

WARRIOR CHILDREN

SONS OF THE RED PLANET



VAUGHN EDWARD

WARRIOR CHILDREN

The Immortals Series

Book II: Sons of the Red Planet

is the second installment in
The Immortals Series.

WARRIOR CHILDREN is a work of fiction.
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**For all those who wander in
curiosity, in the boundless
worlds of the Unseen.**

**For all those who delight in
dreams of alluring enchantment.**

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A peer into the future...

WARRIOR CHILDREN

Book III: Children of the Sun

Kayden walked slowly toward the door. He was grateful for the light bouncing off the walls. If the sword behind his back was not glowing from the infinite flame running up and down the blade, the entire hall would have been completely dark. He stopped one foot from the door and put his hand on it.

As if sensing somebody was there, the door pushed opened a slight bit on its own. A cool breeze brushed across his cheeks, and the door swung open fully. “Kayden,” a familiar voice said to him, “I’m very happy you came to me.”

His eyes widened, and Kayden sucked in his breath. “You? You’re the one?!”. He paused. “I can’t believe YOU’RE behind all of this.”

PROLOGUE

“EDWARD, SPARE HIM!” GENE SCREAMED SO LOUD, his voice echoed off the buildings on both sides.

“Really? Really, Gene?! Clueless! And why? Cause you’re too damn merciful! You and your father! You’re just like him, and it’s seriously pissing me off!” The point of Edward’s knife blazed into an immaculate violet flare, with the tip at the forehead of his prize. “Your kindness precedes you when this mortal should perish! At least let him die in honor, knowing his life force was stripped by MY HANDS! If I die, HE DIES!”

“And for what? This battle’s already done, and the death toll’s at an all-time high! He’s a toy, Edward, a puppet of his master.” Gene calmed his voice and pleaded, using a small bit of his power of persuasion. “Spare him, Edward. Please. We’re not mercenaries. We’re protectors, in case you’ve forgotten. He may be on the side of our enemy, but our enemy is not humanity.”

Edward glared at him the moment he felt the sparkle of energy from Gene. “Seriously? You’re turning your power on me? You’re really trying to force me to change my mind, Gene?! That might work on mortals, but you’re outta your league on this one!”

Crazily, Edward stared at Gene, then at the battlefield and back to Gene again. His body was pumping with adrenaline, and his mind was racing in different directions. He closed his eyes for a few seconds, right before a wicked grin spread across his cheeks. Opening them back up, he raised his arm high into the air and prepared to thrust the knife into the heart of the mercenary in front of him.

Before he could make another move, a blast sent him flying fifteen feet backward. Gene was standing above him, between him and the injured mercenary. Edward's head was throbbing, and he was numb and dazed. He whispered, "Gene, how could you? Why would you do that to me?"

"He's right, Edward." Edward's head spun. There was a brilliant, golden ball, as bright as the sun, advancing toward him. He tried to sit up, but he slumped back to the ground. Kneeling, Christopher placed his hand on Edward's shoulder, which shocked Edward and rattled his body violently.

"It's one thing to kill a mortal out of defense, or out of defense for other mortals. But for a god to strip a mortal of his life force out of sheer contempt, it is the very epitome of hell, Edward." Christopher stared down at him.

Edward made another attempt, but he was unable to sit up. Staring at the ground, he mumbled nonsensically. "It's... it's so hard, when they look at us as gods, but we feel everything they feel. But we feel it more intensely. And this world. I would've done the world a favor by getting rid of this monster. Wouldn't that have displeased Moloch? I..."

Christopher unsheathed his sword and pointed it at Edward while he was still mumbling. "Sorry, Edward. This will hurt. A lot."

At that moment, there was a huge explosion a few hundred feet away. A lightning-fast figure blurred from the explosion. Within a few seconds, Aaron came to a halt next to Christopher. "No, Christopher. Leave this to me."

He unsheathed his Vel staff and aimed it at Edward. Slowly, Edward looked up, and his gaze was met by the end of the gleaming spear. A tear rolled down his cheek, and he whimpered softly, "Aaron?"

The next moment, Edward screamed in pain. His body felt like it was being shredded, as if tiny pieces of glass were entering into his skin and organs. His sight was blinded, and the world around him collapsed.

CHAPTER 1

Part I: Time to Leave 6 Days Before Winter Solstice

Lost in his own world, Caleb moved about, finding it difficult to keep up with daily chores and the menial life of the village. To his left, three women were scrubbing vegetables, while waiting for a large pot of water to boil. Behind him, five men were busy building a wooden fence to keep wild animals from roaming in inadvertently. A few boys, slightly older than him, were splitting logs and carrying handfuls of wood to a nearby shack.

It had only been a week since the two gods had come and gone. His thoughts were tugging at the notion of something new and exciting in a land he could not even imagine.

Nearly every moment, the words from Aaron, the son of Muruga, would slither in and out of his mind. *Second son of Muruga, you were destined this day to meet the first, and the first was destined this day to meet the second. As you wish, so shall it be.*

He stopped and stood in place, just thinking. The words of Aaron's father crept into his mind. *From this day on, you will carry the vibration known as Caleb Elliott. You will carry the same family name as your brother, whom you will meet in the coming days. I have empowered this new name for you so that a pathway can be made for you into the Western world.*

"Can it be that I'm really going insane? My brother? I am still stuck in this village, and I really do not know if things will ever turn for me." An hour felt like a day, and a day felt like a month.

The swirling vortex of energy, created by Aaron and Edward, was a powerful vibration in the midst of a once-was common village. Established so that it would harness the magicks of Muruga for the benefit of the entire world,

the vortex was summoned and constructed within Caleb's tiny village, right in the heart of the Himalayan Mountains.

At the end of a day's work, most in the village could be seen sitting inside the circle of the six golden trees, repeating the powerful and magickal word, given to them by the son of Muruga.

Night settled, and Caleb stood outside the vortex and watched a group of his fellow villagers who were enchanted by the Murugan magick. The humming sound of Saravanabava, the magickal word which Aaron had given to them, penetrated the atmosphere, as they chanted in unison. Never did he step foot inside and join them. He was always content to stand back and watch. Always, when they incanted, he felt a surge of electricity buzzing inside of him, almost as if they were calling to him, chanting his name. He was in a daze trying to figure it out.

Question after question fluttered through his mind. He was excited and doubtful. *Did any of this really happen?* He sighed.

