

Fallen From The Sky

"I'm looking for the Book of Skies."

Thamlar Harkasonne waited at the side of the road as the wandering vendor sifted through the absurd stack of books in his cart, pulling out scrolls and tomes with no end in sight.

"A-ha!"

The vendor's seeming triumph sent a jolt through Tham.

"Did you find it?" he asked, steadying himself.

"No," the vendor replied. "But I found this! The Book of Books. If it exists, it's here."

Tham sighed. He was so sure he'd get it this time.

The vendor skimmed through the Book of Books so fast that Tham doubted he was even glancing at the pages. He then slammed it shut.

"Too bad, kiddo! There's no Book of Skies in the record. But there's plenty of fantasy comic books you can take! They may be a better fit for someone so young."

Tham pursed his lips.

"Thanks."

He walked away as the vendor called out about some wonder inn that could help. Not that they'd have the book he needed anyway. Tham knew what he wanted, even at his underestimated fifteen years of age. He'd reach a Skyland one day and share his story in verse. For that, he needed the pesky book.

Tham started the way toward the wooden stairway that led to his home. Stumpborn Village was carved into the stump of a once-massive tree. The one-piece masterwork was in constant evolution.

It wasn't late. Mid-afternoon in the land of Beron meant the sun still had ways to go. He glanced at it to make sure, and then he saw it.

An object was falling from the sky, building up speed as if shot straight to the ground.

Tham stared in amazement.

A dragon?!, he thought, equal parts excited and scared. He should go alert the village. But he most definitely wanted to check it out first. That falling object had 'adventure' written all over it.

He ran through the field and then forest that surrounded Stumpborn Village, trying to predict its trajectory. Needless to say, the Unidentified Falling Object smashed against the surface about half an hour before Tham got to it.

It was a man. Lying deep in a crater, with a black sword by its side, he looked dead, or at least dying. His dark brown hair was all messed up and slightly slick with something that looked like blood. He was way too young to die.

Tham froze. He wasn't expecting *that*.

What am I meant to do now?

He couldn't just carry the guy home, could he? His mom would never allow it. But... did she need to know?

He hesitated. It would be easier to just let him be.

Even so, could he leave a man to die? He didn't look older than 19.

Tham sighed, pursing his lips.

I'm gonna regret this, he thought as he headed over with his every sense on edge, pulling those heavy arms over his shoulders. He grunted as he got to his feet, balancing the body on his back.

"Hey! Leave Kayden alone!" a metallic voice exclaimed.

Tham jumped, almost letting the body drop as he spun around, pale. Was his adventure coming to an end?

He frowned. There was no one there.

"Down here, idiot!"

It was the black sword.

“Uhh,” Tham attempted with a trembling voice. “I was just... going to take him somewhere safe.”

“Eh?” the sword said. “And you're just leaving his good ol' friend behind, huh?”

“What?”

“I'm the Mimicker!” the sword continued. “A Capital Sword, unique and different! Kayden saved my life, and I saved his, so we're bonded now.”

“You're alive?” was all Tham could reply.

That gave the Mimicker pause.

“Am I? Well... I don't know... but I'm gonna find out! I'll discover the truth of my creation. The Mimicker —creature or machine? Stay tuned, fellas!”

“So, uh, you want me to...”

“Take me with you!” the Mimicker said. “It's clear you won't leave Kayden here, and I'm not letting you take him away from me either.”

Tham thought about it long and hard. The sword looked *heavy*. His mom didn't allow weapons inside the house. He hadn't signed up for carrying both a man and a sword.

“Can't you walk?” Tham asked.

“No,” the Mimicker said. “I'm a sword.”

Tham sighed.

“Fine. But if I get the slightest hint of back pain I'm dropping you.”

He walked over to the Mimicker, struggling to crouch with the man called 'Kayden' on his back. He pulled it from the floor, holding it horizontally with both hands behind his back as a seat for the unconscious Kayden.

If this man is dead, and I'm spotted by anyone, Tham couldn't help but thinking, I'll be blamed.

Well, he just had to walk quickly. It was getting dark anyway. Gosh, were they heavy.

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Tham reached the gargantuan tree remains on which Stumpborn Village lived about two hours later and gasping for air. Why was he doing this again?

Guess this place has been way too boring as of late, he thought to himself.

Then, he noticed. The stump had only four entrance stairways, and they were guarded by two villagers each. How on Athoren was he meant to sneak in with an unconscious man and a talking sword?

