

Cliffhanger Story by Bea Yang – Grade 3

My parents used to tell me stories about people called “Daika” with special powers. In each tribe there would be a Daika with a power based on their tribe. In the hidden water city the Daika would be able to bend the waters of the sea and swim as fast as a cheetah on land. It was even said that if each Daika was in contact with its rune stone and did the ritual, peace would be restored to the land.

These stories were just myths though. There was no Daika in the elf tribe and there had never been one in elf history. At least that's what I was told. And I believed it, until the day the sky fell apart. The tribe was swarmed with evil robots of all sorts: shooters, bombers, regular droids, everything. The whole tribe was in chaos. The last words I heard from my parents was to run, to find my “true nature”, and one day fight back. I had no idea what they meant back then, but I do now.

Nine Months Later

Everything was hidden away from me. I was a Daika, but I guess they didn't want me having to leave the jungle so young, so they kept it hidden from me until they really needed me. I guess they thought it would keep me safe, but it didn't. Now I'm all alone, in a seemingly endless jungle.

The last thing my parents gave me were two maps: one map to the forest temple at the heart of the jungle, and another to the only way (and how) to get out of the jungle.

A dim light of excitement flowed through me. I had never been outside the jungle, but the thought of it felt unnerving to leave the safety of the jungle I knew. There was only one thing left for me to do. So, 9 months ago I left for the center of the jungle, and now I'm finally here.

I don't know what I expected the temple to be like, but this wasn't it. I guess I expected it to look newer, but that was wrong. The temple was covered in vines and plants, camouflaging it so well I nearly tripped on what seemed to be the ruins of the stairs. The temple itself was cracked and chipped. Several piles of the temple ruins surrounded the outside. They must've fallen off years ago, because the forest had already completely covered where they used to be.

Many of the down-hangs were crawling with spider webs as thick as a small children's book. Even though it made my hands shake and my whole body stiff, something about it had a slight welcoming feeling, as if this was where I belonged.

I took a deep breath and entered. The inside was almost pitch black. The only lighting was from the skylight, which, even in the middle of the day, was still drowned out by the trees above. I took a small portable light from my pocket and continued on. The light was still dim, but I could see around me enough to know where I was going. I saw a small light in the distance and walked toward it.

When I got there, I noticed that the light was coming from a few torches on the walls. They must've been enchanted because nobody had been in this temple for years, yet the torches still burned as if just lit. It still took a minute for my eyes to adjust to the darkness around me, and when it did, I looked around the room and froze. I knew what it was the second I saw it. My rune stone. Floating on a pedestal in the middle of the room, was a green emerald shaped like a leaf.

I had always wondered what the rune stone would be like. Would it be big? Small? Green? Blue? I had so many thoughts about what it would look like when I was young. I just stood there. Shocked.

Maybe I already knew this was coming but maybe I didn't want it to be true. Everyone had lied to me. I slowly walked toward the stone. My head was still spinning with thoughts. *Why would they keep me from all of it? I could still train in the village; they knew it would come someday, right? No harm would come to me. Keeping it away from me has put me in the most.* Then it came to me. They knew a Daika had to save the world from, well, everything. That would involve leaving the jungle and putting me at risk.

I looked up and realized that I had nearly run straight into the pedestal. My eyes met the shimmering stone. It looked like an especially shiny leaf covered in the morning dew of the jungle.

I knew what I had to do.

I took a deep breath and looked straight at the stone. I wanted a vision, an answer, a prophecy -- nothing. No surprise.

I could've sworn I heard my mother's voice. *"Do it. You know what it is. Do it and fight back. For the tribe."*

For. The. Tribe. The words rung throughout my ears. I reached a hand out to the rune stone and I felt the cold of it as my palm touched it. The stone started to grow brighter, and brighter, and brighter. I looked away. My eyes hurt, but I kept holding on. Suddenly a green beacon shot out into the sky. I forced myself to take one last look at the rune, which had grown even brighter. I quickly looked away again. The beacon seemed to be coming from the rock itself.

It felt like minutes had gone by, but it had only been half of one. I could feel my hand growing hot under the rock, and then as quickly as it started... it stopped. The temple became quiet and dark. The stone was once again dim, but I felt different. I made a quick motion with my hand -- a vine moved with me.

Buried in my depression I could feel a slight army of happiness fighting through. I was not a little girl anymore. I was ready to fight. *For the tribe*, I whispered under my breath. I headed for the door and began trekking through the jungle again.

I. Was. Ready.