"Child, you should step inside the circle and ask your questions." The voice resounded from the center of his head. He looked around, but saw nobody. An eerie feeling crept throughout his body, and he walked slowly to the edge of the invisible barrier of energy. He stepped inside the vortex, and immediately, the energy he had felt standing outside of it increased dramatically by ten-fold.

His head was spinning and tingling, and one by one, his thoughts subsided. He walked to the very center of the six trees and closed his eyes. Oblivious of the other villagers, he momentarily forgot who he was and where he was. The voice in his head then said, "Ask."

His body jolted, but his eyes remained closed. *Did any of this really happen? Am I just dreaming?*

“Child, when you anticipate your desires, you become drenched and locked within time. The only way to escape this mold is to become present, unaware of anything else but this moment.”

Caleb stood in place a few moments. Slowly he asked, “Who... who are you?”

“You are the second son of Muruga, and I am he. That which you call destiny, awaits you. Upon the opening of your eyes, pay silent homage to the peoples of this village. For every time my name is spoken, the energy increases for you and the entire world. As they chant my name, Saravanabava, so too do they chant your name.

“After doing so, pack lightly. Inform your parents, as of this day, you will no longer be residing in this village. Your karmic bonds with them have been dissolved, and they will allow you to leave gracefully. Speak the truth, and you will surely access the freedom which you desire.”

But, you should know, my parents will not let me leave.

“The bonds which kept you wrapped tightly with your parents have all been melted away by the first son of Muruga. There is but one option, and one option alone. That is, to leave. That is the only door available. It must be so.”

Where do I go? How am I supposed to leave?

He stood there for two minutes listening for an answer. Nothing. *And I'm going nuts.* He opened his eyes and turned to walk out of the circle of the six trees, then stopped and placed his hands firmly on his hips. “Fine.”

Breathing in and out slowly, he watched the group. He then lowered his head and stared at the ground for a bit. Lifting his eyes, he scanned the villagers, then let his eyes sink. *Thanks. I might be crazy, but thanks.* Then he ran out of the vortex and made a beeline toward his home.

The door creaked, and he dashed in, only to come to a halt, nearly running into his mother. Her long, black hair flopped in her face as she yelled

out, “Aaaahhh!” She creased her eyes and asked him, “What are you in a hurry for? Slow down!”

“I, uh, never mind.” He casually walked to a corner of the room where he slept. His home, just a one-room shanty, gave roof to him and his parents. His mother eyed him suspiciously and watched him stuff two shirts and a pair of pants onto a small blanket, then tie the corners together.

“What are you doing?” she asked sharply.

“I...” He didn’t know what to say and thought about lying.

The voice from earlier pounded into his head once more. “Speak the truth, and you will surely access the freedom which you desire.”

Caleb stood up and sagged a bit in front of his mother. Before he could speak, his father walked in the door. Eyeing the situation and feeling the tension in the room, he asked in a very stern manner, “What is going on?”

“I am waiting for an answer from him,” she replied coolly, pointing a finger at Caleb. “He has packed some clothes.”

“Out with it then,” his father demanded.

“Well, last week, you know that I spoke to that god, the one who called himself Aaron. I even held on tightly to that weapon of his.” He squirmed a little and paused.

“Go on,” said his father.

“I did not tell you everything. That day, I asked him to help me to leave this village so I can have an exciting life. I love you both, and I am grateful to this entire village for everything. Really, I am. And well, he even made me give thanks to everyone before he helped me. When I grabbed hold of that staff of his, I heard this voice talking to me. It told me that I was going to have a new home in some place in the Americas, wherever that is. I have never even heard of it.”

Again he faltered, sputtering his words. His father just nodded and said, "Go on."

"Well, and then Aaron or his father, one of the two, gave me a new name. They called me Caleb. Caleb Elliott. He told me it would be my new name for when I go to the Americas."

His heart was pounding and his head started to hurt, but he continued. "Um well, then tonight, I went inside of the circle of the six trees, and that voice came to me again. It told me to pack, because tonight I am supposed to leave. And that is the long and short of it." He was almost in tears, unsure if he was going to receive a scolding or whipping.

Both his parents stood in front of him quietly. Unable to take the silence, he screamed out, "Well?!"

His father breathed a long and heavy sigh and touched the elbow of his wife. He then turned to his son. His voice was quiet. "The past three nights, I have had a recurring dream. The young god who came to us last week has been in it each time. All three nights he has said the same thing to me. In the dream, he told me, 'You will have to let Caleb go. If you allow him to leave, then one day, he will be the grace of this village.' I thought that it was just a dream. I mean, I did not know of anyone named Caleb."

The tension in the room eased, and the silence was captivating. Finally, his mother chimed in, "How are you supposed to leave tonight? We cannot just let you wander aimlessly in the mountains. There are wild animals, and who knows what else?!"

Just then, they heard the squawking of a handheld horn outside. Peering out the front door, they saw two horses and a caravan rolling in. Caleb's eyes lit up, and he shouted, "There! I'm supposed to leave with them!" He ran outside with his packed clothes.

His parents were about to run after him, but as they took one step, an apparition appeared before them. It was a hazy figure with colors of red and gold, and it held the same weapon as the son of Muruga had held the previous week.

It spoke to them. "Do not be alarmed, and do not fear for your son. The events which have happened were pre-ordained and arranged by the gods. His luck will continue to grow, and he will continuously be provided for. The little coincidences which have taken place are merely a twist of the hand. Go now. He needs you this very moment."

The apparition disappeared, and his parents stared at each other for a few seconds, then ran outside to find their son.

Many of the villagers were lingering about. It was not every day that outsiders happened upon them. A man stepped out from the driver's side and waved to everyone. "Hello. I am on my way to the city. It is a very long way from here, and my wife and I are in need of any supplies. We have money, but it looks as though you are all completely self-sufficient and have no need of that. So we can only ask for a favor."

Quickly, the villagers hurried in different directions and loaded the caravan with enough food to last several nights to a week. After graciously thanking everyone, the man stepped back up into the driver's seat. Caleb's mother saw the expression of her son, as his face turned sour. He was too scared to ask, and they had not yet granted permission for him to leave.

She stepped in front of the caravan and waved for the man to come out again. Before the entire village, she stated, "What our village has done for you, we do without asking in return. But if I can now ask a favor of you? Please take my son with you. See to it that he arrives in the city. He is on his way to America, and this will just make it easier."