“Wake him up,” the Mimicker suggested.

“How?” Tham asked in a whisper, struggling to catch his breath. He didn't know whether there was anyone listening up in the edge.

“I don't know, slap him or something! You know, like humans do.”

Tham slowly let Kayden and the Mimicker down onto the ground. He flexed his shoulders. His back indeed hurt. He kneeled next to Kayden.

“Won't he get mad?”

“He'll get madder if you drop him while climbing,” the Mimicker said.

“...Fair enough.”

Tham hesitated, but then slapped him slightly in the cheek.

“Sorry,” he added right away.

Nothing happened.

Tham raised his hand again, but as he was ready to get another go at it, Kayden's left hand shot up and grabbed his wrist.

“Apology accepted,” Kayden said with a worn-down voice. “Just don't—”

He sat up quickly, spitting some blood to the side with a grimace. Tham could now see his right eye was light-blue and his left one was brown.

“Oh, man! Did I make you bleed?” Tham said. “I'm sorry!”

Kayden laughed, clear and loud.

“Nah. It's just been a shaky day. Nice to meet you, by the way.” He held up his hand. Tham shook it, and then pulled him up by it. “I'm Kayden Almerth.”

“I'm Thamlar Harkasonne,” Tham said, then frowned. “Have I heard your name somewhere?”

“I don't know,” Kayden said with a shrug. “Maybe? You know, your name sounds familiar too. Not for the right reasons, though.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“We know a—!” the Mimicker started.

“We know a lot of Imperial spies,” Kayden interrupted. “How do we know we can trust you?”

Tham paused.

“You're kidding, right? I just carried you all the way from the bottom of a crater to my home. It took me like two hours!”

Kayden stopped.

“You did?”

“He did,” the Mimicker said.

“Yeah!” Tham said. “If there's anyone who should be asking that question, it should be me. Why should I let you into my village?”

Kayden shrugged. “I don't know. Thanks for saving me, but I don't know if I want to go into your village anyway.”

Tham sighed.

“You're not making this rescue any easier.”

A fourth voice cut off their discussion.

“Is anyone there?”

A village guard.

“Blast!” Tham muttered. “Follow me, Kayden! Bring the Mimicker with you.”

With that, they scuttled away along the bottom of the stump, heading over to the next entrance stairway.

“Hey, Brigger!” Tham greeted the assigned guard as he climbed the steps. “I'm back. This is my friend, uhh, Hayden. Say hi, Hayden!”

“Hi, Hayden!” Kayden said.

"You're Hayden, idiot!" Tham whispered. "He's Brigger."

"Right. Sorry, I'm tired," Kayden whispered back.

"Tham?" Brigger asked. "Up way past your bedtime, aren'tcha?"

"Nah," Tham said with a grin. "I'm just recruiting staff for the inn."

"Quite the workout to get to 'im I see," Brigger added with a laugh. "That's new."

"Yep," Tham replied. "I mean, it's not! I'm always working out. I just fell... in a muddy pond... today. Yeah, that's it."

"Well, just let Tandallie know. Don't lie to her, okay?"

Tham nodded, ready to head into the village.

"Who's Tandallie?" the Mimicker asked from Kayden's back.

They all froze.

"I mean, I must've forgotten!" Kayden said quickly, copying the Mimicker's higher-pitched voice. "Lotta names around here."

"My mom," Tham said, trying to make sure Brigger didn't suspect anything.

"Oh, okay," Kayden and the Mimicker said at the same time.

"Sorry," Kayden told Brigger. "I, uh, have a cold. That's why my voice sounds weird. That's why I'm bleeding, too."

"...All right," Tham said, pushing Kayden forward. "Let's get you to the inn before it gets colder."

Stumpborn Village was beautiful in its simplicity. Each building, carved out of the wood, was the vivid reflection of its owner. Tham carefully guided Kayden over to the Grinnin' Inn. His lifelong home and at the village's main square, the Grinnin' Inn was meant to be shaped like a smiling mouth, but it still looked to be more of a banana. It was a work in progress. His mom and him would finish it one day. When they did, they would invite the whole village over and celebrate for an entire week.

They sneaked into Tham's room through the second-floor back window like only he knew how. It had little more than a bed, a wardrobe, and a stack of books, but it was messy nonetheless.

“Okay,” Tham said, sitting cross-legged on his bed and gesturing Kayden to the carpet. “Take a seat. We have a lot to talk about. Don't make me regret this.”