new here. The armory?" he asked, trying to keep his heartbeat and breathing stable, still closing his blue right eye.

The guard, seemingly not knowing yet what was going on, pointed a thumb up a corridor, giving him directions.

Kayden headed that way, trying to look nonchalant, and soon, got to an open door. Hesitant, he peeked inside. It was a big room carved directly into the rock, with dozens of weapons hanging from the walls. There was of everything there: swords, axes, maces, bows, trees, bread, sticks.

He quickly headed toward the biggest sword in the room –a black steel broadsword on a pedestal, with a thick and broad blade almost as tall as Kayden himself. Kayden picked it up, feeling its weight. His weak muscles suffered as he swung the massive broadsword around with a two-handed grip, but he felt at ease knowing he now had something better to defend himself with. Of course, it wasn't as strong or as sharp as Bakor's sword, but it would have to do. He really hoped he didn't get the chance to use it, though. He didn't want to get dizzy from seeing blood again.

"Hey!" a voice called to him out of the blue. "What do you think you're doing?"

Kayden frowned. He looked around for the source of the voice. He finally noticed it was the broadsword he'd just picked up, complaining as everything else in this place, vibrating slightly with each word.

“...What?” Kayden asked the sword. “I’m wielding you. That’s what people do with swords.”

“I’m no normal sword!” the sword complained. “I’m a Capital Sword, unique in the world. I’m the Mimicker!”

“I don’t really have time to—” Kayden pressed.

“I don’t care! State your quest. I’ll deem if it’s worthy or not.”

“Uhhh, for now I’m just trying to get out of the prison,” Kayden replied, getting nervous. He didn’t have time to debate with swords.

The Capital Sword that called itself the Mimicker paused. “Out? To the outside world?”

“...Yeah.”

“What for?”

“I’m going to find the Megalo Sky,” replied Kayden without thinking.

“What’s that?” the Mimicker asked.

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“What?” the teacher asked among the other students’ laughter. “Kayden... I’ve never heard of a thing called ‘Megalo Sky.’ Are you sure it’s not some, um, fairy tale?”

“It’s real!” Kayden said, getting to his feet. “I know! I don’t know what it is, but I’m going to find it.”

“I believe you,” the girl seated next to him said with a thumbs-up. Lauren. “Let’s...”

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The memory shard soon vanished.

“The Megalo Sky is the thing that holds the key to the perfect future,” Kayden grinned. “I don’t know the details, but I’m going to find it.”

“All right then, what are we waiting for?” the Mimicker exclaimed. “I don’t get what you said, but let’s go!”

Kayden frowned. Weird folk around here.

The sudden rumbling of rock that followed turned so loud Kayden had to shout to make himself heard.

“Mimicker! Is this normal here?”

“It can only mean one thing!” the sword replied.

The nearest rock wall exploded toward them, shrieking stones barely missing Kayden's head. From among the debris and a tunnel of pure darkness a colossal man sprang out. The greased-hair hulk of a warrior in plate armor was wielding a warhammer that surpassed him by a good two heads.

“Harkatronic!” exclaimed the Mimicker.

Kayden's fast dodging and Timebending were barely enough to avoid the flurry of blows from the warhammer man known as Harkatronic. The cavern's pulse all around him sped up, taking up the rhythm of invisible and powerful war drums.

“Stop *moving!*” Harkatronic shouted, smashing through the pedestal the Mimicker had been on before. “I am the warden. This is *my* domain!”

Kayden doubted the newly-acquired Mimicker could break through Harkatronic's armor, much less parry a warhammer of that size.

Then, as suddenly as he arrived, Harkatronic let go of his warhammer, which cracked the ground as it fell. He closed his eyes, breathing in deep.

Kayden frowned, holding the Mimicker in a defensive stance but unsure of what to do.

Harkatronic pulled out from his belt a small crystal vial the size of a thumb and spoke.

Is that, Kayden thought, tensing up, *an Airtronic vial?*

“I will become the Emperor of Athoren and show the world that my father was right,” he said, opening his eyes and uncorking the vial over his mouth, which hissed as it released its contents. “You are an obstacle. Gain 1.”

The air started vibrating, an indescribable white noise that started to fill the room.

This is definitely not good, Kayden thought, taking several steps backward.

Electricity surrounded Harkatronic's body, lighting up his eyes. As if the noise and vibration weren't overwhelming enough.

"Face the abyss" he finally said, grabbing his warhammer and smashing it against the rock.

The ground collapsed under Kayden. Fast, too fast.

He recognized the Gravitybending right away. He couldn't even shout; the air left his lungs as the absurd force of who knew how many gravities pulled him downward through some kind of hole or vertical tunnel.

A fall. An immense pressure. Darkness. And water.

Kayden sank in black liquid, without the slightest hint of air as fuel for his powers.

He moved his arms in desperation, feeling his throat full of water.

I'm going to die, Kayden thought.

Panic took him over; his heart quickened, his stomach tightened.

I can't die like this, Kayden thought, his consciousness going dark. *I won't die like this!*

He stretched his hand up, searching for the sky.

He wouldn't make it. He was too far down. Then cold metal clasped his arm. He stopped sinking. He didn't understand how, but he knew it was the Mimicker.

Kayden felt as if his body weighed a thousand kilos. The water had him completely overwhelmed. He couldn't breathe.

I'm not going to die here, he thought.

So he stretched his arm upward, and grabbed onto the Mimicker. Fighting not to drown, he pulled himself up. Then he stretched up his other arm, and did the same. Again, giving it his all to not try to breathe. Again, feeling a forget-me-not sinking into the depths. And again, and again, and...

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Kayden gasped, coughing out an ocean onto the dark rock.

He was soaked to the bones and his body felt numb, but he was alive. Small victories.

Looking around he could see the black lake into which he had plummeted, its surface wavering and dancing. This cave was very much like the cavern-cell he'd just escaped from, except the rock seemed smoother, in a way, and glowed orange. The pulse seemed stronger down here, and he soon noticed all surfaces were warm, too. Was that normal?

"You woke up!" the Mimicker called out, lying on the side of the underground lake close by. "You sure sleep a lot for a death-row inmate."

Kayden frowned, crouching next to the sentient sword. "Death row?"

"Yeah," the Mimicker said. "So many possible centuries and you escaped right before they kicked your bucket! Or so I overheard. What are the odds?"

Kayden paused.

"Centuries?" he asked. "And, you've heard of me? I have a lot of questions. Where are we, anyway?"

"*Everyone* here has heard of you –the biggest of big-shot criminals! Well, we fell pretty deep," the Mimicker said. "I managed to hang on to a rock ledge before you sank, and then I did my thing. I'm called 'Mimicker' for a reason, you know. I can shapeshift! ...In a very restricted kind of way."

"That's cool," Kayden said. "It may be useful for getting out."

"I've heard about this place," the Mimicker noted. "It's very deep. There are tunnels that lead out of here. ...I just don't know which ones."

"Uh, thanks."

Without much of a choice, Kayden picked up the heavy Mimicker, fastened it to his back, and started walking. He had a lot on his head, but none of it would be resolved until he got out of the mess he was in. Harkatronic was most likely searching the whole prison for him. He seemed powerful.

Nevertheless, Kayden was making progress. He had escaped his chains and the cavern-cell. He had the Mimicker with him now. He could do this.

He *would* get his life back. But first, he needed to escape Chasm's Edge.