The man in the caravan looked to his wife for a moment, and she nodded. "Very well. We are honored to accompany him, and we will happily take him as far as we can. There is plenty of room for us all." He turned to Caleb and said, "Hop in."

Caleb was beaming. He ran to his mother and hugged her tightly, then did the same to his father. "I do love you, and I will never forget you. I promise!" His parents squeezed him tightly, and without knowing why they were doing what they were doing, they let him loose.

He then turned to face his entire village, and for a few seconds, he lapsed into a trance, while he was brought back to the moment when Aaron had spoken to him. He watched the scenario as if he was standing a few feet away.

He saw himself before the son of Muruga, and he clearly heard the words of Aaron, as he had spoken them previously. "Second son of Muruga, you were destined this day to meet the first, and the first was destined this day to meet the second. As you wish, so shall it be. When time opens, and the door swings wide for you to walk, look back once more and honor your parents. Give them hope in their time of loss. Tell them you will return someday. Tell the entire village, that when all seems lost, and despair is at its peak, that is when you shall return."

Caleb snapped out of his trance. His eyes were wide, and although he felt silly for saying it, he yelled out, "Someday, I will be back! I will come back and help! And ummm, when I do, when all seems lost, and despair is at its peak, THAT is when I will return!" *Wow. Now I feel stupid.* He turned to his parents once more and said, "Thank you mom and dad. I love you!"

Some of them jokingly laughed at his remark, and they waved goodbye to him. A young girl ran up to him and gave him a hug and kissed him

lightly on the cheek, causing him to blush. Then he jumped into the back of the caravan and watched the village disappear into the night.

Part II: Away from Home

“What is your name, son?”

“Caleb, sir. Caleb Elliott.”

“Caleb? Your name is not from the East.”

He quickly thought of an answer. “My parents know people from the Americas who have a son named Caleb. They liked it so much and named me after him. That is where I am going, to them. So uh, there will be two of us. Two Calebs,” he added, trying to sound convincing. *What? Oh man. I didn't just say that.* He sighed to himself.

“I see. Why are you heading to the West? Schooling?”

A bit unsure of what to say, he blurted out, “I... Yes. They want me to attend school there, and they told me that everything is already set up for me.”

“I see. How old are you?”

“I am fourteen, sir.”

“So you will be entering into high school then? That sounds very exciting.”

“Yes. I will be going to high school in the Americas.” *What?? All I have to do is get to the city. This conversation really has to stop now.*

“We live in the city. It should not take too long to reach civilization.” He chuckled to himself. Thinking for a bit, he asked, “Are you supposed to meet somebody in the city?”

“Uh, yes. I am.” Caleb twisted his lip.

“Do you know where? When we get to our car, I am not going to just drop you off anywhere.”

“Sir, as long as you get me out of the mountains, I will be fine. I have been there before, and I know exactly where to go.” Not wanting to be questioned any longer, he asked, “Do you mind if I sleep? I am just really tired.”

“No, of course not. Sleep.”

Caleb leaned back and stared at the ceiling of the caravan, shifting his eyes to the outside every now and then while pretending to be asleep. He was too anxious, excited and scared about the future to sleep. *At least I am out of the village. That is a start.*

Finally, after two hours, sleep won over. Several hours later, he awoke to the sounds of metal clanking together. The caravan had stopped, and the couple was preparing food. A small fire was lit, and the morning sun had just risen.

“You are finally awake.” She smiled warmly and handed him a paper plate with a mound of rice, topped with a soupy dish of sliced potatoes and lentils. “I know it is not much, but when we get to the city, we can treat you to a really nice lunch or dinner, complete with desserts.”

“Oh no, this is fine. Thank you. I am not used to having much anyway. In the village, we do not eat like princes. It is just, well, stuff like this.” *Oh wait, that did not come out right.* “I mean, this looks really good, and I am used to eating this kind of food.”

She grinned at him and nodded. “Well then, it looks like we have something to look forward to when we do get to the city. A nice meal, and then you can be on your way.”

“Ummm, okay, deal. You are really nice, by the way. And if I did not say it before, thank you both for taking me.” A few thoughts quickly passed through his mind, some of which were about Aaron and his father. “And if there is something I can do for you to pay this debt off later on, then I will do it.”

She put her hand on his shoulder. "You were raised right, but you have no debt to us. Remember? Your village helped us out. So fair is fair."

"She is right. No arguments on this one." Her husband cheerfully walked around the caravan and sat down. "You owe us nothing. We will be in Delhi in no time at all. When we reach there, we will feed you, and then make sure you safely meet your chaperone."

Caleb tilted his head, then slowly shook it up and down. "Okay. Then we are even. That is very kind of you, sir. Thank you." He turned around and grimaced a bit. *Just wait til they find that nobody is there to meet me.*

Part III: Across the World in a Blink of an Eye
New York, Mid-December

Casually strolling down 42nd Street, he whistled a tune to himself, merely out of pure joy. A wide grin spread across his face, and he breathed in the buzz of a city like no other in the world. He followed no path, nor the swarms of people who were walking in various directions. Instead, he zipped from corner to corner and window to window, peering at anything and everything that caught his fancy.

Dressed to a tee in modern, form-fitting fashion, donning the colors of black, red and white, with sleek pants and his collar popped up, he stopped in front of a window and gazed at his reflection. His smile broadened. Then he sighed and shifted his backpack so that it hung on the other shoulder. *Soak up the fun now before leaving for the world of complete and utter silence.*

He turned and saw a street performer who was juggling six tennis balls. The smile returned to his face. He stood mesmerized. "Now that's magick! And while it's freezing cold!" *So much to see, so much to do.* "I'm thinking, this planet really should be my home." He walked toward the performer and tossed a ten-dollar bill in his bucket.

After milling around for several hours, hopping from bus to bus and from train to train, he found himself somewhere in the middle of Queens. By this time, the sun had already dimmed, and the night sky welcomed the city lights in all directions. "Food. I definitely need some. I haven't eaten anything all day." *Ah, well, except that coffee. Is that considered food, Father?*

No Answer.

He walked into a café and placed an order for a falafel sandwich and a salad. When the waitress asked what he wanted to drink, he merely said, "Surprise me." A few seconds passed by and the waitress hadn't moved. "Yes,

really. Surprise me. I just want my food. And whatever else, well that's just a bonus. So there you go."

A few minutes later, she returned with an orange soda, a root beer float and a coffee. "Now that's what I'm talking about!" He was clearly overjoyed.

