



## CHAPTER 6



# Betrayed

**D**RAKE SAT ALONE in his room, running his hands across the smooth, black cloak given to him by Lord Ekron. Following Terell and Ryann after school to the lake had been a hunch on his part. Their faces had flushed with guilt when he approached Liddy and them in class to ask what they were talking about. Lord Ekron had told him that he needed to stop the one who seeks to bind, and the first two likely candidates were Terell and Ryann. The decision to corner the two of them out by the lake and intimidate them was easy. What he hadn't expected was the strange glowing water and Ryann's disappearance. Even now he could see the blank, distant stare from Ryann's eyes as he slipped beneath the surface. Panicking, he had run as quickly as he could back to his bicycle and raced the entire way home.

"I blew it," Drake thought. "It was my first chance to do something for Lord Ekron and I chickened out." Drake smashed his fist down on his desk, hoping for another chance.

"Things not going as well as you would have liked?" the crackling voice muttered from behind him.

He jumped slightly. "Oh," he said, turning to see his aunt standing in the doorway, the small lamp in his room casting eerie shadows across her face. "You startled me."

She smiled when he said that, as she crossed the room and placed her long, bony fingers on his shoulder. "Do you feel like you let him down?" she asked.

"Let him down?" he wondered. "She couldn't be talking about Lord Ekron, could she? How could she know?"

"What do you mean?" Drake asked his aunt. "Let who down?"

"It's okay, boy, it's not a secret. Lord Ekron first visited me many years ago when I was a girl about your age. I've done his bidding ever since. He's the one who told me to adopt you."

Drake glared at her, caught between the desire for her to tell him more about Lord Ekron and despising her for revealing the harsh truth that he wasn't adopted because of family loyalty, but out of obligation.

"If you're like me, you can feel the power that he has to offer. Then you won't have to worry about anyone taking advantage of you again," she said.

Drake stared into the empty, sagging eyes that glared back at him. Ever since he could remember, he had felt uncomfortable around his aunt. She always seemed to be staring at him, like she was peering into his thoughts. He didn't think she really could, but Drake always felt she knew more than she was letting on.

"I'm afraid I've outlived my usefulness, but he has plans for you, Drake. I see you have his symbol." She stared at the red dragon on the black ring. "Now that you've opened the door and let him in, there can be no turning back."

Drake considered her words. "Why would I want to turn back? Lord Ekron is opening my eyes to things I've never seen before," he reasoned. Suddenly his aunt didn't seem so scary anymore. She looked tired and frail.

"Do you know who Lord Ekron wants you to stop?"