

## Introduction

It?s just a camping trip...right?

## **Chapter 1**

Date, July 1, time,9:59, place, Blue ridge mountains

They sat around the campfire, relaxed, full and content, watching the flickering red-orange flames. The cicadas buzzed sleepily in the trees, the crickets hummed steadily, a lone owl hooted, everything was calm and still.

A young woman appeared in front of them. She was tall, very pale, with dark eyes and long ebony hair piled on top of her head. She was wearing a bright crimson dress, strapless with a black laced bodice and the skirt whisped around her ankles.

When she spoke her voice was low and soft, ? Good evening.?

They jumped to their feet. ? What-who-where-? Paul stuttered.

- ? Who are you? Where did you come from? How did you-? Sage broke off, making a vague gesture with her hands.
- ? One question at a time Sage.? The woman said.
- ?How the...how in the world do you know her name!? Zach exclaimed.
- ? That you can find out, if, you choose to Zach. And so can you Paul. You as well Sage. ? They glanced at each other and shifted uncomfortably.
- ? How-just, please, explain.? Zach said. The woman smiled, a mysterious, somehow slightly sinister smile. ? If I explained there would be nothing for you to learn, ? she said, her voice quiet yet resounding through the woods. ? However, I will tell you what you need to know. I assume you know nothing? ? She queried. They exchanged glances and shook their heads.
- ?Very well. This is what is essential for you to know. What you imagine, all that is real. ? ?How do you know about that?? Zach said.
- ? Yeah, we didn?t talk about that to anyone other than each other!? Sage said.
- ?Do not interrupt. It is real. There is magic. Not the magic of the modern world, not floofy Disney type magic, but magic. You need to gather 13 objects by August first and bring them to the place. You will know where the place is for you will know by the time you find it. ?

Sage, Zach and Paul stared at her. Paul cleared his throat, ? Uh, so how will we know what these objects are? ?

She smiled. ? Look for the plant that is young for its species yet rich with the wisdom of an ancient world. You would write on it. ?

And with that, she was gone, leaving only the faint scent of ginger and baked apples in her wake.