She gave him a sarcastic look. "Right. I would've brought you a beer, but yeah, it'd be a waste of my time to even ask for your ID."

He eyed her incredulously. "What you mean? I've had a beer before."

"Pppffh." It came out as a loud exhale, and she turned around. "Your food'll be out in two minutes."

"What?" Then he realized. *Oh yeah, right. I totally forgot. I'll look under age even two thousand years from now.* He giggled to himself.

After his meal, he stood on the street, staring at a clock inside the window of another restaurant. *Two hours, thirty-two minutes, and twelve seconds.* "What to do until then?" he voiced aloud to himself.

Silently, he explored the neighborhood, mindlessly walking through alleys, side streets and sometimes through buildings, from the entrance and finding his way to the back doors. In one such building, he looked at the clock again. *Eleven minutes and forty-three seconds to go.* "Hmmm, I killed that much time off?"

He slipped out the back door of the building and stood in the parking lot for a moment before entering an alley. Looking at both ends of the alley, he was trying to decide if he should go left or right. *As if it matters.*

He mentally checked off his to-do list. *Get the boy. Bring him to the others. Find rocks. Throw 'em around the planet. Come back. Have fun.*

A big grin spread across his face as he thought of having fun. *And blow some shit up with Edward.*

His thoughts of fun were halted, when a voice rang out, “Yo! Lookie what we got here! Uh oh! Looks like someone turned down the wroooong street!” And then, laughter.

Aaron rolled his eyes when he saw two guys walking toward him, and four coming from the parking lot he had just left. He hollered out, loud enough for them all to hear. “Damn. You totally ruined my happy thoughts. Really though, I don’t have time for this. I’m on a schedule.”

“Hear that, Tone? We ruined his happy thoughts. And the boy’s on a schedule.”

The one addressed as Tone spoke out. “Should’ve thought of that before, pretty boy. Way you’re dressed, I’m bettin’ mom ‘n dad sent you away with a heavy pocket. What’s in the backpack?”

If not demons, humans. All I wanted was a good night. “Ummm, you really don’t wanna know what’s in there. And I don’t have a mom. I’m actually the son of a great god whom I call, Father. So I guess you can say, my dad did send me away with something. But I’m just letting you know, you really don’t wanna know what’s in my bag.”

“I thought about letting you off with just a few stabs and broken bones,” Tone said, “but since you opened your mouth, you’re not gonna walk or even crawl away.”

Tone took one step, but before he came any closer, Aaron had already unzipped his bag and stuck his hand inside. The moment his hand went inside the backpack, Tone and two others drew guns, while another pulled out a knife with a five-inch blade.

When he saw the guns, Aaron’s arm moved at blinding speed, as he withdrew it from the backpack. In a split-second, the Vel staff in his hand grew to over five feet in height, while emitting a searing light that filled the entire alley.

In a frenzy, Tone pulled the trigger. A loud echo rang through the alley from the gunshot.

“What the...?”

Aaron cut Tone off. “I told you, you didn’t wanna know what was in my backpack. And no, I wasn’t lying about my father.” The bullet was suspended in mid-air one foot away from Aaron. He hadn’t moved. Nor did he flinch.

Tone pulled the trigger once more. Again, the bullet stopped one foot away from Aaron.

“Look...” Aaron took a deep breath and stared hard at Tone. “I’m not here to fight. If you leave now, you will all remain unscathed.”

He reached out, grasped both bullets, and stuck them in his pocket. He eyed them quickly and spotted a silver watch on one of them. “Before you leave, I’ll be taking all your weapons, and your watch.” He pointed at the one with the watch on his wrist.

They were all speechless. Aaron added, “No need to go searching through your pockets. I’ll take them from here. Well, except the watch. You will happily take that off your wrist and toss it to me.”

He slammed the base of his staff into the ground and emitted a power that started to magnetize the weapons to him. The guns slipped out of their hands, and another gun came sliding out from the pants of another.

The one with the five-inch blade could not hold on to his knife. It too was wrenched from his hands, along with two other blades from the others. All the weapons floated toward him and gently lowered to the ground at his feet.

“Now. That watch?” Aaron held out his hand. “Please hurry. I distinctly remember telling you all that I was on a schedule, and I need to know how much time I have.”

In a very speedy and nervous manner, the guy slipped the watch from his wrist and threw it to Aaron. He looked at the time. *Two minutes and twelve seconds*. “Is this watch dead on?”

“Ye- yeh,” the guy stammered. “It’s right on time.”

“Good. You can all leave now. And I really do mean right now. I need to scam and do my thing.” Aaron pointed his staff at the weapons. A burst of light shot out and disintegrated the guns and the blades. When that happened, all six of them turned tail and ran off.

Aaron glanced at the watch again. *Thirty-eight seconds*. He closed his eyes while gripping the Vel staff tightly. The air around him swirled, and tiny particles of light shot out from both his staff and his body. A crackle of thunder in the sky, and he disappeared, leaving the alley dark and quiet.

Part IV: Teacher and Student. Brother to Brother.

The caravan rolled into Delhi, and the couple was met by a friend, who took the horses off their hands and had arranged for a cab. The couple, along with Caleb, piled into the cab, which took them further into the city.

The husband turned to Caleb. "We will get some food first. You were telling me earlier that your chaperone will be in the inner city of Delhi?"

Caleb fidgeted a bit and said, "Yes. I can get there if I just see some of the neighborhoods. I will be able to recognize it, and he is expecting me." *Maybe I can just run off and lose them. They are nice and all, but what to do.*

"Very well." He turned to his wife, placed his hand on her knee and asked, "How about Prakash's restaurant?" She nodded, and he gave the cab driver the address of the restaurant. He turned to Caleb and said, "We are going to the restaurant of a good friend of ours. The food is very good there."

An hour and a half passed, and Caleb was completely stuffed with food that he had never before eaten. Spicy dishes, rice dishes, and sweets which he had never heard of. *Man, I hope they have this stuff in the Americas.* Then the agitation hit. *Oh no. Now what?*

Standing on the side of the street outside the restaurant, the husband looked at Caleb. "It is a big city. Do you recognize any of this?"

Caleb wasn't prepared for an answer. His cheeks flushed, and he was trying hard to think of something to say. Just then, a voice called out from almost a block away. "Caleb! There you are! I'm so happy you made it here safely!"

