EMILY KNIGHT

I am...Awakened

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PROLOGUE

Rose

The window shutters swung to and fro, creaking nosily in the quaint farmhouse. Rose Moore, a little girl with two neat plaits wrapped in red ribbon, sat at the kitchen table swinging her skinny legs back and forth to the sound of the creaking. She began to hum tunelessly, a song she had heard on the radio.

May Moore was making brownies, and her wrinkled hands were covered in chocolate. Her blue almond eyes, enhanced by her round-framed glasses, were staring intensely at the brownie mixture, and her chubby cheeks were red from the heat of the kitchen.

"That smells lovely," Jack Moore said, as he hobbled into the kitchen. He bent down and kissed his granddaughter's nose. She giggled and he walked to his wife, sticking out his finger.

"Hey!" May said, slapping his blue-veined hand away from the brownie mixture. She poured the mixture into a circular baking tray and handed Jack the bowl. "Share it with Rose but not too much!"

Jack kissed his wife on the cheek. May smiled and he

winked at his grinning granddaughter. Rose placed her finger in the bowl and scooped up the mixture. She swirled the chocolate and sugar around in her mouth.

"Yum," she said, as she scooped again. Jack watched Rose adoringly as she cleaned the bowl. "Finished," she squealed triumphantly.

"Good, you can wash the bowl. Come on," May said, when Rose pulled a face.

"Are these for tomorrow?" Jack asked, noticing the white roses on the table.

"Yes, we'll leave them in the morning. We're going to visit your parents' grave tomorrow, Rose."

"Can I put the flowers down?" Rose asked, as she rolled up her sleeves and turned on the tap.

"Of course you can, lovely," May said, kissing her forehead.

That night, May locked up the chickens and ducks that lived in the back garden and chased the rooster that crowed at sunrise into its cage. Jack, as usual, locked up the doors and windows, before sitting at Rose's bedside to finish her bedtime story. His voice was calm and gentle. He stopped constantly to show her the pictures in the book. This particular picture was of a tiny girl the size of a thumb who was staring into the giant face of her mother. The tiny girl was questioning why she was a different size from everyone else.

"Would you still love me if I was different?" Rose interrupted.

Jack looked up from the book. "Of course I would, Rosie Posie. Why do you ask?"

Rose turned away from him. "What if . . . I could do things?"

Jack closed *One Tiny Girl* and frowned at his granddaughter.

"What sort of things?" Rose hesitated. "Come on, Rose, you can tell me anything."

Rose stared at him with her eyes wide. "What if I could fly?"

"Fly?" Jack asked frowning. "Why would you be able to fly?"

A shrill scream came from downstairs.

"May?" Jack shouted.

He jumped up from his seat, and moved with the alertness of a young man. Rose went to follow him, but he shook his head. She sat back on her fairy-covered bed and pulled the duvet over herself, so that she was hidden. Rose heard shouts, and deep voices she had never heard before. Her grandfather was yelling. Rose had never heard her grandfather raise his voice before, and it frightened her.

She curled into a ball and began to loudly hum a song she had heard on the radio, to block out the screams. Then she smelt it. Fire. She threw her fairy duvet on to the floor, and shot out of bed. She jumped the stairs two at a time and stopped when she saw shadows moving in the smoke.

"Grandpa?" she yelled, as she looked around.

Shouting and laughing echoed around her. She watched helplessly as three figures ran out of her house, congratulating each other on their accomplishment. Rose screamed when she saw two bodies slumped on the kitchen floor motionless, surrounded by red flames that were licking her grandmother's cream wallpaper.

The smoke was filling up Rose's young lungs. She began to heave and cough. She kneeled over and put her pyjama top over her mouth. Rose walked slowly towards her grandparents, but her bare feet scratched on the shattered glass on the floor. She fell, clutching her pale foot as the blood spread over it. Her head felt light. She couldn't breathe.

"Help," she said desperately, before everything went black.



SEVEN YEARS LATER

The bathroom door swung shut behind her. Rose fumbled at the taps, but she couldn't get a firm grip. The smoke from her hands was getting stronger. Rose bit down hard on her lip to stop herself from screaming in pain. She finally managed to turn the stiff tap, and the cold water shot down on to her hot hands. Her hands sizzled and the smoke and pain slowly began to disappear. Rose looked at them in awe. Apart from the scars from the fire, they were okay.

"Thank God," she sighed.

She looked up and caught her reflection. Her large, sad brown eyes stared back at her through her long black hair. Her pale cheeks, engraved with burn marks, were flushed. She poured water into her cupped hands, and dabbed the water on to her cheeks until they were pale again.

Rose returned to her English class, where the students were sitting in silence, writing an essay. Mrs Draught glanced up as Rose entered the room, then she continued to mark her papers. Rose sat in her seat, and tore off a piece of paper from her exercise book. She wrote on it quickly, scrunched it up, and threw it to the desk next to hers. Her best friend, Max Jacobs, a skinny boy with a long brown fringe and glasses that were too big for his face, opened it up on his lap.

Smoky hands. What does it mean?

Rose could see from the corner of her eye that Max had opened his backpack and pulled out a book that he placed on his lap. He turned the pages quickly, and Rose glimpsed pictures of famous warriors. When he stopped, he wrote down something on the back of her note, scrunched it back up, and threw it to her.

Rose glanced up but Mrs Draught was still marking her papers. Rose opened up the note and it read in messy writing:

That means you are officially a warrior!

Rose gasped. Her eyes immediately started to well up and she shook her head from side to side.

"No, no, no!" She tore the note into little pieces and threw them in the air.