Caleb's eyes widened. There was a dark-headed boy, dressed to the nines, walking toward them. The bold mixture of colors of black, red and white, and his obvious foreign origin stood out amongst everyone else on the street.

"I... uh," Caleb managed to mutter. "Looks like we do not have to go anywhere. There is my chaperone now."

Aaron cheerfully waltzed up to where they were standing and introduced himself. "Hullo. I'm Aaron. My father sent me to meet Caleb."

The husband shook his hand and asked, "Of course. I was a bit worried about this whole thing. But it makes sense for an American to take him to the West. Where is your father now?"

"Oh. He is very busy. He's off doing the fatherly stuff he does so well with his business. But he provided me with enough money and all the papers Caleb needs in order to travel." Aaron pulled out a passport with Caleb's photo on it, along with a handful of other documents that looked very official.

After inspecting them for a couple of minutes, the husband handed them back to Aaron, satisfied. "Well then, it looks like everything is set for you, Caleb. My wife and I can stop worrying about you, and you will soon be in the West attending school."

Aaron smiled broadly at the couple. He gave a slight bow of his head and spoke to them very clearly and intently. "Your generosity and care for this boy will not be forgotten. He is extremely important. He is very close to me and is in every way, a brother to me. For the selflessness which you showed, your life will be a myriad blessing of many sorts. And I assure you..."

He paused for dramatics sake. "I assure you, whether or not the gods and goddesses whom you chant to daily, come to you, the Murugan god will be at your beck and call, before you even ask."

Before they could say a word, Aaron tapped them both on the forehead with both of his index fingers. Their eyes bugged wide, and a rich warmth of electricity spread throughout their bodies. "I will be taking Caleb now. We have much work to do."

With that, Aaron tugged on Caleb's sleeve, turned and walked in the direction from which he came. Caleb glanced at the couple, who was still in pleasant shock. He managed to say, "Ummm, thank you!" Then he turned and ran to catch up to Aaron.

He caught up with Aaron, clearly giddy. "What? How did you know I was...?"

"Honestly." He cut Caleb off. "Edward and I come and heal an entire village of diseases and problems, and you ask me how I knew when and where you would be?"

"Oh. Right." Caleb furrowed his brows and asked, "So now what? When do we leave to catch our flight to America?"

Aaron laughed heartily. "Silly boy. We're not. I need a half-day to rest, then we can leave for America. My way. The documents I showed them were purely for their benefit, so they wouldn't worry. They weren't real. It was merely an illusion for their eyes. But like I said, I need to rest, or at least not do much more than just sight-see. Then we leave."

"Oh." Caleb stared at Aaron as they walked. He was fascinated by the god before him. "So, do all gods dress so nicely?"

"Hahahahaha! That's about the funniest thing I've ever heard! At least in the past minute, anyway."

"Well. I don't know. How would I know?" Caleb wasn't sure how to act or what to say to Aaron. He looked upon Aaron as a god, and more of as a teacher or parent figure, rather than the equal he was destined to become.

"Don't worry." Aaron was very amused at his new friend. He knew it was his job and responsibility to teach Caleb every facet of the magicks of Muruga. He also needed to figure out a way to make Caleb feel like a brother instead of a student. *Not sure how that's gonna happen. Suppose I'll wing it, just like every other moment.* "You'll know everything you need to know soon

enough. Just stay present with me. Ask any questions you like. And above all else, let's just have fun."

"Okay then. So like, how old are you?" asked Caleb. "You look like you're in high school. But I'm not stupid. I saw how you handled all the grown-ups in the village. Unless, wait. Are you in high school?"

"I've honestly never attended a day of school in my life. The only schooling I've ever had was just living life and learning from it. As for my age, I really don't know. There's really no way to calculate it. I've always just... just been."

He stopped walking and closed his eyes for a few seconds. Then he opened them up and looked at Caleb. "I was never born, and I've always been. I've been alive for thousands of years. I don't remember when I was never not. To my knowledge, I won't be ending any time soon."

Caleb's eyes widened in amazement. "You're not lying, are you?"

"Nope. I wouldn't lie to you, little brother. Let me add, that even though you're only fourteen, don't let age control you. Your wisdom is not guided by your age. You will learn. You will absorb. The outer form of your body will not show what you know, but your eyes will. People will be able to see the wisdom from the intensity of your eyes, and they will hear what you have to say from the silence you display."

"Huh?" Caleb gave him a weird look. "Whatever you just said just went about three feet over my head."

"No," Aaron replied. "It went about three floors above your head. It's okay. Let's keep walking. As I said, you'll know everything you need to know, in time."

"So what's this place like in the Americas? What it's like over there?" Caleb was clearly very anxious.

Oh lord, Father. I shouldn't have told him to ask any question he'd like. "That answer will have to wait. The only way you'll know what it's like, is if you see it and experience it for yourself. Anything I tell you will just be a dry idea to what it actually is. Meaning, it won't mean squirt to you. Understand?"

Caleb thought for a moment. "Yeah. Cause then it'd just be your idea of what it's like, not mine."

"Right."

"If I'm gonna be some great god like you, then I have to learn a bunch of stuff, right? What'll I be doing?" A fearful expression dawned on his face, although he tried to look courageous.

"I've put some thought into this," said Aaron. "I really think it would be useful if you actually did attend school. You know, fit in with other kids your age. That's part of it, at least."

"Really, why? Not that I care or anything. At this point, I'm just glad I'm out of that village. I'll pretty much do whatever. Just feed me. That's all I ask."

Aaron laughed heartily, then halted in place. He wanted to drive a very important point into Caleb. "As somebody who is granted the blessings and powers of my father and the Otherworlds, it's extremely important that you learn how to relate to people. People of every color, background and age, and people with problems ranging from relationships to finance to bum bodies that are diseased and failing.

"If you can relate to them, you'll know the best ways to connect with them and solve their problems. Me 'n Edward? We know how to relate to the people, so we were able to help your village. So I want you to be able to relate with people your age first. Find out what their problems are and why they're so depressed. Soon enough, you'll be dealing with adults. No rush in any of this. All the while, the Otherworlds will continue to open up to you."

Just then, Caleb realized he was speaking perfectly fluent English with Aaron, although he had never studied it. He stopped in his tracks. "Omagosh!"

"What's the matter?" Aaron turned around and looked at him perplexed.

"I've been talking in another language this entire time I met you! But... but I never learned how to!"

Aaron nodded in understanding. "Second son of Muruga, you did learn it. You absorbed a gift which I gave to you the day we met. I gave it to you without telling you. You now have the power to learn, or rather, know any language you wish you to. Edward has this gift also. By any language, I mean all languages. The language of those animals who talk back and forth to each other. The language of alien races not of this planet. It is all available to you."

Caleb was a bit shaken up. It was just beginning to dawn on him, who and what he was, although he still had no idea. "Why me? I mean, I'm not saying I'm scared or being a baby about this. It's pretty cool so far. But why did..." He tilted his head, not sure if he felt comfortable saying it or not. Then he continued. "Why did... why did Father choose me? I only wanted to leave home. That's it, really."

Oh boy. I knew this question was gonna be asked sooner or later. Aaron's lips twisted, and he sighed. "First, get used to thinking in that way and addressing him as Father. That's what he is to us after all. We are both the sons of Muruga.

"And second, I may be known as a god, but I honestly don't have all the answers. Father is a vastness that I sometimes can't comprehend, although I can. If that makes any sense at all? But this vastness of Muruga does as it does. And when it does, things are made to happen.

“I can only tell you, I’m along for this joyride as much as you are. For the moment, I’ve got a shit-ton more experience, and I know more than you. So I’m here to show you the ropes, until you’re ready to grab onto them and swing around by yourself.

“I’ll tell you this much,” Aaron added. “Those who are so-called ‘chosen’ are not necessarily just chosen. There had to be some kind of inner longing from you to want to experience something deeper than what you’ve been experiencing. All you’ve known is your village. Maybe that was enough for you to want more. It was bland, like a cage around you. Like your buttons were pushed to the very limits, and if you didn’t experience something better, you would’ve exploded.

“When you’re pushed to the limit, you become open to that vastness I was talking about. You’re not just some silly kid that Father chose. You opened up to something amazing and great. It was then presented to you, and you jumped at the chance to receive it.”

“Ummm, okay. I’m sorry I asked. Can we just have some fun now?” Caleb couldn’t take anymore.

“Yeah yeah yeah. My favorite motto. Let’s have some fun. No wait, I take that back. My favorite motto is, let’s blow something up.”

Caleb looked at him curiously, and Aaron just snickered. “Come on. Let’s just do something.”

CHAPTER 2

Part I: To America

Nine hours passed. Caleb had walked all over the city with his new “brother” just sight-seeing, petting random animals on the street and eating fruit from different stands in the outdoor markets. He even stood watch while Aaron napped for an hour on a bench to help regain the strength he needed to make the jump from East to West.

“I love India! I wish I had more time to explore and walk around, but we have things to do and people to see. And also, I’m pretty tired and need to rest.” Aaron told him, “I need for you to stand guard over me. This is your first assignment. Don’t let anyone near my backpack, and keep your mind focused on that mantra we gave you, Saravanabava. The more you use that power, the more you’ll become it. Okay, I’m gonna snooze now. Protect me. In exactly one hour, wake me up. We’ll leave for the West then.”

Immediately, Caleb felt useful and important. Aaron didn’t really need any protection. He only wanted Caleb to get used to doing things. As Aaron slept, Caleb was vigilant in his incantation of the mantra. And although his eyes were pointed outward to all who passed by, his focus remained in two worlds. The Otherworlds and the Earth Plane. Exactly what Aaron wanted him to accomplish and get used to.

After one hour, Caleb shook Aaron awake, and his eyes popped open. When they did, Caleb couldn’t see Aaron’s pupils at all, only white and gold sparkles of light. Aaron rubbed his eyes and yawned, closed them tightly and opened them back up. His pupils were showing again.

“It’s been an hour,” said Caleb.

“I’m still alive. Nobody touched me or took my backpack. Kudos to you, brother.”

Caleb was beaming. “So we leave now?”

“Yup. We leave.” It was nighttime already. Aaron stood up and looked around for an inconspicuous spot. “Let’s just walk a little and see if we can find an alley or some spot where nobody’s at. When I zip in and out of places, it causes a pretty big stir.”

After walking for seven blocks, they hopped a fence and ended up in the back of a run-down building. “This is perfect.” Aaron glanced at Caleb. “You scared?”

“Well, no. I mean, not really. Maybe a little?”

“It’s fine if you are. Even if you don’t admit it to other people, at least be honest with yourself. I’ve been scared before, although I think I’ve only admitted that to one person in the thousands of years I’ve lived. And that was to Edward. But when I was scared, I always admitted it to me, and then I found the strength to go on.”

“Yeah well, it helps when you can’t die.” Caleb let out an audible sigh. “Alright. I’m a little scared, but I’m also excited. I wanna feel this power go through me when we transport, and I’m excited to see a new part of the world.”

Aaron nodded in understanding. “This is special also. It takes an enormous amount of energy to do what we’re about to do. When I invoke this energy, you’ll be completely saturated by the energy and blessings of Father. Every cell of your body will be transformed. It’s like a shortcut. You get the wisdom and power stuffed into you, and you don’t even have to do a thing. No learning. No memorizing. No nothing. I do everything, and you just accept the energy into you.”

“That’s it? I don’t do anything?” Caleb was a bit skeptical.

“Nope. Just stay open to receiving. Now put your right hand on my hand. And whatever you do, don’t let go.” Aaron held tightly onto his Vel staff, while Caleb clutched onto Aaron’s hand.

“Again,” said Aaron. “Just stay open to receiving. Feel the power. Let it take you over. Surrender to it. The more you do, the more you become it. That’s the gist of it all, how humans become gods. They let the power of the gods become them. It’s actually very easy if you ask me. Oh, and don’t be too surprised. Where we’re going, it’ll be mid-day, and the sun’ll be out. Anywho, you ready?”

“Yeah, I’m ready.”

Aaron spoke a few incantations aloud for Caleb to hear. He pictured the location he wanted to go to, then slammed the bottom of the staff into the ground. The wind around them stirred in a frenzy, almost like a mini tornado. There was a low, vibrating hum, and light and energy shot into both of their bodies.

Caleb was shaking hard, but he did not release his grip. He felt the power of their father, Muruga, coursing through every vein, every cell. It lit up his brain, and he felt as if his body was on fire, without hurting or being burned.

All his thoughts ceased. In that moment of zero thoughts, he saw light exploding in everything around him. He realized, the light in the building and in the ground was the same light inside of him.