"Rose!" Mrs Draught was on her feet with her hands on her hips. "What is going on?"

Rose pushed back her desk with so much force that it toppled to the floor. The class watched in shocked silence as she ran out of the classroom, slamming the door behind her.



"Are you okay?" Max asked, sitting beside her on the bench in the playground. "Why did you get so upset?"

"Because I hate them," Rose spat.

"Why?" Max asked.

"They're evil," she replied. "And I don't want nothing to do with them."

They watched the other children playing games and chasing

each other around the school playground. Rose couldn't remember the last time she had felt happy. After her grandparents' death, there was a part of her that died with them and she felt empty. Since then, the days seemed to merge into one long stretch.

They were under the oak tree, Rose's favourite spot in the entire school. The shade from the tree hid Rose and Max from the other students. She felt like they were invisible to the world.

"But how are warriors evil?" Max asked her. "I mean, Tainwo Kena saved loads of people's lives." He pointed to the book on his lap. There was a photograph of a young Korean man, with biceps bulging through his t-shirt, firing a blue fireball up into the sky.

Rose sighed and hit Tainwo Kena's face in the book with her finger. "People like *him* kill people. These warriors set fire to my house and killed my grandparents when I was six. They enjoyed doing it. If it wasn't for the neighbours calling the fire brigade, I would be dead too. Look at me! They left their mark."

She could feel Max staring at her face. Her face was destroyed because of people like them.

"Do you know who they were?" Max asked, turning away.

Rose shook her head. "I wish I did." *I would kill them,* she wanted to add, but she didn't want to scare away her only friend.

A football gently hit Rose's foot.

"Hey, patchwork!" James Dunce shouted. "Pass us the ball."

Rose ignored him. She ignored anyone who called her names. The only person she didn't ignore was Max.

James walked towards her. He was a tall, lean boy with

spiky black hair, blue eyes, and a beauty spot on his right temple. All the girls at St Peter's Secondary School thought there was something special about James and they all fought over him. Rose thought he was an idiot.

"You deaf or something? I asked for my ball."

She looked at him through her long black hair. "You called me patchwork, when my name is Rose."

James looked down at her, scrunching his round face up like there was a nasty smell under his nose. "Well, you're the ugliest rose I've ever seen. You're more of a weed, a disgusting, burnt one." He let out a loud roar of a laugh and sat himself down between Max and Rose.

"Come on," Max said hurriedly as he got up from the bench. Rose followed him, and James followed her.

"You should join a freak show!" James shouted, as he deliberately stepped on the back of Rose's battered shoes.

She fell down on to the concrete floor and scraped her skinny knees.

"Leave off!" Max shouted at James, who laughed.

"What are you going to do, puny? Puny and ugly, what a tag team!"

"GO AWAY!" Rose screamed, as she whipped around to face him.

James's eyes widened as he was lifted high into the air. He elevated for a few seconds before he was thrown into the oak tree. He banged his head hard on the wood, and slid down the trunk. He slumped helplessly on to the ground, with his head resting on his chest.

Carolyn Smith, James's jealous girlfriend, had been watching from across the playground. She screamed when she saw James

fly through the air and collide with the tree. She sprinted towards him, shouting his name, catching the attention of the other students who ran after her.

Rose stared at her scarred hands, breathing fast. Max looked at her with his eyes wide.

"This is not good," Max said, as he watched the students charging towards them, screaming James's name.

Rose glanced at James but he was still knocked out.

The headmaster hurried out of the school doors in his tight, shiny suit. Frown lines were imprinted in his face. Students were running towards him, pointing at James. Rose got up slowly. She took a step backwards and when no one looked her way, she took another. She glanced over her shoulder at the school gates. In that moment, she was grateful that she was good at blending into the background. With all eyes on James, she turned around and walked normally to the gates, breathing faster than usual.

"You can't go!" Max said horrified, grabbing her arm. "What should I say happened to him?"

"I don't know . . . tell them I'm sorry," Rose whispered, before she ran out of the school gates.

Rose ran and ran, even though her side ached. She ran until she came to her home on Broad Street. The tears that rained from her eyes blinded her as she fumbled for her keys. She managed to open the front door to hear her aunt Janet singing 'Summer Holidays' in the kitchen. Rose raced up the stairs, hiding her tear-stained face in her long hair.

"Rose, is that you?" Aunt Janet called, but Rose slammed the door, and buried herself under the duvet, where she cried and howled into the mattress.

Tap.

Rose pulled the duvet of her face and looked at her watch. Five hours had passed. Rose brushed her hair out of her face, realising that she must have cried herself to sleep.

Tap.

She looked around the room to find out where the sound was coming from but it was too dark to see. She caught her reflection in the mirror and jumped. "You should be in a horror film," she said to herself, as she stared at her scars, highlighted by the glow of the moon.

Rose squinted her eyes. There was a small circular light on the mirror that shook from right to left. Rose stood up and moved closer to it.

Tap.

A small rock was thrown on to her windowpane. Rose moved cautiously towards the window, and looked down at the bright lights.

"There she is!" a voice cried.

Rose ducked. She sat on the floor, holding her knees to her chest, rocking back and forth. The crowd began to chant, "Freak." An avalanche of rocks was being hurled on to her window. One broke through the glass and Rose screamed. She covered her ears, and hummed tunelessly a song she had heard seven years ago in her grandparent's kitchen. The louder they chanted, the louder she hummed.

"Rose?" Aunt Janet called from behind the door. She fiddled with the doorknob, but it was locked. "Rose, open the door!"

"No!" Rose shouted. "Why can't everyone just leave me alone?"