He understood. To become the god, a human mind does nothing. *So this is what it’s like. I am the power, and the power is me. I’ve always been this power. But... but I’ve always been too dumb to know it, and too deaf and too blind to hear it or see it. It’s so simple. I understand. The mortal does nothing, and that which is the god takes over and does everything.*

One more massive amount of energy and light entered into them both and shot out from their bodies in every direction. They were gone. All was quiet and desolate again in the back of the building.

Part II: The New Recruit

Edward stood outside on the back patio of his new home that Starko had readily welcomed him into. The Guardian Watchers, Heather, Gwen and Mery, were inside training with all the others. It was a relaxed time, if only for a moment, and he was able to gather his thoughts. He stared out into the backyard and drifted off into thought.

The brilliance of the first light, a pure white, will circle over the horizon during the battle cries of Earth's mourn. Winter will come to pass. The second, a wondrous blue light, will usher in the dawning of a new age as the three who walk amongst the flesh, will gather as one. Heed the cries of souls be gone. Earth, wind, fire, water and space, will bow before one, and all that is lost will be found.

“That damn prophecy.” He rubbed his face and took a deep breath.

Christopher and Gene walked out and joined him. Christopher pointed to all the stuff in the backyard. “It’s so perfect! Starko’s a genius. This place of his is a total cover-up. I mean, who’d wanna hang out in an abandoned lot filled with rusted junk? Besides us, of course.”

Gene pondered that for a moment. “Well, Starko did say that some drifters did try and take shelter here once, thinking it was exactly as you said. But every entrance was triple-secured, and they couldn’t get in.”

“Yup. I believe that.” Edward whistled. “Even Moloch’s henchmen would have trouble getting in this place. Break one lock or door, and you run into solid walls made of metal. On top of that, the power of the Sun is pouring

out from everything here, and it's literally telling people to overlook this place, like it's non-existent."

"It's my baby, this place." They turned around and were met with a wide grin from Starko. "This place looks like a rambled-up hell-hole on the outside. It's so deceiving."

"Got that right." Edward watched the cloud from his breath in the cold air as he talked. "You ever run into problems with the law with this place?"

"Sure did. A few years ago, the city sent the police here. They tried to declare this property a hazard. I claimed it was a storage place for me, and that the junk was needed for scraps for my art. They didn't buy into that too much and pressed me pretty hard. I think they just wanted it for their own use."

Starko cracked up in the middle of his story. "So I set up a meeting with city officials, and I brought Thomas in to pose as my lawyer. Thomas is a talker, definitely. With both of us in the room at the same time, we did a bit of mind influencing on them. They pretty much agreed to everything we said. Signed whatever we wanted, and we were out the door in thirty minutes!

"But Thomas, man, he was pretty ruthless. At one point, he told them all, 'That building is such a beautiful place. I really think you think that.' He was radiating this very strong power. Everyone in the room started to nod their heads in agreement. They were looking at pictures of this ugly building and telling each other how beautiful it was. They told us, as long as our property taxes were paid, we were as good as gold.

"Thomas could have gotten them to petition this place as a National Historic Landmark if he wanted to. Of course, that wouldn't do much good for us, since we're laying low."

"That's hilarious!" Christopher slapped his thigh. "This is one of the ugliest places I've ever seen, on the outside anyway. Hahahaha!"

Edward had drifted off into his own world, and the expression upon his face was somewhat grim. Christopher stared at him for a moment, then asked, "What's the matter, Edward?"

"Huh?" Edward snapped out of it. "Oh. I was just thinking, you know, about that stupid prophecy. I was reminded of that episode when you and Gwen were in New York, and she recorded you spitting out another damn prophecy that sounded related. Do you remember what you said?"

"Yeah, I watched it a few times afterward and memorized it. It was short enough. Just don't try and get me to memorize any speeches. Anyway, it went like this."

He thought for a moment, then mumbled through it. "When the three become one, the power inside and beyond all images and thoughts will destroy the blatant ignorance of humanity's self-inflicted pain."

"Can you say that with a little better diction and meaning?" Gene asked him, jokingly.

"Whatever, Gene! I'm a good actor. Besides, me and Edward made it on TV. You didn't."

Edward couldn't help but laugh. "I'm glad you guys are with me. You make me laugh during times like this. Before you all came out here, I was just thinking of the original prophecy, the one handed to us over 3000 years ago. When we merged into one entity not too long ago, and this other prophecy was given to Christopher, I was just thinking how it fits right in with the original."

"Yes, it does." Starko thought for a moment. "It all makes sense. You three were given the prophecy thousands of years ago. All three of you come back in this day and age. Then, when the three of you merged into one, while Edward was battling those flying beasts, a similar prophecy comes through Christopher. All signs point to keeping you three alive til the Blue Full Moon. Then we're golden."

“Yup.” Christopher sighed aloud. “I can’t wait for my body to not be so damn mortal.”

Just then, a huge wave of white and golden light shot across the roof and on both sides of the building, and the ground shook a little. All four of them ducked and placed their hands over their faces and eyes, completely startled.

Thomas came running out back. “What the hell was that?!”

They looked around for a minute in silence, until Edward spoke up. “Wait a minute! I know what it was. Somebody just couldn’t stay away! Come on, follow me!”

He ran around the side of the building, and the others followed suit. There, lying in the middle of the lawn, sprawled out on his back, was Aaron. He was staring up at the sky, lazily, and a small boy was sitting next to him.

He tilted his head forward and saw them all standing in front of him. “Heya, guys. Got any food? He likes cheese, by the way.” He pointed to Caleb.

“Aaron!” Edward ran up to him and gave him a hand. He looked at Caleb and smiled. “We’ve been expecting you. I’m sure your outlook on life is completely caput by now, hmmm?”

“Yes sir. I’d say so.” Caleb was a little dizzy from traveling. He tried to stand and wobbled a bit. Edward caught him and steadied him.

“And please don’t call me sir anymore. That’s just weird. Edward will do.”

Edward turned to the others. “Everyone, this is Caleb. He’s somewhat in training, but Aaron’s father has already claimed him as the second son of Muruga.” Edward then introduced Caleb to Christopher, Gene, Starko and Thomas.

Caleb looked at Aaron, then Edward. He shook his head and sighed. He was dazed and a bit in awe, since these were the two gods who had come to his village. He looked at the others and waved. “Yeah. I do like cheese.”

“Come on in then.” Edward led the way. “Let’s get you both some food. How long are you here this time, Aaron?”

“Not long, unfortunately. I need to rest, then zip back to the other side of the world and meet Gaia, so I can get those stones.” The look on his face saddened a little.

“I understand. Come on in.” Edward put his hand on Aaron’s shoulder. “You’ll be okay. You’ll be back in no time. Probably right in time to blow something up and get in Moloch’s way.”

“Yeah. That’d totally be fun.” The look on Aaron’s face cheered up. “Oh, and I need some new clothes. I’ve been in these too long. Got anything?”

“We’re about the same size. No problem there. Hopefully it’s fashionable enough for you, though.” Edward was glad that Aaron had lost his short wave of sadness.

“Yes, well, it better be. I only go out looking like a movie star. You know that, Edward.”

“Yes,” Edward agreed. “This is true.”

Inside, there was an exciting buzz. Another new recruit for the side of the gods. Patrick was enthused. There was somebody who was younger than him, but still cool enough to hang out with. Standing next to Caleb, Patrick sized him up and figured he was about three inches taller than Caleb, who was 5’5”. They sat down on a couple of bar stools at the kitchen counter, and Patrick jokingly said, “About time we got some diversity in here.” He put his arm against Caleb’s dark skin and laughed. Caleb just grinned.

Heather, who was standing nearby, rolled her eyes. “Yeah, because a few girls who can kick your ass, a young child who looks like he’s twenty-five, a sun god and three gods from thousands of years ago, AND a few evil henchmen who aren’t evil anymore isn’t diverse at all.”

Patrick stuffed his mouth with some of the mashed potatoes that Heather had made. “Yeah. You right. Caleb’s young, but Thomas’s protégé is technically the youngest I guess, since he’s only like seven? Damn though, looks like he’s twenty-five.”

“Just another day here at Starko’s.” Heather shrugged her shoulders and turned her back to them, so she could tune them out and focus on the rest of her cooking.

Caleb felt at home and was chomping on a grilled cheese sandwich, with all sorts of vegetables that were sautéed in the middle of it. They had been talking for some time, and Patrick changed the story and was telling him how he had ended up at Starko’s fortress.

“So yeah, dude!” Patrick was very animated. “I was in this gang, and we were like, all acting tough. It was five of us against Christopher and Gwen. Gwen was just sitting down, watching us all get our butts kicked by Christopher. Then, Christopher just froze us all in place with his powers! He told us all to leave, and we did. I ain’t never seen the rest of those guys since. We disbanded, and I somehow found my way here. I had to. It was like something kept calling me. Calling me and pulling me to Christopher. Now, Christopher is well, my ummm, Master.”

“That’s pretty cool,” said Caleb. “Aaron and Edward came to my village and turned it upside-down. But you know, in a good way. I begged Aaron to make things happen for me, so I could leave the village. I never expected he’d come and take me himself and bring me to a place like this. But here I am.”

Patrick nodded. “Yeah man, that’s pretty cool too. Oh! And I was wondering. Besides your accent, you speak damn near perfect English. And you’re fourteen? I’m sixteen.”

“Yeah, fourteen. And yes, I somehow speak fluent English, even though I never studied it. Aaron did something, and then, blah blah blah.”

“They’re pretty cool, huh? Our teachers? My life before this pretty much sucked.” Patrick shook his head at the complete change he had undergone. “I was eating leftover scraps from people and sleeping in random places. I was a squatter.”

“My life didn’t really suck. It was just horribly boring.” Caleb took another bite. “This food is just amazing, compared to what I was eating. But anyway, every day, it was running around that stupid village, getting wood, or picking vegetables or scooping water. Actually, yeah. It did kinda suck too. But now I’ve discovered English and cheese, and life is good.”

Patrick cracked up. He was in a really good mood. He had been trying hard to relate to the girls and the gods, but was having so much trouble. It always seemed that he was at a loss for conversation with them. So he just listened, nodded his head and smiled when they looked at him.

“Yeah,” said Patrick. “The food here is hella good. It’s better than the day-old shit I was eating from restaurants when they tossed it out back.”

Caleb made a face and squinted. “Ew.”

“Oh yeah. Christopher told me I had to go to school. He told me it was necessary and not to argue.”

Caleb’s eyes lit up. “Really? Aaron told me the same thing. Maybe they’ll send us to the same school?”

“That’d be kinda cool. You’d be in a different grade. But you know, we could like watch out for each other.” Patrick was hopeful. He was small, and he hadn’t yet picked up the gift of gelling with other kids. It didn’t matter that Caleb was younger. All that mattered was that he wasn’t alone in some new place.

“Gwen on the other hand, she doesn’t have to go back to school.” Patrick frowned at that. “They said that she’s already seen enough and done enough, and that her training is on a completely different level now.”

“So like, that girl Gwen can totally kick our asses?” asked Caleb.

“Pretty much. She could easily tear us both apart. And Heather. Don’t EVER mess with her. She makes some awesome mashed potatoes, but I’m just sayin’.”

“What was that about messin’ with my mashed potatoes?” Heather looked up.

“Nothing.” Patrick stuffed another fork full in his mouth.

“Uh huh.” She nodded her head and squinted her eyes at him. “Looks like you like it enough.”

“Yup. Stuff’s good,” Patrick readily agreed. “You know me, Heather. I’d never knock on you or your cooking. Besides, I’d get my ass kicked if I did.”

Heather balled up in laughter. She walked to the refrigerator and pulled out some juice. She stood there gulping it in front of the two boys, then looked at Caleb. “So how are you liking it here?”

“It’s a huge change. I like it though. Everyone’s nice. And there’s like, a LOT of food that I’ve never heard of or smelled or eaten before. So I’m gonna eat it all now, while I have the chance.”

“You act like you’re goin’ somewhere and this ain’t gonna last.” Heather raised her eyebrows and stared at him.

“Well, no.” Caleb was defensive. “I just haven’t had a lot of stuff in life. Now that I have this, I’m gonna eat it ALL. You never know when it might run out.”

Heather was done teasing him. “Relax, kid. I’m only pulling your ropes. You can eat whatever you want, when you want. I don’t care. Just have fun and enjoy it. This stuff ain’t running out any time soon.” She glanced at the

food she was making and added, "I'll finish all that later." She then walked out of the kitchen and left them both sitting there quietly.

Caleb was the first to speak up. "Yeah. I think she could totally take us both out in a fight. What do you think?"

"Oh yeah. Definitely."